PURGING THE NEW AGE:
A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF NEW AGE PRACTICES BY THE CHURCH

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By

Chris Berg
Lynchburg, Virginia
RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY AT LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

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The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Doctoral Degree Committee of Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University for acceptance, a Dissertation entitled Purging the New Age: A Theological Analysis of the Use of New Age Practices by the Church, presented by Chris Berg in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology and Apologetics.

Committee Members:

Chair: Dr. Ronnie Campbell
Signature:____________________________

Reader #1: Dr. Kevin King
Signature:____________________________

Reader #2: Dr. Robert Talley
Signature:____________________________

Date: May 1, 2021
DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate my dissertation to all those who have experienced personal loss or persecution for resisting false doctrine and refusing to engage or permit the practice of syncretistic spiritualism. It is one thing to stand for the truth in the face of the world’s religions, but quite another to stand for the truth against those one considers to be fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. May we all hold fast to the Word of God as given in Scripture and reject syncretizing with the world’s wisdom, which can only lead to the destruction of our souls.
ABSTRACT

This dissertation sets out to demonstrate that Yoga and the Enneagram are not compatible with orthodox Christianity. Additionally, this dissertation will show that all possible attempts at Christianizing these practices ultimately fail due to incompatible underlying philosophies and theologies. In order to accomplish this task, assessment criteria will be developed through a comparison of a subset of evangelical Christian theological topics with their New Age counterparts. These criteria will be used to assess the level of syncretization in each practice as presented by the most popular and prolific Christian practitioners. After assessment, a recommendation will be given concerning each practice’s use in the church. For future study, the criteria developed through this dissertation will be able to be used by others to discern New Age syncretization in any practice under examination.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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“For how comes it that we are carried about with so many strange doctrines [Heb. 13:9] but because the excellence of Christ is not perceived by us? For Christ alone makes all other things suddenly vanish.”¹

John Calvin

“It would not be an easy matter duly to estimate the ensnaring influences of such objects, or the immense difficulty of throwing them overboard.”²

C. H. Mackintosh – Concerning extrabiblical activities

Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

“For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly!”³ Of all of Paul’s warnings, the injunction against the reception of a different Jesus and a different Gospel is one of the most pertinent for the American Church. A 2008 study of 2,500 church attenders revealed that only 48 percent of them read the Bible once a week or more, and only 35 percent conduct in-depth study of the Bible in the same time frame.⁴ This trend has resulted in the juvenilization of the average church attender and is reinforced by churches that have come to view “the religious beliefs, practices, and

¹ John Calvin, Commentary on Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 97.


³ 1 Corinthians 11:4 (HCSB).

developmental characteristics of adolescents . . . as appropriate for Christians of all ages.”

The combination of a lack of Bible knowledge and inadequate, juvenile theological training has left the average Christian highly susceptible to syncretistic engagement with beliefs and practices that are antithetical to the gospel.

As the average modern-day Christian has neglected to go to Scripture and doctrine to answer life’s most fundamental questions, a number of New Age practices have risen to fill the void. First, in the area of fitness, Hindu yoga has been given a Christian facelift and promoted as a tool to “pursue unity of body, mind, and His Holy Spirit… with the intent of worshiping and serving Christ with our entire beings.”

Second, concerning personal identity, Christians are increasingly looking to sources outside of the Bible to define themselves. As a result, personality tools like the Enneagram have spread rapidly throughout Christian churches. Unfortunately, in addition to telling people their identity, the Enneagram also promotes itself as the “nine ways we can find our way back to God.” These are only a few of the ways the New Age Movement (NAM) has infiltrated the Christian Church.

For instance, a 2009 Pew Research study found that 20% of American Protestants affirmed belief in reincarnation, 18% affirmed belief in Yoga, 20% affirmed belief in spiritual

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energy, and 21% affirmed belief in astrology.\textsuperscript{9} As will be demonstrated later in this dissertation, the acceptance of these New Age doctrines stems from a direct attack on traditional hermeneutics and orthodox interpretations of Scripture. Some parishioners see traditional orthodoxy as “worn out” and argue that most evangelicals are “bored with what their tradition offers.”\textsuperscript{10} In an update to the previous study, a 2017 Pew Research poll showed that belief in reincarnation had increased by 6%, belief in spiritual energy had increased by 12%, and belief in astrology had increased by 3% in an 8 year time frame.\textsuperscript{11} As the NAM continues to make ground, biblical and theological arguments will continue to have less of an effect in the evangelical world. This is evidenced by the staggering statistic that by 2017, 38% of American Protestants believed that psychics are a valid source of spiritual knowledge.\textsuperscript{12} Due to the increasing level of syncretism among American Christians, it is pertinent to develop methods by which to protect the Church against further syncretization and reverse these unorthodox trends.

**Research Purpose and Statement of Intent**

The purpose of this study will be to develop and apply a theological assessment tool to assess New Age syncretism in the following activities used at churches: (1) Enneagram, and (2) yoga. The development of the theological assessment criteria will be conducted in chapter 3. In order to appeal to as wide an audience as possible while maintaining biblical orthodoxy, this

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
dissertation will draft criteria based on a broadly evangelical theology defended through the use of Scripture. Additionally, historical theology and theological tenets from other denominations and branches of Christianity will be discussed and included in order to demonstrate that though they may seem to show solidarity with NAM teachings, they in fact do not. The result will be a set of criteria that clearly demonstrates the differences between broadly evangelical, orthodox Christian belief and New Age teachings and can easily be applied to the task of discerning whether syncretism is present in a Christian practice.

In chapter 4, the criteria developed in chapter 3 will be applied to the practices of the Enneagram and yoga as they have been utilized by Christian leaders. For each practice, the core theology and practical elements will be assessed, followed by an examination of how those practices have been utilized in the church and changed to make them acceptable to the average churchgoer. This general assessment will then be used in conjunction with the theological criteria to examine whether or not the practice shows signs of syncretism.

Research Significance

This project has the potential to have a major impact on the American Church at large. First, there is a substantial level of interest in the topic of what are to be considered valid church practices. This information could easily be distilled down to the popular level and taught at churches as both a refresher to orthodox Christianity and as an introduction to inoculate members against New Age syncretism. The heavy emphasis on Scripture would also have the impact of

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13 Apologia Ministries has recently released a number podcasts on this topic through their podcasts “Cultish” and “Sheologians.” Second, Steven Bancarz and Josh Peck have recently written a popular book addressing this topic and are currently on circuit promoting it. Third, a number of churches have personally reached out to the author to request the dissertation when it is completed and for the author to conduct seminars for their churches.
rekindling Christians’ love for the Bible. It is possible that this material could also continue to generate awareness about this problem in the eldership and pastoral levels of the church.

From a research perspective, this project would serve as a call to conduct further research into the areas of cults, Christian syncretization, and contemporary theological application. The dissertation will not be able to cover every practice nor apply every aspect of systematic theology and the author welcomes all future interest in this topic and encourage more researchers to apply their talents to this burgeoning field.

Third, this research serves the ultimate purpose of glorifying God through the clarification of theological statements and the purifying of the Body of Christ from anti-Scriptural practices. These two goals cannot be understated as Scripture commends any action that constitutes “the bride mak[ing] herself ready.”

Thus, this dissertation has significance at the theological, practical, and eschatological levels. The following sections in this chapter will provide the necessary background information about the history of Christianity and the New Age Movement as it pertains to syncretism along with a brief review of pertinent literature.

History of Christianity and the New Age

Origins of the New Age Movement

The New Age Movement is comprised of a variety of sub-movements, including New Thought, that share “common assumptions and a common vision” and draw on the full gamut of philosophies and beliefs that humanity has contrived over the last 4,000 years. New Age leaders have incorporated Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, hermeticism, alchemy, and pagan


polytheistic Spiritualism in an attempt to address the “failures” of most modern institutions. New Age Movement leaders seek to overturn the Judeo-Christian worldview, to “leave the prison of our conditioning,” and usher in the Aquarian (utopian) age.\textsuperscript{16} For example, New Age writer Matthew Fox denigrates orthodox hamartiology and soteriology in favor of the New Age understanding of blessing, saying, “fall/redemption theology has ignored the blessing that creation is because of its anthropomorphic preoccupation with sin! The result has been among other things, the loss of pleasure of spirituality, and with this loss the increase of pain, of injustice, of sado-masochism, and of distrust.”\textsuperscript{17} In order to understand why a belief system that stands diametrically opposed to the Bible is so popular among Christians today, it is necessary to uncover what circumstances originally drove people to accept these beliefs.

This section will uncover the historical and cultural “soil” that gave rise to New Age organizations. First, 20\textsuperscript{th} century culture and history will be examined to determine the primary triggers that led to the development of New Age thinking. Second, a stream of thinking related to the NAM called “New Thought” will be traced from its origins to its institutionalization in various religious organizations. By understanding the New Age Movement from a historical and cultural perspective, it will be possible to determine how NAM practices and ideology infiltrated the American Church.

New Age Movement

One of the major contributors to the rise of the New Age Movement was the stark reality of the failure of humanity to preserve life. New Age leaders characterized the 20\textsuperscript{th} century as the


\textsuperscript{17} Matthew Fox, O.P., \textit{Original Blessing} (Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Company, 1983), 46.
greatest “Black Moment” in Earth’s history. On the global level, the 20th century saw over 2.55 billion people die due to starvation. Through the advent of film, people watched in horror as 108 million people lost their lives to war. Disease, unhealthy environments, and poor general health topped the major causes of death for the century, prematurely ending the lives of approximately 5.438 billion people. Additionally, on the individual level, over the course of the 20th century, there had been “a sharp rise in anxiety, depression, and mental health issues” among young people, which continued to get worse as time progressed. In response to these issues, New Age specialist Marilyn Ferguson investigated a loose but rapidly development network of people including “politicians, stewards of corporate or private wealth, celebrities, professionals trying to change their professions, and ‘ordinary’ people” who were assembling as “conspirators” intending to “change social institutions, modes of problem solving, and distribution of power.” Similarly, Christian apologist, Wouter Hanegraff also affirmed that New Age adherents were bound together by the idea that “collectivism, patriarchy, intolerance, [and] authoritarianism” had failed to bring about the Aquarian Age and needed to be replaced. In his analysis of the history of spiritual but unchurched Americans, Fuller argues that those who

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18 Ferguson, The Aquarian Conspiracy, 24.


23 Ferguson, The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in Our Time, xxiv.

engaged with NAM theology found a way to bring “together the elements of life ripped apart by Western civilization” and heal “the social and ecological damage created by ‘old age’ consciousness.”

A second key factor that led to the rise of the NAM was the Vietnam War, which “catalyzed the conflict of the sixties,” leading to the popularization of a variety of independent, anti-establishment, and counter-cultural movements, like the sexual revolution, psychedelic drug groups, and the civil rights movement. In Daniel Bell’s thorough analysis of the Vietnam War’s impact on American society, he concluded that the war was “perceived as morally ambiguous, if not dubious, by a large portion, perhaps the majority of the population.” Additionally, he found that one of the major results of the war was “an estrangement of a large section of the future elite from the society,” and that it was the “single most direct source of alienation” for young people. Due to the breakdown of belief and authority in governing institutions, people sought alternative communities and voices to define ethics and morality, which included “religious movements” that resolved the counter culture crises of the 60s. Religion historian, Hugh Urban argues that “the 1960’s and ‘70s witnessed the most rapid growth of New Age spirituality” due to ideologies and groups like “feminism,” “the sexual revolution,” and “anti-Vietnam War

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28 Ibid, 191.

protests.” Through the combination of mistrust toward the government and a steady diet of teaching that spoke of finding “inner truth,” many people found “a hybrid paradise” of Eastern mysticism and American psychology. Thus, the New Age Movement provided a way to distance oneself from the harsh realities and power struggles that dominated public life, while at the same time providing meaning and purpose to one’s life.

A third major factor that allowed the fledgling movement to grow quickly and permeate society was the passing of the Hart-Celler Act of 1965. This legislation loosened quotas and saw immigration from Southeast Asia “quadruple” from 1965 to 1970. As one of the major contributors to the globalization of America, the Hart-Celler Act of 1965 allowed for the importation of Eastern philosophy. For example, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishna) started during this time, as well as “various new forms of Buddhism.” The subjectivity of these philosophies was quickly adopted by New Age organizations as it allowed them to redefine morality along their counter-cultural lines. The Vietnam War, general disillusionment with Christianity and the American government, and the influx of Eastern spirituality were perfectly timed to attract the maximal number of people to the fledgling New Age Movement.

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34 Ibid.
Finally, the New Age Movement could not have occurred without the deconstruction of modernism, followed by the rise of the postmodern worldview. Postmodernity fundamentally restructured the way people form worldviews and take in information. In the modernist framework, people held a shared meta-narrative established by an authority or institution. New information was then judged and assessed through that lens. However, as communication technology increased and mistrust of authority spread, people became disillusioned with institutions and the meta-narratives they produced. With its emphasis on personal, subjective truth, the NAM was positioned to capitalize on the desire to create reality through the “self-selection” of information.\textsuperscript{35} With the American people disillusioned with their government, rejecting institutions, tired of war, and oversaturated with death, the New Age Movement truly seemed like an inner light coming into the world.

New Thought

Separate from the traditional strands of the New Age Movement, another New Age philosophy began to develop in the mid-1800s through a man named Phineas Parkhurst Quimby.\textsuperscript{36} After becoming disenchanted with mesmerism, Quimby developed a “spiritual science” by blending Christian teachings with “scientifically demonstrable mind healing.”\textsuperscript{37} Quimby’s system, called “New Thought” rejected the standard doctrines of Christianity and all forms of high Christology.\textsuperscript{38} He redefined religion, so that “to believe profoundly in the


\textsuperscript{36} Newport, \textit{The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue}, 29.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. Mesmerism is commonly known as hypnosis and was developed by Anton Mesmer in the late 1700’s.

indwelling presence of God as love and wisdom... [and] to realize its reality vividly in the practice of spiritual healing” is the paradigm of faith. The fundamental premise of his healing system is to realize that one’s beliefs are the only things that keep one ill. By holding beliefs contrary to the reports of doctors, he argued that it was possible for the mind to heal the physical body.

Though Quimby never gained a large following, he passed on his teachings to key students, one of whom founded a fully functioning church based on the principles of New Thought mixed with eisegetical interpretations of Scripture. Mary Baker Eddy was one of Quimby’s patients in 1862 and, after receiving healing, she merged her understanding of the Bible with Quimby’s healing techniques, founding the Church of Christian Science. The church was syncretistic with Christianity, but only on a superficial level, using “the standard terms of Christian orthodoxy,” but completely re-writing them on a metaphysical level. For instance, in her seminal work, Science and Health, Eddy utilized Trinitarian language, but in the same sentence also stated that “Jesus of Nazareth taught and demonstrated man’s oneness with the Father,” which is a monistic/pantheistic view of divinity. Though it attempted to find a place in

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39 Horatio Dresser, “Chapter 1: Biographical Sketch.”


41 Ibid.


mainstream Christianity, Christian Science was never able to receive universal acceptance into Christendom due to its fundamental rejection of central doctrines.

One of Mary Baker Eddy’s students, Emma Curtis Hopkins, had a “falling out” with her and crystalized the dominant “New Thought” philosophy, which coupled positive thinking with success and prosperity as well as physical health.45 As a result of her teachings, many “New Thought” organizations and publishers were formed, such as the International New Thought Alliance and the Unity School of Christianity, which taught that “God is Mind,” and that because people are “one with God,” they “cannot be poor, because God cannot be poor.”46 This prosperity philosophy became the basis for a variety of “New Thought” books and organizations that trained people how to manipulate the world through the power of thought.

One instance of this doctrine came from New Age teacher William Atkinson. He merged positive thinking with pseudoscientific principles concerning brain wave vibrations to form the basis of his theory on how mental thoughts can manipulate the physical world.47 In his book, Atkinson argued that “you must get in love with the thing you want,” in order for reality to manifest it in your presence.48 In this way, nothing is too good for the thinker, nor is anything impossible for the person who loves the deepest. These ideas have repeatedly resurfaced, the most well-known instance being Rhonda Byrne’s The Secret, which brought “New Thought” into the mainstream. In general, “New Thought” has had an easy time being accepted and

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48 Ibid, 61.
incorporated into American life. As a result, both the New Age Movement and “New Thought” have also found a home in American churches at large, and especially in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.

**Infiltration of the New Age Movement into Christianity**

As the following section will demonstrate, the New Age movement penetrated Christianity at distinct times and often through calculated methods, such as New Age meditation and New Age music. Rarely was this syncretization wholesale. Often, it occurred as an adoption of new doctrine to fit the specific needs of American churchgoers, though over time, New Age philosophy began to corrupt orthodox doctrine. One thing is common to all instances of New Age syncretization: the rejection of the evangelical, orthodox doctrine of bibliology. In every instance, the sufficiency of Scripture is denied, and truth is sought from sources other than the Bible. Additionally, syncretization requires either the rejection of the Old Testament as useful or a hermeneutic that spiritualizes or allegorizes the biblical text. Finally, for the purposes of this book, syncretization does not necessitate that the doctrine itself came from a New Age source, nor that it was accepted in its entirety. Rather, syncretization means that the revised Christian doctrine now resembles a New Age tenet in some way. The following section will trace the origins of New Age syncretism into the church, leading into the current climate of American churches.

**Mainline Denominations**

Mainline denominations such as Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics, and Episcopalians have seen a dramatic shift in the beliefs held by their congregants as New Age philosophy has

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infiltrated mainstream America. For instance, as of December 2017, 67% of mainline American Protestants affirm at least one of the following: spiritual energy, psychics, reincarnation, or astrology.\(^50\) Similarly, 70% of American Catholics affirm at least one of these New Age beliefs.\(^51\) Dr. John Killinger, who served as a pastor in Baptist, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches, articulates the core of this new Christianity saying that salvation is “self-realization” and “self-fulfillment,” which are concerned with “being so well integrated as a self” that one can be in “a kind of heaven” in “this highly imperfect world.”\(^52\) This New Age understanding of salvation manifests itself as a significant increase in religious pluralism; a 2014 Pew Research study found that 80 percent of mainline American churchgoers believe that “many religions can lead to eternal life.”\(^53\) In Protestant Christianity, the Bible has been so denigrated that, according to a Gallup poll, only 35 percent of churchgoers believe that it is the actual word of God and only 51 percent would agree that it is in some way inspired by God.\(^54\) This new type of “Christian” no longer has confidence in “the church or organized religion.”\(^55\) Instead, individually-defined

\(^50\) Gecewicz, “‘New Age’ Beliefs Common Among Both Religious and Nonreligious Americans.”

\(^51\) Ibid.


spirituality reigns and religion is cast away as an outmoded, dead practice. For these churchgoers, the Bible becomes one voice among many, and truth about the self is sought from a variety of pseudo-spiritual sources. Typically, Christians that syncretize with New Age thinking tend to focus on “self-improvement in the here and now,” as opposed to eternal life or salvific concerns. Dr. Christian Smith characterizes this new form of American Christianity as “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” (MTD). Though churchgoers who hold to this view do not explicitly align with the New Age Movement, their worldview elements concerned with God are distinctly New Age. For example, Smith records a MTD student saying, “God is a spirit that grants you anything you want, but not anything bad,” which reflects the New Age belief in the primary goodness of the spiritual world, the law of attraction, and the impersonality of God.

The New Age Movement has also infiltrated Christianity through the adoption of various practices that have traditionally been associated with paganism, Spiritualism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. For instance, in an attempt to deepen their spirituality, Christians of all denominations have flocked to yoga. At Wheaton College, Christian Yoga is a class that students can take through the athletics department. Though many believe that yoga cannot be detached from demonic worship and Hinduism, many Christians report that yoga allows them to worship

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58 Ibid.


60 Ibid, 43.

God “with their whole body” in a way that “overly intellectual, uninteresting, or body-denying” orthodox doctrines do not.\textsuperscript{62}

Another suite of New Age practices that have made their way into the church are related to personality typing. In the 1960's, Claudio Naranjo utilized the teachings of Oscar Ichazo, and with the help of automatic writing, came up with the basic version of the occultic personality typing system called the Enneagram.\textsuperscript{63} From there, it quickly spread into Catholic seminaries, where many fell under its influence.\textsuperscript{64} Though it died down in the following years, recently it has made a major resurgence in Charismatic churches, non-denominational churches, and in pop-Christian circles. For instance, a 2018 article from \textit{Relevant Magazine} describes how the Enneagram is making its way into evangelical churches. The interviewee states that she and her husband run a church-sponsored Enneagram class to assist in the process of “bringing what we know of the Enneagram” into the lives of Christians with a “more traditional, Gospel-centered perspective.”\textsuperscript{65} Additionally, evangelical publication companies have recognized the growing trend and both \textit{InterVarsity Press} and \textit{Zondervan} have published immensely popular books on the Enneagram that are targeted at the average evangelical churchgoer.\textsuperscript{66}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{62} Brown, “Christian Yoga,” 669.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Ibid, 117-118.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Another substantial supporter of the Enneagram and heterodox doctrine is Catholic Franciscan monk, Richard Rohr, OFM. His focus is on redefining Christ through syncretizing with the New Age concept of Christ Consciousness. In his book, *The Universal Christ*, he argues that Christ “was clearly not just Jesus of Nazareth, but something much more immense, even cosmic… [and] this vision has the power to radically alter what we believe.”67 For Rohr, Christ is the presence of God that is incarnate in the entire universe. He argues that “the universe is the Body of God, both in its essence and in its suffering,” and that Christ is “beyond gender.”68 Rohr explicitly denies the standard Creator/Creation distinction, asserting that “God loves things by becoming them.”69 He also derides the gospel saying people “will have long discarded the notion of Christian salvation as a private evacuation plan that gets a select few humans into the next world;” rather, Rohr affirms universalism whereby everyone will be saved.70 Later on in his book, he denies the doctrine of original sin and, instead, accepts “the inherent goodness of human nature.”71 Rohr’s understanding of Christianity is uniquely his own, as he draws on New Age movement theology infused with Christian language and tradition. For instance, he is theologically committed to panentheism, a works-based universal salvation through spiritual contemplation to gain hidden knowledge, and that humans are essentially good and have a divine nature.72


68 Ibid, Kindle, 1713, 1895.


70 Ibid, Kindle, 708.


72 Ibid, Kindle, 2891.
The Charismatic Movement.

The Pentecostal and Charismatic Church’s history with the NAM is extensive with many interconnected incursions. This section will examine a few of the major events that led to dramatic shifts toward New Age thinking and practice. The seeds for a syncretistic style of Christianity were sown at the very beginning of the Charismatic Movement. The Holiness Church, which led into modern day Pentecostalism, held that “physical healing for the body was provided ‘in the atonement’ along with salvation for the soul.”

The pressure to guarantee physical healing and other signs and wonders cultivated the temptation to look outside of Scripture and the Christian Church to secure new miracles as contemporary ministries dried up.

In accordance with Holiness theology, one of the founders of Pentecostalism, Charles Parham, held that “physical healing is the Christian’s birthright” and conducted a “restless search” for healing power among unorthodox ministries and organizations. This set a precedent for later ministries. Additionally, Parham cultivated the concept of two tiers of Christians and taught that only “those who received the latter rain baptism would form the Bride of Christ.”

The division of Christians into those who were empowered versus those who were not would later develop into the theology that being gifted spiritually meant that a person had a special relationship with God and could receive new revelation. Though his movement remained small throughout his life, Parham’s Houston Bible School was instrumental in the education of William J. Seymour—who, in 1906, started the worldwide Pentecostal movement through the

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Azusa Street Revival. Thus, the foundation of the Pentecostal Church included experientially-driven pragmatism.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the Pentecostal Church entered into a period of dramatic growth through a series of healing evangelists. The key leader and “primary source of inspiration” for many healing and revivalist meetings was William Branham. Branham’s theology and practice are the foundation for most modern New Age incursions into the American Church. For instance, he asserted that the Bible was merely one source of revelation among many. In his message entitled “The Pillar of Fire,” he stated that “God wrote three Bibles: one, the Zodiac, one in the pyramids, one on paper.” In his teachings, he utilized these other streams of revelation by connecting them allegorically to biblical stories. Additionally, Branham popularized angelic encounters. In the angelic encounter that was foundational to his ministry, Branham was visited by a being who told him that he was “sent from the presence of the Almighty God to tell you [Branham] that your peculiar life and your misunderstood ways have been to indicate that God has sent you to take a gift of divine healing to the people of the world.” The angel also affirmed

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80 Ibid.

that Branham “would be able to detect diseases by vibrations on his left hand.”  
With one stroke, Branham normalized “angelic beings” who promoted New Age practices.

Branham also laid the groundwork for shifting authority away from denominations, which he considered “the mark of the beast,” and onto individual people he calls “apostles.”

Branham’s doctrine of “The Manifest Sons of God,” coupled with his Dominion Theology, formed the backbone of the theological justification for the New Apostolic Reformation and various associated modern charismatic ministries.

In total, Branham played a substantial theological role in the lives of “Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborn, Jack Coe, A.A. Allen, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Kathryn Kuhlman, Paul Cain, Earl Paulk, Marilyn Hickey, and Benny Hinn,” all of whom directed the course of the modern Charismatic Movement.

The New Apostolic Reformation

**Overview of the NAR.** The core teaching of the New Apostolic Reformation, inherited from William Branham and others of the Latter Rain Movement, is “the belief that apostles, working together with prophets, must take over governance of the church—taking the reins from pastors, elders, and denominational leaders—so that God’s end-time plans can be fulfilled and Christ can return.”

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82 Harrell Jr., *All Things Are Possible*, 28.


in support of the present-day apostolic theology and mission, Peter Wagner was the primary theological influence. In his ecclesiology, he affirms that apostles are the ultimate authority under God in the Church, and both apostles and prophets receive new revelation directly from God. This doctrine, coupled with prior affirmation of occultic and New Age rituals, has allowed for a substantial influx of New Age thinking and practice into many of America’s churches as over “66 million” people in the U.S. have been “influenced” by the NAR. If a leading apostle hears from God that extra-biblical spirituality is proper for Christian engagement, then God must endorse it, even if the Bible does not. As it turns out, this is exactly the situation in which many NAR organizations and church groups find themselves. The following sections will detail the origins and belief systems in the most prominent NAR organizations and how those systems have allowed for New Age syncretization.

**International House of Prayer.** In addition to C. Peter Wagner, who codified the NAR movement at the academic level, the NAR organized at the church level in Kansas City. Bob Jones, Paul Cain, and John Paul Jackson were NAR Prophets who operated out of Mike Bickle’s church, Kansas City Fellowship. In 1988, Mike Bickle and Bob Jones delivered an interview entitled “Visions and Revelations,” which relates a series of supernatural events and angelic encounters that comprise the “Prophetic History” of the IHOP-KC. There are several events in

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88 C. Peter Wagner, *Dominion!: How Kingdom Action Can Change the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 2008), 27, 123.


92 Mike Bickle and Bob Jones, “Visions and Revelations” (Kansas City, MO, Fall 1988), 20.
this interview that have set the stage for the incursion of a number of New Age beliefs. First, Jones and Bickle normalize angelic and demonic encounters over and above the Word of God. In one of his earlier encounters, Jones reports that he was reading Psalm 23 when a demon came to him to incite him to kill people at the mental institution in which he was hospitalized. When he cried out for help to Jesus, he reports that a voice said to him, “I can’t help you, Bob, until you forgive them. Go kill them or forgive them.” Thus, rather than reiterating Scripture, Jesus was claimed to have told Jones to either “kill them or forgive them.” While there is truth in forgiveness, the coupled statement of an either/or with murder is out of line with the nature and character of God and is likely demonic as well. However, this event and others like it have justified the reception of revelation from non-biblical sources. This revelation often hides under the term “prophecy.” In his magnum opus on prophecy, Bickle states that “supernatural confirmation by acts of God in nature strengthens our faith as it provides irrefutable proof of the specific direction that God is speaking to us.” In other words, prophecy, as revelation, is not verified by checking against Scripture, but by supernatural confirmation.

Second, Jones affirms in the interview that “the Lord allowed me to know… that there would be an end-time measure of apostolic ministry that would come out of the fruit of intercession.” This affirmation, as in earlier movements like the Latter-Rain, is the justification for the continued existence of apostles and prophets with near-unlimited authority and comes with it the high probability of New Age syncretism. It is important to note that IHOP officially

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93 Bickle and Jones, "Visions and Revelations," 6.

94 Ibid.


96 Ibid, Kindle, 84.
denies all involvement with the NAR, the giving of prophecy that is unjustified by Scripture, and the reinstitution of the offices of the apostle and prophet.\(^7\) However, these denials are in direct contradiction with what the founder of IHOP affirms in his widely used book on prophecy where he validates the continued existence of “the Level IV prophetic office” which “parallel[s] the Old Testament ministries of men like Samuel and Elijah.”\(^8\) This type of doublespeak is another indicator of syncretization where organizations put on one face to the public due to potential public relations issues, and then reveal their true belief system to a select group of people.

Finally, the primary way in which New Age practice has crept into IHOP is through their use of contemplative prayer. Bickel argues that Ephesians 3:14-21 provides the backdrop for his theology on contemplative prayer.\(^9\) One egregious error is his declaration that “the very essence of God’s being” is love. This assertion is based on an eisegetical reading of 1 John 4:8 which reads: “The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”\(^10\) Pillar commentator Colin Kruse argues that the author of 1 John “is not making an ontological statement describing what God is in essence; rather, he is…speaking about the loving nature of God revealed in saving action on behalf of humankind.”\(^11\) Verses 9 and 10 support this thesis as they talk about God’s love in terms of God’s action by which “He loved us and sent His Son to


\(^10\) 1 John 4:8.

be the propitiation for our sins.”  

Additionally, Jobes argues that for “God is love” to be ontological, the statement would have to work in reverse “love is God” which “the syntax of the Greek does not permit.”

This reduction of God to love is characteristic of New Age thinking and perpetuates the idea that as long as something is loving it is of God. For instance, Bickle presents the Holy Spirit’s primary role as “the escort” through which Christians “feel love” from God. Thus, the primary connection to God becomes emotion, rather than belief or faith. In agreement with the early Holiness/Pentecostal teaching that the Holy Spirit is present when He is felt and has moved on when the emotional experience dries up, Bickle affirms that “spiritual boredom is the enemy’s best weapon against us,” and that “contemplative prayer” is the key to intense emotional experience with God. This is another example of utilizing extra-biblical means to achieve

102 1 John 4:10.

103 Karen H. Jobes, 1, 2, and 3 John, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 191, quoting Robert W. Yarbrough, 1-3 John, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 273, quoting Gerard S. Sloyan, Walking in the Truth: Perseverers and Deserters: The First, Second, and Third Letters of John (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 45; Jobes, 1, 2 and 3 John, 191, quoting R. W. L. Moberly, “‘Test the Spirits’: God, Love, and Critical Discernment in 1 John 4,” in The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins: Essays in Honor of James D.G. Dunn, ed. Graham Stanton, Bruce W. Longenecker, and Stephen C. Barton (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 305-6; Jobes, 1, 2, and 3 John, 191, quoting Bob Barber, “‘Show Bridges Heaven and Earth,’ Profiles in Faith,” Santa Barbara News-Press, January 3, 1998.Quote is reprinted here in full: “Note that the syntax of the Greek does not permit the terms of the statement to be reversed, as Yarbrough points out: “John does not say that love is God, a statement found nowhere in Scripture. “There have always been some who wished to apotheosize human love, but it cannot be done.”…[sic] To do so would be to replace a living, personal, and active God with an intellectual, ethical, volitional, or emotional abstraction. This is the last thing that the language of 1 John, or the graphic portrayal of God incarnate in the Gospels, would permit.” Furthermore, as Moberly points out, “a theoretical definition of deity in terms of a supreme human quality…can give rise to Feuerbach’s potent critique that the quality is more ultimate than the deity, and that to keep the quality, while disposing of the deity, is to hold firm to the one thing needful.” This tendency to define God by human concepts of love leads directly to self-serving heresy, such as is often presented by popular spirituality. While being interviewed, a religious talk-show host mentioned a spiritual experience he once had of “what is defined by love, or oneness, or God.” He went on, “Ultimately, our faith and deeds give us an experience of love and connectedness. The more good we do, the more experience we have with God, or love.” When asked what was his message to the audience, he replied. “We are all made of love, God is love, and we are God” (emphasis added). This is clearly and aberrant understanding of John’s teaching (cf. 4:10).”

104 Bickle, “Contemplative Prayer.”
spiritual encounter. Contemplative prayer utilizes extended repetition of a “love word” or “sacred word” which enables one to connect with God. This connection is not found through rational thought, but through “an altered consciousness that refuses to identify or feed with what are only passing shows.” After assessing the similarities of contemplative prayer with eastern meditation, D.R. McConnell concluded that contemplative prayer involves “going beyond thought” and thus negates the relational alert requirement for communicating with God. Thus, in his book critiquing the Word of Faith movement, he argues that “we have no good reason to engage in the practice.”

**The Word of Faith Movement.** At its core, the Word of Faith Movement is “a cultic infiltration of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.” Though Kenneth Hagin is seen as the father of the movement, his theology is the theology of E. W. Kenyon, whom he often heavily plagiarized. This section will assess Kenyon’s adoption of the teachings of Unitarianism, Christian Science, and New Thought and how those teachings were taken and used by Hagin and other Word of Faith teachers. Though Kenyon began his spiritual journey in the Methodist and Baptist traditions, in his twenties, he entered into study under one of the most

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110 Ibid, Kindle, 250-542.
prominent Unitarian teachers of the 19th century, Minot Savage.\textsuperscript{111} Many of the doctrinal teachings of the Word of Faith movement mirror unitarian teachings, including: faulty views on theology proper and the Trinity, confusion about the nature of Jesus Christ, confusion about the nature of mankind, and confusion about penal substitutionary atonement.\textsuperscript{112} Additionally, Kenyon attended Emerson College, which had “some of the best known and most articulate advocates of New Thought.”\textsuperscript{113}

The net result of this influence was a substantial deviation from traditional biblical doctrine and an acceptance of New Age Gnosticism and mysticism. For instance, in his book, \textit{The Hidden Man}, Kenyon states that “man was created in the same class with God,” which equates man’s nature with divinity.\textsuperscript{114} Additionally, he discounted the sufficiency of Scripture with statements like, “the recreated spirit is also the fountain of wisdom,” which affirmed that new revelation could come from within one’s spirit.\textsuperscript{115} Kenyon also affirmed that “God becomes a part of our very consciousness,” in an effort to justify the divine power that people have in their minds.\textsuperscript{116} In concert with Mary Baker Eddy and P. P. Quimby, Kenyon argues that science can be conducted in the spiritual realm.\textsuperscript{117} This justified virtually any exploration into non-Christian, New Age, or occult practice to see if it would bring about the desired results. Two of the most

\textsuperscript{111} McConnell, \textit{A Different Gospel}, Kindle, 875-957.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, Kindle, 957.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, Kindle, 1122.


\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, 137.

\textsuperscript{117} McConnell, \textit{A Different Gospel: A Bold and Revealing Look at the Biblical and Historical Basis of the Word of Faith Movement}, Kindle, 1194.
prominent teachings that Hagin later celebrated in *The Power of Positive Confession* and *Sign-Posts on the Road to Success* were the power of positive confession and the Christian’s right to prosperity.\(^{118}\) In these books, Kenyon argues that it is “the unseen you” who has been created with everything necessary for success.\(^{119}\)

Kenneth Hagin took the teachings of Kenyon and elevated them to the level of irrefutable revelation, even threatening those who disagreed with execution.\(^{120}\) One of the primary ways that he did this was through his adept combination of the use of scriptural proof-texts interwoven with new prophetic revelation.\(^{121}\) Hagin taught three key doctrines that he utilized from Christian Science, New Thought, and the Holiness Movement. First, Hagin argued that spiritual knowledge is superior to intellectual knowledge and that to truly understand the things of God one must “by-pass the brain.”\(^{122}\) This divorced revelation from propositional truth, creating a form of “direct insight” into God’s mind and “transcending all ordinary levels of human experience.”\(^{123}\) The result is similar to other movements; whatever the spiritual “prophet” says is divine revelation and beyond correction, even by Scripture itself. Second, Hagin holds that salvation involves the deification of mankind, and thus, as there can be no sickness in God,


\(^{119}\) Kenyon, *Sign Posts on the Road To Success*, 44.


therefore there can be no sickness in believers who understand this doctrine. He affirms what is known as “identification theology” as he states that being born-again involves “a real incarnation” involving God’s “nature, substance and being.”¹²⁴ For the Word of Faith movement, this teaching that Christians are the same as Jesus Himself gives them justification to hear from God exactly as Jesus did and perform signs and wonders exactly as Jesus did. Third, similar to New Age philosophy, Hagin treats faith as a way to “write your own ticket with God.”¹²⁵ Similar to Byrne’s The Secret, Hagin teaches that “when we talk right and believe right, we will climb to the top.”¹²⁶ These are only some of the central teachings of the Word of Faith movement as disseminated by Kenneth Hagin and many of the key leaders of the movement. All of them led to the syncretization of Christian theology with New Age thinking and practices.

Bethel Redding. One significant incursion of the New Age Movement into the American Church has been through Bill Johnson and Bethel Church in Redding, California. This section will cover the explicitly New Age beliefs and practices held by the leaders of the Bethel movement. Bethel’s support of “New Thought” will be handled in the next section. The central treatise on Bethel’s acceptance of New Age philosophy and practices is found in the book, The Physics of Heaven, edited by Bill Johnson’s administrative assistant, Judy Franklin, and home-school curriculum developer Ellyn Davis. The following all contribute a chapter or more to the book: Kris Vallotton, Bob Jones, Bill Johnson, Jonathan Welton, Ray Hughes, Dan McCollam, Cal Pierce, Larry Randolph, David Van Koevening, and Beni Johnson. This book is sold on


¹²⁶ Ibid.
Bethel’s website and is endorsed by the major leaders of Bethel Redding, Bill Johnson, and Kris Vallotton. There is no better, nor clearer, source published by Bethel that outlines their stance on the New Age Movement and its practices.

Franklin’s first sentence sums up the theological foundation of the book and Bethel’s entire engagement with the New Age: “My journey into the mysteries of sound, light, vibrations, and quantum mechanics began with one word—‘sound.’” Franklin, Davis, and the leaders of Bethel are not diving into the Scriptures to acquire their knowledge; rather, they are relying on a subjective inner voice experience. Davis goes on to explain, like others who engage in New Age syncretism, that “the Christianity of my childhood seemed to have little relevance to my everyday life.” Thus, she sought out truth in the New Age movement and claims that “a lot of what I saw and heard in the New Age Movement embodied biblical principles and could be backed up by Scripture.” Given these statements and the endorsements and contributions to the book by key Bethel leaders, it is impossible to deny that Bethel Redding has fully embraced New Age Movement practices and attempted to syncretize them with a Christian veneer.

The following is a list of practices defended in The Physics of Heaven: (1) a sound from heaven is coming that will “change DNA” and make human DNA “the same as His;” (2) spiritual people carry “good energy” around with them that takes the form of “vibrations;” (3) Angels teach people about how to command them and how to manipulate the physical universe

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128 Ibid.

129 Ibid, Kindle, 319.

130 Ibid, Kindle, 363.
with sound; (4) “the spiritual discoveries of the New Age movement” are like the Ark of the Covenant being held by the Philistines; (5) “Jesus has given us the power, through our faith and our intent, to “pop a qwiff” and bring things from the unseen world into the visible;” and (6) all things are connected through a “mystical connection.”’\textsuperscript{131} There is no attempt to hide that these are New Age principles, but there is every attempt to defend their use in the church through eisegeting Scripture.

In summary, the Christian Church has seen many incursions of NAM practices and philosophies over the last century. As reported in the LA Times, these syncretizations have captured the minds and hearts “of a growing number of young people . . . who have turned away from traditional organized religion and are embracing more spiritual beliefs and practices like tarot, astrology, meditation, energy healing, and crystals.”\textsuperscript{132} However, the church has not been silent. There are a number of apologists, pastors, and academics who have seen NAM influence and have stood against it.

\textbf{Current Landscape of Apologetic Refutation of NAM Syncretism}

Having detailed both the origins of the New Age Movement as well at its infiltration of the American Church, the following section will conduct a survey of literature that has been written in an effort to provide a polemic against New Age syncretism. The review will group works into three categories: academic, apologetic, and popular. Academic works are typically authored by people with advanced degrees and demonstrate a substantial level of research,

\textsuperscript{131} Franklin and Davis, \textit{The Physics of Heaven}, Kindle, 480, 792, 1229, 1353, 1637, 1669.

citation, and synthesis throughout the books. Apologetic works are aimed at lay-level and often focus on a polemical approach to Christian syncretism. They can be authored by people with or without degrees, but still demonstrate a high degree of scholarly research. Popular level books are written for the lay person. They are often researched but utilize secondary resources rather than primary literature. The works reviewed in this section will not be summarized; rather, each work will receive a short description of the main contributions that it makes to the field. This is not an exhaustive list.

Academic Works

One of the top academic books on the New Age Movement and Christianity is *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview* by John Newport.\(^{133}\) This book does an excellent job at tracing the origins of the New Age Movement and provides a direct comparison of New Age theology and biblical theology. The second half of the book is especially useful, as it covers the interaction of the two worldviews in major areas of culture such as health, business, art, education, science, and history. The only issue with this book is that, being written in 1998, it is not up-to-date on the current forms of New Age syncretism. Thus, much of the polemical information could use a substantial update to reflect contemporary issues.

Another pivotal academic book is the *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs* by John Ankerberg and John Weldon.\(^{134}\) This book provides extensive coverage on a wide variety of New Age practices. The authors discuss New Age theology incidentally, but the focus remains on the practices themselves. For each practice, they provide a brief statement about its use in

\(^{133}\) Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue*.

Christianity and how Christians should deal with these practices. These sections are short and there is ample room for further research. Additionally, as with Newport’s book, this book was written in the mid-1990’s and does not discuss contemporary New Age practices like the Enneagram.

In terms of a direct and thorough refutation of the NAR, Douglas Geivett’s and Holly Pivec’s books, *A New Apostolic Reformation: A Biblical Response to a Worldwide Movement* and *God’s Super-Apostles: Encountering the Worldwide Prophets and Apostles Movement*, represent the best and most balanced of contemporary scholarship. These books cover similar ground and give an account of the Biblical versus NAR understanding of the offices of the apostle and prophet. They are very charitable in their analyses of the NAR and critique the movement along strictly biblical lines. Though they do mention NAR connections to the New Age, they tend to treat the NAR as a Christian movement with bad theology. They do not cover many explicit NAR practices; instead, they evaluate Christian practices that have been modified by the NAR such as prophecy, miracles, and spiritual warfare.

Also critiquing the NAR is *False Prophets Among Us* by Kent Philpott. This book is split into two major sections. First, Philpott provides book critiques for many of the major doctrinal books by NAR authors. These critiques are invaluable as they quickly assess each chapter in each book and note any essential heretical issues found therein. He does not hold any punches in his assessments, and his condemnation of these authors is both blunt and clear. In the

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second section, Philpott provides a series of essays through which he presents his personal theology and credentials for authoring the book. Additionally, he comments on Pentecostal theology, to which he holds, and offers his thoughts on the direction Pentecostalism should take. The book serves as a great overview of the various key books of the NAR but does not deal extensively with many New Age practices.

Heath Henning’s book entitled *Crept in Unawares: Mysticism* is an excellent new addition to the academic literature on New Age philosophy and the church.\(^\text{137}\) He examines the New Age movement as a modern iteration of ancient Gnosticism. The second half of the book is useful, as it contains a detailed discussion of how experientialism has taken over the American Church and provided the soil for the adoption of New Age practices. He focuses on contemplative prayer and contemporary Christian music as the greatest offenders due to their origins in ancient mysticism. Finally, he provides an integrated treatment of “Kingdom Now” or “Dominion” theology and draws connections to both Islam and New Age organizations.

In terms of graduate work, there have been no Ph.D. dissertations that have directly assessed either the Christian Enneagram or Christian Yoga against a biblical worldview or biblical doctrine. The overwhelming majority of dissertations on both practices are concerned with integrating the practices into Christian living and are written with the assumption that both practices are valid for Christian use.\(^\text{138}\) Additionally, there is at least one Master’s thesis that

\(^{137}\) Henning, *Crept in Unawares: Mysticism*.

addresses the issue of yoga being used in the church which does an excellent job at demonstrating yoga’s Hindu origins and theological commitments. However, it does not provide a full systematic theological refutation of yoga.\textsuperscript{139}

Apologetic Works

Douglas Groothuis is the premier apologist concerning New Age syncretism with Christianity and has authored multiple books and articles on the subject. His two most famous works, \textit{Unmasking the New Age} and \textit{Confronting the New Age} have been pivotal for providing both awareness of the NAM’s intentions and how to prevent it from infiltrating one’s church. In \textit{Unmasking}, Groothuis focuses on the counter-cultural origins of the NAM and how it capitalized on an influx of science and pseudo-science to present a view of the future that involved a fundamental change in ages. In \textit{Confronting}, Groothuis shifts his content toward fighting back against a New Age culture. He covers how to spot New Age counterfeit spirituality, how to present biblical Christianity to those who have come under the sway of the New Age, and how to deal with culture’s appropriation of the New Age movement in everyday life. Due to these books being written in the 1980s, he does not cover many New Age practices that are currently in vogue.

Another pillar of the faith who defends Christianity against the New Age is Walter Martin. In his books, \textit{The Kingdom of the Cults}, \textit{The Kingdom of the Occult}, and \textit{The New Age Cult}, Martin provides a clear understanding of the major theological tenets of the New Age Movement, how Christians can use the Bible to respond to these teachings, and the dangers

\textsuperscript{139} Injib Kim, “Christian Yoga as a Product of Hinduism and the New Age Movement” (Master’s Thesis, Liberty University, 2009).
Christians face in a world quickly being overcome by New Age philosophy. The only issue with his set of books is that having been written in the 1980s, they do not cover many of the New Age practices in use today. However, they remain excellent resources on the polemical approach to dealing with New Age groups and individuals.

The late Norman Geisler was also a critic of the New Age Movement and wrote *The Infiltration of the New Age* and *Apologetics in the New Age*. Unique to his take on the NAM is his focus on its pantheistic elements as they pertain to the deification of the self. Few other books explore the pantheistic underpinnings as well as Geisler and his co-author Clark, and they demonstrate how it is pantheism that drives the NAM doctrine of man and revelation. These analyses make *Apologetics* a vital resource for understanding NAM thought. However, *Infiltration* is not as useful, due to its early date of authorship and much of the material contained within is covered in greater depth elsewhere.

Catholic friar, Mitch Pacwa, provides a unique and noteworthy critique of Catholicism’s syncretism with the NAM in *Catholics and the New Age*. In *Catholics*, Pacwa focuses his critique on the aspects of the NAM that deal with psychology. Specifically, he outlines Jungian psychology and the Enneagram and their acceptance into many Catholic seminaries. He effectively demonstrates how they are fundamentally anti-Christian in both origin and

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142 Pacwa, *Catholics and the New Age: How Good People Are Being Drawn into Jungian Psychology, the Enneagram, and the Age of Aquarius*. 

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syncretistic implementation. Though the Enneagram made its way through Catholic circles in the 1970s, it is currently making its way through mainstream evangelical Christianity. Thus, his book is vital for assessing this practice in its new iterations.

A Different Gospel by D. R. McConnell, Christianity in Crisis by Hank Hanegraaff, and Playing with Holy Fire by Michael Brown all address various theological heresies and abuses within the Charismatic Movement. McConnell addresses the rise and influence of the Word of Faith Movement by ascertaining its true origins in “New Thought” and Christian Science and then presenting an overview of its main theological premises which all exhibit New Age philosophy. Hanegraaff also addresses the Word of Faith Movement, but with a special emphasis on prosperity teaching. He admirably demonstrates that the Word of Faith Movement is not characteristic of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Church in general and ends with five chapters on how Charismatics can return to orthodox belief. Michael Brown addresses the wide umbrella of Charismatic churches and is more a call to accountability than a polemic refutation. This trio of books provides a much-needed charitable perspective on the Charismatic Church’s involvement with the NAM and demonstrates that the Charismatic Movement can be orthodox when the NAM issues are dealt with.

The following trio of books all represent works that deal with an individual book or New Age practice. This short list is only a selection of the many books of this type: The Physics of Heaven: The Theology of the New Apostolic Reformation, Sense and Nonsense About Angels and

Demons, and Yoga and the Body of Christ.\textsuperscript{144} These books provide excellent critiques of the various practices and books that they cover: quantum mysticism, angelic encounters, and yoga. However, none of these books presents a refutation from a systematic theology approach. Thus, there is still substantial research to be done in these areas.

**Popular Works**

There are a number of books written at the popular level concerning Christianity and the New Age Movement. The following is a short list of some of the more popular books: The Second Coming of the New Age by Bancarz and Peck, God, Greed, and the (Prosperity) Gospel by Costi Hinn, Kundalini Warning by Andrew Strom, A "Wonderful" Deception by Warren Smith, and Taboo or to Do by Clifford and Johnson.\textsuperscript{145} These books have filled a massive gap in popular literature dealing with the current infiltration of New Age practices in the American Church. They are all exceptional at exposing New Age mysticism and practice and how it has been largely accepted by American Christianity. The only downside is that these books are not written at the academic level.

**Conclusion of Literature Review**

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a substantial amount of literature written at the apologetic level that countered the New Age Movement and attempted to prepare Christians for


the coming attack on their churches. In the 1990s, few books were written on the topic of the NAM from the Christian perspective, but the few that were written were academic in origin and filled a major need. However, there has been a drought for the first two decades of the 21st century. As a result, the New Age Movement has fundamentally changed the face of American Christianity. In the last four years (2016-2020), there has been a surge of popular level books written exposing the NAM, NAR, WoF, and New Age practices that have been accepted by churches and Christians. However, there is no academic, polemical, theological treatise critiquing New Age movement practices at a comprehensive theological level. Thus, this dissertation fills a gap in the literature and a serious need in the church
Chapter 2: Methodology

The Qualitative Paradigm

Research into the area of Christian syncretism requires unobtrusive data collection and analysis of the following: (1) documents/articles/books detailing New Age theology and practices, (2) documents/articles/books containing attempts to syncretize or utilize New Age practices in a Christian setting, and (3) documents/articles/books attempting to deny the integration of New Age practices in the Christian church. The author recognizes that people come from different perspectives and utilize words in different ways and will be respectful of the viewpoints presented in each data source. Additionally, the author will make every attempt to analyze and interpret the sources fairly, and in their context, avoiding both mischaracterization and misrepresentation. This research is unobtrusive because the author will not need to speak directly with any of the practitioners studied, the author need only analyze their written materials. In order to properly assess for syncretism, the author will engage in content analysis research.

Qualitative Research Design – Content Analysis

This dissertation will involve the development of criteria across four areas of theological thought, each containing five theological topics, in order to conduct a content analysis to determine the level of syncretism present in the works of the Christian practitioners. The criteria will be presented in the form of dichotomies derived from the content of each of the theological topics.

One of the main issues with the development of the criteria will be how to reconcile doublespeak in the texts. By definition, syncretistic beliefs hold theological assertions that come from two different religious traditions and often they hold multiple assertions that are
contradictory. If contradictory beliefs are present in a text, only the syncretistic statements will be reflected in the final analysis.

Research Procedure for Data Analysis

Development of Criteria

The dichotomy questions will be developed from the theological summary material provided in Chapter 3. Dichotomies will determine if the practice syncretizes on any teaching that is necessary for Christians to believe in order to claim historical orthodoxy. If a source indicates the presence of both a biblical and New Age viewpoint, only the syncretistic viewpoint will be incorporated.

Analysis of Results

Results will be presented in both color grids and in percentage analyses. This will allow for the reader to quickly assess both the quantity of theological syncretization as well as the degree to which syncretization has permeated the practice as a whole.

Assumptions

In order to assess for syncretism, this dissertation will affirm a broadly evangelical theology as the standard orthodox set of beliefs. Some of the distinctives of evangelical theology that will have a prominent place in guiding the application of the criteria will be the following: (1) the necessity of the Creator/creature distinction, (2) the sufficiency of Christ’s death on the cross for salvation, and (3) the inability of mankind to develop spiritually on his own power. However, the following topics will not be assumed from tradition due to the fact that they are debated within evangelical circles: (1) monism/dualism of human nature, (2) cessationism/continuationism, (3) predestination election/choice election. The dissertation will
also incorporate theological standpoints of other Christian denominations and branches as they merit comparison to New Age theology.

The theological method that will be utilized in this dissertation is as follows. Scripture will be affirmed as supreme epistemological authority and as the ultimate source of truth in the dissertation. Reason will serve as a test for the veridicality of theological statements and interpretations of the Bible. Tradition will serve as a historical guide to orthodox belief and practice as informed by Scripture and reason. Fourth, in contrast with modern thinking, experience will only serve as a source of knowledge as bound and limited by the proceeding three sources.

Limitations

One of the leading limitations on any study of the New Age Movement and its practices is that the NAM is not a monolithic organization with a concrete doctrine and set of practices.\(^1\) Thus, it is not possible to speak on behalf of the entire movement which means that evaluations can only be done on specific instances of the NAM. Additionally, Christian syncretization attempts are not organizational either, thus, all attempts to analyze potentially syncretistic practices must be done on a case by case basis. This dissertation will take the following approach to overcome this limitation. In the determination of NAM beliefs and practices, the author will utilize both summary sources and primary sources to develop common trends in NAM thinking rather than official doctrine. Second, the author will survey the most popular representative voices as well as a number of minor voices and form a consensus of the beliefs and practical

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elements surrounding the various syncretistic practices. Though the study will not be comprehensive, it will be thorough enough to allow for broad recommendations to be made.

Delimitations

Though there are many differences between the NAM and Christian theology, the author will be limiting the points of comparison to those which best articulate the worldview of each belief system. As such, the author has developed four general theological groups to ensure that a broad range of beliefs are accounted for but will be highly selective in which topics within those groups are utilized for the study. Second, there are a number of potentially syncretistic practices that this study could cover, but the author will only focus on two that have had a great impact on the church in the last decade. This will be done to ensure that the quality of research remains at the highest level. Third, although Christian doctrine can be syncretized with any other system of belief (New Age, Mormonism, Islam, Secularism, Post-Modernism), this dissertation will develop criteria that specifically assess for the presence of New Age syncretism.

Ethical Considerations

Given that the research consists solely of published documents, the only ethical consideration present is my faithful, truthful, and considerate reporting of the beliefs and practices in question.

Plans for Presenting the Results

After the data are analyzed, all results will be presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of the dissertation report. Additionally, the author plans to conduct a series of talks at churches around the country on the topic of the dissertation to raise awareness about the problem of New Age syncretism and equip pastors, church staff, and church members with the ability to prevent its spread and draw people back into a biblical faith. The author also intends to develop a popular
level book on the topic of the dissertation to help develop Christians theologically and equip them to discern New Age practices. These books and videos will be made available on my ministry website.

Summary

This chapter discussed the research method for developing and applying assessment criteria to determine whether or not certain syncretistic practices are viable for church use. Dichotomy questions will be developed to assess each of the practices according to both evangelical theology and New Age Movement theology. The data for comparison will be gleaned from published works by specific practitioners. The results of the analysis will be presented in Chapter 4 of the dissertation report, and the discussion of the conclusions will be presented in Chapter 5. Finally, the author would like to credit Gordon Davis and Clyde Parker for their contribution to the development of this dissertation proposal even though they were not directly cited elsewhere.²

Chapter 3: Development of Assessment Criteria for Church Practices

A Comparison of Christian Theology with New Age Movement Beliefs

Introduction

The goal of this section is to provide the data from which to build sets of theological dichotomies that can be used to test Christian practices for syncretism. The section is comprised of four broad theological categories with five topics in each as well as a section on authentic vs. inauthentic spirituality. The point of discussion in each of these topics is not to provide a defense for individual theological standpoints, nor to exhaustively describe and detail these points. Rather, it is to present the broadly evangelical view of Christianity on each topic, followed by a general understanding of the New Age Movement’s teaching on the subject. The Christian section will contain both biblical data as well as theological and historical viewpoints. The New Age section will be comprised of both direct statements from NAM leaders as well as comments from those who have analyzed and synthesized NAM teachings.

Doctrines Concerning Divine Revelation

Supremacy of Propositional Truth vs. Authority of New Consciousness

Christianity. Traditionally, Christians have held to the following forms of revelation. First, God has made Himself known through his Creation.¹ This is called general revelation and can be seen in verses like Romans 1:20, which states, “For His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being

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¹ Ronald H. Nash, The Word of God and the Mind of Man (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1982), 44. It is important to understand that the assertion of the importance and preeminence of propositional revelation does not preclude the existence and utility of revelation of other types.
understood through what He has made.”² This form of revelation is able to hold people accountable before God, but due to the noetic effects of sin, “human beings do not in fact succeed in attaining a sure and saving knowledge of God by natural revelation or natural theology.”³

The second type of divine revelation is special revelation, whereby “specific truths of God and his redemptive purposes . . . are given to specific people at specific times and specific places.”⁴ As such, special revelation can come through a “personal encounter with the Lord,” in which God either manifests His presence to a person (Exodus 3:1-6) or displays His mighty works and miracles (Exodus 7:14-11:10).⁵ Additionally, special revelation can come through the Incarnation itself, as God directly interfaces with humanity through human nature. Finally, God can also speak verbally and propositionally through human words (2 Timothy 3:16-17). In contrast, the Bible does not speak of a revelation coming from a modified human consciousness. Additionally, though God interacts with humans in a variety of ways, evangelicals have typically recognized Scripture as the only source of revelation that Christians currently have access to that is inspired. This means that the revelation of God has been infallibly communicated through the autographs of Scripture and “all a priori conceptions, all conjectural postulations, all subjective

² Romans 1:20.
⁵ Ibid.
expectations are answerable to and subject to what is given through divine self-revelation” as found in Scripture.6

The word of God is God’s own speech. Though the concept of God speaking and meaning things through words has long been under attack, Scripture itself affirms that He does. For instance, Job recounts how he did not forget “the commandment of [God’s] lips” and how he “treasured the words of [God’s] mouth.”7 Additionally, Scripture repeatedly references how “the word of the Lord came” to various prophets.8 Theologians like Wolterstorff have contributed greatly to the understanding of God’s speech through the linking of words and sentences to “the illocutionary stance” of God and affirming that God can authorize and deputize prophets and apostles to write and speak His words.9 Thus, as Henry affirms, theological claims based on Scripture are "true not because they are human affirmations about the divine, but only as they express God’s communication of his concerns and expectations."10 The fundamental difference between religions then is not simply that their content differs, but that the source of their content differs. Scripture, as divine revelation, is God’s speech, whereas all other religions are the creation of people.

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7 Job 23:12.

8 Jeremiah 1:4.


Scripture is also clear on the properties of God’s Word as revelation.\textsuperscript{11} First, it is propositional; using words, God directly communicates to mankind revealing things about Himself through “language” that correlate sufficiently with “reality.”\textsuperscript{12} This is affirmed through Scriptural statements like: “so My word that comes from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do,” and “every word of God proves true.”\textsuperscript{13} One corollary to the idea that God can only speak truth is the idea that God’s words are univocal, having only one meaning.\textsuperscript{14} If God can truly communicate and can expect people to respond accordingly to that communication, then He must communicate in such a way as to be able to imbue the words He speaks with concrete meaning that is understandable by

\textsuperscript{11} John M. Frame, \textit{The Doctrine of the Word of God} (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 7; Henry, \textit{God, Revelation and Authority: Volume 1: God Who Speaks and Shows: Preliminary Considerations}, Kindle, 4675. The use of Scripture to define revelation may either be circular or appear to be so depending on how one attempts to ground divine revelation. Frame argues that “circularity of a kind is unavoidable when one seeks to defend and ultimate standard of truth, for one’s defense must itself be accountable to that standard.” Thus, he takes Scripture to be divine revelation axiomatically and asserts that ultimate standards make the same claim. Henry takes a similar approach and argues that Divine revelation is the “basic epistemological axiom” and the “source of all truth.” He then asserts that Scripture “is its verifying principle.”

\textsuperscript{12} Henry, \textit{God, Revelation and Authority: Volume 1: God Who Speaks and Shows: Preliminary Considerations}, Kindle, 34468. One of the current discussions in the study of revelation is whether or not Scripture is simply propositional in nature, or whether the revelation in Scripture is the result of a speech act. Authors like Carl Henry argue that the intention of God in speaking is contained within the text itself and its immediate context. Thus, there is no need to create a separate theory of language to explain authorial intent. Other theologians like Vanhoozer argue that the illocutionary acts of God, such as commanding, declaring, and covenanting, are themselves the connection between divine authorial intent and human words, and thus require specific classification. Both of these theories have their merits, and both Vanhoozer and Henry argue for Scripture as being the only authoritative source of revelation Christians now have.

\textsuperscript{13} Isaiah 55:11 (HCSB); Proverbs 30:5 (ESV).

\textsuperscript{14} Kevin J. Vanhoozer, \textit{Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge}, Landmarks in Christian Scholarship (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2009), Kindle, 7265-7273.
people.\textsuperscript{15} As Henry affirms, “God’s revelation is intellectualistic” and “neither in part nor as a totality is the truth of revelation an illogical or nonlogical monstrosity.”\textsuperscript{16}

Other properties of God’s Word as revelation are that it is personal and authoritative in nature. God’s Word is not simply declarative statements that exist for their own sake. Rather, like all language should be, God’s Word is directed at humanity in general. In addressing mankind, God’s language “creates obligations in the hearer” and is “authoritative not only in telling us what to believe and do, but in directing our emotions, our preoccupations, our priorities, our joys and sorrows.”\textsuperscript{17} This idea is borne out throughout the entire Bible; the following is a sample of verses that teach the personal and authoritative nature of God’s Word: “your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path,” “I assure you: Anyone who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life.”\textsuperscript{18} These verses present a connection between the word giver and the word itself. If the word is heard and the content is believed, then judgment is changed. Additionally, the words of God act as a light for humanity in the darkness of worldly thinking, thus these words act as an authority on the “light” or the good, while simultaneously being given from God lovingly, so we would have a light on our path. In conclusion, the Bible presents special revelation as the very Word of God. This Word is personal, propositional, and authoritative. Once it is written, it cannot be changed.\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{18} Psalm 119:105; John 5:24.

\textsuperscript{19} Frame, \textit{The Doctrine of the Word of God}, 104.
New Age Movement. Revelation in the context of the New Age Movement is best described by the “new awareness” model. This form of revelation is not “external,” nor is it content-ful. Rather, it is an act of “recognition” whereby the human mind undergoes stimulation and enrichment to become conscious of its own divinity and link to the Cosmos. New Age leader, Marilyn Ferguson, explains this recognition, saying “the transformation of people . . . refers to the state of being conscious of one’s consciousness,” which is indicative of ascending to a “wider dimension.” This form of revelation “has no fixed content” and orients the inner spirit toward “greater integration, freedom, and self-possession.” One way New Age adherents describe this type of revelation is the acquisition of the “Christ Consciousness” which is “a state of total enlightenment, love, and compassion,” wherein one is “aware of one’s oneness with God while living in the world of manifestation.”

This form of revelation fundamentally differs from any form of evangelical Christian revelation as it centers the revelatory act in mankind, rather than in God. For example, in William Warch’s New Age book on New Thought, he argues that God exists in all people as the “Christ Mind,” which serves as “a neverending reservoir of inspiration” that people have direct access to for the express purpose of receiving revelation. In affirming this, the entire aim

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20 Dulles, Modes of Revelation, 99.
22 Ferguson, The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in Our Time, 53.
23 Dulles, Modes of Revelation, 109.
24 Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought, 190.
of revelation changes. Rather than communicating to mankind eternal truth about God and His work, revelation becomes a method by which one can participate in the “active transformation of outer reality.”26 The centrality of this belief cannot be understated either in the context of the NAM form of revelation or the totality of NAM theology. The new consciousness mode of revelation as utilized by the NAM is a natural requisite as a result of its pantheistic/panentheistic view of God. NAM revelation is not the means by which one receives knowledge about a transcendent God, rather it is the means by which one recognizes that the self as god can remake the world.27

The Bible: Word of God vs. Word of Man

Christianity. That the Bible is the very Word of God is central to the evangelical understanding of Christianity and the development of all true theology. The key verse supporting this doctrine is 2 Timothy 3:16-17 which states that, “All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”28 However, the idea that the Word of God is inspired Scripture has received numerable opponents over the history of the Church.29

Through the writings of Spinoza, Kant, Newton, and others, a “dualistic, disjunctive”

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27 Hanegraaff, New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought, 229-230; Carl F. H. Henry, God, Revelation and Authority: Volume 3: God Who Speaks and Shows: Fifteen Theses, Part Two, Kindle, 31285. As a point of connection to issues in the Church, Henry points out that “many ecumenically minded churches are resigned to fluid theological conceptions and to preoccupation with structures and activism at the expense of doctrinal truth.” The engagement with a new consciousness form of revelation which emphasizes one’s ability to “remake the world” leads to this type of doctrinal erosion and social activism.

28 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

understanding of God’s Word has entered the Church, causing there to be a “perceived ‘gulf’ between the historical text of Holy Scripture and a transcendentized ahistorical ‘Word of God.’”\textsuperscript{30} Theologian Ronald Nash argues that the attack on divine revelation has come on three fronts: 1. “the nature of human knowledge,” 2. “the nature of God,” and 3. “the nature of human language.”\textsuperscript{31} Additionally, he concludes that the lack of belief in divine revelation that “thousands of theologians, seminary professors, and pastors share” is that “cognitive knowledge about God is simply declared impossible and replaced by personal encounter, religious feeling, trust, or obedience.”\textsuperscript{32}

In order to overcome this issue, theologians have worked to demonstrate that Jesus is the ontological Word of God incarnate, whereas Scripture is the “

\textit{derivative Word of God.”}\textsuperscript{33} In practice the written Word of God is produced by God through man via inspiration and prophetic-apostolic commission. Biblical inspiration is “a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.”\textsuperscript{34} With reference to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, inspiration is directly associated with Scripture being “God-breathed” which means that Scripture is “a Divine product.”\textsuperscript{35} In this way, the ontological bifurcation can be disproven. The words are human words written by a human hand, but God is not as transcendental as the enlightenment thinkers claim. The God of

\textsuperscript{30} Morrison, \textit{Has God Said?}, Kindle, 242-251.


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, 12.

\textsuperscript{33} Morrison, \textit{Has God Said?}, Kindle, 6380.


\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, Kindle, 32.
Christianity is able to be immanent in creation through personal communication and can use human words to convey His meaning without infringing on the will of the human author.\textsuperscript{36}

The second aspect of the production of the derivative Word of God is the bestowal of the prophetic-apostolic commission, which is accomplished through the divine “exousia,” or authority.\textsuperscript{37} This authority is conferred on the disciples through authoritative sending as found in John 20:21: “Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’”\textsuperscript{38} Paul understood this authority as coming from Jesus, the Lord, saying, “for if I boast some more about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up . . . I am not ashamed.”\textsuperscript{39} Additionally, he related the authority to his message directly, stating that Jesus “has committed the message of reconciliation to us.”\textsuperscript{40} This authority was only given to the apostles during the time of the early church and with the completion of Scripture “it is through the Bible that Jesus Christ now exercises his divine authority, imparting authoritative truth, [and] issuing authoritative commands.”\textsuperscript{41} Thus, no matter whether one is continuationist or cessationist, the authority of Scripture must be supreme in terms of authority and theological revelation.

Finally, it is important to address the critique that human language cannot convey divine truth. Secular theories of language typically argue that “human language originated in sense


\textsuperscript{38} John 20:21.

\textsuperscript{39} 2 Corinthians 10:8.

\textsuperscript{40} 2 Corinthians 5:19.

experience” and lack the ability to “explain the nature and function of language.” However, Scripture “implies that God instituted language as a vehicle for interpersonal communication and fellowship.” Thus, whether or not human language can contain divine truth is at least in part dependent on one’s undergirding philosophy of language. For instance, if language is rooted in sense experience, language has no necessary anchoring absolute and could be construed as purely subjective and unable to connect to reality. However, Nash points out that such a view, is “obviously self-defeating” as language is necessary to articulate the view which renders itself meaningless. By utilizing the starting presuppositions that God has created mankind for relationship with Himself and that He has given mankind language so that He can communicate truthfully with them, the biblical theory of language resolves the issue of being unable to traverse the transcendence of God to reach mankind. Thus, as Henry states, though “exhaustive human knowledge about God” is out of reach of mankind, language is perfectly capable of conveying “information and instruction” about Himself in a readily understandable way.

New Age Movement. NAM leaders do not have a doctrine of revelation per say; however, they do hold a special relationship with words, which is evidenced through the doctrine of positive confession or positive thinking. NAM leaders hold that because all people are fundamentally connected to the Cosmic Mind, their words have the power of creativity. When

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42 Henry, God, Revelation and Authority: Volume 3: God Who Speaks and Shows: Fifteen Theses, Part Two, Kindle, 33759.

43 Ibid.

44 Nash, The Word of God and the Mind of Man, 118.


people speak words, those words come with matter-energy vibrations and thus a positive or a negative energy.\textsuperscript{47} One corollary of this doctrine is the idea that healing comes through the removal of these negative energies. For instance, NAM leader Gary Zukov advises people to “discharge” negative energy and thoughts at their “root” and simultaneously remind oneself of the “spiritually profound” truth that “your life is no accident.”\textsuperscript{48}

In terms of exactly how these energies and realities are changed, NAM leaders assert that the verbal affirmations and nonverbal visualizations are able to reprogram the unconscious mind.\textsuperscript{49} It is fundamental to the doctrine that the statements and visualizations are presented as truth and not a mere wish or desire, otherwise the subconscious will not “start creating a reality which reflects that belief.”\textsuperscript{50} The closer one can connect these beliefs to claims of divinity the stronger the effect that they will have on the individual and the world around them.\textsuperscript{51}

Thus, the NAM teaching on the power of words is directly connected to its understanding of mankind as part of the divine Cosmos. As god, mankind can create whatever reality it so desires through its “word” (verbal or pictorial). No reality is out of reach for humanity and through positive thinking and confession perfect health and a perfect society can arise from the universal consciousness.


\textsuperscript{48} Zukav, \textit{Seat of the Soul}, 244.

\textsuperscript{49} Willis Harmon, \textit{Global Mind Change: The Promise of the Last Years of the Twentieth Century} (Indianapolis, IN: Knowledge Systems, 1988), 76-77.

\textsuperscript{50} Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought}, 240.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
Sufficiency of Scripture vs. Ongoing Revelation

Christianity. There are many instances throughout Scripture that affirm its sufficiency. First, there is a clear injunction against favoring mankind’s traditions over and above God’s Word. For instance, Jesus summarizes portions of Isaiah stating “these people honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. They worship Me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commands of men.” This verse indicates that there will be people who will claim to know and honor God and yet somehow deceptively teach doctrine contrary to Scripture. Sufficiency also applies to whether or not people trust the Word of God. For instance, Pharaoh, Joshua and Caleb, Ahab, Ahaz, Nineveh, Agrippa, the Pharisees, Pilate, the Sadducees, and Herod were all presented with the truth of the Word of God. Those who responded by trusting in it were rewarded whereas those who did not were in some fashion condemned. Additionally, 2 Timothy 3:16 affirms the use of Scripture alone as useful for Christian living.

One of the most important aspects of evangelical theology is the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture. In doctrinal terms, “the sufficiency of Scripture means that all things necessary for salvation and for living the Christian life In obedience to God and for his glory are given to us in the Scriptures[,] . . . the Bible . . . is the authority that provides believers with all the truth they need for reconciliation with God and for following after Christ.” The Westminster Confession frames biblical sufficiency well, claiming that the Bible is “the whole counsel of God.” In terms of doctrine, even if Scripture only indirectly makes a comment on an

52 Mark 7:6-7.
53 Frame, The Doctrine of the Word of God, 225.
aspect of theology, it has full authority and remains the standard. Thus, the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture precludes the addition of any further revelation whether “of the Spirit, or traditions of men.”

One of the prevalent attacks against the sufficiency and supremacy of Scripture is pragmatism or as theologian C. H. Mackintosh calls it, “expediency,” or “doing all the good we can, without due attention to the way in which that good is done.” It is unfortunate that Christians go to sources other than Scripture in order to understand themselves and their relationship with God. Biblical counselor Jay Adams argues that people’s “apathy” toward finding Scriptural answers and methods “stems from the failure…to understand the Bible theologically” and as a result, Christians “take all sorts of actions . . . that fail.” Both Mackintosh and Adams use strong language to demonstrate the supremacy of Scripture and distinguish the Bible’s counsel vs. the world’s counsel. Mackintosh states that “men must either deny that the Bible is the Word of God, or admit its sufficiency and supremacy in all ages and in all countries all stages and conditions of the human race.” Adams succinctly declares that if man “rejects God’s counsel, whatever he follows instead turns out to be Satan’s counsel.”

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Rather than fall into the easy path of accepting the world’s problems and answers, Christians are to “set a higher value than ever upon the Holy Scriptures.”

One of the difficult issues surrounding the doctrine of sufficiency is the use of extrabiblical information. No one denies that the Bible does not contain an encyclopedic presentation of all knowledge of all things; instead, it contains what is sufficient for knowledge of God and salvation. This is precisely the point where some New Age theology has historically crept into the church. NAM leaders make comments that are not necessarily against Scripture, but nor are they subordinate to Scripture. The key to determining whether or not a statement is subordinate to Scripture is whether the knowledge can properly be applied by Scripture. First, the scriptural doctrine concerning a specific topic must be systematically and thoroughly presented. Then, the specific instance of knowledge or content from a worldly source should be compared to that doctrine. If the worldly knowledge can serve as a right and proper application of Scripture in a specific instance, it is valid for Christian use. If, however, any of the following are true, the knowledge must be rejected: (1) The worldly content redefines Scriptural definitions of theological terms or concepts, (2) the worldly content provides extra definition to Scriptural concepts that it claims are necessary to Christian living, or (3) the worldly content speaks to new theological categories that are not explicitly taught by Scripture. Frame offers the following additional advice; Scripture should always produce a “normative premise.” If the worldly knowledge can be framed as a particular instance of that normative principle, scriptural

63 Ibid, 228-230.
64 Frame, The Doctrine of the Word of God, 230-231.
application may proceed, otherwise, the knowledge is in contradiction with Scripture.\textsuperscript{65} In conclusion, the Bible is sufficient for knowledge of God, knowledge of man, knowledge of sin, and knowledge of salvation. Going to any other source aside from Scripture for answers to these questions will invariably lead to syncretism and false doctrine.

\textbf{New Age Movement.} NAM leaders hold to an open view of revelation, which leads directly to the denial of the sufficiency of Scripture. New Age teachers view sources for doctrine and spiritual practice through a pluralistic, syncretistic lens.\textsuperscript{66} This “revelational indeterminacy” or “the belief that the truth may be revealed in diverse ways and through diverse agents” allows the New Age adherent to forge his or her own path to spiritual awakening.\textsuperscript{67} New Age teachers utilize the beliefs of “Sumerian, Indian, Egyptian, Chaldean, Babylonian, and Persian religious practices.”\textsuperscript{68} They also syncretize with the major leaders and teachings of all of the major world religions under the banner of Christ Consciousness. Each of these major teachers, Confucius, Muhammad, Jesus, Moses, Zoroastrian, Maitreya, etc. are “manifestations of avatars,” and teach aspects of truth about how humanity can attain divinity.\textsuperscript{69}

Thus, rather than the sufficiency of Scripture, NAM leaders teach the utility of all forms of knowledge in the universe. This knowledge can be found in any media (written, oral, or inner experience) and from any source (human, spirit, or ritual). New Age truth is fundamentally relativistic and pluralistic, given that it attempts to syncretize truth from multiple world religions.

\textsuperscript{65} Frame, \textit{The Doctrine of the Word of God}, 230-231.

\textsuperscript{66} Newport, \textit{The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue}, 12.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{68} Martin, \textit{The Kingdom of the Cults}, 407.

When approaching any New Age source, it is vital to understand that syncretization will be present. Instead of attempting to see what is true from New Age sources, it is more pertinent to assess what is wrong, or one could engage in syncretism. In conclusion, New Age views on Scripture are that it is one source of truth among many and does not hold authority in the lives of human beings.

Knowability of Revelation: Absolute Truth vs. Relativism/Perspectivalism

**Christianity.** The Judeo-Christian worldview holds that God has a universal perspective on reality that is absolute, authoritative, and the standard by which all other perspectives are judged. Rather than being a simple philosophical concept, God’s universal perspective takes center stage in Scripture on multiple occasions. In the Book of Job, Job is tested based on his adherence to a principle he thought was immutable and connected to the very nature of God: righteousness brings reward and unrighteousness brings punishment. Thus, according to Job’s perspective he either must have committed a sin unknowingly or that perhaps God is allowing for injustice in Job’s case. In response to Job’s accusations, God gives a simple answer: “Who is this who obscures My counsel with ignorant words? Get ready to answer Me like a man; when I question you, you will inform Me. Where were you when I established the earth? Tell Me, if

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70 Francis J. Beckwith and Gregory Koukl, *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 79-91. Total relativism is a self-defeating statement as it affirms the very premise it seeks to deny: there is no such thing as absolute truth. This statement is itself an absolute, thus relativism fails. However, it is more common for people to affirm a softer form of relativism called perspectivalism or multiculturalism, wherein absolute truth can exist, but no one has access to it due to their finite nature and differing, limited perspectives. This view fails on moral grounds as it becomes impossible to affirm morality in any meaningful sense. Additionally, Christians have the right to logically assert that divine revelation is the ultimate, perfect, and absolute perspective and that they have access to it as Scripture.


72 Job 35:13-14.
you have understanding. Who fixed its dimensions? Certainly you know!"\textsuperscript{73} Compared to the counsel and knowledge of God, humanity only has a limited and finite perspective. To claim any ability to speak authoritatively from one’s own personal knowledge is hubris and can only lead to folly. God’s claim to be dealing with Job justly is entirely based on His nature and character, which includes His universal perspective on reality.

In the New Testament, Jesus dealt with similar accusations. For instance, in the Gospel of John, Jesus’ disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”\textsuperscript{74} Jesus’ response is strikingly similar to God’s response to Job. He said, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned . . . This came about so that God’s works might be displayed in him.”\textsuperscript{75} Again, there is a denial that the person deserved the suffering due to sin and an affirmation of God’s universal perspective. God knew and designed the situation so that His works would “be displayed.”\textsuperscript{76} Through the affirmation of God’s justice, sovereignty over history, and creation events, the Bible affirms that God has an objective, absolute perspective on reality. As such, belief in absolute truth is rooted in the very nature and character of God.

**New Age Movement.** The New Age Movement denies any understanding of the existence of an absolute, objective perspective. This denial stems from the NAM understanding of God and mankind. The Universal One Mind or god-force is not actually conscious nor personal.\textsuperscript{77} It is something that people become aware of being connected to, that fills people up

\textsuperscript{73} Job 38:2-5.
\textsuperscript{74} John 9:2.
\textsuperscript{75} John 9:3.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Gawain, *Creative Visualization*, 28.
with life, light, and love, and that connects people to everything around them.\textsuperscript{78} However, consciousness exists only at the level of individuals, thus all forms of consciousness and all perspectives are limited and finite.\textsuperscript{79} It is important to understand that connection to the Universal Mind does not give one omniscience nor ultimate knowledge, rather it gives one a sense of awareness of others and a connection to those others.\textsuperscript{80} There is a continuous tug in the New Age person’s mind between individual consciousness and collective consciousness. In other words, the more aware one is of his or her connection to the Universal Mind, the less one is aware of his or herself.\textsuperscript{81} Thus, in NAM theology, a universal perspective does not exist because there is no individual who exists as the One Mind.

The relativist, perspectivalist views of the NAM are also reinforced by the dual goals of NAM humanity: (1) becoming a “fully realized human being” and (2) creating one’s own personal reality.\textsuperscript{82} The focus in NAM theology is on “accomplishing whatever [one] desire[s].”\textsuperscript{83} This is accomplished through asserting that one’s reality is completely independent of all other individual’s realities. In doing this, one can simultaneously affirm others’ realities while also asserting the supremacy of one’s own reality for oneself. This allows the New Age adherent to determine his or her own path in a completely autonomous way. The NAM follower creates his or her own morality, path to divinity, path to a utopian world, and path to fulfillment. In

\textsuperscript{78} Gawain, \textit{Creative Visualization}.

\textsuperscript{79} Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought}, 205.

\textsuperscript{80} Henry Reed, \textit{Edgar Cayce on Mysteries of the Mind} (Detroit, MI: Aquarian Press, 1990), 54.

\textsuperscript{81} Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought}, 206.

\textsuperscript{82} MacLaine, \textit{Dancing in the Light}, 104.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
conclusion, NAM leaders teach that there is no one, universal perspective and each individual must find the truth in his or her own perspective, resulting in a relativist view of truth.

Other Sources of Revelation: Scriptural Angelic Encounter vs. Spiritual Beings

**Christianity.** The Bible contains accounts of angelic encounters and displays remarkable consistency concerning the “boundaries” of the encounters and what they accomplish. Hebrews describes angels as “ministering spirits” who are “sent out” by God to “serve those who are going to inherit salvation.”84 One of these services is the provision of God’s answers to prayer. For instance, Daniel reports that “while I was praying, Gabriel . . . came to me in my extreme weariness” to “give [me] understanding.”85 Gabriel also announced the forthcoming birth of the Messiah to both Zechariah and Mary.86 In these cases, the angel acted as a spokesperson for God and announced His decree and commands. In no way was the knowledge considered as having an origin in the angel himself. In terms of praise, only God is in focus. In Mary’s jubilatory response, she states that her “soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and [her] spirit has rejoiced in God [her] Savior.”87

Angels also execute God’s commands concerning the safety of believers. For instance, while the church was praying for Peter while he was in prison, an angel came to him, freed him, and assisted in his escape. When Peter realized what was going on, he did not give the angel credit for the deliverance, but rather, he exclaimed, “Now I know for certain that the Lord has

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84 Hebrews 1:14.
87 Luke 1:46-47
sent His angel and rescued me.”

Psalm 91:11 confirms God’s sending of angels to people in times of trouble saying, “for He will give His angels orders concerning you, to protect you in all your ways.”

Angels also encourage believers as found in Acts where, on a particularly difficult night for Paul, an angel came to him, saying, “Don’t be afraid, Paul. You must stand before Caesar. And, look! God has graciously given you all those who are sailing with you.”

In this case, the angel’s encouragement took the form of reinforcing Paul’s belief in God’s sovereignty and providence. Paul “must stand before Caesar,” thus God would see that he arrived at his destination. In conclusion, the biblical portrayal of angelic encounters is that they are entirely God-directed and God sent. Angels are provided primarily for believers’ protection and encouragement, sometimes delivering messages on behalf of God Himself.

The Bible also recognizes the existence of fallen angels who mimic good angels by “masquerad[ing] as an angel of light.” These fallen angels or demons are “prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone [they] can devour.”

Aside from their ability to interact with the real world through inflicting sickness and disease, bequeathing of supernatural strength, and causing torment, demons have two primary goals with regard to spirituality.

First, they actively attempt to prevent the gospel from taking root in a person’s heart: “The seed along the path are those who have heard, and then, the Devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so

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89 Psalm 91:11.
91 2 Corinthians 11:14 (NIV).
92 1 Peter 5:8.
they may not believe and be saved." This action alone should give everyone great pause when interacting with the spiritual realm, as it may have eternal consequences.

Second, demons lie; “there is no truth” in the demonic realm, and when they speak, they “speak[] from [their] own nature” as “a liar and the father of liars.” These lies often come in the form of false doctrine. Paul warns about this saying, “the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons.” These deceits are not necessarily easy to denounce as demons can potentially offer false knowledge as found by those who consult either “the spirits of the dead” or spirits in general. In conclusion, demons will do everything in their power to prevent salvation and spread false doctrine. Believers must be particularly on guard as their deceits come under the guise of good angels and potentially with hidden knowledge. In order to defend against these deceptions, believers are encouraged to “dwell” on “whatever is true . . . honorable . . . just . . . pure . . . lovely . . . and commendable.” Through the “renewing of your mind” believers will be able to “discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.” In conclusion, God provides angelic encounters to mankind to deliver His message and to protect them. People are not to seek out angelic encounters and are to be cautious because demons will mimic angels in order to thwart the gospel and spread false doctrine.

95 John 8:44.
96 1 Timothy 4:1.
97 Isaiah 8:19-20.
98 Philippians 4:8.
**New Age Movement.** The New Age Movement does not believe in the biblical concept of angels and demons. Rather, NAM leaders assert a wide variety of beliefs that are not systematic, nor unified. For instance, NAM author, Chris Griscom, describes the spiritual realm as including “many levels of guides, entities, energies, and beings in every octave of the universe.” These levels of guides are tied to specific harmonic frequencies of the divine “Thought of God,” thus they are more extensions of the god-force rather than independent beings with a “free will.” These beings are typically portrayed as good, and they exist to “serve the Will of God as it operates harmoniously through the Divine Law.” Another name for this law is the law of “attraction/repulsion” that dominates much of New Age thinking; these entities assist humans in realizing and utilizing this law to recreate their own realities. Other New Age teachers view these spirits more along the line of primal forces or “elementals.” In this paradigm, spirits resemble mythical “nymphs or dryads or sylphs or gnomes,” whom people can “catch” to tap into their “eternal, awesome, potent, and far wiser” nature.

The fundamental purpose of these spiritual encounters is to gain “spiritual understanding” through “experience.” Esoteric or occult knowledge is the goal in seeking out these spiritual experiences.

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102 Ibid.

103 Griscom, *Ecstasy Is a New Frequency: Teachings of the Light Institute*, 82.


105 Ibid, 83-84.

encounters. One of the primary ways in which people are able to contact these spirits is through channeling, whereby a person invites the spirit to inhabit his or her body, and then, allows the spirit to speak and act through his or her body.107 These interactions are often accompanied by teachings such as the truth of “reincarnation” and gaining new abilities like “astral projection.”108 In conclusion, the New Age view of spiritual encounters is overwhelmingly positive. They affirm that it is proper for people to seek out these encounters and that through them people can ascend to higher levels of consciousness.

Revelation Criteria

Table 3.1 Revelation Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Number</th>
<th>Criterion Description</th>
<th>Christian Teaching</th>
<th>New Age Movement Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Form of authoritative revelation</td>
<td>Propositional revelation (Scripture)</td>
<td>New consciousness (spiritual enlightenment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>God’s ability to speak</td>
<td>God can speak authoritatively through prophesy and Scripture to mankind</td>
<td>God is impersonal and cannot speak with mankind; mankind becomes aware of divine essence</td>
</tr>
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107 Ankerberg and Weldon, Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs, 80.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Changeability of God’s speech</th>
<th>God’s written word cannot change</th>
<th>People’s consciousness and knowledge of god is always changing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Spiritual beings</td>
<td>Angels are God’s servants; demons are evil angels who are in rebellion against God</td>
<td>Spirits are generally good and in their own process of evolution</td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Angelic contact</td>
<td>Angels are sent by God; they are not to be contacted by humans</td>
<td>Spirits are to be contacted directly by people</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Spiritual beings: work</td>
<td>Angels protect people and deliver God’s messages to people; demons physically harm people, attempt to thwart the gospel, and teach false doctrine</td>
<td>Spiritual beings assist people in attaining consciousness of their divinity, teach new doctrine, and show humans how to manipulate the physical world</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Sufficiency of revelation</td>
<td>Scripture is sufficient for the knowledge of God and God’s</td>
<td>Further revelation through prophesy or channeling is</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>View of truth</td>
<td>Absolute truth exists and is knowable because God’s view of reality is complete and authoritative; He communicated truth to humanity through His word</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Absolute truth does not exist because the universal mind is impersonal and does not have a perspective of its own; thus, each individual person’s perspective, though relativistic, is authoritative for him or herself</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Word of God</td>
<td>The Bible is identical to the word of God and thus is true and authoritative</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Man’s words are divine words and thus create reality</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Divine authority</td>
<td>The apostolic-prophetic commission was given by Jesus to specific individuals to</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness of one’s Christ consciousness gives individuals the authority and power</td>
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Doctrines Concerning God and Creation

Transcendence

Christianity. One of the Bible’s most recurring and pervasive statements about God is that God is separate from and superior to Creation.109 The Creator/Creation distinction is affirmed from the very first verse of Genesis which states that “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”110 The focus of the passage is on God as the “autonomous Creator” of all that exists, and as such, “He is antecedent to it” and “distinct from it.”111 The rest of the chapter goes through the major groupings of created things from inanimate objects to plant life to animal life and finally ending with the creation of humanity. At each instance of creation, no other being partnered with God in the act of creation, as God brought each thing into being though His Word

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110 Genesis 1:1.

alone. Thus, not only is He separate from Creation, but He maintains His authority and sovereignty over it.¹¹²

There are also many sections of Scripture that act as polemics against false gods by demonstrating that, unlike false gods, the God of the Bible is not part of Creation. For instance, Isaiah 44:9-20 is an extended treatise on the inability of idols fashioned by human hands to actually serve as gods. Isaiah remarks that people who worship a created thing “cannot see” that when they worship a carven image, they are also worshiping the thing that they use to start their cooking fires. He even goes so far as to say that idolaters never consider whether or not they should “fall down before a block of wood.” Additionally, Psalm 113:5-6 affirms both God’s separateness and His superiority to creation at the same time stating: “Who is like Yahweh our God—the One enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?”¹¹³

One of the best dialogues man has with God on transcendence comes from the end of the book of Job. In Job 38-39, God claims to have “established the earth” and “fixed its dimensions.”¹¹⁴ He asserts the He “commanded the morning,” “assigned the dawn its place,” has the power to “fasten the chains of the Pleiades,” and “loosen the belt of Orion.”¹¹⁵ On the microscale, He also claims a level of sovereignty that includes providing “the raven’s food” and allowing “the hawk [to] take flight by [His] understanding.”¹¹⁶ These verses indicate a level of creation and control that goes from the creation of all physical matter, to the creation of the laws

¹¹² Mathews, Genesis 1-11:26, Kindle, 2717.
¹¹³ Psalm 113:5-6.
¹¹⁴ Job 38:4-5.
¹¹⁵ Job 38: 12,31.
of physics and even the creation of the behavior of living things. The God of the Bible is the God who “know[s] the laws of heaven” and “impose[s] its authority on earth.”\footnote{Job 38:43.} Even for mankind, the height and pinnacle of Creation, there is only one response to an encounter with such a transcendent God: “I am so insignificant. How can I answer You?”\footnote{Job 40:4.} The God of Christianity is transcendent to such an extent that apart from divine revelation He cannot be known.

There have been many models of God’s transcendence presented throughout Christian history. Traditionally, God’s transcendence has been designated by His being “higher,” “above,” and “high and lifted up.”\footnote{Erickson, \textit{Christian Theology}, Kindle, 6230.} In the ancient world, these terms conveyed a real sense of God being truly above mankind and existing in places mankind could not reach. However, in the modern era, with technological advances like spacecraft and astronomy, it is “difficult if not impossible” to think about God’s transcendence in these terms alone. Many theologians have attempted to develop new models to overcome these semantic difficulties.

Karl Barth’s attempt at a solution was through emphasizing God’s complete otherness with respect to humanity; there is no overlap between God and humanity, nor between God and Creation of any kind.\footnote{Karl Barth, \textit{Church Dogmatics 3.2}, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (London, U.K.: T&T Clark, 2009), 132.} In Barthian theology, God is unreachable by mankind in any way, shape, or form.\footnote{Karl Barth, \textit{Der Romerbrief: Abdruck Der Neuen Bearbeitung} (Zurich, DE: E. V. Z. Verlag, 1967), 11.} He fundamentally denies the ability of natural theology to convey the truth about God.
and argues that divine revelation is the only source of knowledge about God.\textsuperscript{122} While his denial of the possibility of any understanding of God through natural revelation and Creation may be slightly overzealous, his depiction of God as wholly other is very helpful in comprehending God’s transcendence.\textsuperscript{123}

Another way theologians have chosen to represent God’s transcendence is through an appeal to God’s eternality. Augustine argues that time is a created thing, and thus, God is not subject to it.\textsuperscript{124} Thus, when Scripture claims that God is “The Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End,” it is a claim to being over and above Creation from a temporal sense; “from the divine point of view, end-times events are impending.”\textsuperscript{125} God is sovereign over history and cannot be affected by Creation as He has guaranteed that He will accomplish His “eternal purpose.”\textsuperscript{126} This understanding of transcendence presents God as having such a degree of sovereignty over Creation and history that He can only have effects on it and it cannot have effects on Him. In conclusion, Christian transcendence holds that God and Creation are ontologically distinct subjects.

\textbf{New Age Movement}. The New Age Movement fundamentally denies any idea of God’s transcendence. Rather, the New Age Movement embraces the idea that God and Creation are one.


\textsuperscript{123} The aforementioned theological standpoints are Barth’s theology as found in his earlier works and Church Dogmatics. As Barth wrote extensively, he modified and softened his positions in later works.


\textsuperscript{126} Ephesians 3:11
substance. Those who hold to New Age beliefs assert that “the Cosmos is seen as a pure, undifferentiated, universal, energy-interconnected process.”\textsuperscript{127} This topic will be discussed further under the section entitled “Immanence.” However, there are a few points to note about the New Age Movement’s understanding of perceived transcendence that merit discussion. First, in their doctrine of ignorance, New Age leaders acknowledge that people perceive God as being transcendent. For example, in the popular New Age training document, \textit{A Course in Miracles}, Helen Shucman asserts that the ego or self is “idolatry” and must be abandoned in order to “know reality.”\textsuperscript{128} Thus, humanity carries with it an inherent level of ignorance concerning the truth of the lack of God’s transcendence.

Second, the denial of transcendence is also born of the New Age desire to “avoid dualistic concepts.”\textsuperscript{129} Transcendence by its very definition promotes the distinctions of self/other, Creation/Creator, human/divine.\textsuperscript{130} New Age teachers, like Eckhart Tolle, argue that “only Spirit can recognize Spirit,” and that to deny the lack of distinctions reflects a denial of “a new consciousness” —which is integral to New Age philosophy.\textsuperscript{131} In her analysis of several New Age books, Mary Bednarowski, demonstrated that the denial of the transcendence of the divine was one of the five fundamental themes that New Age teachers agreed on and was

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\textsuperscript{127} Newport, \textit{The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue}, 4.


\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.

required for the assertion that humanity can evolve in its consciousness.\textsuperscript{132} In conclusion, a transcendent God is completely rejected by New Age leaders and is contrary to their theological convictions.

Immanence

\textbf{Christianity}. The Bible presents three ways in which God is immanent (present and active) in Creation: (1) presence in and sovereignty over nature, (2) interaction with humanity, and (3) omniscient knowledge of and sovereignty over history.\textsuperscript{133} First, God is present in and throughout the universe but is not Himself the universe. Jeremiah 23:24 states "‘Can a man hide himself in secret places where I cannot see him?’—the Lord’s declaration. ‘Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?’—the Lord’s declaration."\textsuperscript{134} Verses like this do a good job at explaining that God can fill and be omnipresent throughout the universe without being one with the universe. Psalm 104 also indicates that God is immanent to literally every particle of creation, as without God’s constant sustenance it would fall apart and people would “return to the dust.”\textsuperscript{135} In Job 38-39, God presents Himself as being in complete control of nature, citing specific control over “lightening,” “wind,” and “rain."\textsuperscript{136} In Matthew 6, Jesus communicates the idea that God is not only present in nature but God tends to it lovingly. He states that “God clothes the grass of the field” with more “splendor” than He did “Solomon.”\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{133} Erickson, \textit{Christian Theology}, Kindle, 6032.
\textsuperscript{134} Jeremiah 23:24.
\textsuperscript{135} Psalm 104:29-30.
\textsuperscript{136} Job 38-39
\textsuperscript{137} Matthew 6:29-30
Second, God is also intimately involved with mankind by communicating through His Word. This is often indicated throughout Scripture with the statement “the word of the Lord came to me, saying.”\textsuperscript{138} This statement affirms that what comes from the Prophet are the very words of God, and thus, they have and assert authority over mankind.\textsuperscript{139} God also interacts with humanity through the Incarnation of the Son. John lays out Jesus’ Incarnation in this way “the Word became flesh and took up residence among us . . . we observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”\textsuperscript{140} Through the Word of God, both incarnate and written, God interacts with humanity on a regular basis.

Third, God also displays immanence through His rule and command of history. For instance, Daniel writes that God “changes the times and seasons; He removes kings and establishes kings.”\textsuperscript{141} Similarly, God delivers divine judgment through the restriction of divine providence or through invading nations: “The Lord God of Hosts is about to remove from Jerusalem and from Judah every kind of security” and “Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger—the staff in their hands is My wrath . . . I will send him against a godless nation.”\textsuperscript{142} Finally, it is also important to note that at the heart of God’s immanence in history is the fact that “He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.” The God of Christianity is also sovereign over and immanent in the salvation of His people.

\textsuperscript{138} Jeremiah 1:4.


\textsuperscript{140} John 1:14.

\textsuperscript{141} Daniel 2:21.

\textsuperscript{142} Isaiah 3:1.
Theologically, God’s spatial immanence has been best represented through the doctrine of repletive omnipresence. Reformed theologian, William G. T. Shedd, states that “divine omnipresence means the presence of all things to God, rather than God’s presence to all things.”\textsuperscript{143} Similarly, Anselm in \textit{Proslogion} argues that “although nothing exists without thee, nevertheless dost not exist in space or time, but all things exist in thee. For nothing contains thee, but thou containest all.”\textsuperscript{144} With such a high degree of immanence, it was vital that these theologians also guarded against pantheism and panentheism. Shedd does this in his definition of God’s spirituality where he asserts that God has no physical body and that He “is of an essence whose spirituality transcends that of all other spirits—human, angelic, or archangelic.”\textsuperscript{145} Thus, in Shedd’s theology, God cannot be Creation because He is wholly different that Creation. Anselm dealt with panentheism and panentheism through his development of the ontological argument. He argued in Chapter 22 of the \textit{Proslogion} where he argues that “He alone is what He is and who He is” which precludes any mixing of God and Creation.\textsuperscript{146} Thus, these theologians teach that all of Creation encounters the fullness of divinity at every instance of existence, and that there is no part of existence to which the fullness of God is not present; yet, God is not Creation.

Theological debate over God’s immanence through the Incarnation and Scripture has been a prominent part Christianity’s history; however, there are two points of comment that are directly relevant to the comparison with New Age philosophy. First, traditional Christianity has

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{144} Anselm, \textit{Proslogion} (Public Domain, n.d.), 19.
\item \textsuperscript{145} Shedd, \textit{Dogmatic Theology}, Kindle, 4696.
\item \textsuperscript{146} Anselm, \textit{Proslogion}, 22.
\end{itemize}
affirmed that the union of the Incarnation is hypostatic: it is a “personal union” by which “God united himself with man” without changing “Himself into man.” Thus the transcendence of God is fully maintained. Second, traditional Christianity holds that the Word of God is Scripture over and against theologies that affirm that Scripture is a book of human origin. In conclusion, Christians hold that God’s immanence is exhibited in his sovereignty over creation, through his speech to mankind, through the hypostatic union of the Son, and through all things being present to the fullness of Himself.

**New Age Movement.** The New Age Movement holds that Creation and God are immanent to the degree of ontological identity. For example, in his book, *No Boundary*, New Age teacher, Ken Wilber, states that we must view ourselves and the world as “one harmonious whole” through “no-boundary awareness.” Under this view, Ken Wilber and other New Age teachers affirm that there is no difference between “inside and outside, self and other . . . organism and environment.” In New Age thinking, the Cosmos is divine, and everything is a part of the Cosmos. At its core, the New Age Movement affirms a hybrid form of pantheism and panentheism. In terms of ontology of essence, NAM is pantheist. Its leaders hold to a unity of substance that decries any divisions. However, it is important to know that in terms of consciousness they affirm a specialized form of panentheism.

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147 Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Kindle, 19693.


149 Bednarowski, “Literature of the New Age: A Review of Representative Sources, 213”

150 John Cooper, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), Kindle, 289. The modern versions of panentheism as espoused by leaders in the New Age Movement and Christian panentheists is the latest iteration in a line of panentheist thinking that dates back to the time of Plato. There is surprising overlap with modern and ancient thinkers as they both espouse the
Even though all substance is unified, the specific part of the substance known as spirit must undergo its own transformation or evolution into understanding its true divine nature. For example, in the compilation volume, *What Is Enlightenment?*, fourteen different and prominent New Age teachers all affirm that those who seek New Age enlightenment seek “what we already are in essence—Being, the ultimate wholeness that is the source and ground of all Becoming . . . Enlightenment is realization of the truth of Being.”¹⁵¹ Thus, for New Age Movement adherents, God’s immanence is more than God’s interaction and care of the world as orthodox Christianity teaches. Rather, it is the idea that people are the world, people are God, and people ultimately control the universe through an enlightened higher consciousness.

**Immutability**

**Christianity.** There are few doctrines that are under as heavy attack in contemporary Christianity as the immutability of God.¹⁵² However, the biblical basis for immutability is

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¹⁵² Paul Helm, “Divine Timeless Eternity,” in *God and Time: Four Views*, ed. Gregory Ganssle (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 28. The attacks against the doctrine of the immutability of God come in the following forms: 1. Attacks against the immutability of God’s knowledge, 2. Attacks against the immutability of God’s decree and action, and 3. Attacks against God’s immutability of nature. The attacks against God’s immutable knowledge come in the form of Open Theism which reinterprets God’s omniscience to exclude events which are part of reality, but open to change. Thus, God’s knowledge changes/increases as history moves forward in time. The following is a brief list of the major works that defend this view: 1. Clark H. Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger, *The Openness of God*, 2. Gregory Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God*, 3. John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence*, 4. Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness*, and 5. Richard Rice, *The Future of Open Theism*. The attacks against the immutability of God’s decree and action are summarized in the denial of divine impassibility. The general assertion of this doctrine is that God can be affected by Creation to some extent and that these interactions can change God’s mind or decree. The following is a brief list of contemporary theologians and books who advocate for some form of divine possibility: 1. John C. Peckham, *Divine Attributes: Knowing the Covenantal God of Scripture*, 2. Thomas Jay Oord, *The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence*, and 3. Karen Winslow, *Relational Theology: A Contemporary Introduction*. The third type of attack is one which would typically place the proponent outside of evangelical Christianity, but they are starting to become acceptable. This view holds that God’s very nature and character are mutable, He can and has changed. Some of the
substantial. In general, God’s immutability is affirmed through verses which argue that He does not change. Malachi 3:6 states, “Because I, Yahweh, have not changed, you descendants of Jacob have not been destroyed.” Similarly, Psalm 102:26 states, “They will perish, but You will endure.” It is important to note that some of these verses like Malachi, link God’s immutability to the continued existence of Israel. The reason for this is to reassure the people of Israel that no matter what happens they will not be destroyed because God is immutable and will not change His mind about them.

Additionally, God’s counsel and decree are also immutable. Isaiah 46:10 states that “I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done,” indicating that the entirety of history has been ordained by God. Psalms asserts that “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.” The New Testament also affirms God’s immutability in counsel in Hebrews which states, “Because God wanted to show His unchangeable purpose even more clearly to the heirs of the promise, He guaranteed it with an oath.”

Of special note is that in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is said to be “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” One of the theological heresies that circulated the early church, key books promoting this belief are: 1. Richard Rohr, *Universal Christ*, 2. Philip Clayton “God and World” in Kevin Vanhoozer’s *Postmodern Theology*, and 3. Bruce Epperly, *Process Theology*.

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155 Isaiah 46:10.
156 Psalm 33:11.
157 Hebrews 6:17
158 James 1:17.
Arianism, was that the Incarnation either changed God or that Jesus Christ was not eternal.\textsuperscript{159} Hebrews affirms against this heresy that Jesus is divine, eternal, unchanging, and identical with God as only God can be immutable.\textsuperscript{160} It also acts as an assurance that the Incarnation did not affect God’s immutability.

Theologically, it is important to define exactly how and why God must be immutable. First, God’s immutability is a necessary corollary from the fact that “His being is from Himself and not from another.”\textsuperscript{161} Thus, He can only be what He is and cannot become better nor get worse than He is.\textsuperscript{162} Additionally, behind all ontological change is “dependence upon another,” and assumes that the being that is changing is in some way not perfect or incomplete.\textsuperscript{163} Both of these are directly denounced by Scripture.\textsuperscript{164}

Aquinas defends God’s immutability from a more philosophical perspective. He argues that God as the “first being” must be “pure act.”\textsuperscript{165} In other words, God must be a being who is eternal in action and completely without potentiality, or He would need an external cause to convert His latent potentiality into action. Thus, Aquinas states that God is immutable since he has no potentiality.\textsuperscript{166} Additionally, Aquinas remarks that God has “no composition” or parts,
thus God cannot be acted upon in such a way as a part is moved, or changed, or altered. In this way, Aquinas also derives immutability from the doctrine of simplicity. God is not a thing that can be defined in finite, particular terms; thus, He is beyond the bounds of change. Finally, Aquinas utilizes God’s infinitude to derive immutability. He argues that “everything which is moved acquires something by its movement, and attains to what it had not attained previously.” However, due to God’s infinite nature, it is impossible for anything to be acquired, added, or taken away from God, thus “movement in no way belongs to Him,” and He is immutable.

However, it is important to make a distinction between changes in ontology, knowledge, will, and purpose versus changes that result from action and relational changes such as the Incarnation. For God to change in ontology, knowledge, will, or purpose, He would have to either become better or worse than his previous self. However, Christian philosopher Thomas Morris argues that some types of change are “value-neutral” and do not “necessitate an increase or a decrease in [one’s] intrinsic value or metaphysical stature.” Changes of this type are required as a product of time. For instance, there is a difference between God prior to the formation of mankind and posterior to the formation of mankind—the difference being the actualization of the creative act. Similarly, there is a difference between God prior to and posterior to the incarnation. Before the incarnation, God was not in relational union with

167 Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 1.9.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid.
171 Ibid, 128.
mankind, after the incarnation, the Son was in relational union with mankind. However, these
table changes do not affect the nature and character of God, thus they are value-neutral and within the
realm of orthodoxy.

Finally, though also under heavy attack, the related doctrine of impassibility has also
been held by traditional theologians. For example, Clement of Alexandria said that “God is
impassible, free of anger, destitute of desire… so as to rule over desires.” Similarly, Augustine
argues that the depictions of passion in God in the Old Testament are anthropomorphic and God
is “jealous without any darkening of spirit, angry without any perturbation, pitiful without any
pain, [and] repents… without any wrongness in Him to be set right.” In conclusion, traditional
Christianity holds to the beliefs that God does not change ontologically, nor in purpose and will.

**New Age Movement.** Teachers within the New Age Movement fundamentally deny that
God is impassible; this is a natural corollary of their doctrine of monism and pantheism.
Fundamental to the New Age Movement is the idea of “spiritual evolution” whereby people
undergo “countless existences on this planet as well as in an infinity of other dimensions” in an
effort to attain to higher states of consciousness. Thus, as New Age adherents grow spiritually,
God grows spiritually.

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172 John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Helseth, eds., *Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the

173 Clement of Alexandria, “The Stromata,” in *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian,

Christian Church, First Series (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1887), 1.

175 Wouter Hanegraaff, “New Age Spiritualities as Secular Religion: A Historian’s Perspective,” *Social
Compass* 46, no. 2 (1999): 150.
New Age leaders also deny immutability by arguing that god can be directly affected by the material realm. New Age adherents rely heavily on “transformative technologies” to help them attain higher levels of divine actualization. These include a heavy emphasis on the discoveries made in physics regarding relativity and the fields of neuroscience and psychology. Additionally, these technologies are also derived from ancient mystical experiences and include the use of crystals to manipulate the spiritual realm, the use of yoga to induce mystical states, and muscle testing to impact one’s aura or chi.

One important result of the denial of immutability coupled with the affirmation of total pantheism is that people can fundamentally create and live in their own reality. Shirly MacLaine affirmed that she “created [her] own reality in every way,” and “was the only person alive in [her] universe.” The denial of immutability allows the New Age adherent to live in a universe of his or her own making and continually change that universe to fit his or her momentary whims. This is directly connected to the New Age metaphysics of the law of attraction which states that one can receive what one desires by willing it into being. In conclusion, the New Age Movement completely rejects the concepts of divine impassibility and divine immutability along with the distinctions they create.

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177 Ibid, 152.


Trinity (Tri-Personality of God; Oneness of Essence)

Christianity. The Doctrine of the Trinity is one of the fundamental doctrines that separates Christianity from the world religions and from the various Christian cults or sects that have come about throughout its 2,000-year history. In order to demonstrate the Trinity in the Bible, theologians have typically focused on finding verses that affirm the distinct personhood of each of the members as well as the essential oneness of each of the members. For instance, the Great Commission is a perfect example of the oneness of all three members: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” This verse represents the full revelation of the covenant name of God in concert with the command to go and spread the news of the “New Covenant in Christ;” this name is “the one name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

There is no question from these verses that the three members of the Trinity are both distinct persons and “on an equal footing” even sharing “in the one being of God.”

The Upper Room Discourse found in John 14 is also replete with Trinitarian distinction. For example, Jesus says that “I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever . . . He is the Spirit of truth.” This demonstrates that between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit there is real communication occurring and real relational distinction. Later on, Jesus reiterates His own position in the sending of the Holy Spirit: “But the Counselor, the Holy

182 Matthew 28:19.
184 Ibid.
185 John 14:16-17.
Spirit—the Father will send Him in My name—will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.” For the Father to send the Holy Spirit in someone else’s name, and not His alone, would be blasphemous; it would be tantamount to allowing someone else to be the God of the universe. The only way for this statement to work is for the Father and the Son, minimally, to share the same name. These represent a small selection of the verses that can be used in defense of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Theologically, the doctrine of the Trinity has been represented in two dominant ways. First, the immanent, essential, or ontological Trinity refers to a series of declarations about “who God is within Godself.”296 Ontological descriptions of the Trinity focus on the unity of the being of God. For instance, the divine attributes of omniscience, eternality, and aseity are held in full by all persons of the Trinity as they constitute the nature of God’s essence. However, the economic depictions of the Trinity focus on the distinctions of the persons of the Trinity in role and mode. This does not split up actions of God between the persons of the Trinity. John 5:19 states “I assure you: The Son is not able to do anything on His own, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son also does these things in the same way.” Thus, all of the actions of God are accomplished by God in His entirety. However, Scripture does indicate through the Trinitarian persons that each member of the Trinity participates in the divine action differently. For example, in salvation, God the Father is the one who sent the Son, and without Him, the plan of salvation would not have been enacted. However, it was only the Son, the second person of the Trinity who made the atoning sacrifice on the cross. Additionally, it is the Holy Spirit who effects the spiritual regeneration in mankind.

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296 Yarnell III, God The Trinity, Kindle, 794.
Historically, the Council of Chalcedon and the Council of Nicaea were pivotal in defining key doctrines of the Trinity. The creed that came out of Nicaea entrenched Trinitarianism as the orthodox doctrine of the Christian Church, but the exact nature of Jesus’ relationship to God was still uncertain. At Chalcedon, Jesus’ two natures (divine and human) were defended as being united in one person who was “truly God and truly man.” This definition solidified Jesus’ standing as the second person of the Trinity while also maintaining his full humanity.

After the Reformation, theologians like W. G. T. Shedd argued that any true God must be a Trinity by necessity. The argument goes that God could only have “consciousness” by contact with an “other,” as “personality does not develop nor exist in isolation.” However, one “other” is not enough to establish God, as two “others” would be unable to see that they are the same being. To solve this issue, any true, personal God requires a third person by which the other two persons recognize themselves as one being.

Additionally, throughout history, theologians have denounced various unorthodox ways of understanding God’s triune nature. For instance, in arguing against the Arians, who believed that the Trinity is not representative of God in eternity, Athanasius argued that “if God be Maker and Creator, and create His works through the Son, and we cannot regard things which come to be, except as being through the Word, is it not blasphemous, God being Maker, to say, that His Framing Word and His Wisdom once was not?” Athanasius argued that from Genesis 1’s creation account that God the Father, God the Son/Word, and God the Wisdom/Holy Spirit are

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187 Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Kindle, 1495.
188 Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, Kindle, 5278.
inseparable in the creation act and thus cannot be created beings themselves. His statement of the Trinity reflects both the persons and the one essential nature: “there is an eternal and one Godhead in a Triad, and there is one Glory of the Holy Triad.”\textsuperscript{190} In Athanasius’s view, any glory due one member of the Trinity was also glory to the other members. In conclusion, though the doctrine of the Trinity has been disputed and its complexities not fully explored, it is the biblical, orthodox understanding of God in Christianity.

**New Age Movement.** The New Age Movement fundamentally denies the existence of a transcendent Trinity. As stated in earlier sections, the idea of universal oneness is fundamental to New Age philosophy.\textsuperscript{191} However, in destroying the personhood of God, New Age adherents also reject the personhood of the individual as “ultimately there is no difference between God, a person, a carrot or a rock.”\textsuperscript{192} Fritjof Capra states that the best understanding of God is one “in which all boundaries and dualisms have been transcended and all individuality dissolves into universal, undifferentiated oneness.”\textsuperscript{193} Thus, while New Age proponents adhere to the oneness of God, they do not recognize any distinction in God. This leads to a fundamental denial of distinctions between anything.

Concerning Jesus, the New Age Movement draws a hard line between “the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.”\textsuperscript{194} The New Age Movement sees Jesus as “a great prophetic

\textsuperscript{190} Athanasius, *Discourse 1 Against the Arians*, 18.


\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.


figure, a learned saint, who is to be numbered among the world’s great religious leaders.”\(^{195}\) But in no uncertain terms is Jesus either ontologically the Christ or the second member of the Trinity of the Christian God. For example, Richard Rohr argues that “although Jesus was clearly of the masculine gender, the Christ is beyond gender.”\(^{196}\) This bifurcation of Jesus and Christ is central to New Age philosophies which emphasize that “Christ” is a “consciousness” that all people can obtain.\(^{197}\) In New Age theology, Christ is not the second person of the Trinity, nor is He even a person, rather Christ Consciousness is an attribute which people can attain.

New Age leaders, like Edgar Cayce, argued that God is “an impersonal force or energy” whose major work is “by the application of the God-force within to mete it out to others.”\(^{198}\) In this framework, God is a force that seeks to either replicate itself or cause awakening of itself in the minds of human beings. To the New Age mind, god being personal occurs when one becomes “aware of thyself being thyself, yet one with Him.”\(^{199}\) Thus, in New Age theology, god is not a Trinity, nor is he even personal. Rather, god is an impersonal force that seeks to impersonally create awareness of itself in the minds of mankind.

Jesus as the Unique Messiah

**Christianity.** Central to all major branches of Christianity is the idea that Jesus is the one and only Christ/Messiah of God. There are a number of ways that Scripture declares the


\(^{197}\) Rohr, *The Universal Christ*, Kindle, 3126.


\(^{199}\) Ibid, Kindle, 1095.

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uniqueness of the Messiah and that Jesus is that Messiah. First, the Old Testament is replete with declarations from God called Messianic prophecies that can be used to pinpoint the identity of the Messiah.\(^{200}\) For instance, Micah 5:2 reports that the Messiah would be born in “Bethlehem Ephrathah,” which is the recorded birthplace of Jesus in the gospels. Additionally, Daniel’s 70 weeks prophecy predicted that the Messiah would arrive 483 years after “Artaxerxes’ decree” in “444 B.C.”\(^{201}\) This places the Messiah’s arrival at 33 A.D. which, regardless of how one precisely dates Jesus’ triumphal entry, does fit the general timeline of Jesus’ life and ministry.\(^{202}\) A full treatment on the extensive nature and predictive capability of Messianic prophecy is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but there are many sources that demonstrate Messianic prophecy’s power to precisely indicate that Jesus is only person who could be the Messiah.\(^{203}\)

Scripture also explicitly declares Jesus’ uniqueness as the Messiah directly. For example, when Jesus asked the disciples, “who do you say that I am?” Peter responded, “You are the

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Messiah, the Son of the living God!” Jesus then affirmed Peter’s understanding of Himself saying, “flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven.” This indicates that Jesus’ identity as the Messiah also meant that He was the Son of God and that this identity was confirmed by God Himself. John 11 also reports a similar declaration of Jesus being the Messiah when Jesus declares that He is “the resurrection and the life,” and Martha responds by saying, “I believe You are the Messiah, the Son of God, who comes into the world.” The requirement that Martha believe in Him is another indicator that there is only one person whom one can put one’s faith in: Jesus the Messiah, who has come into the world. In conclusion, the Bible contains significant evidence that Jesus was the one and only unique Messiah and Son of God.

Theologically, there are a number of reasons theologians have defended the uniqueness of the Messiah and His identity as Jesus of Nazareth. First, the Messiah’s work necessitates that only one person could ever be the Messiah. The Messiah’s central work is His death on the cross for the atonement of the sins of all who believe in Him. This work must be completed by a single individual, one time for all of humanity, as stated in the following verses in Hebrews: “by this will of God, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once

204 Mark 8:29; Matthew 16:15-16.
205 Matthew 16:17.
207 John 11:25-27.
and for all” and “this man after offering one sacrifice for sins forever.” If more than one person could be or needed to be the Messiah, the sacrifice would be insufficient to complete the task of salvation, as it would be fundamentally no different from the Mosaic sacrificial system with its repeating sacrifices.

In order to complete the work of atonement, the Messiah also had to be sinless. The problem is that “the Scriptures maintain that the genuineness and fulness of Christ’s humanity are necessary for our salvation.” Given that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” it would seem that no person who has or will ever live can be the Messiah. However, Jesus claimed to be sinless and “kept [His] Father’s commands and remain in His love.” The author of Hebrews also attributes sinlessness to Christ saying Jesus was “One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin.” No human being could ever make such a claim nor earn their way to being able to claim sinlessness. Thus, Jesus, who being in very nature God and man, is the only person who could act as an acceptable sacrifice, being “a lamb without defect or blemish.” In conclusion, Christianity teaches in accordance with Scripture that Jesus is the Messiah and the only person who could fulfill the promises of God in atonement for the sins of those who believe.

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210 Hebrews 10:10, 12.


213 Romans 3:23.


215 Hebrews 4:15.

216 1 Peter 1:19.
New Age Movement. Adherents of the New Age Movement do not believe that the Messiah or Christ is a person. Rohr states that “‘Christ’ is a word for the Primordial Template (‘Logos’) through whom ‘all things came into being, and not one thing had its being except through him.’” He argues that “Christ” is the presence of God found in all of Creation and cannot be limited to the human Jesus. Thus, the work of the Christ is not to save fallen humanity through the atonement. Rather, God “saves” creation by loving it, and according to Rohr, “God loves things by becoming them.” As people accept that the “Divine Presence” flows through them, they become aware that “the Christ Mystery anoints all physical matter;” and thus, they are anointed by God as well. In the New Age framework, salvation is essentially the “present evolution of consciousness” that “includes everybody” as people come to a greater awareness and consciousness of the fact that they are part of God.

This concept is one of the central tenets of the entire movement. For instance, Eckhart Tolle expresses Christ Consciousness or “the Christ within,” in panentheistic terms stating that “I Am [is] the essence of identity of every man and woman, every life-form in fact.” He goes on to say that “Christ refers to your indwelling divinity, regardless of whether you are conscious of

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218 Ibid, Kindle, 250.

219 Ibid, Kindle, 257.

220 Ibid, Kindle, 305.

221 Ibid, Kindle, 313-328.

it or not,” and then says about Jesus, He “became Christ, a vehicle for pure consciousness.”

Thus, while simultaneously elevating humanity to the level of divinity, Christ Consciousness brings Jesus down to the level of an exalted human. In conclusion, the New Age Movement holds a view of Christ that removes Jesus’ true divinity and places a panentheistic divinity throughout all of Creation. This also leads to a direct change in the purpose and means of salvation.

God and Creation Criteria

Table 3.2 God and Creation Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Number</th>
<th>Criterion Description</th>
<th>Christian Teaching</th>
<th>New Age Movement Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ontological Creator/Creation Relationship</td>
<td>Creator and Creation are ontologically distinct</td>
<td>Creator and Creation are either ontologically identical, on a continuum, or mixed in some way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Creation Event</td>
<td>God made creation apart from any external help</td>
<td>Creation continually remakes itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>God’s authority</td>
<td>God maintains full authority and</td>
<td>Creation governs itself</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>Creator and creation substance types</th>
<th>God and creation are different substances</th>
<th>God and creation are the same substance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>God’s presence to nature</td>
<td>All of nature is fully present but not identical to God at all times</td>
<td>God is one with nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>God’s presence to humanity</td>
<td>God makes Himself known to humanity through His word and works</td>
<td>God is the spirit of mankind; thus, man becomes internally aware he is god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>God and history</td>
<td>God is sovereign over history</td>
<td>Mankind and the Cosmos control history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Immutability of substance</td>
<td>God does not change ontologically</td>
<td>God is in process of spiritual evolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Immutability of knowledge and decree</td>
<td>God’s knowledge is fixed, and His decree is eternal</td>
<td>God’s knowledge continuously increases, and it does not have a decree; individuals have changing decrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Depiction of God</td>
<td>God is triune: three persons in one essence</td>
<td>God is an impersonal, unconscious, universal mind force out of which individual consciousnesses evolve</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Type of Theism</td>
<td>Trinitarian monotheism</td>
<td>Pantheism or Panentheism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Identity of Jesus</td>
<td>Jesus is the only and unique ontological Son of God; He is the only Christ or Messiah</td>
<td>Jesus is a human being who attained high levels of divine consciousness by being one among many who gained Christ consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Uniqueness of the Christ</td>
<td>Jesus is the only Christ and has been for eternity</td>
<td>All people can attain Christ consciousness and become Christs or anointed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Doctrines Concerning the Nature and Purpose of Humanity

Human Nature: Distinct Creation vs. Universal Monism

**Christianity.** The Bible maintains the unity of human nature while referring to both physical and non-physical parts. Scripture tends to speak of the various aspects of mankind in relation to the whole. The following is the understanding of human nature as derived from the various terms that Scripture uses to describe it. First, the Bible uses both basar and soma to refer to the physical body. References to the soma are not negative nor are they associated with sin. Instead, soma refers to the physical nature of mankind’s body. It is looked at as a good thing, one that is to be cherished, and potentially, depending on one’s exegesis of Paul, a temple of the Holy Spirit. The body can and must be purified in order to be present before God, so it is something that can be defiled. However, it is important to note that it is not the body that makes one unclean but what comes out of one’s mouth, which is a reference to the actions of the soul. Additionally, sarx as flesh and soma as body are sharply distinguished in Scripture.

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226 1 Corinthians 6:19.
227 Leviticus 11:24-25.
228 Matthew 15:11-20.
229 The Bible uses the term sarx to refer to the flesh. It is important to note that the flesh is not equivalent to the physical human body. Rather, the flesh refers to the carnal sinful nature that mankind has inherited through original sin. Unfortunately, because carnal desires are often for physical things, the two have been equated, however, Scripture takes a positive view of the body and a negative view of the flesh or sin nature. The flesh is equivalent to one’s now innate desires for self, immorality, and evil.
To refer to the non-physical aspect of human nature, the Bible uses the terms *nephesh* and *psyche*.\(^{230}\) In the Old Testament, it is also equated with the blood, and it is what energizes the body and gives life to it.\(^{231}\) To spill the blood is to take a person’s *nephesh* and requires the death penalty.\(^{232}\) The *psyche* is also the seat of personhood, decision making, and thought. It is often used to refer to the sum total of a person’s non-material nature.\(^{233}\) It is the part that is said to survive physical death and either go to heaven or hell.\(^{234}\) The spirit and the soul are presented in a very similar manner in Scripture.\(^{235}\) Similarly, the heart is also a reference to the non-physical part of the human being.\(^{236}\)

There is a substantial degree of diversity among theologians concerning the constitution of man. Most scholars’ views can be summarized as being either substance dualism, holistic dualism, or monism. Augustine is representative of a standard substance dualism view stating, “Man, then, as viewed by his fellow-man, is a rational soul with a mortal and earthly body in its service.”\(^{237}\) This type of distinction is most likely due to both a biblical and Platonic

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\(^{230}\) Job 12:10; Genesis 9:4; Deuteronomy 12:23; Numbers 31:28; Genesis 12:5; Ezekiel 13:18; 1 Corinthians 15:45; Acts 2:43; Revelation 18:13.

\(^{231}\) Leviticus 17:11.

\(^{232}\) Genesis 9:6.


\(^{234}\) Matthew 10:28.

\(^{235}\) The *ruach* or *pneuma* is the spirit. This is not seen as a different substance for the soul even though some verses do split it out from the soul. Rather, this is the part of mankind that is capable of having a relationship with God. It is what is fundamentally wreaked by sin in that people are spiritually dead and in need of a new spirit or in other words a renewed ability to be in relationship with God.

\(^{236}\) The *leb* or *kardia* is the heart and is one of the more vital pieces of the human constitution in Scripture. The heart is the seat of one’s inclination and desires. It is the part of the soul that inclines one to God or to self. It is the central motivator of one’s actions and is thought to be the seat of the life of a person.

understanding of human constitution.\footnote{John Cooper, \textit{Body, Soul \& Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate} (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), Kindle, 309.} However, Augustine does recognize that “man is neither body alone, nor soul alone, but both together . . . and therefore the highest good . . . is composed of goods of both kinds, bodily and spiritual.”\footnote{Augustine of Hippo, “The City of God,” in \textit{A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church}, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1887), XIX, 3, 1.} Thus, though Augustine takes a view that places the body in a more distant position with regard to the whole person, he does acknowledge that full constitution of mankind requires a body and soul working together. Aquinas shares a similar overall view as Augustine in that he affirms that mankind is “composed of a spiritual and of a corporeal substance;” however, he disagrees with Augustine’s understanding of the “man” being both the body and the soul, instead affirming that “the soul is man.”\footnote{Aquinas, \textit{The “Summa Theologica” of St. Thomas Aquinas}, 75; 75, 4.}

Other Christian theologians have held to a monistic view of human constitution, within which are a number of varieties. This dissertation will depict constitutionalism as a point of comparison with the New Age concept of the essence level unity of soul and matter. Lynne Baker depicts constitutionalism as the view that “we are fundamentally persons—whole persons—not minds, souls or brains.”\footnote{Lynne Rudder Baker, “Constitutionalism: Alternative to Substance Dualism,” in \textit{Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism}, ed. Jonathan Loose, Angus Menuge, and J. P. Moreland (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2018), 341.} She argues that persons are “non-reductive” and are only identical with themselves, thus a human is a specific body with a first-person perspective of an individual person.\footnote{Ibid, 341-346.} She argues that there is no such thing as a person without a body. In order to cover the intermediate state, she argues that God could provide a person with an
“intermediate” body prior to the resurrection.\textsuperscript{243} In conclusion, the Bible affirms that human nature is holistic and should not rightly exist divided. It also makes a degree of distinctions between various aspects or parts of humanity like body and soul, even though theologians disagree on exactly how deep of a distinction one should draw. Finally, though the gamut of theology ranges from cartesian dualism to various forms of monism, no form of orthodox Christianity asserts that mankind is of one substance with all of nature, nor that mankind is of one substance with God.

\textbf{New Age Movement.} The New Age view on the constitution of mankind is that it is united with the Cosmos.\textsuperscript{244} J. Z. Knight, through the channeled spirit, Ramtha, argues that matter can go through a process of “reprogramming” to be converted into something fundamentally different.\textsuperscript{245} Hanegraaff describes this process as the changing of “the very cellular structure of his body, transposing it from the vibration of matter to the vibration rate of pure light.”\textsuperscript{246} Thus in the New Age view, the Cosmos—and thus, humanity—is simply vibrations of energy that can be morphed and changed into other types of matter and energy. It is this universal energy, equal to the Cosmos, that is also called “Mind” and individual consciousnesses are extensions or instantiations of the “One Mind.”\textsuperscript{247} Thus mankind is fundamentally energy and any consciousness is an emergent property of that energy.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[244] Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought}, 203.
\item[246] Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought}, 209.
\item[247] Ibid, 204-205.
\end{footnotes}
This metaphysical structure underlies the New Age concept of “universal interrelations.”\textsuperscript{248} This fundamental New Age belief decentralizes the concept of god. Rather than the existence of a supreme conscious mind, NAM leaders affirm that god is a diffuse non-personal entity spread throughout and united with the Cosmos.\textsuperscript{249} The ramification of this view is that any instantiation of the universal consciousness is essentially, and by nature, connected to every other part or instantiation of the universal consciousness. Additionally, all matter is fundamentally connected to all other matter, not on a particulate level, but in the sense that all matter is fundamentally energy vibrations. Thus, any piece of matter can convert into any other piece of matter at any time. In conclusion, the New Age view of humanity is that it is one with the Cosmos through the interconnectedness of energy and the unity of emergent consciousness.

**Human Nature: Finite and Created vs. Infinite and Divine**

**Christianity.** The Bible is strict with its understanding of mankind as a creation of God that in no way shares in the divine essence. First, Genesis 1:26-27 presents mankind as an unique, but still created, being: “So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God.”\textsuperscript{250} In no way, shape, or form was mankind a derivation of God nor a siphoning off of God. Mankind is presented as a creation just as all other aspects of the Universe are presented. The word used in these verses is “bara” or “to create.” Strong’s concordance states

\textsuperscript{248} Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, 128.

\textsuperscript{249} Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue*, 4-5.

\textsuperscript{250} Genesis 1:26-27.
that “only God is the subject of this verb,” and its use includes everything in the universe including humanity and angels.251

Though some have sought to demonstrate that spiritual renewal, glorification, and resurrection involve the deification of mankind, Scripture stands resolute in the Creator/Creation distinction. For instance, concerning believers, Paul asks that they “may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him,” as well as “be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience.”252 These verses paint God’s empowerment of Christians not as a divinization, but as a spiritual empowerment whereby God strengthens people to accomplish His will, typically focused around moral concerns. Additionally, five verses later, Paul states that “everything was created by Him [Jesus], in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible.” Thus, no matter how much empowerment mankind receives, he is still a creation. Finally, the resurrection itself is described as “from heaven” and “bear[ing] the image of the heavenly man.”253 Thus, the biblical understanding of glorification and resurrection does not involve becoming Christ, but rather, it involves being made into His image, preserving the Creator/Creation distinction.

Theologically, the one differentiating factor between mankind and the rest of creation is that man was made “in the image of God.”254 There are a number of different views on what the

252 Colossians 1:9-11.
253 1 Corinthians 15:47-49.
254 Genesis 1:27.
Imago Dei actually is, but they all agree that it is not in-and-of-itself a declaration of deity; rather it means “human persons ‘reflect’ the divine reality in some way.”255 Traditionally, the Imago Dei has been viewed from a structural perspective. For example, in Against Heresies, Irenaeus argued that “man being rational, and therein like unto God” was responsible for his actions.256 The structural view holds that mankind is like God in terms of “symbolic reasoning, self-determination, moral agency, [and] self-transcendence.”257 This view holds that the image is something essential to humanity and that humans would not be such without it. For example, John Calvin states that the image is composed of “distinguished endowments,” principally “reason . . . by which they can distinguish between good and evil.”258

Some theologians take a relational approach to the Imago Dei. This view, developed substantially by Karl Barth, argues that:

man is created by God in correspondence with this relationship and differentiation in God Himself: created as a Thou that can be addressed by God but also as an I responsible to God; in the relationship of man and woman in which man is a Thou to his fellow and therefore himself and I in responsibility to this claim.259

The strongest argument in defense of this position comes from the existence of inter-Trinitarian relationships and humanity being created as reflecting them. However, this position suffers from taking the full gamut of biblical data into account and “an anachronistic tendency to read modern


256 Roberts and Donaldson, “Irenaeus: Against Heresies,” 4.3.3.


conceptual categories into the biblical text.” In conclusion, even the most disparate theologies concerning the *Imago Dei* affirm that mankind is only like God, not God Himself.

A third view, called the representative view, has also made its way into evangelical theology and attempts to account for both the structural and functional aspects of the image of God. This view starts with Henry’s premise that “Divine revelation is the starting point of all human knowledge.” From there, Scripture is utilized to expand upon the declarations presented in Genesis 1:26-27 which state that mankind was created in God’s “likeness” and with the intention that mankind would “rule” over various aspects of Creation. As Strachan states, “the image of God [is] an ontological reality that leads to function.” In this view, the image of God is humanity ontologically and to “see humanity is to see the likeness of God.” Thus, the mankind’s ontological and structural status as image bearers cannot change. Sin cannot denigrate the image, nor can mankind ontologically become the image any more than it already is.

However, the functional or representational aspect of the image can and does vary widely from being virtually non-existent to being expressed in perfection. Hoekema argues that sin results in mankind using the gifts of God “in ways that were contrary to God’s will.” Strachan describes the loss of the functional aspect in terms of what mankind was designed to do: conduct

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262 Genesis 1:26-27.
264 Ibid.
266 Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 83.
himself according to “obedient worship.” Sinful, unrepentant man no longer worships the one true God nor gives Him praise nor glory in any willful way. Rather than working and serving for God’s ends, mankind sets itself up as an idol that works for its own chief ends.

Thus, one of the central aspects of salvation is the restoration of the functional or representation aspect of the image of God to mankind. Strachan argues that “worship is the end of humanity…if we connect adoration with obedience and service, we set ourselves up to understand what eternity will involve.” This restoration of the image of God happens through the biblical understanding of salvation. It begins “in regeneration” or the act through which the Holy Spirit causes a person to be “born again.” It is continued and completed through the process of sanctification whereby the person in question becomes free of the “pollution of sin” and is “enabled to live in love, in three directions: toward God, toward the neighbor, and toward nature.” This process is not completed until after death, thus while on earth, no one attains to a perfect obedience prior to death.

Jesus Christ, as the God-man, is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.” He is the only one who perfectly exemplifies the image of God and walks in perfect obedience and love. He bears the image of God perfectly due to the unique relationship that He has with the Father and by that fact that He is the Incarnation of the Son into human nature.

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268 Ibid.

269 Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 86.

270 Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 86.

271 Colossians 1:15.

272 Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 73.
Through Him, fallen humanity is able to “see clearly what is hidden in Genesis 1: namely, what man as the perfect image of God should be like.” It is only through union with Jesus Christ that mankind can hope to bear God’s image as intended and thus bring to fruition the hope of Colossians 1:27-29:

“God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.”

In conclusion, the doctrine of the image of God is not about transforming humanity into God nor about mixing humanity and divinity. As Strachan states, “Genesis 1 does not allow us to conclude that the thriving planet formed by the Creator is the Creator or is in the Creator in ontological terms…the world is uniquely the world, and the creatures are discrete creatures.” Additionally, that mankind is the image bearer of God uniquely positions him so that he must find his definition and purpose in God and His revelation. Through sin mankind has forsaken the purpose unto which God has made him, but that purpose can be restored through faith and trust in the saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the one true image of God. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God regenerates mankind and causes them to walk in His ways in obedience and love.

**New Age Movement.** Fundamental to New Age theology is the understanding that mankind is identical with God. Ferguson states that “the separate self is an illusion . . . even beyond the collective Self . . . there is a transcendent, universal Self.” This is directly related

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273 Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 73.

274 Colossians 1:27-29.


to NAM doctrine on the nature of humanity as being one with the Cosmos. Another New Age leader, David Spangler, claimed the following: “I AM now the Life of a new heaven and new earth. Others must draw upon Me and unite with Me to build its forms.”277 This was his way of asserting that he had ascended to the universal god-self and gained the knowledge necessary to shape the universe into one of his own making. In contrast to Christianity, New Age leaders claim the power of creation for themselves and destroy the Creator/Creation distinction.

MacLaine also emphasized her own oneness with the material creation and God saying that “I was the air, the water, the darkness, the walls, the bubbles, the candle . . . I am God, because all energy is plugged into the same source . . . God is us and we are God.”278 By uniting Creation and Creator, MacLaine and other New Age leaders turn humanity into an eternal self-creating and self-actualizing being. However, this has serious ramifications for humanity in general. First, if MacLaine and others are correct, then “there is no diversity or individuality in the world.”279 Second, all morality vanishes into thin air. If all people are truly just an extension of one impersonal god-force, then it is impossible to treat oneself other than one would want to be treated and the concept of “wrong behavior” is eradicated. Similarly, those who try to hold to a morality will only be left with whatever morality one comes up with at the time. Third, humanity loses its place as a special creation as it is fundamentally no different from the dirt on the ground or the water in the ocean. In conclusion, the NAM view on humanity as divine


279 Amano and Geisler, The Infiltration of the New Age, 17.
eradicates the Creator/Creation distinction and places absorption into the god-force as the ultimate goal of mankind.

Individual Purpose: Christlikeness vs. Christ Consciousness

**Christianity.** “Who am I?” is one of the most basic and core questions that people have throughout their lives. The Bible’s answer incorporates both the divine design through the concept of *imago dei*, as well as the effects of sin and rebellion against God. As fallen beings, people are inherently sinful children of wrath whose heart is deceitful and doomed to destruction in hell without a savior. They can do nothing in and of themselves to better their situation or their person. Perfection, moral or otherwise, is outside of their grasp. However, the Bible does teach that humanity can be perfected. The central verse that depicts this doctrine is Colossians 1:27 which states, “God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” This verse indicates that the mystery of God that Paul is referring to is the literal “indwelling of ‘Christ.’”

However, unlike the Christ Consciousness of the New Age Movement, the indwelling of Christ maintains the distinction of Jesus Christ and the individual being indwelt. Scripture goes to great lengths to describe the union. For instance, believers are “created in Christ Jesus for good works,” and they “no longer live, but Christ lives” in them. There is an aspect of the union with Christ that seems to require the death of self, so that one can live Christ’s life “by faith in the Son of God.” In Romans, Paul states that believers are “baptized into His death,”

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280 Colossians 1:27.


282 Ephesians 2:10; Galatians 2:20.

283 Galatians 2:20.
so that they may be joined with Him “in the likeness of His resurrection.” Union with Christ is not an ontological union, it is a relational union; it is not absorption into Christ and God, it is about being united with Him; “to be saved is to be united to the Savior.” Union with Christ is the theological thread that connects all aspects of salvation from effectual calling to glorification together.

Being one with Christ is not about a higher consciousness, nor is it about gaining divine powers; instead, at its core, it is about how believers can “participate in what is most precious to [Jesus]: his relationship with his Father.” J. I. Packer argues that this relationship is “the highest privilege that the gospel offers: higher even than justification.” He goes on to state that justification through the atonement and forgiveness of sins is absolutely vital, so that we may have peace with God, but the blessings of union with Christ do not end there. Instead, these lay the groundwork for the greater blessing of being adopted into God’s family. John Calvin also affirmed this view of adoption as children of God, saying, “there are innumerable other ways indeed in which God daily testifies his fatherly love toward us, but the mark of adoption is justly preferred to them all.”

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284 Romans 6:4-5.


286 Ibid, Kindle, 603.

287 Ibid, Kindle, 2888.


The relational aspect of adoption is depicted in John 14:18-20; “I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you . . . In that day you will know that I am in My Father, you are in Me, and I am in you.” In this verse “Jesus speaks of the new state that will exist between the Father, Son, [Spirit], and the disciples,” in which “the Father and Son will indwell (via the Spirit) the believer.” It is through this indwelling that believers participate “in God’s relational life—eternal, life-giving bond of love between the Father, Son, and Spirit.” That this type of union can happen without completely being absorbed into God is one of the tenets that makes Christianity unique. Christians enter into God, not through essence, but through becoming “sons of God by being joined to the Son of God.”

**New Age Movement.** The individual goal of the New Age believer is to attain the “true self.” Hammer argues that New Age thinking, which is heavily rooted in enlightenment anthropology, is fundamentally “antithetical” to Christian theology. In terms of the ultimate goal of humanity as individuals, NAM theology is not focused on morality or destiny, but rather, its emphasis is on the “transmutation” of the “personality.” NAM philosophers assert that

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294 Ibid.
296 Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 4. Enlightenment anthropology argues that “humanity is not fallen, we have within us a rational faculty that we can use to free ourselves from our self-imposed tutelage.” Additionally, enlightenment thinking argues that “if our understanding of the world differs from that presented in authoritative revealed teachings, it is the latter that must yield.” Contrarily, Christian theology argues that mankind is fallen due to sin and is in need of a savior to get back to a state of holiness.
297 Ibid, 52.
there are “‘archetypal’ elements in one’s own psyche” that must be unlocked, so that one can transcend the ego and achieve “the ‘true’ essence of our persons.” For instance, NAM leader, Wayne Dyer, utilizes inward contemplation and meditation to achieve this form of self-discovery. He argues that “prayer and meditation” revealed his true “purpose” which was to “become totally, unconditionally loving to all people,” and as a result, serve as a fountain of miracles.

NAM theology on the chief end of the individual involves the fusion of “spirituality and psychology.” Religious scholar, Robert Fuller, states that whereas people used to turn to religion to answer the deep questions of their lives, “psychology has become [its] secular successor” and gives people “a new vocabulary and new set of theories by which to understand ourselves.” William James, one of the pioneers of New Age thinking along psychological lines, sought to persuade people of “unchurched religious philosophies such as parapsychology, yoga, positive thinking, and mind cure” with the intention of divorcing spirituality from “personal judgment or . . . faith in ancient creeds.” He argued that through his methods “our deepest destiny is fulfilled . . . work is done upon our finite personality.” In conclusion, the goal of mankind in the New Age Movement is not a relationship with God; rather, it is an

298 Hammer, Claiming Knowledge, 52, 55.


300 Hammer, Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age, 72.


302 Ibid, 132-133.

improved personality and a connection with the cosmic energy of the universe. This is achieved not by a relational union with God, but through psychological diagnostics and spiritual practices.

Corporate Purpose: Body of Christ vs. Societal Transformation

**Christianity.** The Bible presents the formation and sanctification of the Body of Christ as humanity’s primary goal during the church age. This body is composed of members of humanity from every race, ethnicity, nation, and tongue. As 1 Corinthians 12 states, “we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. So, the body is not one part but many.”\(^{304}\) According to Scripture, Jesus Christ “gave Himself” for the Body of Christ “to make her holy” and to “present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle.”\(^{305}\) In this way, the Bible presents the effectual calling and election of a subset of humanity for the purpose of purification and cleansing from sin unto a relationship with Christ that resembles a bride and groom.

While on earth, the Body of Christ has been set to act as the primary mode of confession to the world that Jesus is the Christ. As the Paul writes, Jesus was . . . preached among the nations, believed on in the world.”\(^{306}\) The body serves first and foremost as the community through which the Great Commission will be actualized and disciples will be made throughout the Earth.\(^{307}\) This confession and the mission that develops from it must be held by the church or the Body of Christ will fall to the “entrapment of the gospel by the culture” as it has countless

\(^{304}\) 1 Corinthians 12:13-14.

\(^{305}\) Ephesians 5:25-26.

\(^{306}\) 1 Timothy 3:16.

\(^{307}\) Matthew 28:19-20.
times throughout church history. Paul’s injunction to the Body of Christ is vital to understand this issue: “For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly!” The purpose of the Body of Christ on Earth is to preach and proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ in full without any exceptions. When it does this it remains healthy and continues to prepare itself for Jesus’ return; when it does not, it puts itself in danger of having its “lampstand” removed.

In terms of its relationship to the world, the Body of Christ is called to be:

- a distinctly Christian community in contrast to the perceptions and practices of its surrounding society; the church is continuously shaped by the gospel to be a demonstration of its claims, promises, and invitations; and the church relates itself to the surrounding world, near and far, as a community of the coming reign of God.

The Body of Christ is not an answer to the world’s problems, nor is it the world’s watchdog. While on Earth, the Church will not exhibit perfection and will sometimes lose its way. The Body of Christ is a collection of “pilgrims living and worshipping in the “boundary epoch” between the two advents of Jesus Christ.” The Body of Christ is focused on building an eschatological community of redeemed people who are being prepared to live with God and each other for eternity. This is fundamentally opposed to the NAM understanding of the purpose of humanity on Earth which is to become one with the Cosmos and be free of all distinction. In fact,

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309 Revelation 2:5-6.


311 Gregg Allison, Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), Kindle, 3735.
the Body of Christ lives to show the adherents of the New Age Movement that there is a better way, with better promises and a better God.

**New Age Movement.** Marilyn Ferguson presents in great detail the ultimate goal of the NAM for society: the complete destruction of all traditional roles and distinctions that have held society together. She reports that “custom” and “norms” hold significant power in society and that one of the NAM’s primary goals is to see “once-entrenched patterns of marriage, family, sexuality, and social institutions [be] shaken by radically new, or radically old, alternatives.”

One of the specific dichotomies that she mentions is being destroyed is the “male-female” distinction, as men are yielding to the “increased ‘yin’ nature” in their lives and becoming more like women. The goal as she sees it is to utilize the cosmic feeling of being “bonded to the whole, the community,” in order to embody “empathy with the world” through which love reigns supreme as total “acceptance.”

In terms of the morality of human relations, the New Age Movement relies on its philosophy of the destruction of distinctions to create harmony. In NAM theology, “the duality of ‘good versus evil’ is ultimately illusory.” Through New Age enlightenment, people can transcend their soul and realize that the dualism of good and evil is a fundamentally relativistic construct based on individual perspective. MacLaine argues that terrorism, murder, and abortion are only evil in the eye of the beholder. Stanislav Grof likens the existence of perceived good

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312 Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in Our Time*, 430.
313 Ibid.
315 Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, 277.
316 MacLaine, *It’s All in the Playing*, 144-145.
and evil to a “cosmic game.””\textsuperscript{317} He argues that “the problems and baffling paradoxes associated with human existence are . . . contrived deceptions . . . and the ultimate meaning of human existence is to experience fully all the states of mind associated with . . . consciousness.”\textsuperscript{318} In conclusion, the New Age view of society is one in which all cultural distinctions and traditions cease to exist, morality is seen as an illusion, and individuals recognize their paradoxical role in the Universal Mind’s cosmic game.

**Eschatological Purpose: Kingdom of God vs. New Age Utopia**

**Christianity.** There are few theological topics in Christianity that are as heavily disputed as eschatology. Within orthodox understanding, there are multiple views on both the definition of the Kingdom of God and the timing of when it will arrive (or has arrived). Thus, rather than presenting a specific view of the Kingdom, this section will first detail the commonalities that all views of the Kingdom have, and then, compare those views to the NAM understanding of the world’s destiny. Though the verses that will be assessed may be speaking about different moments in the Kingdom of God, they are only being used to discern attributes of the Kingdom regardless of the degree to which they are realized.

First, the Kingdom of God is described as a time when Jesus will reign as a “powerful, theocratic ruler.”\textsuperscript{319} Psalm 22 depicts God’s reign as total sovereignty which cannot be denied, saying, “All the families of the nations will bow down before You, for kingship belongs to the Lord; He rules over the nations. All who prosper on earth will eat and bow down; all those who

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\item\textsuperscript{318} Fritjof Capra, *Uncommon Wisdom*, 150.
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go down to the dust will kneel before Him—even the one who cannot preserve his life.”320 This type of rule is seen both at the national level and the individual level. Additionally, the reference to “one who cannot preserve his life” indicates that Jesus’ rule will extend to those who do not recognize it.321 No matter what people want, the rule of God in the Kingdom cannot be denied. This rule will also involve swift judgment as God “will break them with a rod of iron; You will shatter them like pottery.”322

A second aspect of the Kingdom is that “war will exist no more; all nations will be at peace under the rule and righteous reign of the Prince of Peace.”323 For instance, Isaiah records that “He will settle disputes among the nations and provide arbitration for many peoples. They will turn their swords into plows and their spears into pruning knives. Nations will not take up the sword against other nations, and they will never again train for war.”324 God’s reign will institute an unprecedented era of world peace that is based not on instantaneous agreement, but on perfect “arbitration.” This peace will result in the complete dissolution of the armed forces of nations as there will simply be no need to “train for war.” Additionally, there will be a general recognition of God throughout the nations as “all nations will stream to [the mountain of the Lord’s house].”325

322 Psalm 2:9.
324 Isaiah 2:2-4.
325 Ibid.
Another quality of the Kingdom is the ultimate eradication of all disease, sickness, suffering, and death. First Corinthians 15 argues that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,” so “this mortal is clothed with immortality” resulting in the victory cry of “death has been swallowed up in victory.” Thus, humanity in the Kingdom of God will be immune to the effects of death. Similarly, Revelation states, that God will “wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will no longer exist; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away.” Not only will death be dealt with, but so will all sickness and even personal grief. The portrayal of the Kingdom is one in which all of humanity and God are in “shalom” with each other and there is no strife, anger, malice, or evil. Additionally, there are no more accidents, incidents, or troubles; it is a time of perfect harmony. In conclusion, the biblical portrayal of the Kingdom of God is marked by the authoritative reign of God, universal peace throughout the Earth, the end of all suffering and death, and universal peace between God and men.

**New Age Movement.** NAM leaders envision a new age arising from the current one, marking the transition between “The Age of Pisces” and “The Age of Aquarius.” Aquarius is known as the age of peace following the age of war. This utopia is often called “The Whole Earth,” which means that the whole world will one day be “a borderless country, a paradigm of humanity with room enough for outsiders and traditionalists, for all our ways of human knowing, 

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327 1 Corinthians 15:54-55.

328 Revelation: 21:3-4.

329 Revelation 21-22.
for all mysteries and all cultures.” This fully accepting, multi-cultural world will be accomplished through the rejection of the notion of “right or wrong” and the acceptance of all peoples into one large “family.” Along this line, world peace is achieved through the “personal transformation” of the minds of all people rather than through politics. Thus, this new society will be constructed out of an “autonomous people” who affirm that “you cannot impose your brand of enlightenment on anyone else.” Ultimately, the goal of New Age adherents in the Aquarian Age is “the fulfillment of individual potential.”

One of the main physical accomplishments of the Aquarian Age will be the elimination of personal need. As their ultimate goal of interpersonal relationships, New Age adherents seek to eradicate such “problems like poverty and [dangers to the] environment.” The key to solving these problems is either worshipping the Earth “as a goddess [and] alive,” or becoming one with the universal consciousness of the Earth and the Cosmos. In this way, people can have the level of respect, reverence, and power needed to end poverty and world hunger, and save the environment.

Another way to represent the New Age view of utopia is through the concept of “planetization.” New Age leader Lewis Mumford described it by saying, “the destiny of

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331 Ibid.


334 Ibid, 27.

mankind... is at last to become one... this unity is on the point of being politically expressed in a world government that will unite nations and regions in transactions beyond their individual capacity.”\textsuperscript{336} This requires a fundamentally Marxist, socialist view of economics, where every individual is provided an equal “distribution” of “wealth, prosperity, and peace.”\textsuperscript{337} In conclusion, the New Age view of utopia is one in which each individual is his or her own authority, where all economic means are evenly distributed throughout humanity, and where the Earth is prospering as a planet. Additionally, it also requires the universalization of consciousness between all people.

The Nature and Purpose of Humanity Criteria

Table 3.3 The Nature and Purpose of Humanity Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Number</th>
<th>Criterion Description</th>
<th>Christian Teaching</th>
<th>New Age Movement Teaching</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Anthropology: substance</td>
<td>Mankind’s nature is both physical and non-physical, yet distinct from God and creation</td>
<td>Mankind, nature, and god are one continuous substance</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Anthropology: creation of mankind</td>
<td>God created and defined mankind</td>
<td>Mankind creates and defines itself</td>
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\textsuperscript{336} Lewis Mumford, \textit{Transformations of Man} (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith Publisher, 1978), 142.

\textsuperscript{337} Groothuis, \textit{Unmasking the New Age: Is There a New Religious Movement Trying to Transform Society?}, 117.
<p>| 3 | Anthropology: mankind’s relationship to God | Man is made in the image of God | Mankind is made from the substance of god |
| 4 | Anthropology: identity | Christians find their identity in Christ through His indwelling; Christ and believers remain distinct individuals | The acquisition of Christ consciousness allows one to become one’s true self |
| 5 | Eschatology: now | By the power of the Holy Spirit, God is creating the body of Christ who is being sanctified to participate in the eternal kingdom | Through Christ consciousness, all distinctions on earth are being erased and conflict between people is being eradicated |
| 6 | Eschatology: God’s role | God’s authority and kingdom are fully realized throughout the new heaven and new earth | As all distinctions are erased through awareness of the universal mind, war and conflict end; creation of a |</p>
<table>
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<th>Eschatology: humanity’s role</th>
<th>To love God and love one’s neighbor</th>
<th>To affirm divine autonomy of every individual</th>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Eschatology: results</td>
<td>Sin, death, and rebellion are eradicated: individuality is maintained</td>
<td>Conflict is eradicated, individuality is blurred, personal autonomy reigns supreme</td>
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**Doctrines Concerning Sin and Salvation**

The Fall of Humanity: Sin vs. Ignorance

Christianity. The Bible uniformly teaches that the fundamental problem with humanity is sin and separation from God. Genesis 1-2 presents a picture of humanity in which people are in harmony with God, able to speak directly with God without repercussion, and able to eat freely of the “tree of life” and never die.338 Key to the biblical narrative is the fact that after the

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creation of the woman, Adam and Eve were not aware that they lacked anything. All that they needed was provided by God in the garden, and they were both in right relationship with God.

However, this situation fundamentally changes in Genesis 3, which states that upon being tempted by the serpent, Eve “saw the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom… so she took some of its fruit and ate it,” as did Adam.\footnote{Genesis 3:6.} This was in direct violation of the only command God had given them. By taking the fruit and eating, they committed the first sin against God. Sin is most often described as “
\textit{chātā}” or “missing the mark;” it conveys the idea of not living up to the standard that God has set for holiness.\footnote{R. Stanton Norman, “Human Sinfulness,” in \textit{A Theology for the Church}, ed. Daniel Akin (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), Kindle, 14567.} At that juncture, a number of permanent things occurred to the entire human race. First, “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked.”\footnote{Genesis 3:7.} Adam and Eve, as well as the rest of humanity, now possessed an innate knowledge of shame for whom and what they are. Rather than being innocent, mankind became ashamed and guilty.\footnote{Mathews, \textit{Genesis 1-11:26}, vol. 1A, Kindle, 5516.} Second, God judged Adam and Eve as guilty and sentenced them to death.\footnote{Genesis 3:19.} This death would happen as their bodies physically died, but it was reflective of the fact that they could no longer remain in the presence of God—thus, they also spiritually died.\footnote{Genes 3:23-24.}

That all humanity has fallen under the curse as the result of Adam’s and Eve’s sin is clearly represented throughout Scripture. First, as humanity proliferates from the beginning, it
quickly becomes so degenerate and sinful—“man’s wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every scheme his mind thought of was nothing but evil all the time”—that God had to “wipe off from the face of the earth mankind.” This type of evil persisted throughout the history. Even God’s chosen people, Israel, behaved so poorly that God exiled them from the Promised Land. As a result, He exiled them from the Promised Land. New Testament authors are equally as discouraging about the human race. For instance, Jesus states that “No one is good but One—God.” Paul also argues that “there is no one righteous, not even one,” and “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” In conclusion, the Bible teaches that the fundamental problem with mankind is not a lack of knowledge, but guilt before God for breaking His divine command.

One of the difficult theological debates concerning the nature of sin and its effect on humanity involves attempting to describe how all of humanity came to a fallen state through Adam’s sin, yet also remains fully responsible with regard to the individual sins that one commits. Even if they could not answer this conundrum, the early church fathers agreed that this understanding of sin was correct. For example, Justin Martyr argues simultaneously that humanity has “from Adam’s time . . . fallen under death and the deceit of the serpent,” and “each man sinned by his own fault.” Augustine taught that “original sin” was part of human nature from “infancy,” which he likened to “desires” that “inflamed” him in his youth. Shedd further builds upon this understanding using the concepts of volition and inclination. He argues that the

345 Genesis 6:5-6.
346 Mark 10:18.
347 Romans 3:10, 23.
fallen part of the human will lies most strongly with the soul’s inclination which is “the actions of the soul which terminate on the soul itself.”\textsuperscript{350} Another way to explain this is as one’s desires. A holy inclination only has the desire to love God and obey His commands. A fallen inclination only has the inherent desire to satisfy oneself. According to Shedd, there is no way for a fallen sinful nature to recover itself. To get a holy nature back, one must receive the regeneration of the Holy Spirit and experience a “renovation of the will.”\textsuperscript{351}

This method of understanding sin’s effects relies on the theory of traducianism in terms of how people receive their souls. This view holds that all people were seminally present in Adam, and thus, share the guilt with Adam for rebelling against God, even though they are only held accountable for the individual sins they commit.\textsuperscript{352} The alternative view is called creationism, whereby mankind receives their souls directly from God upon conception and is held accountable for Adam’s sin through representative headship. Created souls are “deprived of original righteousness” upon the basis of Adam’s representation of the human race.\textsuperscript{353} In conclusion, though there are different ways of understanding sin, it is generally acknowledged in Evangelical Christianity that sin has both irreparably degraded human nature and that individuals are held accountable for their own sins.

\textbf{New Age Movement.} In New Age thinking, the root problem plaguing humanity is not sin, disobedience, nor rebellion against God. Instead, ignorance of our true nature is the

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item\textsuperscript{350} Shedd, \textit{Dogmatic Theology}, Kindle, 16375.
  \item\textsuperscript{351} Ibid, Kindle, 23870.
  \item\textsuperscript{352} Ibid, Kindle, 13859.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
fundamental problem. New Age environmental leader, Matthew Fox, argues that “awakening of heart knowledge and heart power” are the keys to being able to “help the Mother Earth.” More commonly, the New Age concept of ignorance is framed in the lack of one’s knowledge of one’s “superconsciousness” or the means by which one recognizes that one is god.

This type of thinking exemplifies the doctrine of Gnosticism, or “that salvation comes through knowledge (gnosis) rather than through faith (pistis).” This knowledge allows one to unlock the “higher self” and connect with the “God force.” Under this view, people can attain perfection by recognizing that they are part of god. Richard Rohr adopts this thinking and argues that without this knowledge, “we struggle to see God in our own reality, let alone to respect reality, protect it, or love it.” The New Age Movement affirms a view of mankind that is fundamentally good and in the “process” of becoming perfect. Thus, the doctrine of sin in the New Age Movement actually ends up in the deification of mankind with one author attesting that human beings are “the light of the world.”

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357 Easton, “Shirley MacLaine’s Mysticism for the Masses: She’s the Super Saleswoman for a Fast-Growing New Age Movement.”

358 Ibid.

359 Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe*, Kindle, 289.


361 Ibid.
Salvation of Humanity: Atonement vs. Hidden Knowledge

**Christianity.** Throughout Scripture, the solution to humanity’s problem of sin has been an atoning sacrifice. The first clear example of the requirement for an atoning sacrifice comes from the Passover. Exodus 12 states that “an unblemished . . . male . . . from either the sheep or goats” must be killed, and then, “some of the blood” must be “put on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses” of all of the Hebrews.\(^{362}\) If this was done, God said, “I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and strike every firstborn male in the land of Egypt . . . the blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you; when I see the blood, I will pass over you.”\(^{363}\) As a direct result of the sacrifice of a perfect lamb, God passed over them when meting out His wrath in judgment.\(^{364}\) 1 Peter 1:13-21 picks up on the idea of the Passover lamb and argues that the lamb’s blood “is now the redeeming blood of Christ Jesus.”\(^{365}\)

That the Messiah would have to act as a penal substitutionary sacrifice is also present throughout the prophets. For example, Isaiah 53 describes God’s servant as one who would be “pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds.”\(^{366}\) This verse underscores the reality that the punishment due for sin will be visited on the Servant of God and that people will have peace with God through the Servant. This entire section is directly applied to Jesus through 1 Peter

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\(^{362}\) Exodus 12: 5, 7.


\(^{366}\) Isaiah 53:5.
2:22 and the surrounding context which is a near direct quotation of the Septuagint version of Isaiah 53:9b.\textsuperscript{367} This links Jesus’ sacrifice with the Servant’s sacrifice in Isaiah and yields a clear picture of the interpretation of Jesus’ death as a “penal substitutionary death” that would “make atonement between [people] and God.”\textsuperscript{368}

Theologically, there have been several ways in which the atonement has been understood throughout the centuries, some of which are compatible with the biblical data concerning atonement. For instance, Luther taught:

"before, I had not yet any Lord, nor King, but had been held captive under the devil’s power, doomed to death, ensnared in sin and blindness…. Now, therefore, those tyrants and gaolers are all crushed, and in their place is come Jesus Christ, a Lord of Life, righteousness, all good and holiness, and He has snatched us poor lost men from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and brought us back to the Father’s goodness and grace."\textsuperscript{369}

Whereas theories of penal substitutionary atonement focus on the absolute necessity of Christ’s sacrifice in overcoming the debt of sin and appeasing the wrath of God, there are a number of other things that the atonement accomplishes as well which fit under the doctrine called “Christus Victor.”\textsuperscript{370} For instance, not only does sin incur a punishment, it also breaks relationships, disturbs peace or \textit{shalom}, causes “rebellion against authority,” makes things ritually unclean, brings “shame and disgrace on oneself,” and causes physical and spiritual death.\textsuperscript{371}

\textsuperscript{367} J. Ramsey Michaels, \textit{1 Peter}, Word Bible Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1988), 144.

\textsuperscript{368} Jeffery, Ovey, and Sach, \textit{Pierced for Our Transgressions: Rediscovering the Glory of Penal Substitution}, 67.


\textsuperscript{370} Ibid, Kindle, 143.

The traditional problem with “Christus Victor” is that it attempts to explain the atonement entirely in terms of “victory over the hostile powers” which “brings to pass a new relation, a relation of reconciliation, between God and the world.”372 However, affirming that penal substitutionary atonement is the means by which Christ obtains this victory maintains that PSA is at the core of atonement, and brings into view the reality of the victory over “the forces of evil and sin.”373 In this way, modern theologians have done justice to the verses which mention this type of victory including: Revelation 12:9-11—“They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony;” 1 John 3:4-9—”The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the Devil’s works;” Colossians 2:13-15—“He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it out of the way by nailing it to the cross . . . He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; He triumphed over them by Him.”374 In conclusion, the Christian view of the solution to the problem of sin is the atonement of Christ. In this atonement, Jesus pays the penalty due for sin (death) through which He then secures victory for believers and ultimately for God Himself over Satan.375

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375 Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 825-840. The atonement is one aspect of the full program of salvation that God carries out in the lives of the elect. Evangelicals disagree on the *ordo salutis*, or the order in which salvation events occur. This dissertation will not take any specific stance on one particular view as the point is to provide a comparison to New Age Movement theology, not to argue for a specific instance of Christian doctrine. However, evangelical theology has traditionally held to the following concepts (ordinals are not reflective of the *ordo salutis*). First, salvation must include the rectification of one’s guilt before God. This rectification is known as justification which occurs by grace through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Second, sin corrupted the heart of mankind so that his propensity was toward rebellion against God and moral failure. God’s solution to this issue is spiritual regeneration or being born again. Though this process, a person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and their inclination is now directed toward God and holiness. Third, through the power of the Holy Spirit, believers
**New Age Movement.** Due to its denial of sin, the New Age Movement takes a radically different approach to the solution to mankind’s problems than the Bible does. Marilyn Ferguson sums up the Aquarian gospel saying, “the central idea was always the same: Only through a new mind can humanity remake itself, and the potential for such a new mind is natural.”

Foundational to New Age belief is the idea that the human mind is ignorant and deficient and that it must strive to attain a higher consciousness in order to become perfect. In line with transcendentalist thinking, New Age leaders affirm that people should embrace “the expansive or self-transcending impulse of the self, [and] its desire to embrace the whole world in the experience of a single moment and to know and become one with that world.”

This type of thinking later became known in the New Age Movement as “the mind cure” which, similar to MacLaine’s “super soul,” contains the “occult power of making over the world in one’s own conscious imagery.” NAM teaching asserts that through this heightened consciousness, the distinction of “I-Thou” that is the root cause of humanity’s problems ceases to exist and rather than engaging in hate, violence, and crime, people will simply “feel as if you want to make love to the Cosmos.” Rather than needing to pay a penalty or atone for past wrongs, the New Age Movement teaches that the path to salvation is change: change in one’s consciousness will bring about the social change that we wish to see. NAM leaders undergo the process of sanctification by which they are progressively made holy. This process comes to completion only after death. Fourth, salvation is perfected after death in the event called glorification and through the general resurrection of believers when death is finally undone.

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fundamentally deny that there is anything inherently wrong with humanity that needs to be atoned for. In fact, NAM leaders affirm that “sacrifice is a notion totally unknown to God . . . [and] sacrificing in any way is a violation . . . you should be merciful even as your Father in Heaven is merciful.”380 Thus, the NAM affirms a new consciousness approach to salvation over an atonement-based salvation.

Agent of Salvation: God and Grace vs. Humanity and Works

**Christianity.** The New Testament contains a number of verses that explicitly affirm the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice. For instance, Acts 4:12 records that “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people, and we must be saved by it.”381 Similarly, Romans 8:1 argues that “there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”382 The New Testament also presents a unified view on faith being the sole means through which people receive Christ’s atonement. Romans 5:1 states, “therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Gospel of John articulates a similar view saying, “truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.”383 Ephesians 2:8-10 demonstrates that works are a product of one’s faith in God and one’s justification, not the cause of it: “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are His creation,

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380 Schucman, *A Course in Miracles*, 813.

381 Acts 4:12.

382 Romans 8:1.

383 John 6:47.
created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.”

This verse is vital to the conversation on salvation by faith as upon cursory reading, James 2:24 seems to say the opposite: “You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.” With regard to this verse, New Testament scholar, Frances Gench, states “Paul is dealing . . . with how new life begins; James, however, is dealing with . . . how Christian life grows and matures.” Rather than attempting to demonstrate that a person is literally saved by works and faith, James’ statement should be read as, “by works a person is shown to be justified.” This is a vital distinction to make as otherwise James would be read in complete disagreement with Paul and would be a direct violation of infallibility.

One of the main disagreements between the Protestant branch of Christianity and the Roman Catholic branch concerns the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice for the propitiation of sins. Catholicism affirms “the exclusivity of Christ,” but denies that Christ’s work is sufficient grounds for justification saying, “If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; [meaning] that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the

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384 Ephesians 2:8-10.
movement of his own will; let him be anathema.”

Again, the issue is not that Christ is not the only way to salvation, but rather, Christ and man must “co-operate” in order to receive justification, thus His sacrifice is not sufficient. Church historian, Gregg Allison, argues that it is not that Catholic doctrine requires works per say, but that Catholicism heavily emphasizes the “Christ-Church interconnection” to the point of claiming that the sacraments of the Church “confer grace” in their administration.

In contrast, the Protestant Church affirms the strict doctrine of solus Christus, which states that faith in Christ’s sacrifice alone is enough to receive total justification from sins. One of the keys to understanding and defending the Protestant doctrine is demonstrating that what Jesus suffered was the fullness of the wrath of God that believers deserve. This is depicted in brutal color in Matthew 20. James’ and John’s mother came to Jesus requesting that they be given the highest positions in the coming kingdom of God. Jesus then responds, “You don’t know what you’re asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?”

The reference to the cup was generally understood to refer to “suffering, especially that caused by God’s wrath.” The disciples response that they could indeed “drink the cup,” which “simply shows that they still do not understand.” Jesus’s initial question affirmed that the cup of the wrath of God was something that only He could drink, and that once done, the wrath of God

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391 Matthew 20:22.


393 Ibid, Kindle, 7898.
would be fully dealt with. In conclusion, the Bible teaches that Christ’s sacrifice alone is sufficient to propitiate the sins of mankind. Additionally, contra to the Catholic Church, the Sacraments are not required in order to partake of the sacrifice of Jesus. However, either way, neither branch of Christianity holds that man’s own contrivances can bring about justification.

**New Age Movement.** NAM doctrine is explicitly works based in its approach to human salvation. The starting point of the New Age adherent is a condition in which the person is under “an illusion” that he or she is “limited and finite.” The only way to transcend this illusion is through the acquisition of knowledge. However, it is not factual, verbal, head knowledge that must be acquired. Virtually every New Age follower asserts the belief that he or she is part of the god substance, but that assertion does not itself bring enlightenment. Rather, New Age members must engage in a variety of practices through which they can gain a spiritual awareness of the verbal truth. It is this spiritual awareness that is the key to achieving salvation or knowledge of the truth about one’s divinity.

For example, New Age guru, Werner Erhard, developed an enlightenment training, called E.S.T. (Erhard Seminars Training), through which one could come to know his or her “true (divine) potential.” The core of the trainings involves “lectures, mental exercises sometimes involving altered states of consciousness, and group ‘sharing’ of feelings and experiences.” Enlightenment involves the realization that one is personally in control of and responsible for everything that has happened to them as they are ‘‘gods’ who create their own reality and

Aside from E.S.T., New Age adherents turn to Astrology, channeling, meditation, muscle testing, crystal work, and visualization in order to achieve this heightened state of divine consciousness. In conclusion, the New Age Movement promotes a path to salvation that is completely within the control and responsibility of the individual. No one can achieve enlightenment for another, rather, the individual must find his or her own path to divinity.

Purpose of Salvation: Sanctification and Holiness vs. Consciousness of Divinity

**Christianity.** Sanctification is fundamental to the Christian life and to Christian eschatology. It is the “process by which God works to make his children holy in character” and sets them “apart for Himself.” The aspect of setting apart is exemplified by statements like, “to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus and called as saints,” which speak of sanctification in completed terms. This is consistent with the Old Testament understanding of sanctification, by which both people and objects were made clean or positionally sanctified (“consecrated”) in order to work in the Temple and be in God’s presence.

The other aspect of sanctification is progressive and is carried by the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. Though this type of sanctification requires the cooperation of the believer, it is still “a supernatural work of God.” For example, Ephesians 3:16 states that believers will be

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399 Ibid, v.
401 1 Corinthians 1:2.
402 Leviticus 11:44.
“strengthened with power in the inner man through His Spirit.”\footnote{Ephesians 3:16.} In Galatians, Paul writes that when people “walk by the Spirit” they will “not carry out the desire of the flesh” and will not engage in all variety of immorality because the Spirit of God produces “fruit” in the life of the believer.\footnote{Galatians 5:16-23.} Additionally, one cannot expect to become fully sanctified while on the earth because we are at war, “for though we live in the body, we do not wage war in an unspiritual way;” however, heaven is filled with the “spirits of righteous people made perfect.”\footnote{2 Corinthians 10:3; Hebrews 12:23.}

Theologically, both Catholic and Protestant branches have differed from the Orthodox branch on the topic of sanctification. The Orthodox view of “deification,” or “theosis,” was first expounded by Irenaeus, who said, “Who for His immense love’s sake was made that which we are, in order that He might perfect us to be what He is.”\footnote{Saint Irenaeus, \textit{Five Books of S. Irenaeus Bishop of Lyons Against Heresies}, trans. John Keble (Oxford, England: James Parker and Co., 1872).} The primary biblical justification for this doctrine is 2 Peter 1:4, which states, “By these He has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may share in the divine nature.”\footnote{2 Peter 1:4.} The concept of sharing in the divine nature has persisted as a central tenet of the Orthodox faith to this day. The Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese states that “theosis is the understanding that human beings can have real union with God, and so become like God to such a degree that we participate in the divine nature.”\footnote{Mark Shuttleworth, “Theosis: Partaking of the Divine Nature,” \textit{Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America}, n.d., accessed June 10, 2020, http://www1.antiochian.org/content/theosis-partaking-divine-nature.} Though this might initially seem like an acceptance of mankind’s ability to...
ontologically become deity, it is not. Rather, *theosis* is the process by which “we achieve union with God . . . through the divine energies” and not through union with God’s essence.410

Concerning 2 Peter 1:4, Bauckham argues that “it is not very likely that participation in God’s own essence is intended” as “to share in divine nature is to become immortal and incorruptible.”411 Thus, in agreement with the Orthodox church, any attempt to use this verse to justify transmutation of essence is erroneous. However, the terminology of deification can be easily misconstrued, so Rakestraw argues that we should not talk of human beings “becoming God” or “divinization” or “deification,” but rather, we should speak of “becoming like God” as found in 1 John 2:6, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 Corinthians 11:1, Ephesians 4:22-24, 1 John 3:2, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and Ephesians 5:1.412 In conclusion, the Christian doctrine of sanctification, in all branches of Christianity, denies that Christians share ontologically in the essence of God. Rather, to varying degrees, they argue that sanctification is a process by which people become set apart as holy before the Lord and attain to perfect moral character by His power.

**New Age Movement.** The New Age version of sanctification is the progressive evolution of the spirit by which “man [is] in the process of evolving from his current status to yet a higher being,” namely god.413 One of the main proponents of this ascension to divinity was Mary Baker

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413 Martin, *The Kingdom of the Occult*, Kindle, 4163. One of the more interesting New Age incorporations of other worldviews can be seen in how NAM leaders modified physical evolution to reflect the spiritual realm. For instance, Human Potential cults believed that “Darwinian evolution was part of their process” to attain higher spiritual ascendency. Additionally, NAM leaders saw Christianity as a “blockade” to their ideology due to its anthropological convictions that mankind was created complete and does not evolve.
Eddy and the Church of Christian Science. In her seminal work, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, she stated that “there is no life, truth, intelligence nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-All.”\(^{414}\) Thus as one recognizes this maxim, one will ascend on the path to divinity. One New Age leader of the Theosophy cult, Louis Rogers, articulated this doctrine by saying that mankind “is an embryo-god, being destined to ultimately evolve his latent powers into perfect expression.”\(^ {415}\)

The process of ascension is entirely self-dependent; Rogers explicitly denies that the sacrifice of Christ “has relieved man from the necessity of developing his spiritual nature . . . [and] nullif[ied] his personal responsibility for any evil he has done.”\(^{416}\) Instead, New Age members must utilize a variety of means to gain power and knowledge that will allow them to ascend to divinity. For instance, knowledge can be attained through the spiritual world through astrology, horoscopes, the zodiac, automatic writing, clairaudience and clairvoyance, divination, mediums, numerology, out-of-body experiences, parapsychology, spirit guides, and telepathy.\(^ {417}\) These practices are seen as ways that people are “participating in God as individualized manifestations of [the] Ultimate Unifying Principle and as channels of the universal energy to the world.”\(^ {418}\) In conclusion, sanctification in the New Age Movement is not about being set apart, nor moral perfection. Instead, it is concerned with the processes and practices that can allow a person to evolve from a spiritually ignorant state to a fully divine state.

\(^{414}\) Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston, MA: Trustees under the will of Mary Baker Eddy, 1934), 468.


\(^{416}\) Ibid, 181.


Result of Salvation: Resurrection vs. Divinity

**Christianity.** The end goal of salvation for the Christian is glorification. The Scripture references that deal with the concept of glorification are some of the most exciting and uplifting verses in the entire Bible. At the core of glorification is the concept of resurrection and eternal life. Jesus promises in John 11 that He is “the resurrection and the life” and that “the one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live.” This verse captures both a present and future reality. In the present, people who believe in Jesus have eternal life, which is “that they may know you, the only true God, and the One You have sent—Jesus Christ.”

In the future, Paul claims that just as “God raised the Lord,” so will He “also raise us up by His power.” The resurrection results in the complete undoing of physical death through which believers will receive a new body. This body is described in magnificent detail in 1 Corinthians 15 as being “raised in incorruption . . . glory . . . [and] power.” Additionally, though the body is a “spiritual body,” this is simply a statement of contrast with the “natural body” which exhibits “corruption,” “dishonor,” and “weakness;” it is not a statement that the resurrection body is not physical. New Testament scholar, N. T. Wright, agrees with this assessment by uncovering that the distinction of “spiritual” and “natural” and the meaning of “flesh and blood” are not references to the physicality/non-physicality issue, rather they refer to the “corruptible physicality”/“incorruptible physicality” issue. The beauty of the resurrection

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419 John 11:25.
421 1 Corinthians 6:14.
422 1 Corinthians 15:42-43.
423 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.
is that believers will no longer have to deal with “sickness, injury, decay, and death” because the “new body will be immortal.”

One of the more prominent historical heresies, called Docetism, held as its central point that the resurrection of Jesus was not real and thus that the future resurrection of believers would not occur. Threads of Docetism can be found in early writings like the apocryphal Gospel of Peter which presents Jesus as disturbingly aloof during the crucifixion and “feeling no pain.” Church historian J. Kelly asserts that statements like these indicated a belief that Jesus’ “bodily make-up was illusory.” The gnostic documents of the Nag Hammadi detail the Docetic ideal in full as they attribute sayings to Christ that are in explicit denial of His resurrection and by extension the resurrection of believers. For instance, they record that Jesus stated that “I did not die in reality but in appearance,” “I suffered according to their sight and thought,” and “for my death which they think happened, (happened) to them in their error and blindness.” This view has resurfaced in modern liberal theological circles through scholars like Shelby Spong, who asserts that “viewing the resurrection of Jesus as physical resuscitation was a late developing tradition in early Christianity.”

425 Wright, Surprised by Hope, Kindle, 2537.


The early church fathers rigorously defended against these views. Ignatius in particular denounced this understanding of Christ and the Resurrection saying, “the unbelieving, say, He became man in appearance [only], that He did not in reality take unto Him a body, that He died in appearance [merely], and did not in very deed suffer.” He also affirmed that “He was crucified in reality, and not in appearance, not in imagination, not in deceit . . . he really died, and was buried, and rose from the dead . . . therefore, who raised Him up, will also raise us up through Him, apart from whom no one will attain to true life.” One of the better arguments against Docetism comes from Irenaeus who stated that “He had Himself, therefore, flesh and blood, recapitulating in Himself not a certain other, but that original handiwork of the Father, seeking out that thing which had perished . . . because the righteous flesh has reconciled that flesh which was being kept under bondage in sin, and brought it into friendship with God.”

Thus, Christ had to take on real flesh and be physically resurrected, so God could reconcile the totality of human nature to Himself. In conclusion, the Bible and orthodox Christianity have maintained the physicality of the resurrection and its superiority over remaining in a disembodied state. The process of resurrection is known as glorification and is one aspect of the future hope that Christians look forward to in eternity.

New Age Movement. The fundamental end of mankind in the New Age Movement is not restoration, reconciliation, nor a resurrection body; rather, it is the attainment of full divinity.

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432 Ibid.

However, it is not often clear exactly what the attainment of godhood will bring about. Often, divinity is referenced by using vague language like “divine spark” or “droplet of divinity.” Some New Age proponents emphasize that the blessing of becoming one with god is the “cosmic connection” that is developed through which people can become “channels for the universe.” This connection then fuels people with boundless ecstatic love and acceptance. NAM leader, Matthew Fox, argues that the primary benefit of becoming one with the Cosmos is the reception and utilization of “creativity” which is “a cosmic energy.” In his understanding, when a person is able to engage in “true nothingness” and learns to develop a “reverence for the dark,” one can embrace the “awesomeness and the responsibility of our creativity.” When one fully engages as creation/god, one realizes that one has the power to create one’s own reality and the reality that he or she has been living has been one of his or her own creation without knowing it.

One of the more fascinating corollaries of New Age Movement theology is the realization that one cannot encounter truly “other” minds in light of the universal consciousness. When she had arrived at the end state of her quest into higher consciousness, MacLaine claimed that “I was the only person alive in my universe.” The New Age Movement’s assertion that individual people are only instantiations of “The One Mind” fundamentally destroys any possibility of

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436 Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, 205.


439 MacLaine, *It’s All in the Playing*, 171.
eternal community. In decreeing that one is “one” with the Cosmos, there can be no recognition of individuality. Thus, though there is endless ecstatic “love,” there is no eternal loving community. In conclusion, the New Age understanding of enlightenment is the actualization of becoming one with the impersonal god-force cosmic energy that unites all material things.

**Sin and Salvation Criteria**

**Table 3.4 Sin and Salvation Criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Number</th>
<th>Criterion Description</th>
<th>Christian Teaching</th>
<th>New Age Movement Teaching</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Problem with humanity</td>
<td>Humanity has sinned against God and is separate from God</td>
<td>Ignorance of divine nature and true self</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Consequence of problem</td>
<td>Spiritual and physical death; eternity in hell</td>
<td>Continual reincarnation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Baseline state of humanity</td>
<td>Unholy, not good, sinful</td>
<td>Humanity is essentially good</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Solution to the problem:</td>
<td>Penal substitutionary atonement</td>
<td>Acquisition of hidden or gnostic knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>mode</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Solution to the problem:</td>
<td>Faith in Jesus and His sacrifice</td>
<td>Spiritual encounters and religious practices lead to</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>means</td>
<td></td>
<td>enlightened consciousness</td>
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<th></th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Works versus faith salvation</th>
<th>Jesus’ atonement on the cross is fully sufficient for salvation; faith is all that is required</th>
<th>NAM practices require continual work and are not sufficient for total enlightenment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sanctification: definition</td>
<td>Process by which God makes believers holy in character and set apart for Himself</td>
<td>Process by which adherents become aware of their connection to the Cosmos and discover their true self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sanctification: means</td>
<td>The Holy Spirit, through the regenerate heart and cooperation of the believer, purge sin from his or her life</td>
<td>Increased participation in spiritual practices causes individuals to become aware of their divine nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Destiny of mankind</td>
<td>Glorification through the general resurrection (new physical body), completion of sanctification, and</td>
<td>Deification through becoming one with the Cosmos; no resurrection of the physical body, only reincarnation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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| 10 | Eschatological community | Eternal community of morally perfect beings | Recognition of the individual as alone in the universe |

**Spirituality**

**Introduction**

This section will present a theology for spirituality from the perspectives of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the New Age Movement. Each subsection will address both authentic spirituality as well as inauthentic spirituality. After the conclusion of this section, a chart of dichotomies will be developed from its material. This chart will be used in the assessment of church practices.

**Definition of spirituality and its relationship to worship.** The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* defines spirituality as “the state of deep relationship to God.” Don Saliers provides a helpful expansion of this definition, saying that spirituality is “humanity at full stretch before God in relation to world and to neighbor,” or “humanity at full stretch as animated by the Holy Spirit of God—coming alive to the depths and heights and ordinariness of being human in the image of God shown in Jesus the Christ.” In an evangelical framework, this means that true spirituality is intrinsically linked to both Scripture and worship. First, Scripture is the only

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source of authoritative information about the image of God and Jesus Christ as the perfect image of God. Scripture is also the only authority on the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, a proper understanding of spirituality requires a proper relationship to and use of the Word of God.

Second, in terms of worship’s role in spirituality, Romans 12:1 provides a helpful connection: “therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship.”442 In his commentary on Romans, Thiselton argues that the key to spiritual life is a “‘profound transformation’, which is ‘not the Christian’s own doing but the work of the Holy Spirit.’”443 Romans defines this transformation as being by God’s mercy and as a “living sacrifice” that is “spiritual worship.”444 Anders Nygren points out that the type of sacrifice Paul is referring to is found in Romans 12:2 and includes the “mind” being renewed in Christ.445 Thiselton, agrees, saying that the “renewal of the mind is crucial for Christians, because…Christians must not let themselves be moulded by the world.”446 In conclusion, the end goal of spirituality as deepening one’s relationship with God can be effected only by the power of God through the Holy Spirit. This work is accomplished practically through the Spirit’s empowerment to be conformed to the perfect image of God, Jesus Christ, as an act of worship under the direction of the Word of God. Thus, authentic spirituality hinges on one’s understanding of authentic worship as detailed by Scripture.

442 Romans 12:1
444 Romans 12:1, the use of sōmata in this verse should be taken to refer to the whole person given the emphasis on the renewal of the mind in the next verse.
446 Thiselton, Discovering Romans: Content, Interpretation, and Reception, 221.
Ross provides a good framework for understanding worship, stating that worship is “the structured and ordered expression of the proper response of the people of God to the revelation of God in Christ.”

When people engage in worship with the proper heart and through the proper rituals, they are filled with “adoration and praise” for the triune God of Christianity. In this “transcendent meeting with the living God,” what is typically seen as routine becomes “life-changing and life-defining.”

Unfortunately, with the modern rejection of the authority and sufficiency of Holy Scripture as the authoritative Word of God, people look to cultivate transcendent spiritual experiences “everywhere” else including: yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Eastern mysticism, sex, music, art, mind-altering drugs, and rituals.

In contrast to these practices, true worship and true spirituality are defined through direct divine revelation from God. The next section will examine Old Testament passages that deal with the proper form of worship for the Israelites as a covenant people and draw applications that are still relevant for Christians today.

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448 Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, Kindle, 268.

Spirituality in the Old Testament

**Authentic spirituality: types of proscribed spiritual practices.** The Old Testament proscribes a wide variety of activities and rituals that all constitute the proper means by which mankind may interact with God and worship God. First, as a direct corollary of its definition, worship occurs through and as a response to the proclamation of the Word of God.\(^{450}\) Psalm 29 provides a poetic picture of the power of the Word of God in worship. The psalm begins with an entreaty to “ascribe to Yahweh” the truth about His nature and character as revealed through Scripture.\(^{451}\) Next, the psalmist asserts that the “voice of the Lord” has “power,” “splendor,” and “shatters the cedars of Lebanon.”\(^{452}\) Each of these images speaks of God’s voice and His Word as having the power to effect real change in the world. The psalmist asserts God’s total sovereignty over everything that happens as is affirmed by the double mention of the Lord sitting “enthroned, King forever.”\(^{453}\)

The Word of God is also tied to obedience—another aspect of worship and spirituality—as seen when the psalmist declared: “I have treasured Your word in my heart so that I may not sin against You.”\(^{454}\) Additionally, the Word of God in proclamation is tied to praise, for the same psalmist rejoices in the fact that “with my lips I proclaim all the judgments from Your mouth . . . I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget Your word.”\(^{455}\) That the Word of God is also

\(^{450}\) Deuteronomy 17:18-20; Deuteronomy 32:46-47; Psalm 1:1-3.

\(^{451}\) Psalm 29:1-2.

\(^{452}\) Psalm 29:3-5.

\(^{453}\) Psalm 29:10.

\(^{454}\) Psalm 119:11.

\(^{455}\) Psalm 119: 13-16.
“firmly fixed in heaven,” and “a lamp for my feet and a light on my path” is indicative that it should be directing every moral and worshipful action of the human being.456

To proclaim God’s Word, to assert the truth of who God is, to remind people of the covenants God has made with them, and to invite people to reaffirm their “allegiance to one sovereign, holy—but invisible—God” is at the core of the proper worship.457 Thus, acts which constitute true worship must simultaneously exemplify the revelation of the one true God and as denunciations of “pagan worship as a futile lie.”458 Authentic spirituality must, in its very content, “expose” the “works” of the world which do not bring “profit,” as they are fundamentally idolatrous and so superfluous that “a breath will take them away.”459 Thus, spiritual practice and rituals cannot be separated from theology. Otherwise, “true worship would become hopelessly entangled with false worship.”460

Second, true worship and spirituality involve proper sacrifice, which is necessitated by God’s holiness. One of the central motifs of Scripture is the idea of a “holy dwelling.”461 God’s manifest presence, as found in the Garden of Eden, the Tabernacle, and Solomon’s Temple, will not abide the presence of sin, sinful beings, or defiled objects.462 The only way in which people can draw near to God in worship is through a proper sacrifice. The story of Cain and Abel

456 Psalm 119:89,105.
457 Ross, Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation, Kindle, 1100.
458 Ibid, Kindle, 1094.
460 Ross, Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation, Kindle, 1110.
461 Ibid, Kindle, 1786-1850.
462 Leviticus 16.
provides the template for the type of sacrifice that God requires in worship. First, Cain brings an offering of vegetation while Abel brings an offering of an animal sacrifice.\(^ {463}\) This mirrors Adam and Eve’s attempt to cover with vegetation versus God’s covering through animal hide.\(^ {464}\) In both of these accounts, God denied man’s own capability to provide for himself outside of the garden and instead affirmed that man would need to rely on God’s provision even though he would now lack His direct presence. In this way, proper worship reinforces the necessity of mankind’s reliance on God both in general and in anticipation of the necessity of a God provided sacrifice for atonement from sins.

The sacrifice must also be representative of the best one has to offer in order to constitute authentic worship. In the case of Cain and Abel, Cain’s sacrifice was designated as “some of the land’s produce,” indicating that what was given was not distinguishable from the rest of what Cain produced.\(^ {465}\) In contrast, Abel offered “the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions” which indicated that he presented a sacrifice that was truly a sacrifice to give.\(^ {466}\) This ties directly into the holiness of God as only a sacrifice that was itself unblemished could actually serve as an atonement sacrifice. Only something ritually clean could purify something that was ritually unclean.\(^ {467}\)

Third, true spiritual worship must involve praising YHWH. This aspect flows directly from the need to receive atonement from sin—and often, from the need to receive deliverance

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\(^ {463}\) Genesis 4:3-4.

\(^ {464}\) Genesis 3:7,21

\(^ {465}\) Genesis 4:3.

\(^ {466}\) Genesis 4:4.

\(^ {467}\) Leviticus 16:15-19.
and restoration after a time of divine punishment or exile. One of the best examples of this is the song of Israel to the Lord recorded immediately after the Israelites deliverance from the Egyptians during the time of Moses and the Exodus.\(^\text{468}\) In this song, God is praised for being their “salvation” and for being holy and unique.\(^\text{469}\) The praise offered in this song is an indication that the Israelites “had been accepted into the presence of God.”\(^\text{470}\) Additionally, praise for God could be offered at any time with regard to any encounter with God or His Word. Praise was also fundamentally structured into the lives of the Jewish people through seasonal proscriptions in the Torah. Thus, any act, ritual, or practice should point to God as the source of blessing, deliverance, or forgiveness and should result in His praise.

**Authentic spirituality: heart of the worshipper.** In addition to the types of spiritual practices that are ordained by God, Scripture also speaks directly about the heart behind one’s worship or spiritual practice. Psalm 40:6 states that God does “not delight in sacrifice and offering;” but rather, He delights in people doing His will and when His “instruction lives” within people.\(^\text{471}\) Hosea 6:6 argues a similar point, saying “For I desire loyalty and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”\(^\text{472}\) Rituals are important in that they represent a very real necessity that people need God to act on their behalf in order to be restored to Him. However, those rituals and practices should be conducted with a contrite, humble, and upright heart. This same heart can be seen behind memorial acts in worship such as the celebration of the

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\(^{468}\) Exodus 15.

\(^{469}\) Exodus 15:2,11.

\(^{470}\) Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation*, Kindle, 2163.

\(^{471}\) Psalm 40:6-8.

\(^{472}\) Hosea 6:6.
Passover. The ritualistic act of celebration of this festival naturally leads one to a humble state before God as it was by His sovereign choice that the Israelites did not suffer the plague of the first-born.

Going back to the story of Cain and Abel, there are a number of lessons to be learned about the proper heart of worship as a requirement for authentic spirituality. Genesis 4:4-5 offers insight into the disposition out of which each sacrifice was given. Abel sacrificed the best he had knowing that God was worthy of the best his livestock produced. This indicated an attitude of humility when approaching God. Cain, on the other hand, responded to God’s lack of “regard” for his sacrifice by being “furious” and looking “despondent.” Old Testament scholar, Kenneth Matthews, states that the primary issue directing God’s response to the sacrifices was “the integrity of the giver.”

Later in the story, when God is speaking to Cain, He states that “if you do what is right, won’t you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” This is an indication that “Cain’s wicked lifestyle” was a large part of the reason that Cain’s sacrifice was not accepted, as is reiterated in 1 John 3:12.

God’s statement brings out another aspect of proper worship and spirituality: obedience to His commands. This is reiterated throughout the Old Testament. For example, 1 Samuel 15:22 states, “Does the Lord take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the

473 Genesis 4:4-5.
Lord? Look: to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay attention is better than the fat of rams."\(^{476}\)

This verse ties directly back into the definition of worship: “For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and defiance is like wickedness and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has rejected you as king.”\(^{477}\) Disobedience is fundamentally a rejection of the Word of God. By rejecting the Word of God, one no longer respects the only true source of worship. Thus, it does not matter what practices or rituals one engages in, they cannot be done in a truly spiritual sense if they stand against God’s Word.\(^{478}\)

**Authentic spirituality: specific spiritual activities.** There are two classes of spiritual interactions that are authorized in Scripture. The first class is comprised of those interactions which involve man connecting directly with God Himself. Going to God directly is often compared with attempting to approach either God or the spiritual realm indirectly.\(^{479}\) For example, Isaiah 8:19 attests that people should “consult their God,” rather than “the spirits of the dead.”\(^{480}\) Authentic contact with God occurs in two forms: “the Lord’s word” and by His “great power.”\(^{481}\) These two means of communication serve different roles in relationship to God’s communication with mankind. The power of God, or “signs and wonders” serves the purpose of

\(^{476}\) 1 Samuel 15:22.

\(^{477}\) 1 Samuel 15:23

\(^{478}\) Further list of verses that defend obedience over sacrifice: Psalm 51:1-16; Jeremiah 7:21-23; Deuteronomy 5:1-33; Micah 6:8.


\(^{480}\) Isaiah 8:19. Utilization of the Urim and Thummim fall under the category of consulting God directly, as God is being petitioned directly through divinely appointed means.

“confirm[ing]” the Word of God that was given through Moses. Once the Word of God was given and affirmed through signs and wonders, it could not be countered by anything, including future signs and wonders that accompanied a contrary message.

The second way people are authorized to interact with the spiritual world is through unprovoked angelic encounters. In Scripture, humans never seek out these encounters, nor do they ask angels for power; rather, angels are “employed by God to minister to the welfare of men.” For example, God sends angels to communicate His message to people, or to announce great events—like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Thus, angelic encounters are only authorized when they are initiated by God and fulfilling His commands.

In conclusion, authentic spirituality as described by the Old Testament must, at all points, reference the Word of God, have direct bearing on the atonement of Christ through the cross, and result in the praise of God for both who He is and what He has done. Any practice fit for spiritual use must also be able to be done with a contrite heart and humility toward God. In terms of the types of spirituality that are permitted, the Old Testament provides for God’s voice to encounter mankind through prophets and angels.

482 Deuteronomy 6:22. For reference, this view is also affirmed in the New Testament in Mark 16:20.


484 Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Kindle, 2694.

485 Genesis 19:1-22; Events like the birth and resurrection of Jesus were announced by angels as well in Luke 1:26-38; John 20:12.

486 Geoffrey Bromiley, “Angel,” Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 61. Theologian G. W. Bromiley argues that Christians should not “deal with angels apart from the biblical witness.”
Prohibited spirituality: source of spiritual error. The key to understanding Old Testament prohibitions against specific spiritual practices is to understand their link to idolatry. In 2 Kings, the author records that disaster was brought upon the Israelites because “they had worshiped other gods . . . [and] had lived according to the customs of the nations the Lord had dispossessed.”\(^{487}\) Some of the specific practices mentioned in this section are that the Israelites “practiced divination and interpreted omens.”\(^{488}\) In these verses, idolatry and the customs and practices of other nations are so tied together that the assumption is that if Israel accepted one they would quickly adopt the other. This view is also found in the close proximity of Leviticus 18:3 with Leviticus 19:4, which relates God’s commands to “not follow the practices of the land of Egypt, where you used to live, or follow the practices of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. You must not follow their customs,” and “not turn to idols or make cast images of gods for yourselves; I am Yahweh your God.”\(^{489}\)

The psalms and prophets are also replete with depictions of when the Israelites syncretized with other nations in terms of both the acceptance of idols and foreign spiritual practices.\(^{490}\) For instance, Psalm 106 links the two, saying that Israel “mingled with the nations and adopted their ways . . . [and] served their idols which became a snare to them.”\(^{491}\) Similarly, Psalm 78 argues that God became angry with Israel when the people “did not keep His decrees”

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\(^{487}\) 2 Kings 17:7-8.

\(^{488}\) 2 Kings 17:17.

\(^{489}\) Leviticus 18:3; 19:4.

\(^{490}\) Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation*, Kindle, 3172.

\(^{491}\) Psalm 106:34-36.
and adopted “carved images” to worship.\textsuperscript{492} The prophet Jeremiah framed the link between idolatry and perverse spiritual practices in real world terms. He stated that “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”\textsuperscript{493} First, this verse indicts the Israelites with idol worship. Second, God admonishes Israel for seeking water from man-made idols, rather than the living water from Himself. This false worship led to a lack of the knowledge of “the way of the Lord, [and] the requirements of their God,” as the people “prophesied by Baal” and engaged in adultery.\textsuperscript{494}

The connection between spiritual practices and idolatry is due to the belief that idols could be manipulated into doing what one desired through sympathetic magic. These spiritual practices utilized “magical operations” to accomplish such tasks as “to destroy masculinity and battle prowess of the enemy.”\textsuperscript{495} For instance, the Israelites embraced the Canaanite’s fertility cult of Ashera, as found in Judges 3:7. In order to ensure their continued fertility—something YHWH promised through the Abrahamic Covenant—the Israelites turned to Ashera poles and “the ritual of sympathetic enactment in a local shrine,” which often took the form of temple prostitution.\textsuperscript{496} It is important to note that throughout the Old Testament, “any attempt to include

\textsuperscript{492} Psalm 78:56,58.
\textsuperscript{493} Jeremiah 2:13.
\textsuperscript{494} Jeremiah 5:4; 23:10-13.
\textsuperscript{496} Ross, \textit{Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation}, Kindle, 3172.
the perverse practices of the world and its false religions in the worship of God will corrupt the worship and the morals of the participants.”

**Prohibited spirituality: types of forbidden spiritual practices.** One of the major groupings of forbidden practices in the Old Testament is anything that can be categorized as “magic” or “the use of ritual activities or observances which are intended to influence the course of events or to manipulate the natural world, usually involving the use of an occult or secret body of knowledge; sorcery, witchcraft.” Deeply intertwined with a person’s ability to utilize magic to manipulate the physical and spiritual realm is the concept of occult knowledge, which is “wisdom . . . beyond the range of ordinary human knowledge;” these are gained through the practice of divination, fortune telling, spiritism (necromancy), and magic. Magic and occult knowledge are used to achieve five main purposes: (1) transformation or translation of mankind into divinity, (2) internalizing the idea that all is one and all is God, (3) to recognize that mankind is inherently divine, (4) to realize that mankind is essentially good and “evil is an illusion or imperfection,” and (5) to gain control over the world through the amplification of spiritual power through specific spiritual practices.

One of the dominant occult, spiritual practices that is forbidden throughout the Old Testament is the practice of divination, which is the “art or science of deducing the future or the unknown through the observation and interpretation of some facet of nature or human life,

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497 Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation*, Kindle, 3322.


500 Ibid.
ordinarily of an unpredictable or trial character.” Scripture issues heavy warnings against practicing divination and its related practice, fortune-telling. Micah 5:11-12 expressly forbids “ānān” which is translated fortune-telling or soothsaying. Though it is difficult to tell exactly what the word means, it is likely linked to the forbidden practice of “nāchash,” found in both Deuteronomy and Leviticus, which is a reference to prognostication, predicting the future, and “seeking forbidden knowledge.” Though people could and did go to God for wisdom and knowledge, these aforementioned forbidden practices all reference alternative means of attaining knowledge. Some examples of the general ban on divination include the interpretation of omens and seeking after signs and even the reading of entrails. Divination even serves as a way through which heresy was able to enter Israel as Ezekiel records that “they see falsehood and lying divination who are saying, ‘Did you not see a false vision and speak a lying divination when you said, ‘The Lord declares,’ but it is not I who have spoken?’” Thus, divination is something that was syncretized with ancient Judaism to devastating effect.

The Bible also explicitly condemns a variety of practices through which divination was carried out: spiritism, consulting mediums, necromancy. These three terms are significantly related and represent three types of false prophets who seek revelation through sources other than

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501 D. E. Aune, “Divination,” The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980). Though some have pointed out that numerology is not rejected in Scripture, it is covered under the injunction of Divination. Numerology is the observation of one’s birth chart which is a “facet of . . . human life” to gain hidden, occult knowledge. Thus, it is a form of divination and explicitly rejected by Scripture under the banner of divination.


the God-ordained prophetic-apostolic commission. In general, one who participates in spiritism, consults a medium, engages in necromancy, or attempts to contact the “spirits of dead people” does so with the express purpose of learning hidden knowledge. This practice and many others are expressly forbidden in Deuteronomy 18:10-11: “No one among you is to make his son or daughter pass through the fire, practice divination, tell fortunes, interpret omens, practice sorcery, cast spells, consult a medium or a familiar spirit, or inquire of the dead.” As stated in Deuteronomy and 1 Samuel, spiritism also covers any attempt to contact spirits, which can be seen through heretical examples of false prophets delivering oracles through unclean spirits or “satanic beings.” The primary dictum put forth by this section of Scripture is the idea that “any means employed by the heathen to gain information from their gods or even to manipulate them . . . had to be strictly avoided by God’s elect people.”

A third set of biblically prohibited practices is summed up by the idea of magic rituals and includes the practice of sorcery and the use of spells. Sorcery was tied to the “ability to create apparitions” and even manipulate the physical world in the case of the Egyptian magicians who recreated the early plagues. Additionally, sorcerers often pedaled enchantments, herbs, and amulets that were thought to be able to manipulate the physical world, especially with regard to fertility. For example, Isaiah’s denunciation of “crescents” in Isaiah 3:18 is a specific


reference to “counter charms worn around the neck to protect against evil spirits, and, as such, meant an acknowledgement of heathen religion.”510 Additionally, Hosea 2:2’s reference to the “adultery from between her breasts” is likely a reference to amulets that “signified sympathy and complicity with heathenism”—even though they were worn for spiritual protection.511 Furthermore, in Deuteronomy 18, the word “kâshaph” which literally means “to whisper a spell” correlates to “enchant[ing] or practice[ing] magic.”512 Engaging in “kâshaph” amounted to the “use of supernatural powers that harden hearts against the truth,” thus, in Israel its practice required execution.513

In conclusion, the predominant reason why God forbade any spiritual practice or ritual that was not explicitly allowed by Him was due to their dependency on and acceptance of idolatry.514 Thus, no prophet in the entirety of Scripture ever utilized “magic, incantation, or any form of divination or manipulation in order to pronounce God’s message.”515 Additionally, practice of any of these forms of spirituality often came with severe punishments, like being put to death, being cut off from the people of God, or ultimately, being exiled from the Promised Land.516 There was no understanding of a cursory or innocuous engagement with these types of

510 Unger, Biblical Demonology, Kindle, 1382.
511 Ibid, Kindle, 1387.
513 Ibid.
514 Unger, Biblical Demonology, Kindle, 1359.
516 Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 20:6, 26-27; Deuteronomy 18:9-12.
practices; to buy into them syncretistically, or even a little, was tantamount to “whoredoms” and carried with it the understanding of a breach in one’s covenant with God. 517

Spirituality in the New Testament

**Authentic spirituality.** As history transitions into the life of Christ and the era of the Church, there are a number of both continuities and discontinuities to be found with regard to authentic spirituality and worship. The first major discontinuity came with the announcement that Jesus is “the light of the world . . . [and] anyone who follows Me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.” 518 This verse marked “a major shift” in how the people of God would engage in spiritual worship “away from the ritual” and onto Jesus. 519 The sacrificial system set up under the Sinaitic Covenant was only ever able to ceremonially cover sins so that the people of God could inhabit the Promised Land and the priests could perform rituals in the Temple; however, through the cross, “God’s wrath against all his people was propitiated by the once-for-all substitutionary death of his Son.” 520 Thus, in terms of worship and spirituality, it is no longer participation in a series of sacrifices that guides people into a relationship with God, but rather, Jesus “will draw all people” to Himself through His death on the cross. 521

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517 2 Kings 9:22 (KJV).

518 John 8:12.

519 Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation*, Kindle, 3823.


Rather than having to rely on anthropocentrically executed sacrifices to provide for the ability to draw near to God, Jesus’ death allows people to enter into “communion with God,” making “the heart of Christian worship . . . to recall and celebrate the hope of glory” which is “Christ in you.”\textsuperscript{522} This speaks of a new relational dimension to spirituality that is reinforced by Jesus when He states that “an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.”\textsuperscript{523} Whereas the Samaritan woman of the previous verse used the “neuter ‘what’ (ὅ)” to refer to God, Jesus made it clear that “it is not a ‘what,’ not even simply ‘God,’ but specifically the Father who is to be worshipped.”\textsuperscript{524} As distinction is made with regard to the Father, the persons and works of both the Son and the Holy Spirit are also brought into focus. Thus, Jesus was guiding people into true spirituality and worship in explicitly relational and Trinitarian terms.\textsuperscript{525}

These changes in the orientation of worship also required a different means of spiritual engagement. Rather than only a single person being able to approach God through the Temple during the Day of Atonement, all people would be able to approach God directly through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Even though Jesus’ sacrifice paid the debt due for sin, humanity still needed to be purified and glorified. Titus 3:5-7 describes how this process will occur. Paul states that believers are saved “through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit . . . so that having been justified by his grace, we may become heirs with the hope of

\textsuperscript{522} Ross, \textit{Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation}, Kindle, 4082,5235; Colossians 1:27. Rather than an anthropocentrically offered sacrifice, people can now draw near to God through the once and final sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

\textsuperscript{523} John 4:21-24.


\textsuperscript{525} Ibid, Kindle, 6793.
eternal life.”

526 It is vital to understand that these verses draw a hard line for what will constitute true spirituality and false spirituality. As Paul states in Romans, “those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified; and those He justified, He also glorified;” God is the one who completes spiritual work in human beings. Any spiritual practices that people engage in may make use of the spiritual work that God does in believers, but in no way do they help in the attainment of true spirituality. It is the Spirit of God who sanctifies and the human being who chooses to act on the “life-changing power” that is given to him.527

One other discontinuity is the means by which people give glory to God through authentic spirituality under the Sinaitic Covenant versus the New Covenant. Under the Sinaitic Covenant, the people of Israel were not spiritually empowered to live God-honoring lives and thus the nation as a whole was constantly under threat of punishment and exile. God’s glory was on display through the nations through His treatment of Israel. When Israel was obedient and fulfilled the sacrificial law to atone for its sins, it was blessed, and God’s righteousness was made known to the nations. Similarly, when Israel was disobedient, God’s punishment of Israel was the primary way through which His glory and righteousness were demonstrated. The Law did not provide a way for people themselves to reflect the glory of God as it could not “justify” or “confer the Spirit,” nor could people keep it perfectly.528 Under the New Covenant, believers experience “participation in the glory of Christ . . . only through the blessing of the Holy

526 Titus 3:5-7.


Spirit.” By virtue of the “streams of living water” that will flow within a person as a result of faith in Christ, God is able to be truly and properly glorified through humanity.\footnote{David Vandrunen, \textit{God's Glory Alone: The Majestic Heart of Christian Faith and Life: What the Reformers Taught . . . and Why It Still Matters} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), Kindle, 1703.}

However, it is vital to understand that union with Christ through the Holy Spirit does not lead to the immediate reception of the power of the physical resurrection along with all of its benefits. Instead, while on this Earth, humanity primarily glorifies God through two means. First, God is glorified through the union with Christ in suffering. Jesus Himself articulated this reality when He said, “if anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”\footnote{John 7:37-38.} Additionally, Paul argued that “the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance,” and that being “conformed to His death” is the only way to “know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.”\footnote{Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23.} Peter also indicated that giving glory to God through suffering proceeded the positive aspects of God’s glory when he said “to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.”\footnote{2 Corinthians 1:5; Philippians 3:10.}

In terms of the His with believers, the Holy Spirit operates as a Counselor. Jesus stated in John 14 that He would “ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever . . . He is the Spirit of truth.”\footnote{1 Peter 4:13.} The Spirit of God works in line with what God has already spoken as He “will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to

\footnote{John 14:16-17.}
you.”535 For example, Paul asserts that the Holy Spirit “testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”536 However, it is vital to Christian communication with God that the burden of truth lay not with a spiritual interaction, but with the written Word of God. When Christians receive new teaching or ritual, they are to “examine the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so,” not pray to the Spirit to receive new revelation.537

Second, God is glorified through obedience to Christ. When questioned about the greatest commandments, Jesus reiterated the Shema, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”538 When talking with the disciples, Jesus further stated, “If you love Me, you will keep My commands,” indicating that to love God one must keep Jesus’ words close to one’s heart and mind, and then act on them. He then links this obedience to the spiritual renewal that occurs through the “Counselor” who will be with believers “forever . . . the Spirit of Truth.”539 In this way, even the obedience exhibited by believers is directly caused by God, so He receives the glory. Thus, true worship and authentic spirituality are not marked by the anthropocentric attainment of a heightened spiritual consciousness and greater miraculous power; rather, authentic spirituality demonstrates a high degree of connection to the suffering of Christ and obedience to His commands through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

536 Romans 8:15-16.
537 Acts 17:11-12.
538 Matthew 22:36-40.
539 John 14:15-17.
In terms of specific spiritual practices, the New Testament retains a surprising amount of congruity with the Old Testament. For example, the idea that the Bible, as the ultimate source of written divine revelation, must remain the foundation and “key to coherent, corporate worship” and authentic spirituality is evident from both statements about what it meant to receive God’s approval and anything that took devotion away from apostles’ ability to handle the Scriptures with integrity was delegated to others.\textsuperscript{540} Paul argued that being able to “present” oneself as “approved to God” required being able to “correctly” teach “the word of truth.”\textsuperscript{541} Additionally, when the apostles were faced with increasing issues like widows “being overlooked in the daily distribution,” they wisely designated deacons to “handle financial matters,” so they could continue to dedicate their time to “prayer and to the preaching ministry” which was the heart of the church.\textsuperscript{542} Spiritual practice did not begin with anthropocentric experience, but with the Word of God. Had the apostles forsaken the preaching of the Word for service, they would have walked away from true spiritual worship. As Jesus said, the means by which believers are sanctified is truth, and “Your word is truth.”\textsuperscript{543}

Additionally, New Testament believers were encouraged to praise God in similar ways as a reaction to the revelation of Christ’s death on the cross and His resurrection. Paul urges the church to speak “to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music from your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

\textsuperscript{540} Ross, \textit{Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation}, Kindle, 5279.

\textsuperscript{541} 2 Timothy 2:15.

\textsuperscript{542} Acts 6:2-4.

\textsuperscript{543} John 17:17.
of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.” As in the Old Testament, believers in the New Testament were encouraged to continually give thanks to God in response to who He is and what He has done.

Prayer is another spiritual practice that is emphasized heavily in Scripture, but it does come with a set of boundaries and guidelines. For instance, though we are to pray when we are experiencing times of “trouble,” we are also commanded to “pray for those who persecute you.” This is an example of how prayer should always be oriented to God and His commands, as exemplified by the most important commands to love God and love one’s neighbor. Additionally, though believers are encouraged to “believe that you have received… all the things you pray and ask for,” this comes with the caveat that one only prays for “anything according to His will.” A great example of this type of prayer comes from Jesus in John 17:15 when he stated that His prayer “is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” There is no question that Jesus does not want His people to suffer, but Jesus also recognizes that it is the will of the Father to display His glory through the suffering of believers, thus Jesus does not pray that they would be removed from the world but only protected from demonic forces.

In conclusion, the New Testament shows remarkable consistency with the Old Testament in its affirmation that proper spirituality and worship require Scripture at their center, involve

544 Ephesians 5:19-21.
545 James 5:13; Matthew 5:44.
547 John 17:15.
sacrifice from the worshipper, and result in praising God for who He is no matter the circumstances. Additionally, many of the spiritual practices of the Old Testament are also present in the New Testament including prayer, the reading of Scripture, fasting, and prophecy. However, there are important discontinuities as well. The Old Testament sacrificial system has been abrogated on account of its fulfillment in Christ and its inability to save. Thus, rather than an external glory displayed through the judgment of Israel, the sacrifice of Christ allows believers to internally glorify God through their union with Christ and living as living sacrifices.

Prohibited spirituality. The New Testament places prohibitions on a wide variety of spiritual interactions, and among these, witchcraft or sorcery is often singled out.\textsuperscript{549} In the New Testament, sorcery is called “\textit{pharmakia}” or “\textit{pharmakeus}” and covers drug manufacture, drug use, poison use, and “by extension, a magician or sorcerer.”\textsuperscript{550} In the Ancient Near East, potions were not just natural concoctions; they were “spell-giving potions.”\textsuperscript{551} New Testament scholar, Craig Keener, argues that the reference to sorcery in Revelation 21:8 includes the practice of “seductive signs [and] power” and “includes any deceptive tools of demons.”\textsuperscript{552}

In solidarity with the Old Testament, the New Testament actively condemns magic and sorcery in multiple instances. First, Jesus’ admonition, “when you pray, don’t babble like the idolaters, since they imagine they’ll be heard for their many words,” is a direct refutation of the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\textsuperscript{549} Revelation 21:8; Galatians 5:19-21; Micah 5:11-12; 1 Samuel 15:23; Leviticus 19:26; Deuteronomy 18:10-13; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Nahum 3:4-5.


\textsuperscript{551} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{552} Craig S. Keener, \textit{Revelation}, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 490.
\end{footnotesize}
“heathenistic modes of magical incantation.” There was an ancient belief that the more one said something or the more vehemently one believed and commanded something the more likely it was to occur. Acts 8:9-24 recounts an episode of spiritual confrontation between Philip the evangelist and Simon the sorcerer. Simon’s own claim to be “somebody great” and the crowd’s comment that he was “the Great Power of God” indicates that he was able to perform some supernatural acts. However, when compared to the miracles that God performed through Philip, even he was converted to belief in Jesus, though not without issues. In Acts 13:6-10, the use of magic is directly linked to demonic influence, as the magician was called a “son of the Devil, full of all deceit and all fraud, enemy of all righteousness!”

Divination is also expressly condemned in the New Testament. Peter asserts that certain people “have gone astray by abandoning the straight path and have followed the path of Balaam, the son of Bosor.” This is a direct injunction against people who like Balaam were false prophets and served false idols. Jude likewise criticizes people for abandoning “themselves to the error of Balaam for profit.” Additionally, Acts 16 reports that some fortune-telling has its origins in a form of demonic possession by “a spirit of prediction.” Most important is the fact that the girl’s fortune-telling powers were not converted over to Christian use, instead the demon that was in the girl was cast out, and she lost the ability to predict the future. This suggests that, in general, being able to know the future was not a component of the early church’s spiritual gifts.

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554 Ibid.
557 2 Peter 2:15
558 Acts 16:16.
Additionally, the New Testament also issues injunctions against the related arts of astromancy and necromancy, both of which involve gaining hidden information from either the stars or the spirits of dead people.\footnote{Acts 7:41-43; 1 Timothy 4:1.}

However, there is one verse in the New Testament which is often cited as allowing the incorporation of virtually any worldly practice into the realm of authentic spirituality as long as it is recontextualized in a Christian setting. Colossians 1:19-20 states: “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” Some interpret this verse as meaning that spiritual practices on earth which have been co-opted or developed by non-Christian religions can be reconciled to Christ and used in the Christian Church. In standard usage, the word “ἀποκαταλλάξαι” or “to reconcile” was used in “the realm of diplomatic relationships.”\footnote{David W. Pao, Colossians & Philemon, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 103.} Thus, Paul’s use of this word is not in making all things acceptable to Christ; rather, he uses the word to present “the work of Christ as necessary to overcome alienation.”\footnote{S. E. Porter, “Katallasso” in Ancient Greek Literature, With Reference to the Pauline Writings (Zaragoza, ES: Cordoba, 1995), 184.} Thus, the type of reconciliation mentioned is not one of utility, instead, Paul’s reconciliation is one of “triumph” and “pacification.”\footnote{Peter O’Brien, “Col. 1:20 and the Reconciliation of All Things,” Reformed Theological Review 33 (1974): 47, 51.} Rather than making evil things good, this verse is a statement that none of the evil things of the world will be able to wage war against God any longer. In the New Creation, the world will be a good and fit dwelling place for mankind.
Spirituality in the New Age Movement

**Authorized interactions.** New Age spiritual practices are focused on cultivating mystical experiences and are attempts to have “direct communication with ultimate reality.”

Unlike in the biblical worldview, the use of drugs like LSD is proscribed and used in order to attain communion with the divine. Additionally, faith takes a back seat in New Age spirituality. With the emphasis on psychedelic spiritual experiences, it is unnecessary to rely on mere belief or faith. These experiences can be modified by New Age practitioners who utilize guided imagery to facilitate deeper spiritual experiences. Other New Age adherents utilize meditation to attain the spiritual state of “oneness with all things.”

New Age practitioners also attempt to commune with the spiritual realm through manipulation of the physical world. For example, the New Age understanding of yoga is that it is a combination of breathing techniques, postures, and stretches that is believed to prepare oneself to “rid [oneself] of ‘the human condition’ and achieve divinity.” Other accepted practices include the use of animals like birds and dolphins to “achieve universal love and harmony through telepathic contact.” The practitioners of these rituals affirm that the separation of the

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564 Ibid, 415.

565 Ibid.


569 Ibid, 181.
practice from the spiritual component is not only impossible but recklessly dangerous as it could lead to unintended spiritual trauma.  

A third realm of accepted practice concerns attempts to contact dead people, spirits, and aliens. There are a variety of degrees of channeling and mediumship in the NAM. The most basic experiences involve automatic writing, trances, and hearing voices. However, the strongest forms of channeling involve physical changes in the voice, attitude, posture, and actions of the person who is channeling. At their peak, professional channelers have started entire religious movements around their spiritual utterances. During attempts to contact the spiritual realm, many people report coming in contact with aliens from other worlds who deliver spiritual messages. Overall, the NAM views such encounters positively and as sources of divine, hidden truth.

A fourth source of spiritual interaction for the NAM is ritualistic magic. Though direct wiccan and occultic language is only sometimes present, the following are three aspects of magic that have greatly influenced many New Age practices. First, there is the law of the macrocosm and microcosm. This law states that people can use things like “rituals, spells, and sex” to “control cosmic powers.” The second law of magic is that “like produces like.” This principle

570 Newport, The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue, 73.
573 Ibid, 169.
attaches significance to items and rituals that are related to specific events.\textsuperscript{576} One example comes from yoga, which states that positioning oneself into symbols that represent Hindu gods gives one power over the gods.\textsuperscript{577} Finally, the law of “intensity of will” can be seen in the New Age teaching entitled \textit{The Secret} whereby one can intensely visualize what one desires, and the universe will make it come to pass.\textsuperscript{578}

\textbf{Prohibited interactions.} At this juncture, there are no known practices that the NAM explicitly rejects. Though individual practitioners may favor one practice over others and may have had various bad experiences with certain practices, there is no overarching rejection of any one experience.

\textbf{Authentic/Inauthentic Spirituality Criteria}

\textbf{Table 3.5. Authentic/Inauthentic Spirituality Criteria}

\begin{table}[h]
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Criterion Number & Criterion Description & Christian Teaching & New Age Movement Teaching \\
\hline
1 & Purpose of Spirituality & Spirituality is the deepening of one’s relationship with God through worship or the structured and ordered expression of & To attain awareness of one’s own divinity and unite one with the Cosmos \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{576} Newport, \textit{The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue}, 226.

\textsuperscript{577} Newport, \textit{The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue}, 74-75.

\textsuperscript{578} Rhonda Byrne, \textit{The Secret} (New York City, NY: Atria Books/Beyond Words, 2007).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Focus of Spirituality</th>
<th>Celebration of one’s own divinity and power</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Adoration and praise for the triune God of Christianity</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Transcendent meeting with the living God</td>
<td>Engagement with the part of self that is transcendent or divine</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Practice reflects and emphasizes God and His work as revealed in Scripture</td>
<td>Practice focuses on the self, self-divinity, and obtaining personal desires</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Authentic spirituality exposes false doctrine</td>
<td>Emphasizes the acceptance of false doctrine</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The New Age Movement borrows practices from a variety of religions and contextualizes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scripture indicates that pagan religious practices are inextricably linked to idolatry and cannot</td>
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The proper response of the people of God to the revelation of God in Christ

Focus of Spirituality

Adoration and praise for the triune God of Christianity

Celebration of one’s own divinity and power

Experience of Spirituality

Transcendent meeting with the living God

Engagement with the part of self that is transcendent or divine

Centrality of Scripture and Doctrine

Practice reflects and emphasizes God and His work as revealed in Scripture

Practice focuses on the self, self-divinity, and obtaining personal desires

Exposure of False Doctrine

Authentic spirituality exposes false doctrine

Emphasizes the acceptance of false doctrine

Separation of Theology and Practice

Scripture indicates that pagan religious practices are inextricably linked to idolatry and cannot

The New Age Movement borrows practices from a variety of religions and contextualizes
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Proper Sacrifice</td>
<td>Christ’s Sacrifice is sufficient for sins—People are living sacrifices</td>
<td>Material sacrifice (time, money, skills, work) in exchange for spiritual growth or ascension</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Praising YHWH</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Not required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Proper Heart</td>
<td>Doing the will of God, Having an upright heart</td>
<td>Openness to all beliefs and worldviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Connecting with God</td>
<td>Direct encounter with God (Prayer, Word of God, Holy Spirit)</td>
<td>Indirect Encounter (necromancy, mediumship, spiritism, channeling, use of physical medium)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Angelic Encounters</td>
<td>Sent by God</td>
<td>Contacted by man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Purpose of Angelic Encounters</td>
<td>Deliver God’s message, protection</td>
<td>Reveal new truth and doctrine, assist in ascension of consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Links to Idolatry</td>
<td>Prohibited</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Use of Magic</td>
<td>Prohibited</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Use of Music</td>
<td>For thanksgiving and praise, with reverence to doctrine</td>
<td>For inducing a state of spiritual openness</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>Focused on who God is and in line with His teachings, cannot be repetitious</td>
<td>A means of ascending to a higher consciousness, can be repetitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>In line with prior revelation, requires P-A Commission, is true, must glorify God, build up the church, and assist in the Great Commission, cannot profit off of it</td>
<td>Can disagree with prior revelation, requires spiritual empowerment, can focus on personal growth and empowerment, can profit off of it</td>
</tr>
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Chapter 4: Analysis of Practices

Introduction

In this chapter, both the Enneagram and Yoga will be assessed for their use in the Christian Church. Each subsection will open with a depiction of the central philosophical and practical elements that are necessary for the practices to be what they are, regardless of which religious worldview into which they are being incorporated. These sections will contain critiques of places where the practices deviate from Scripture and orthodox doctrine. Second, there will be a brief analysis of the leading popularizers of these practices in the Christian Church. Third, the practices will be critiqued according to the criteria presented in Chapter 3. Finally, the conclusions of the study will be presented, as well as a recommendation for or against Church use.¹

¹ One argument for the use of yoga and Enneagram in church is that the practices can be separated from their theological and philosophical roots and used by Christians in a non-religious or Christianized manner. The criteria developed throughout the course of this dissertation are designed to determine whether or not practices can be separated from their theological roots. It will be demonstrated in Chapter 4 that neither the Christian Enneagram nor Christian Yoga have been able to separate out their theological roots. However, there is another way to look at this issue that while beyond the scope of this dissertation, merits brief comment and speculation. What follows are some of my thoughts after having conducted this study concerning how an alternative approach to discovering syncretism might be conducted.

In order to demonstrate that a practice cannot be separated from its underlining theology and thus used in a Christian or non-religious way, any single one of the following must be proved. First, if the practice was designed to accomplish something that goes against biblical morality, it cannot be incorporated into Christianity or used in a non-religious way. Second, if the practice is centered on taking a stance on or defining a concept that is explicitly reserved as being defined by special revelation, the practice cannot be redeemed as it asserts itself as a source of theology rather than Scripture. Third, if the practice acts, necessarily, as a substitute for a biblically proscribed practice, then it cannot be separated from its theological underpinnings as it is inextricably linked to a non-Christian worldview through substitution. Fourth, if there is a moderate to high risk of engagement with the underlying theology if one engages with the practice, then it should be rejected. This is evidence of a deficient theological method that allows for syncretistic practices to influence one’s thinking on biblical concepts.

Additionally, though a full analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is worthwhile to speculate about a holiday like Christmas, which has known syncretistic elements, would fair under the criteria set forth by this dissertation and the four issues outlined above. First, it is important to recognize that the consumerist elements of Christmas and the general disregard for the Incarnation of Christ by secular observers should not be part of the assessment as they should clearly be rejected. What is subject to analysis is the validity of Christmas as a holiday celebrating the Incarnation. This could be broken down as follows with each component being separately assessed for syncretism and its viability in the church: 1. The use of a day previously associated with a pagan holiday, 2. The
Church Practice #1: Enneagram

Fundamentals of all Enneagram Programs

Rejection of Total Depravity, Original Sin, and the Fallenness of Mankind

In order to understand what the Enneagram accomplishes, it is vital to begin with its understanding of the ontologies of humanity and sin. Sin will be discussed first because the use of the indoor decorated tree, 3. The celebration of an event which though worthy of celebration is not explicitly laid out in Scripture.

Given the results of this study which will be presented later, the following comparisons could be made. First, the use of a day that was associated with a pagan holiday is wholly unlike the Enneagram and Yoga. The Enneagram was designed to be a method for humans to reach God. Yoga was designed as a method to prepare the body and the soul to be separated during transcendental meditation. The day that the pagans used to celebrate their religion is simply a day, it was created to be a day in which things are done. The appropriate comparison would be (human body:yoga::day:holiday). In this comparison, the day is like the body; both can be used properly or improperly. There would most likely be nothing syncretistic about using the same day to celebrate the Incarnation as the pagans used to celebrate their false religion.

The use of the indoor decorated tree is more problematic. At its core, it is a tree, and the decorations are decorations. The tree exists as God’s creation and the decorations exist to look pretty. But the use of a decorated tree in one’s house may constitute a misuse of God’s creation and should be examined. There many stories surrounding the origin of the use of the Christmas tree (See Ace Collins book *Stories of the Great Traditions of Christmas* pages 70-75). Though the Scandinavian people utilized indoor evergreens to conjure strength during the winter, the first known Christian interaction with the evergreen tree comes from a legendary account of St. Boniface, the missionary who in the 7th century spread the gospel across central Europe. The story goes that in order to save a little boy who was about to be sacrificed to Thor, Boniface struck a tree, felling it in a single blow. He then told all present that “the evergreen was the Tree of Life,” “that the tree even winter could not kill stood for the eternal life offered to them by Christ,” and “that the fir’s three points represented the Holy Trinity of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” This then led to trees being hung upside-down in Christian houses. However, it was not until Martin Luther that Christmas Trees in their more modern understanding would be popularized. On his way home during winter, Luther saw starlight through the branches of a group of fir trees. He was so taken with what he saw that he brought a tree into his home and placed candles throughout the tree to replicate the effect. He then stated that “the tree represented the everlasting love of God,” “that the evergreen’s color did not fade, just as the Lord’s love would not fade,” and that “the candlelight represented the hope that Christ brought to the world through his birth and resurrection.” The most important point to glean from these stories is that far from being a pagan practice that the church adopted, it seems as though the use of the Christmas tree and its decorations did not have its origin in pagan ritual. Thus, as long as Christians do not somehow turn the tree into an idol, the use of the Christmas tree would belong under the category of the proper use of Christian symbols and imagery and be valid for Christian use.

Finally, though the Bible does not include the Incarnation as a mandated holiday, Scripture does treat it as one of the most important events in human history and encourages the praise of God for what He has done, so celebrating the Incarnation is not going against any Biblical mandate and is reinforced to an extent by injunctions to praise God. In conclusion, there may be some aspects of Christmas that need to be removed due to their inherent syncretism; however, the holiday in and of itself, celebrated properly, is likely valid for Christian participation.

Regarding the four speculative criteria mentioned above: 1. the celebration of the Incarnation on a given day of the year does not go against biblical morality, 2. the celebration of the Incarnation on a day does not redefine the Incarnation, 3. the celebration of the Incarnation on a day does not act as a substitute for any biblically mandated practice, and 4. the celebration of the Incarnation on a day does not come with a high risk of syncretizing with unorthodox theology.

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Enneagram’s view on humanity is derived from the observations its creators made about how humanity engages with and relates to sin. Enneagram philosopher Christopher Heuertz opens his discussion on sin by asserting that the Christian Enneagram “rescue[s] the original sense of the word sin . . . after the contamination of the notion of wrongness as a dysfunction with that of wrongness as evil.”² In the Enneagram’s worldview, sin does not have to be “a moral category.”³ In fact, sin is not attributed to individual acts or general dispositions; instead, sin is ignorance of one’s true self and “a disorder of awareness and interference with action.”⁴ The Enneagram focuses on sins as obsessive addictions to one’s gifts. For instance, Rohr states that “people are destroyed by their gifts and talents . . . because we identify too closely with what we can do well,” rather than “being destroyed by our sins [(moral wrongdoing)].”⁵ People sin not because of giving into a wrong feeling or desire, but because they give into good desires too often.⁶ Thus, Rohr states that “our gift and our sin are two sides of the same coin,” and that sanctification is the process by which “our gift is our sin sublimated and transformed by grace.”⁷ Given these stances, the Enneagram stands in opposition to the biblical doctrines of (1) sin as disobedience toward God and His commands, (2) original sin as a fallen human nature, and (3) the rejection of holiness in moral terms for the belief in the true self as a form of higher consciousness.

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⁶ Ibid, Kindle, 927.

⁷ Ibid, Kindle, 868.
With sin relativized to one’s personal intention, rather than to specific sinful actions, Enneagram philosophers and theologians redefine humanity’s relationship with sin and its effects on the will. First, Enneagram teachers generally reject the traditional doctrine of original sin as a fallen human nature. Instead, original sin is redefined as being how “we have abandoned our soul, our ‘soul child,’ for a false identity that is defended and deceitful, and so we are trapped.”

Original sin is not the first sin of the human race by which the entire race entered into a fallen state; rather, each person has their own original sin in that they reject the proper functioning of their gifts and persons because they are incapable of perfection, even though “they know it already ought to be that way.” Rather than rebellion against God, sin is more a rebellion against the True Self, or perfection, of mankind. Thus, under the Enneagram, you are not seen as inherently sinful nor irreparably fallen; instead, you are a “One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, [or] Nine,” and defined by how you chose to cope with the world as a child. The Enneagram entrenches sin into coping mechanisms to such an extent that Rohr believes that “no one willingly does evil.”

Thus, on virtually all aspects of the doctrine of sin, the Enneagram presents a view contrary to the Bible.

This view on sin complements the Enneagram’s views on anthropology as dividing the human into the True Self and the False Self. Heuertz argues that sin, or “the ego’s tethering to its tragic flaw,” is the real cause of the “heart’s disconnect from its True Self” and is out of our

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9 Ibid, Kindle, 1257.
10 Rohr and Ebert, *The Enneagram*, Kindle, 808, 868.
11 Ibid, Kindle, 983.
control in many ways.\textsuperscript{12} The specific number that each person chooses to embody is manifested by “false energy.”\textsuperscript{13} This “Enneagram energy . . . determines us at least every ten minutes,” as it guides people to act in specific ways in response to the situations that they find themselves in.\textsuperscript{14} These “fixations” or “sins” of one’s Enneagram number “prevent the energy of life, god’s love, from flowing freely.”\textsuperscript{15} Given that humanity is innately good, the Enneagram is concerned with “illuminat[ing] what’s good and true and beautiful about each of us.”\textsuperscript{16} In order to overcome the addictions and fixations that people have they must work on “developing the ‘true’ self” which “requires us to know, accept, and integrate all parts of our selves \textsuperscript{sic}, including our Shadow elements.”\textsuperscript{17} In summation, the Enneagram does not teach people that they must die in order to live in Christ; instead, it shows them that “we aren’t fundamentally flawed, bad people hoping to be good, but good people hoping to be better.”\textsuperscript{18} The Enneagram teaches that “God loves us unconditionally—along with our dark sides” and does not require that we change who we are.\textsuperscript{19} The spiritual path promoted by the Enneagram is the acceptance of the revelation of “your shadow side” followed with “spiritual counsel on how to open it to the transformative light of

\textsuperscript{12} Heuertz, \textit{The Sacred Enneagram: Finding Your Unique Path to Spiritual Growth}, Kindle, 1275.

\textsuperscript{13} Rohr and Ebert, \textit{The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective}, Kindle, 868.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, Kindle, 945.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, Kindle, 1017.

\textsuperscript{16} Heuertz, \textit{The Sacred Enneagram: Finding Your Unique Path to Spiritual Growth}, Kindle, 359.

\textsuperscript{17} Beatrice Chestnut, \textit{The Complete Enneagram: 27 Paths to Greater Self-Knowledge} (Berkeley, CA: She Writes Press, 2013), Kindle, 228.

\textsuperscript{18} Christopher Heuertz, \textit{The Enneagram of Belonging: A Compassionate Journey of Self-Acceptance} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), Kindle, 354.

\textsuperscript{19} Rohr and Ebert, \textit{The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective}, Kindle, 123.
grace.” The Enneagram argues that concerning humanity, “‘Everything belongs’—the good, the bad, and the ugly.”

In conclusion, the Enneagram’s view on sin divorces it from morality and rebellion against God. This is done so that, contrary to Scripture, humanity can be viewed as inherently good and not fallen. Thus, one does not need an atoning sacrifice to be saved from one’s sins. In this way, the Enneagram positions itself as the savior of humanity because it is the only thing that can help you find your True Self.

Understanding of the True Self is New Consciousness Revelation

All forms of the Enneagram rely on the “New Consciousness” model of revelation as the fundamental mode of spiritual growth. First, Enneagram adherents hold that the Bible is insufficient for full and complete knowledge about God, oneself, salvation, and sanctification. Instead, they believe that the Enneagram is “a sacred map for our souls . . . [and] when understood, leads us to our true identity and to God.” Enneagram teachers warn students that the “timeless truths” of the Enneagram may be hard to comprehend; however, if they can be mastered, one can learn “what it means to be human” and how to “transform ourselves to manifest our highest possibilities.” Thus, the Enneagram’s form of knowledge can be considered to be “gnostic” or a form of hidden knowledge that is only accessible to a privileged few. Once this knowledge is understood on an intellectual level, individual Enneagram

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practitioners are tasked with committing to the practices of “self-observation, self-study, and self-development,” through which they slowly come to a greater degree of “freedom, connectedness, balance, wholeness, and creativity” as they are living through their “higher” Selves. The following is a full description of the higher or True Self and its attributes:

This higher Self represents a more conscious, integrated state of being that is available to all of us when we do the work of dis-identifying with the Personality and facing our fear and our pain. We can experience this higher state of being when we are able to dis-identify with the Personality and merge with something larger than ourselves through meditative practice and conscious self-work. As suggested by the main themes of the “high side” of the Nine point, this opens us up to an experience of a greater sense of union with our true Self, with others, and the natural world.

As psychotherapist Beatrice Chestnut asserts, the higher or True Self is “more conscious,” thus it has a greater degree of knowledge and awareness about itself and its power. This True Self is a “higher state of being” meaning that the True Self of the Enneagram is initially hidden at the substance level of humanity but is revealed through self-reflection and meditation. The mention of merging with something larger than ourselves also plays along with the idea that one’s True Self is more than just an individual, it is a whole new class of being. Rohr Christianizes this ascension using the term “Christ Consciousness” and argues that when people attain this state they realize that God is literally ontologically and incarnationally within all of creation; thus, all of creation is connected. Through the belief that divinity resides within individual people and that knowledge of a higher consciousness is the path to spiritual maturity,


25 Ibid.

26 Rohr, The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe, Kindle, 630. Rohr states that his view is not classical theism, but panentheism.
the Enneagram relies on “New Consciousness” or “New Awareness” forms of revelation over and against Scripture.

In conclusion, the Enneagram’s views on anthropology are panentheistic, whereby part of the divine nature resides in the human nature and is equivalent to the True Self. Rather than humanity needing to be reconciled to God, the Enneagram promotes that people need to become aware of the divinity within oneself. This is in fundamental disagreement with the standard doctrine of the distinction between Creator and Creation. The assertion that God is incarnate in the world rather than God interacting with the world through speech and power denies the Christian doctrine of transcendence and immanence. Finally, as asserted throughout this section, the Enneagram rejects propositional revelation in favor of the esoteric higher consciousness form of revelation.

Internalization of Holy Virtue to Attain Spiritual Growth

The Enneagram completely reinvents the process of sanctification. Rather than sanctification being carried out as a work of the Holy Spirit, Heuertz states that “it’s our Holy Ideas and our Virtues that are the most powerful means we have to bring us back to our true Essence.”27 The Enneagram provides people with the understanding necessary to utilize a “deeper self-awareness as a doorway to spiritual growth.”28 Fully anticipating that his discourse on the Enneagram seems to pull the focus of the believer away from God and onto the self, Heuertz reinforces the notion that the Enneagram is not a casual personality tool; instead, it is “a


map for self-liberation” that leads people to “deeper freedom and inner peace.” In order to experience the inner peace that the Enneagram offers, people are encouraged to “limit our sin in order to recognize how gifted we are” and “to limit our gift; otherwise our sin becomes a trap while we call it a ‘virtue.’”

For example, Rohr pairs sins and virtues together as dichotomies that in some way cancel each other, as seen in his following statement: “humility helps against pride, true love of God helps against envy, the remedy for anger is patience, [and] laziness is overcome through fortitude.”

Heuertz depicts the Enneagram’s Holy Ideas and Holy Virtues as being “the purest part of our truest self” and “the fragrance of our souls bearing witness to our goodness in the world.” He distinguishes between these two by seating the Holy Idea in the mind and the Holy Virtue in the heart. The Holy Idea is fully expressed as “the mental clarity of the True Self that emerges when the mind is at rest.” Utilizing the Holy Idea, the Enneagram promotes spiritual union or integration as “the lucidity of a mind integrated with one’s heart and body, evidenced in the consolidation of mindfulness and self-realization.” In distinction from the Holy Idea, the Holy Virtue is “the emotional objectivity of the True Self that comes forward in a heart at peace.” Heuertz argues that these Virtues were “forgotten as a result of our Kidlife Crisis.”

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29 Hauertz, The Sacred Enneagram, Kindle, 572.
31 Ibid, Kindle, 1044.
33 Heuertz, The Sacred Enneagram: Finding Your Unique Path to Spiritual Growth, Kindle, 668.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
The only way to embody and internalize your Holy Virtue is to remember the true parts of oneself, learning to love oneself, and “breathing into [one’s] own innocence.” Cron and Stabile reinforce this moralistic works-based mentality of the Enneagram, as they state that “once you know your type you owe it to yourself and the people you live with . . . to become a kinder, more compassionate presence in the world.” However, they immediately attempt to backpedal or engage in doublespeak, asserting one cannot become a better person “apart from the transformative power of God’s grace.” They follow this up saying that the only way to change is to “simply give God consent to do for you what you’ve never been able to do for yourself . . . bring meaningful and lasting change to your life.” However, contrary to their assertions, each chapter that covers an Enneagram type contains a section called “Ten Paths to Transformation” that focuses on things one must do to transform, like: “Risk sharing your heart at deeper levels with someone in your life,” ask yourself “What if I’m wrong? . . . a hundred times a day,” “don’t always play the part of the rebel,” and “don’t judge yourself or others as weak for sharing tender feelings.” The use of doublespeak concerning grace and works is common in Christian Enneagram books for the simple fact that the Enneagram’s mode of operation is a works-based model at heart.

In conclusion, the Enneagram prescribes Holy Ideas and Holy Virtues as the means by which one becomes transformed, not as a result of being transformed. Biblical sanctification is

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39 Ibid, Kindle, 452.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid, Kindle, 829-840.
executed through transformation by the Holy Spirit first and obedience to the commands second. The Enneagram teaches that obedience is what gets one access to the true self, or transformation. Thus, despite continual doublespeak, the Enneagram promotes a works-based model of spiritual growth.

Salvation is Earned through Recovering the True Self

Though Christian Enneagram theologians argue that the Enneagram does not subvert Christian atonement and salvation by grace through faith, they continually engage in doublespeak that affirms the opposite. The Enneagram is, at its core, a method of salvation whereby one can learn the truth about their personality, recover their True Self, and restore their relationship with God. Those who teach the Enneagram argue that the true knowledge of spiritual development has been known by “the masters and soul guides of all spiritual traditions of the West and East” as they have affirmed that “true self-knowledge is the presupposition of the ‘inner journey.’” The disciplines of self-work include “knowledge, asceticism, good works, or meditation” and provide a means of “unmasking this illusionary self.” Inner-work or soul-work concerns itself with the identification of “roles, habits, and character features” that are the “chief obstacle in our search for our (true) ‘self.’” These goals are achieved through anthropocentric means through the acquisition and application of self-knowledge.

42 Rohr and Ebert, The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective, Kindle, 123.
43 Ibid, Kindle, 147.
44 Ibid.
45 The fundamental difference between the Enneagram’s form of spiritual growth and spiritual growth as outlined in Scripture is its goal. The Bible asserts that people must “deny [themselves] and take up [their] cross daily” (Luke 9:23) and “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1). The core idea is that spiritual growth happens as “by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body” (Romans 8:13). Thus, spiritual growth is concerned with purging immorality and sin and walking in the
In order to maintain that the Christian version of the Enneagram is still salvation by grace through faith, Enneagram instructors have had to redefine most of the traditional Christian terminology. For example, Rohr redefines redemption in this way: “In Christianity, redemption from the false self is understood as a gift of God’s grace.” No longer does redemption deal with reclaiming humanity from a fallen nature and an eternal damnation; instead, the Enneagram reinvents redemption in terms of personality foibles. It is God’s grace in that it only happens if God allows it to happen, but Rohr reminds his students that “we should pray as if it all depended on God and act as though everything depended upon ourselves.” Thus, he encourages active cognitive dissonance with regard to faith and works, whereby individuals are encouraged to speak in terms of grace and faith but live under a works-based burden.

Rohr also redefines faith saying that it “is actually a way to keep us learning, growing, and being transformed into God—not just a security blanket of doctrinal statements and moral principles.” Faith is transformed from a good and proper trust in the good news of Christ into a force that literally transforms one into God. This is congruent with Rohr’s philosophy of the spirit with the fruits of the spirit. The Enneagram asserts the opposite. It argues that humanity is fundamentally good and simply needs to focus on being better by learning more about oneself. Enneagram teachers explicitly deny that sin is evil that needs to be purged and affirm that spiritual growth is concerned with finding the True Self. In practical terms, Scripture states that God has “given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness” (2 Peter 1:3). In contrast, Enneagram teachers assert that inner work or self-reflection is the source of all that Christians need to live a sanctified life. This is due to their belief in the Universal or Cosmic Christ.

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46 Rohr and Ebert, *The Enneagram*, Kindle, 165.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid, Kindle, 292. Rohr exhibits heterodoxy concerning both *fides quae* and *fides qua*. In terms of *fides quae*, Rohr advocates that faith is more than simply confidence in Jesus Christ, rather it is a means of sanctification and transformation. In terms of *fides qua*, Rohr splits the subject of faith into two. Rather than articulating that we are to have faith in God or faith in the Son of God, Rohr argues on page 18 of *The Universal Christ* that “faith is trusting that *Jesus together with Christ gave us one human but fully accurate window into the Eternal Now that we call God.*” Thus, he divides the Son of God in two; on one side is the human being Jesus and on the other side is the eternal consciousness called Christ.
Cosmic Christ or Christ Consciousness, which he views humanity as attaining if it follows the path of the Enneagram. One corollary of this doctrine is that the Enneagram teaches that holiness is not a matter of moral rectitude nor right belief. To the contrary, holiness is adherence to the true self and full incorporation of aspects of oneself be they good, bad, or otherwise. With the revised definitions of sin, faith, and grace, Rohr proceeds to define conversion as a “specific invitation or call [to adopt] ‘holy ideas’ or ‘ideas of the higher spiritual center.’”49 Thus, conversion is not unto Jesus as Lord and Savior, rather, it is unto the adoption of the particular virtue or “holy idea” that pertains to one’s Enneagram number.

Set in the theology of the Enneagram, salvation takes on a wholly new meaning. Christopher Heuertz summarizes the purpose of the Enneagram, saying:

The contemporary Enneagram of Personality*--illustrates the nine ways we get lost, but also the nine ways we can come home to our True Self. Put another way, it exposes nine ways we lie to ourselves about who we think we are, nine ways we can come clean about those illusions, and nine ways we can find our way back to God.50 By Heuertz’s understanding, Sin no longer separates people from God. According to the Enneagram, it is our ignorance about our True Self and lies about who we really are that separate us from God. This “True Self” is not equivalent to any theology of the image of God; rather it is defined as “the soul” and simultaneously as “God,” as Rohr articulates that “The deepest me is God!”51

Additionally, salvation is no longer about Jesus’ death on a cross for our sins. The Enneagram has replaced that with the new nine ways we can escape our illusionary False Self,

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49 Rohr and Ebert, *The Enneagram*, Kindle, 4678.


regain the True Self, and “find our way back to God.”

The Enneagram, not the Bible, nor Jesus, “reveals our path for recovering our true identity and helps us navigate the journey home to God.” The goal of the Enneagram is not knowledge of God, nor is it humility—though that is often touted as a central aspect—nor is it faith in God; “The purpose of the Enneagram is to develop self-knowledge and learn how to recognize and disidentify with the parts of our personalities that limit us so we can be reunited with our truest and best selves.”

This salvation can be attained precisely because the Enneagram affirms the essential goodness of humanity and reframes the problem of sin in terms of personality defects. These defects, minor in the grand scheme of anthropology, can be removed through self-contemplation using the Enneagram as a guide or map to our soul. Thus, salvation is not a monumental reconstitution of humanity, but is more akin to a cleaning of a well-built, but dusty house.

In order to affect salvation, the Enneagram also has to take over some of the work of God Himself. For instance, Rohr affirms that “the Enneagram, like the Spirit of truth itself, will always set you free, but first it will make you miserable!” Instead of God’s Word being a “lamp unto my feet,” the Enneagram is the light by which “we might see, might stop trivializing the true nature of the darkness that we are, and, as T. S. Eliot said, ‘know the place for the first time,’ which is ironically our truest and deepest Self, the Self that always was but never is.”

Additionally, the Enneagram does not have the capacity to actually define people. Each

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52 Heuertz, The Sacred Enneagram: Finding Your Unique Path to Spiritual Growth.

53 Ibid, Kindle, 462.

54 Cron and Stabile, The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery, Kindle, 272.


56 Ibid, Kindle, 1277.
individual is “the only one who can identify [his or herself] with a certain type or life program of the Enneagram.”57 When someone engages with the Enneagram, he or she is ultimately responsible for his or her success or failure. In conclusion, the Enneagram replaces Jesus as the means by which people reestablish relationship with God. Additionally, rather than the Holy Spirit, the Enneagram is now the primary means through which sanctification occurs.

Relational Healing Requires Personality Knowledge

One of the most sought-after applications of the Enneagram is its usefulness in mending, repairing, and strengthening relationships.58 Rohr grounds this in the primary relationship we have with God, saying, “the Enneagram can help us to find a deeper and more authentic relationship with God—even though it was not discovered by Christians.”59 Implicit in this assertion is the idea that something extrabiblical is better than anything in the Bible at helping you connect with God. Indeed, it is neither the Word nor the Spirit of God that helps one become more loving; rather, “the Enneagram will help us to become more loving.”60 It accomplishes this by first revealing “the personality as a ‘false self’ that develops to allow your (vulnerable and


60 Ibid, Kindle, 817.
young) ‘true self’ to adapt, fit in, and survive among other humans.”\(^6\) The Enneagram then presents a “gift or fruit of the spirit… as the opposite side of the root sin.”\(^6\)

Not only does the Enneagram show individuals how they can be better in relationships, it also helps “people to understand better the specific dynamics at work in a given relationship.”\(^6\)

For instance, Cron and Stabile state that the Enneagram provides people with “great insight” concerning the realms of relationships and friendships and tells us “what we most need and fear from those interactions.”\(^6\)

Practical advice comes in terms of tips and things one can do to promote relational health, like “affirming your spouse in a multitude of ways” as it is “essential” that “in order for a relationship to grow, you have to have five positives to one negative.”\(^6\)

Awareness is also a key factor, for example, if one was married to an Enneagram “Five,” one would need to understand that his or her spouse has “a limited amount of inner resources and relational energy and when that energy is depleted… [his or her] tank is empty,” and he or she has “nothing left to give.”\(^6\)

Though authors like the McCords interweave the Gospel and Christian language throughout their books, it is incoherent to take the Enneagram’s perspective and simultaneously hold to a grace-based method of sanctification in which the Bible is sufficient. The Enneagram


\(^{64}\) Cron and Stabile, *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery*, Kindle, 432.


\(^{66}\) Ibid, Kindle, 2144.
presents itself as a tool by which people can understand each other and thus have the requisite knowledge to avoid conflict and promote positivity. Most authors affirm that this is only possible by relying on the Holy Spirit and the Gospel, but few define what that aspect looks like apart from simply believing that God is changing oneself and then attempting to act differently. Unfortunately, all Christian versions of the Enneagram deny God’s work in salvation by making use of extensive doublespeak which is difficult to detect and tease apart. If even the few principles outlined above are true, and there are certain requirements for good relationships, then the Enneagram has condemned the majority of humanity into poor relationships that will inevitably break down. In contrast, the Bible affirms that all relationships are breaking down ultimately due to sin and that the only way to have thriving relationships is by entering into union with Christ through the forgiveness of sins which He procured through the atonement on the cross.

Theological Analysis of the 9 Enneagram Types

Overview of the Definition of a Type and Spiritual Growth According to the Enneagram

The Enneagram type is both a depiction of individual personalities, as well as the primary motivating factors that influence a given personality type. Typical depictions of Enneagram types emphasize “why each Type thinks, feels, and acts in specific ways.”67 The Enneagram breaks down the “mystical image of the human being” into two stages: the first is the construction of the “‘empirical ego,’ which can also be understood as the sum of our attitudes and behavioral mechanisms.”68 In this stage, Cron and Stabile argue that “our personalities—

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which we and others experience as the ways we predictably think, feel, act, react, process information and see the world—limit or imprison us.”

The second stage facilitated by the Enneagram is one of transformation and finding a way “to Christian freedom.” Rohr describes this process of “enlightenment” or “conversion” as “seeing the truth,” not as “membership in the right group or reciting the correct formulas or even practicing the right morality.”

Part of seeing the truth involves coming to terms with who one is and accepting the good and bad parts about one’s self in order to find balance and integration. Sins are not viewed as evil as they are merely addictions to good things and even “God makes use of our sins.” Heuertz pontificates the average Enneagram adherent will “realize how even seemingly unattractive parts of yourself make you not only who you are, but are crucial to the unique beauty that is you.”

The path to the “inner experience of dignity and power” through the Enneagram involves the acquisition of “self-knowledge” which is gained through “inner work.” Prior to engagement with the Enneagram the “immature person . . . is trapped in himself or herself.” The process of spiritual growth through the Enneagram involves “exposing the masks or illusions of personality and getting to the core of identity.” As one walks the path of transformation, they will begin to

71 Ibid, Kindle, 327.
72 Ibid, Kindle, 825.
75 Ibid, Kindle, 1144.
integrate patterns of opposing and related Enneagram types. Thus, as people mature they become less like their own number and more like Jesus who “brought forth all nine ‘fruits’ of the Enneagram” and “is the fulfillment of all nine types.” Ultimately, if one were able to fully integrate all nine numbers of the Enneagram into one’s life, one could “look on reality from all nine sides. Then [one] would contemplate the world, as it were, with the eyes of God.”

In conclusion, Enneagram types cut against the biblical understanding of anthropology. First, it depicts humanity as incomplete and needing ascension to a higher consciousness, which is against the doctrine that man was created complete. Second, rather than the holy/fallen dichotomy presented in Scripture, the Enneagram asserts the dichotomy of ego/enlightenment. Finally, the Enneagram blurs the line between Creator and Creation through linking success in the Enneagram to having God’s own understanding of reality.

Not Created by God—Genetic/Environmental/Parental Origins of Personality

Enneagram instructors are divided on exactly where and how people receive or choose their Enneagram personality number. However, there is one thing that many Enneagram philosophers agree on: the role of the “Childhood Wound.” The Enneagram reveals the “nine ways our human nature manages our ego’s collection of coping addictions” that result in each person’s Childhood Wound. Thus, sin is not the result of a direct rebellion against God; instead, sin is a result of “the survival strategy that we adopted as children.” Rohr argues that

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78 Ibid, Kindle, 5329.
79 Rohr and Ebert, *The Enneagram*, Kindle, 1153.
one’s environment triggers children into adopting “emergency solutions . . . as a way of coming to terms” with the circumstances of one’s childhood situation. Similarly, Heuertz believes that “the mental and emotional scar tissues of these wounds” cause people to retreat into one of the nine personality types, which results in the “development (or malformation) of our personalities.”

The Enneagram maintains this extremely negative view of childhood and its dominance over the human personality as it asserts that one’s Enneagram number is primarily determined by the “first experiences of being human, coupled with adversity, suffering, or trauma, [to] form mental and emotional rails.” Heuertz links individual sin patterns to parental impartation when he asserts that the “Childhood Wound” is “the way we absorb the burden of our caregiver(s) transferring their shadow.” He muddies the idea that individuals bear the ultimate responsibility of their sins, negative personality traits, and negative behaviors. To further see how the Enneagram’s theology of the Childhood Wound turns people into victims of their past and promotes the shirking of accountability, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the origin of the Childhood Wound. The following is Heuertz’ understanding of the child’s reception of the parent’s “shadow:”

As children, we internalized the pain of imperfect upbringings because we didn’t have the psychological capacity to process the impression of our caregiver’s shadow which develops when we let our pain go unprocessed and unresolved. Our shadow—and we all have one—is the part of our ego we are unable to consciously recognize. Though it is

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84 Ibid, Kindle, 899.

85 Ibid, Kindle, 908.
neither good nor bad, it is where we unconsciously “park” some of the worst of ourselves.\textsuperscript{86}

It is vital to note that it is the child’s lack of “psychological capacity” that drives the integration of the shadow, something that one does not have control over. He further removes one from his or her own responsibility by affirming that we are not able to recognize this aspect of our ego and that we “park” our bad behaviors there. Thus, the emphasis on the childhood wound and its role in the development of one’s Enneagram number ultimately provides one with the idea that at root they are not fully responsible and in control of their own actions. It also promotes the idea that a person is not even able to be fully aware of all their sinful actions. In this way, the Enneagram positions itself as a required tool for sanctification.

Heuertz takes a contrary approach when compared with most Enneagram teachers on the topic of how one embodies his or her number. He states that “we are born into our type and there’s nothing our environment can do to change that.”\textsuperscript{87} Cron and Stabile affirm the traditional thinking stating that “we all adopt one (and only one) of these types in childhood”\textsuperscript{88} Ultimately, it is probably best to articulate the reception of one’s number by saying that the “Enneagram type is one-third nature, one-third nurture, and one-third the decision we make as children to fill a role needed to survive or thrive in our families and environments.”\textsuperscript{89} In conclusion, the Enneagram’s understanding of how people come to embody their numbers limits their understanding of personal responsibility, relativizes sin into one’s inability to cope with their parents’ issues, and

\textsuperscript{86} Heuertz, \textit{The Sacred Enneagram}, 908.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid, Kindle, 987.

\textsuperscript{88} Cron and Stabile, \textit{The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discover}, Kindle, 285.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid, Kindle, 987.
as an unavoidable, inaccessible problem that can only be addressed through the self-knowledge of the Enneagram.

Enneagram as Numerology

The connections of the Enneagram with numerology are extensive in both the philosophical and practical arenas. Richard Rohr sees the Enneagram as being traceable to a line of thinking derived from “Pythagorean thought” and “the works of Origen,” which was popularized by the desert father and monk Evagrius.90 Evagrius “championed the allegorical interpretation of the Bible” and believed that there was a “mysterious, symbolical sense” to Scriptural interpretation, in which Rohr acknowledges numerology having “played a key role.”91 For Rohr and the Enneagram, the presence of numerology is not disturbing, as he asserts that “in the earliest days of Christianity the interest in numerological symbolism was omnipresent and was rooted in pre-Christian thought.”92 Secular Enneagram specialist Beatrice Chestnut sees the numerological, “ancient wisdom behind the Enneagram” as representing the metaphysics and psychology of Aldous Huxley who “finds something in the soul similar to, even identical with, divine Reality and points the way to manifesting our potential.”93 Incidentally, Rohr has no disagreement with the numerological understanding of the soul as divine due to his self-ascribed panentheistic view of creation whereby God is ontologically incarnate in the entire universe.

90 Rohr and Ebert, The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective, Kindle, 520.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid, Kindle, 556. There is a substantial difference between numerological symbolism and numerology. Numerological symbolism is the use of numbers as symbols to represent specific concepts like perfection or completeness. Numerology is the attempt to use numbers to divine hidden knowledge. The Enneagram is not symbolism it is numerology as will be demonstrated throughout this section.
On a philosophical level, the Enneagram and numerology share the same purpose: to discover the “self” and thereby “know the universe and God.” Numerology, in alignment with the Enneagram, teaches that “the average person is often two people.” The external self, which is equivalent to the Enneagram’s false self, is composed of the behaviors, attitudes, and thought patterns that are “freely expressed.” Also, similar to the Enneagram, this false self was “cultivated to defend our sensitivities,” and “build up a psychological wall.” To become aware of the inner or high self, equivalent to the Enneagram’s true self, is “our highest form of expression, the God within.” Upon integration with the high self, individuals are capable of expressing “true love,” “the greatest depth of personal freedom,” and a “depth of wisdom that is almost legendary in human expression.” In conclusion, there is virtually no difference between numerology and the Enneagram’s understanding of anthropology.

Similar to numerology, the Enneagram makes extensive use of numbers, geometric diagrams, and the ways in which the numbers and diagrams connect. The Enneagram symbol is formed using a circle, an equilateral triangle, and an “irregular hexagram symbol.” Each of these three parts represents what the Enneagram describes as eternal laws of the universe. First, the circle represents “the Law of One,” which “denotes eternity, unity, wholeness, and the

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95 Ibid, Kindle, 94.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid, Kindle, 173.


inclusivity of all things.” Second, the Enneagram’s equilateral triangle represents “the Law of Three,” which references “the three forces that guide everything in motion: active, passive, neutral.” Finally, the irregular hexagram teaches “the Law of Seven,” which “is thought to explain things like light . . . sound . . . sequence . . . and energy (the seven chakras of the body’s energy centers that yoga students learn).” One of the original Enneagram/Enneagon philosophers, G. I. Gurdjieff, argues that “everything can be included and read in the Enneagram” and one can study it alone and “in it, read the eternal laws of the universe.”

Additionally, each of the nine points of the Enneagram represents one of the nine standard personality types. These types are defined “on the basis of nine ‘traps,’ ‘passions,’ or ‘deadly sins.’” One’s Enneagram number does not reveal positive things about one’s self; rather, it reveals “our compulsive identification” with a trap or passion that “emerges as a reaction against our original ‘soul space.’” Each of these nine points occupies a node on the Enneagram symbol, and it is the relationship of these numbers to each other in the context of the symbol that provides one with wisdom. The first way the numbers relate to each other is through the concept of wings. Each number sits next to two other numbers which act as “wings” for the

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102 Ibid.

103 Ibid, Kindle, 754. It is worthwhile to note that in explaining the different aspects of the Enneagram laws, Heuertz treats them as eternal principles that manifest in each religion. He speaks of each religion as if they are roughly equivalent.


107 Ibid, Kindle, 1190.
central number. These wings are said to “influence” one’s life based on the “season” one is in. Heuertz argues that “wings serve to balance your type.” No matter the Enneagram theory on wings, it is the location of the numbers on the symbol that determines their relatedness. The second way numbers are related is through the “theory of Integration and Disintegration.” This theory relies on tracing the Enneagram symbol to move from number to number in a specific pattern. As one moves along the designated arrows of integration, “and on the way to spiritual maturity,” they “find true consolation with the positive qualities of the number[s]” they encounter. Similarly, if one moves along the arrow path of disintegration, one will experience his or her “unhealthy inner states” and be able to recognize “destructive patterns” and modify behavior.

Numerology has its own diagram and uses numbers in a similar way to the Enneagram. The numerology chart is called a “Birth Chart” and is drawn as a tic-tac-toe board. Each space is filled by a person’s birth numbers, which are later correlated to a “Spiritual Plane,” which describes how people act and react to “other people and circumstances,” similar to the Enneagram’s personality types. Numerology also incorporates the use of arrows, which are drawn “where any three numbers exist in a straight line, or where any three spaces exist in a

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109 Ibid.


111 Ibid, Kindle, 1595.


straight line.” Similar to the Enneagram, “arrows of numbers are those of strength” and correspond to the Enneagram’s integration path and “arrows of empty spaces are those of weakness,” which are analogous to the Enneagram’s disintegration path.

The Enneagram also mirrors numerology in terms of how it describes its personality types. The following is a diagram with comparisons of quotations from depictions of Enneagram numbers vs. depictions of Birth Numbers from numerology. Note: this diagram is not affirming any connections between the Enneagram number and Numerology number. The point of the chart is to demonstrate that the way in which both programs handle their depictions is strikingly similar.

Table 4.1. Comparison of Enneagram and Numerology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Enneagram Type/ Numerology House)</th>
<th>Enneagram</th>
<th>Numerology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type 1: The Perfectionist/ Ruling Number 9</td>
<td>“Healthy Ones are committed to a life of service and integrity. They are balanced and responsible and able to forgive themselves and others for being imperfect.”</td>
<td>“To serve and improve human life are at the very heart of Ruling 9’s expression.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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117 Ibid.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type 2: The Helper/Ruling Number 2</th>
<th>“They are generous in their efforts to love well and care for others. These happy, secure Twos also have appropriate boundaries.”¹²⁰</th>
<th>“The Ruling 2 is generally the sensitive, unassuming, supportive person.”¹²¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type 3: The Performer/Ruling Number 3</td>
<td>“They still love to set goals, rise to challenges and solve problems… they feel valuable, which unleashes a tender benevolence that is focused on the common good.”¹²²</td>
<td>“These people emphasize the thinking aspects of life… their service to the community… is primarily expressed through thinking, planning, analyzing, memorizing.”¹²³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a number of features that can be seen in this comparison. First, both the Enneagram and numerology focus on things that are vague and could be descriptive of any person. Second, they also describe behaviors that can be reinforced or changed, thus promoting the idea that one can change one’s self and one’s personality to better align with one’s number. Finally, the way they talk about behavior naturally leads to reinforcing mentality. Given their high degree of similarity, it makes sense that Chestnut recognizes that “how to achieve greater peace, freedom,


and self-knowledge has been around for hundreds or maybe thousands of years, encoded in ancient teachings, philosophy, myths, and symbols.” In conclusion, the linkages between the Enneagram and numerology are impossible to ignore and though they have different emphases and focuses they operate on the same underlying principles.

Comparison of Enneagram to Horoscopes and Astrology

The Enneagram also shares significant overlap with horoscopes and astrology. In the same vein as astrology, Enneagram authors make heavy use of symbols to describe their personality types. For instance, Rohr makes use of “animals,” “nations,” “symbolic color,” “biblical figures,” “saints and personalities from history,” “literature,” and “the current world scene.” Rohr even encourages Enneagram enthusiasts to “give names to the forces at work in fairy tales or to relate certain styles of music and dance to the nine energies.” Rohr believes that Enneagram depictions benefit from these “playful approximation[s] to each form of energy.” These statements about the Enneagram from Rohr reveal two things, which will be analyzed in turn: first, the Enneagram and astrology both utilize symbols, and second, they both understand personalities as being influenced by an esoteric, universal energy-force.

The following is a diagram that compares some examples of the Enneagram’s use of symbols with their use in astrology.

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126 Ibid, Kindle, 1135.
127 Ibid, Kindle, 1126.
128 Ibid.; Jan Spiller, Astrology for the Soul (New York City, NY: Bantam Dell, 2008); Alex Fletcher, Astrology and Enneagram: Understanding and Finding Yourself Through Astrology and Enneagram (Zodiac Signs,
Table 4.2. Comparison of Enneagram and Astrology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Enneagram Type 5</th>
<th>Enneagram Type 6</th>
<th>Zodiac Sign</th>
<th>Zodiac Sign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owl, fox, hamster</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hare, wolf</td>
<td>Lion</td>
<td>Crab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desire</th>
<th>Longing for fulfillment</th>
<th>Freedom to trust</th>
<th>To be loved and love in return</th>
<th>Security and stability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Color               | Blue                    | Beige-Brown      | Gold                       | White                  |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Task</th>
<th>Learning commitment and action</th>
<th>Break free of authority and gain responsibility</th>
<th>Interweave individual wants and needs with the world.</th>
<th>Release of repressed feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitfall</th>
<th>Emotional stinginess</th>
<th>Cowardice</th>
<th>Needing acceptance</th>
<th>Insensitivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

First, it is important to note that there is a high degree of similarity between the type and style of information reported by both the Enneagram and astrology. Though astrology is broader in its coverage, both it and the Enneagram place heavy emphasis on personality. Second, a number of authors have seen clear connections between the Enneagram and astrology and published books

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_Horoscopes, Personality Types, Spiritual Growth, Self Awareness, Spirituality_ (Alex Fletcher, 2018); Peter Hastings, _Enneagram and Astrology: The Complete Guide to the 9 Personality Types and the 12 Zodiac Signs - Improving Your Relationships and Discover the Basis Numerology and Kundalini: 2 Books in 1_ (Peter Hastings, 2020). Excerpts from these books were summarized and used to populate the following figure.
connecting the two. In conclusion, the descriptive similarities employed by the Enneagram are very similar to astrology and indicate that the two may be inextricably related.

The second substantial link between the Enneagram and astrology is the view that the energy of the Enneagram type or astrological sign has real and significant control or influence over a person’s life. For example, one astrological interpreter, while discussing the astrological sign of cancer, states that “the essence of [their] energy is sensitivity, femininity, [and] creativity.” Additionally, the astrological guide states that the “Cancer” energy can be “negative” and lead to “gossip, being hypersensitive, cliques, and being overly competitive.” Similarly, Enneagram philosophers also utilize the concept of energy to describe how Enneagram types have power over people. For instance, Rohr states that “each one of the Enneagram numbers refers to a certain state of energy . . . [and] the connecting lines [of the Enneagram symbol] point to the dynamics between specific points of energy.” Later on, Rohr argues that when one is younger, “one must let one’s self be guided by the energy that seems to be natural.” Heuertz also affirms the existence of Enneagram energy saying, “we possess within us the energies or aspects of all nine types.” In conclusion, the method through which


130 Fletcher, Astrology and Enneagram: Understanding and Finding Yourself Through Astrology and Enneagram (Zodiac Signs, Horoscopes, Personality Types, Spiritual Growth, Self Awareness. Spirituality), Kindle, 316.

131 Ibid.


133 Ibid, Kindle, 839.

astrological signs and Enneagram types act seems to be mystically identified with the concept of an energy that can influence a person’s personality.

**Attempts to Christianize the Enneagram**

As the prior sections have discussed many of the Christian versions of the Enneagram in great detail, this section will present some of the teachings of the primary Christian Enneagram teachers that, while not necessarily held by all, are nonetheless part of the overall Enneagram tapestry.

Richard Rohr

Being the central figure whom nearly every other Protestant Christian cites in their own works on the Enneagram, Richard Rohr’s views on the Enneagram are vital to understand, and one recent work critiquing the Enneagram states that “one cannot disconnect the Enneagram from Richard Rohr.”

First, it is worthwhile to assess his personal justification for the adoption of the Enneagram for Christian use. He argues that “in principle, the whole world and everything in it that is good, true, and beautiful is at the disposal of Christians: ‘For all things are yours… and you are Christ’s.’”

He also mentions that “Paul himself and John the Evangelist have taken over and ‘baptized’ ideas and images from the Greek philosophy of religion of their own day.” Both of these justifications are fraught with error. In stating that “all things are yours,” Rohr is neglecting to note that the context of the verse is rather focused on making an argument against the wisdom of the world. For instance, Paul, three verses prior, states that “the wisdom of

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137 Ibid.
this world is foolishness in God’s sight.” Additionally, the juxtaposition of the two wisdoms indicates that “to be wise in God’s way of seeing things means becoming a fool in this age.” Thus, when Paul writes that no one should boast in people, he is referencing that the true source of all good wisdom is God and not people. If a piece of wisdom is truly of God, it cannot be contained by an individual person or personal teaching. With this context set, the “all things” mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:21 can be understood to mean all the spiritual blessings of the gospel. There are not “superior spiritual group[s]” that one can belong to in order to attain greater blessings, “for in Christ everything that has been done for God’s people has had them in mind from start to finish.” Instead of being a defense of the use of the Enneagram, the third chapter of 1 Corinthians presents a strong case that the Enneagram is actually exactly the type of thing that Paul was arguing against—a piece of the world’s wisdom that sets up a special spiritual class of people who have access to greater spiritual blessings than the average Christian.

Second, Rohr falsely equivocates Paul and John’s use of Greek terminology to describe God with using worldly rituals and practices as part of the process of sanctification. Theologians John Piper, Justin Taylor, and Paul Kjoss Helse provide a substantial and thorough defense of a biblical theology of God anthropomorphizing Himself in order to communicate His nature to mankind. Paul and John’s use of the surrounding culture’s terms and ideas falls in accordance with this theology. However, it is important to note their use of this terminology does not

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138 1 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV).


140 Gardner, 1 Corinthians, Kindle, 5565.

141 Piper, Taylor, and Helseth, Beyond the Bounds: Open Theism and the Undermining of Biblical Christianity.
incorporate Hellenistic theology. For instance, John’s use of the word “logos” is not in “the Platonist sense,” “the Stoic sense,” nor the “Neoplatonist” sense; rather, he uses the word “in the OT/Jewish sense,” which “denotes the Word of God as Creator of all things, revelatory of God’s will and sovereignly effective of his decrees concerning human history.” By utilizing the Greek language, Paul and John were not only able to reinforce Jewish orthodoxy, but also speak to the Greeks. Paul and John asserted the logos as the “personal presence of God himself in the Son” over and against the more commonly accepted Greek creative forces of kaos and kosmos. Without syncretizing, they were able to utilize the Greek language and avoid adopting Greek ideology. In contrast, the Enneagram is an attempt to fit Christian principles into the mindset of ancient wisdom, not reason from similarities within ancient wisdom to the Scriptures and God of Christianity. For these reasons, both of Rohr’s justifications are ineffective at defending the Enneagram’s use in Christianity.

Rohr also criticizes traditional orthodoxy, stating that “Christians are inclined to speak with great gusto about how grace alone is efficacious, but we have no answers when people ask how they can experience this redeeming, life-changing grace.” His answer to his own question is to go to the Eastern spiritual teachers from whom he learned about the Enneagram, which he argues is “a parabolic form of teaching” that “subverts our unconscious and truly ‘mythical’ worldview so that God can get in.” Rohr then goes on to say that this “rearrangement of reality”

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142 Klink, John, Kindle, 2397.
145 Ibid, Kindle, 301.
or “transfigured universe is the only thing that Jesus means by ‘the Truth.’”\textsuperscript{146} It is worthwhile to point out that Rohr’s assertion is in direct contradiction with Jesus’s own testimony that He and He alone is “the way the truth and the life.”\textsuperscript{147} This heresy is what later prompts Rohr to argue that the only way to the Truth is through “suffering and prayer,” and the Enneagram is the best tool to generate these experiences.\textsuperscript{148} Thus, in the central, blasphemous statement in his book Rohr cries out that “God saves humanity not by punishing it but by restoring it!”\textsuperscript{149} This is in direct denial of the doctrine of atonement which states that God fully meted out His wrath against humanity on the human nature of Jesus Christ. God did not save humanity by restoring it, but by punishing Jesus Christ.

Rohr also exhibits severely compromised views on God and creation. He mystifies and depersonalizes God by saying things like, “we have to press through to God, the Totally Objective, who for Christians is at the same time Totally Ours, since he has committed himself to our world and become part of it.”\textsuperscript{150} Rather than the revelation of God being found in the Word of God as Scripture, Rohr tells Christians that “the mystery of God’s revelation is hidden inside, and in each of us in a different, unique way (at least nine general God images).”\textsuperscript{151} Thus, Jesus in Rohr’s view is bifurcated and had to become “the Human One who believed the divine image in himself, who trusted it, followed it, and told us to do the same.”\textsuperscript{152} In merging God with

\textsuperscript{146} Rohr and Ebert, \textit{The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective}, Kindle, 301.  
\textsuperscript{147} John 14:6.  
\textsuperscript{148} Rohr and Ebert, \textit{The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective}, Kindle, 319.  
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid, Kindle, 362.  
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid, Kindle, 748.  
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid, Kindle, 1276.  
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
Creation, Rohr asserts that “Christ represents God and hence the essence of the world, its true being.” These views represent Rohr’s general rejection of classical theism that has been the standard for Christian orthodoxy for nearly 2,000 years. They are deeply intertwined with his Christian version of the Enneagram and thus with most views of the Enneagram that protestant Christians will encounter.

Christopher Heuertz

Heuertz approaches the Enneagram from an anthropocentric perspective as he asks “Who am I?”—the question that he believes to be the “the fundamental question of our human experience, the one that compels us to search for meaning.” To answer this question, he relies on the Enneagram which details how one can move from “basic knowledge to principled understanding to embodied integration” of one’s personality and attain the True Self. He asserts that each Enneagram type is “a compassionate sketch of possibilities and opportunities, pointing us back to our True Self and to the anchoring god whose name is Love.”

The redefinition of God’s revelation is a fundamental linchpin in both Heuertz’s theology and the Enneagram. Rather than Scripture, Heuertz relies on eternal archetypes and laws of the universe. For example, he affirms the following Laws as the truth that can be found in any religion: The Law of One, or the general “eternity, unity, wholeness, and inclusivity of all things,” the Law of Three that “three forces guide everything in motion: active, passive, and

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155 Ibid, Kindle, 539.
156 Ibid, Kindle, 572.
neutral,” and the Law of Seven that everything exists on a “spectrum” often with “seven” parts. These Laws reflect Heuertz’s theology, whereby he divinizes creation. For instance, his Law of One reinforces the idea that everything is eternal, and everything is one substance. This is the textbook definition of pantheism. Second, his Law of Three creates a set of forces that are impersonal and co-eternal with God, thereby striking at God’s sovereignty over the universe. Third, his Law of Seven relativizes truth by asserting that all things exist on a spectrum; this contradicts the existence of biblical binaries such as sin/not sin, male/female, and clean/unclean. Thus, Heuertz’s adherence to Enneagram philosophy trumps and contradicts Scripture.  

Additionally, Heuertz asserts that no matter the religion or belief system, “Divine Love is in all truth no matter where it may be found.” The one source of revelation that is consistently missing from his discussion is the Bible itself. Instead, he promotes the idea that our primary modes of hearing God are sensorial in nature and instructs Christians to “trust the voice of God that speaks in our hearts . . . listen to God in our minds . . . learn to sense God at work in our bodies,” rather than reading the very Word of God. He argues that “each of these Intelligence Centers offers us a different way of experiencing the loving presence and voice of God.” In general, Heuertz sees the Enneagram as a full replacement for true, authentic study of Scripture.


158 Ibid, Kindle, 760, 1600, 2791, 4890. Heuertz utilizes Scripture in a way that is indicative of many Enneagram teachers. In his book, The Sacred Enneagram, Heuertz utilizes Scripture selectively to accentuate points made by the Enneagram. The McCords utilize Scripture in the same way in their book, Becoming Us, see loc. 703. Both of these Enneagram teachers discuss utilizing “the Enneagram from a biblical perspective,” which is another way of saying that they start assuming the validity and truth of the Enneagram and rework the language into biblical terms while simultaneously proof-texting Enneagram assertions with out of context verses, see chapter 4 of Becoming Us. The Enneagram is the “GPS” of spiritual growth, not the Bible, see Becoming Us, loc. 712.

159 Ibid, Kindle, 883.

160 Ibid, Kindle, 1431.

161 Ibid, Kindle, 1413.
Cron and Stabile do not discuss the philosophy or theology of the Enneagram in detail. However, one statement in particular is worth examining. Cron reflects on his entrance into the Enneagram saying, “So what led me to believe that writing a book about an archaic, historically questionable, scientifically unsupported personality typing system was a good idea?” The answer, he reports, is revealed throughout the rest of the chapter, and can be summarized in this way—the reason Cron wrote a book about the Enneagram is because he personally found benefit from it and found it “very useful.” This is a clear example of a flawed theological method, whereby Cron has placed experience over divine revelation in the development of theology and has replaced cross-examination of the Scripture with positive experience as his ultimate test of truth.

Assessment Criteria

Revelation

**Table 4.3. Revelation Criteria and the Enneagram**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Number</th>
<th>Criterion Description</th>
<th>Christian Teaching</th>
<th>New Age Movement Teaching</th>
<th>Enneagram Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syncretism with New Age (Red)</td>
<td>Unique Heterodoxy (Yellow)</td>
<td>Orthodoxy (Green)</td>
<td>Gray (Not Applicable)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Form of authoritative revelation</th>
<th>Propositional revelation (Scripture)</th>
<th>New consciousness (spiritual enlightenment)</th>
<th>New Consciousness and Gnosticism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>God’s ability to speak</td>
<td>God can speak authoritatively through prophesy and Scripture to mankind</td>
<td>God is impersonal and cannot speak with mankind; mankind becomes aware of divine essence</td>
<td>Ultimate revelation does not come through God but the Enneagram.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Changeability of God’s speech</td>
<td>God’s written word cannot change</td>
<td>People’s consciousness and knowledge of god is always changing</td>
<td>God’s Word is subservient to the Enneagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Spiritual beings</td>
<td>Angels are God’s servants; demons are evil angels who are in rebellion against God</td>
<td>Spirits are generally good and in their own process of evolution</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>Angelic contact</th>
<th>Angels are sent by God; they are not to be contacted by humans</th>
<th>Spirits are to be contacted directly by people</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Spiritual beings: work</td>
<td>Angels protect people and deliver God’s messages to people; demons physically harm people, attempt to thwart the gospel, and teach false doctrine</td>
<td>Spiritual beings assist people in attaining consciousness of their divinity, teach new doctrine, and show humans how to manipulate the physical world</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sufficiency of revelation</td>
<td>Scripture is sufficient for the knowledge of God and God’s redemptive plan for humanity</td>
<td>Further revelation through prophesy or channeling is required to attain divine consciousness</td>
<td>Revelation is not sufficient; the Enneagram is necessary to draw near to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>View of truth</td>
<td>Absolute truth exists and is knowable because God’s view of reality is complete and authoritative; He communicated truth to humanity through His word</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Word of God</td>
<td>The Bible is identical to the word of God and thus is true and authoritative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Divine authority</td>
<td>The apostolic-prophetic commission was</td>
<td>Awareness of one’s Christ consciousness</td>
<td>Ultimate authority resides in the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
given by Jesus to specific individuals to write the derivative word of God gives individuals the authority and power to speak what they want into being Enneagram itself and in the individual’s ability to acquire access to the True Self

| 11 | Power of human words and thought | Human words have no inherent supernatural power | Human words have the supernatural power to create, heal, and destroy | N/A |

God and Creation

**Table 4.4. God and Creation Criteria and the Enneagram**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legend</th>
<th>Syncretism with New Age (Red)</th>
<th>Unique Heterodoxy (Yellow)</th>
<th>Orthodoxy (Green)</th>
<th>Gray (Not Applicable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Number</th>
<th>Criterion Description</th>
<th>Christian Teaching</th>
<th>New Age Movement Teaching</th>
<th>Enneagram Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ontological Creator/Creation Relationship</td>
<td>Creator and Creation are ontologically distinct</td>
<td>Creator and Creation are either ontologically identical, on a continuum, or mixed in some way</td>
<td>Christian versions of the Enneagram teach either partial (Christ Consciousness) or full identity of creation with God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Creation Event</td>
<td>God made creation apart from any external help</td>
<td>Creation continually remakes itself</td>
<td>You transform yourself into the True Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>God’s authority</td>
<td>God maintains full authority and sovereignty over creation</td>
<td>Creation governs itself</td>
<td>The Enneagram energy controls individual people, yet people are autonomous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Creator and creation substance types</td>
<td>God and creation are</td>
<td>God and creation are the same substance</td>
<td>Either God and creation are the same substance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>God’s presence to nature</td>
<td>All of nature is fully present but not identical to God at all times</td>
<td>God is one with nature</td>
<td>God is incarnationally present in nature, or one with nature</td>
</tr>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>God’s presence to humanity</td>
<td>God makes Himself known to humanity through His word and works</td>
<td>God is the spirit of mankind; thus, man becomes internally aware he is god</td>
<td>God is either equivalent to humanity or incarnated in humanity (Christ Consciousness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>God and history</td>
<td>God is sovereign over history</td>
<td>Mankind and the Cosmos control history</td>
<td>Mankind controls its own destiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Immutability of substance</td>
<td>God does not change ontologically</td>
<td>God is in process of spiritual evolution</td>
<td>The assumption of a pantheistic or panentheistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Concept</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Immutability of knowledge and decree</td>
<td>God’s knowledge is fixed and His decree is eternal</td>
<td>God’s knowledge continuously increases and it does not have a decree; individuals have changing decrees</td>
<td>The assumption of a pantheistic or panentheistic view of God necessitates a relativistic view of God’s knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Depiction of God</td>
<td>God is triune: three persons in one essence</td>
<td>God is an impersonal, unconscious, universal mind force out of which individual consciousnesses evolve</td>
<td>God is an impersonal force or energy called Love that exists within all things; Christ Consciousness is a mantel and the Holy Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Type of Theism</td>
<td>Trinitarian monotheism</td>
<td>Pantheism or Panentheism</td>
<td>Pantheism or Panentheism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Identity of Jesus</td>
<td>Jesus is the only and unique ontological Son of God; He is the only Christ or Messiah</td>
<td>Jesus is a human being who attained high levels of divine consciousness by being one among many who gained Christ consciousness</td>
<td>Jesus is a human being who reflected all nine Enneagram types and is one among many who exhibits Christ Consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Uniqueness of the Christ</td>
<td>Jesus is the only Christ and has been for eternity</td>
<td>All people can attain Christ consciousness and become Christs or anointed</td>
<td>All people can attain Christ consciousness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Nature and Purpose of Humanity

**Table 4.5. The Nature and Purpose of Humanity Criteria and the Enneagram**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Number</th>
<th>Criterion Description</th>
<th>Christian Teaching</th>
<th>New Age Movement Teaching</th>
<th>Enneagram Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Anthropology: substance</td>
<td>Mankind’s nature is both physical and non-physical, yet distinct from God and creation</td>
<td>Mankind, nature, and god are one continuous substance</td>
<td>God is either one with mankind or incarnate in mankind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Anthropology: creation of mankind</td>
<td>God created and defined mankind</td>
<td>Mankind creates and defines itself</td>
<td>Mankind is created by God but defines itself through the Enneagram and True Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Anthropology: mankind’s relationship to God</td>
<td>Man is made in the image of God</td>
<td>Mankind is made from the substance of god</td>
<td>God is incarnate in mankind or of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend

- Syncretism with New Age (Red)
- Unique Heterodoxy (Yellow)
- Orthodoxy (Green)
- Gray (Not Applicable)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Anthropology: identity</th>
<th>Christians find their identity in Christ through His indwelling; Christ and believers remain distinct individuals</th>
<th>The acquisition of Christ consciousness allows one to become one’s true self</th>
<th>Acquisition of Christ Consciousness allows one to become one’s True Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Eschatology: now</td>
<td>By the power of the Holy Spirit, God is creating the body of Christ who is being sanctified to participate in the eternal kingdom</td>
<td>Through Christ consciousness, all distinctions on earth are being erased and conflict between people is being eradicated</td>
<td>People learn to embody the nine Enneagram types to fully integrate the True Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Eschatology: God’s role</td>
<td>God’s authority and kingdom are fully realized throughout the</td>
<td>As all distinctions are erased through awareness of the universal mind,</td>
<td>God helps people see the divinity within and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Eschatology: humanity’s role</td>
<td>new heaven and new earth</td>
<td>war and conflict end; creation of a boundaryless worldwide country</td>
<td>conform to their true self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Eschatology: results</td>
<td>To love God and love one’s neighbor</td>
<td>To affirm divine autonomy of every individual</td>
<td>To affirm the autonomous True Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>World Peace</td>
<td>Achieved through sanctification</td>
<td>Achieved through eradication of distinctions</td>
<td>Achieved through the Enneagram and the True Self</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Sin and Salvation

### Table 4.6. Sin and Salvation Criteria and the Enneagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Number</th>
<th>Criterion Description</th>
<th>Christian Teaching</th>
<th>New Age Movement Teaching</th>
<th>Enneagram Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Problem with humanity</td>
<td>Humanity has sinned against God and is separate from God</td>
<td>Ignorance of divine nature and true self</td>
<td>Ignorance of the True Self and actualization of the False Self through childhood wounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Consequence of problem</td>
<td>Spiritual and physical death; eternity in hell</td>
<td>Continual reincarnation</td>
<td>High potential for universal salvation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Baseline state of humanity</td>
<td>Unholy, not good, sinful</td>
<td>Humanity is essentially good</td>
<td>Humanity is essentially good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: Syncretism with New Age (Red) | Unique Heterodoxy (Yellow) | Orthodoxy (Green) | Gray (Not Applicable)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Solution to the problem: mode</th>
<th>Penal substitutionary atonement</th>
<th>Acquisition of hidden or gnostic knowledge</th>
<th>Acquisition of hidden or gnostic knowledge of the True Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Solution to the problem: means</td>
<td>Faith in Jesus and His sacrifice</td>
<td>Spiritual encounters and religious practices lead to enlightened consciousness</td>
<td>Intensive study of the Enneagram and self-reflection leads to the discovery of the True Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Works versus faith salvation</td>
<td>Jesus’ atonement on the cross is fully sufficient for salvation; faith is all that is required</td>
<td>NAM practices require continual work and are not sufficient for total enlightenment</td>
<td>Enneagram requires continual inner work through spiritual disciplines and study of the Enneagram Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sanctification: definition</td>
<td>Process by which God makes believers holy in character and set apart for Himself</td>
<td>Process by which adherents become aware of their connection to the Cosmos and discover their true self</td>
<td>Process by which adherents become aware of the True Self and integrate with it and God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sanctification: means</td>
<td>The Holy Spirit, through the regenerate heart and cooperation of the believer, purge sin from his or her life</td>
<td>Increased participation in spiritual practices causes individuals to become aware of their divine nature</td>
<td>Sanctification occurs by engagement with the Enneagram and spiritual disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Destiny of mankind</td>
<td>Glorification through the general resurrection (new physical body), completion of sanctification, and</td>
<td>Deification through becoming one with the Cosmos; no resurrection of the physical</td>
<td>Attaining the True Self; Christ Consciousness, integrating the divinity within</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.7. Spirituality Criteria and the Enneagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Number</th>
<th>Criterion Description</th>
<th>Christian Teaching</th>
<th>New Age Movement Teaching</th>
<th>Enneagram Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Purpose of Spirituality</td>
<td>Spirituality is the deepening of one’s relationship with God through worship or the structured and ordered</td>
<td>To attain awareness of one’s own divinity and unite one with the Cosmos</td>
<td>To reject the false self of the Enneagram number and embody the True Self,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus of Spirituality</td>
<td>Adoration and praise for the triune God of Christianity</td>
<td>Celebration of one’s own divinity and power</td>
<td>Celebration of one’s own True Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Focus of Spirituality</strong></td>
<td>Adoration and praise for the triune God of Christianity</td>
<td>Celebration of one’s own divinity and power</td>
<td>Celebration of one’s own True Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Experience of Spirituality</td>
<td>Transcendent meeting with the living God</td>
<td>Engagement with the part of self that is transcendent or divine</td>
<td>Engagement with the True Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Centrality of Scripture and Doctrine</td>
<td>Practice reflects and emphasizes, God and His work as revealed in Scripture</td>
<td>Practice focuses on the self, self-divinity, and obtaining personal desires</td>
<td>Practice focuses on gnostic wisdom and attaining the True Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Exposure of False Doctrine</td>
<td>Authentic spirituality</td>
<td>Emphasizes the acceptance false doctrine</td>
<td>Teaches false doctrine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

expression of the proper response of the people of God to the revelation of God in Christ

which some equate with Divinity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Separation of Theology and Practice</th>
<th>Scripture indicates that pagan religious practices are inextricably linked to idolatry and cannot be separated from their origins</th>
<th>The New Age Movement borrows practices from a variety of religions and contextualizes them in a new theological setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Proper Sacrifice</td>
<td>Christ’s Sacrifice is sufficient for sins—People are living sacrifices</td>
<td>Material sacrifice (time, money, skills, work) in exchange for spiritual growth or ascension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Praising YHWH</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Not required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Proper Heart</td>
<td>Doing the will of God, Having an upright heart</td>
<td>Openness to all beliefs and worldviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Morality is not required; you must be open to revealing and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connecting with God</td>
<td>Direct encounter with God (Prayer, Word of God, Holy Spirit)</td>
<td>Indirect Encounter (necromancy, mediumship, spiritism, channeling, use of physical medium)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Angelic Encounters</td>
<td>Sent by God</td>
<td>Contacted by man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Purpose of Angelic Encounters</td>
<td>Deliver God's message, protection</td>
<td>Reveal new truth and doctrine, assist in ascension of consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Links to Idolatry</td>
<td>Prohibited</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Use of Magic</td>
<td>Prohibited</td>
<td>Accepted (magic, occult, Gnosticism, sorcery, witchcraft, The Enneagram is numerology and astrology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Use of Music</td>
<td>For thanksgiving and praise, with reverence to doctrine</td>
<td>For inducing a state of spiritual openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>Focused on who God is and in line with His teachings, cannot be repetitious</td>
<td>A means of ascending to a higher consciousness, can be repetitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>In line with prior revelation, requires P-A Commission, is true, must glorify God, build up the church, and assist in the Great Commission, cannot profit off of it</td>
<td>Can disagree with prior revelation, requires spiritual empowerment, can focus on personal growth and empowerment, can profit off of it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis and Recommendation

The first part of Chapter 4 has focused on the assessment of the Enneagram for Christian use. To begin this section, the core theological convictions of the Christian versions of the Enneagram were exposed and compared to Scripture and orthodox doctrine. First, the Enneagram’s stance on sin, total depravity, and the fall of man was depicted. The Enneagram teaches that sin is obsession or addiction to the use of one’s innate gifts. It is also described as the ignorance of one’s True Self and the acceptance of the delusion of the False Self. Sin is not related to disobedience toward God, nor is it the committing of inherently immoral acts. People are not inherently sinful, nor do they have an unchangeable fallen nature. Ultimately, the Enneagram teaches that both the good and bad aspects of people need to be fully integrated into their personalities in order to recover the True Self. This teaching is contrary to everything Scripture teaches about humanity and sin. The Bible presents sin as a direct violation of God’s Law and as rebellion against Him and His Kingdom. In Scripture, sin has the effect of permanently corrupting people, causing physical death, spiritual death, moral corruption, bondage of the will, and hardness of heart.

Second, the Enneagram rejects Scripture as authoritative divine revelation in favor of a new consciousness model of revelation whereby people become aware of their True Self and the incarnate divinity that resides in them. This form of revelation is also backed by a gnostic/esoteric body of knowledge that has been transmitted in the Enneagram. This form of knowledge is not authoritative; rather, it acts as a guideline to help people position themselves to
receive the full revelation of the True Self. The only way to gain access to the revelation of higher consciousness is to dedicate oneself to the continual practice of inner work by which one studies the self and attempts to recover and embody one’s holy idea and holy virtue. This understanding of revelation stands in opposition to Scripture—as Scripture asserts its authority, supremacy, and sufficiency over all of the world’s knowledge and wisdom. Additionally, Scripture does not present itself as gnostic and only for the few; rather, it is God’s revelation to all of mankind and is freely assessable by all. It does not require inner work nor sanctification to comprehend it. The Bible as the Word of God confronts people as they are and calls them to submit their lives to Christ, to accept His sacrifice in payment of the debt of their sins, and to hold Scripture as the ultimate authority in their lives.

Third, the Enneagram promotes a false view of sanctification whereby people have to internalize their Holy Idea and Holy Virtue in order to grow spiritually. The Enneagram assigns one Holy Idea and one Holy Virtue to every personality type. By fighting to mentally and psychologically engage with these virtues, one is able to fight back against the obsessive parts of his or her personality and gain mental clarity and awareness of the True Self. This fight is said to be accomplished by the power of God, while at the same time through the full effort of the individual. The Enneagram’s understanding of sanctification conflates the means of sanctification with its fruit. People cannot sanctify themselves. Nothing people do can change their spiritual condition or free them from spiritual addictions. The Holy Spirit alone transforms people into the likeness of Christ which produces good works, fruit, and morally upright actions as a result. Sanctification is a work of the Spirit of God who brings forth good fruit in the actions of individuals.
Fourth, salvation is radically redefined under the Enneagram’s philosophy. The Enneagram presents itself as a pathway to the nine ways one can restore one’s relationship with God and awaken to the True Self. According to Enneagram teachers, no one is actually in danger of eternal judgment in hell, because no one has acquired a permanent moral sin penalty, nor has anyone fallen to such a level that they cannot dig themselves out. Instead, salvation is the journey one goes on in an attempt to restore the True Self. One is not inherently holy or unholy for the Enneagram is not concerned with those designations. Morality itself is insignificant with regard to the ultimate quest of the Enneagram. One can only find one’s way back to God by recognizing which of the nine personality types one has come to embody, and then, work to integrate one’s Holy Idea and Virtue into one’s life so that one can awaken to the True Self. This understanding of salvation stands as an affront to truth of the Gospel. People are sinful from birth, sin throughout their lives against a holy God, and stand condemned to hell. The only means by which people may be saved is if God, as a man, pays the death penalty they deserve on their behalf, and then they accept God’s sacrifice on faith and take Him as Lord and Savior. The idea that there are nine ways we fall away from God and nine ways we return to Him rejects the truth that there is only one way to God, and that is through Jesus Christ.

Fifth, the Enneagram states that the path to reconciliation and mended relationships is a better understanding of others’ personalities and an acceptance of them as legitimate. It frames relational disfunction not in terms of sin, but in terms of knowing how to properly respond to people with different personality types.\textsuperscript{164} Additionally, the Enneagram also promotes things that

one can do in order to have good relationships. Fundamentally, the Enneagram ignores the reality that relationships are distorted, and people are alienated by sin not by personality types. The Bible states that the only way to redeem relationships and come into full peace, or shalom, with others is by being sanctified by the Holy Spirit and by being brought into the body of Christ, which redefines all of redeemed humanity as brothers and sisters.

Sixth, the Enneagram promotes a distorted view of humanity in its assertion that there are nine personality types. These personality types define why people act, think, and feel the way they do, which takes a significant degree of agency away from people. In order to overcome this deterministic hold that the personality has on people, one must become enlightened to the truth about oneself that he or she is good and that the True Self is real. Jesus is also redefined in this framework, as He is presented as the first one who was able to manifest all nine fruit of the nine personality types, and thus bring unity to mankind through the Enneagram. The Bible takes the viewpoint that humanity is created by God and that, as God’s creation, it is good; however, due to sin mankind has become corrupt. Additionally, it is not a personality type that drives or motivates peoples’ actions; instead, it is either the Holy Spirit or the sin nature that is the dominant influencer in a person’s life. The sinner is in bondage to the inclination to sin whereas

wide variety of personality typing systems other than the Enneagram, which include the Myers-Briggs assessment and the DISC analysis. Though a thorough assessment of these other systems is beyond the scope of this dissertation, there are a few comments that should be made. First, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests that personality typing systems are fundamentally destructive, as “the labeling of live human beings emerged as one technique for annihilating individuality.” Second, there are books like Annie Murphy Paul’s, The Cult of Personality, which are written from a secular perspective and demonstrate that personality typing systems have “thrived in the shade of casual neglect, growing unchecked along with abuses like invasive questions, inaccurate labels, and unjust outcomes.” Third, this author holds that authentic biblical counseling is the only form of counsel that Christians should seek. In agreement with preeminent biblical counselor and professor Jay Adams, this author affirms that “the Bible’s position is that all counsel that is not revelational (biblical), or based upon God’s revelation, is Satanic . . . when counsel is given by those who align themselves with some other counsel than God’s the counsel that is given is called ‘the counsel of the ungodly’ (Ps. 1:1).”
the believer has submitted his or herself to the Holy Spirit. To deny the existence of the holy/fallen inclination is to remove the majority of agency from mankind.

Seventh, teachers of the Enneagram typically assert that one’s parents have the greatest impact on one’s personality, as they cause the Childhood Wound that dramatically influences how he or she will react and behave throughout life. They assert that the negative aspects about individual people are the inherited shadows of their parents and that only through understanding how one’s Childhood Wound connects to one’s number can one be truly free to recover the True Self. Scripturally, though people inherit a rebellious, sinful nature from their parents, they are absolutely responsible for their own sins. Additionally, depending on the branch of theology one holds to, some would argue that the same will that was in Adam and Eve as they sinned is also in all people. By holding a Pelagian understanding of humanity, the Enneagram naturally moves to a form of salvation that is also self-initiated and self-accomplished. Christianity, on the other hand, asserts that just as all sinned through Adam, all have the possibility of receiving new life through Christ.

Eighth, the Christian Enneagram is essentially numerology with a Christian veneer and Christian terminology. The Enneagram is primarily derived from the ancient wisdom that has been utilized in virtually all major religions since the dawn of mankind. One aspect of this wisdom is the heavy use of symbolism, numbers, and geometry to divine eternal truths. The Enneagram makes use of all these systems in its presentation of its central symbol and the means and ways in which the personality numbers relate to each other. By learning from and following the path of the Enneagram—literally, the symbol—one can more quickly realize one’s True Self. Additionally, the Enneagram also affirms eternal divine laws that run contrary to Scripture and Christian theology. The Enneagram also makes heavy use of the type of reporting, advice, and
descriptions that are traditionally used in numerological analysis. The Bible explicitly prohibits any use of numerological signs as they are ultimately a form of divination and contrary to the knowledge of God. Instead, Christians are to turn to God’s Word, the Bible, in order to understand who God is, who they are, and what their ultimate purpose in the world is.

Ninth, the Enneagram also borrows heavily from astrology and horoscopes. It presents the personality types in similar ways to astrology charts citing that there is an animal, color, life task, and pitfall that correspond to every personality. On a deeper level, the Enneagram also holds that the personality types are real “energy” that actually asserts influence in a person’s life. Astrology holds to a similar premise. The astrological signs literally govern people’s lives and determine why and how they act. Enneagram authors express similar sentiments when they assert that the Enneagram’s energy guides them. Scripture presents a worldview that is diametrically opposed to the supernaturality of the Enneagram. The Bible teaches that God is sovereign over the universe and is in control of all of history; yet, He allows for real human choice. All people are fully responsible for their own actions, and God is simultaneously in charge. The best depiction of this understanding comes from the crucifixion of Jesus done by the Sanhedrin and Romans as well as ordained by God the Father.\textsuperscript{165} The Bible also explicitly forbids any form of astrology or astromancy as false spirituality.

Following the theological analysis, a brief section was included to demonstrate that the predominant teachers in the Christian Enneagram movement demonstrate significant syncretism with the New Age Movement and utilize a poor theological method when making decisions

\textsuperscript{165} For justification see: Romans 8:32 “He did not even spare His own Son but offered Him up for us all;” Acts 2:23 “Though He was delivered up according to God’s determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail Him to a cross and kill Him;” and Mark 15: 9-15 “Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.”
about whether or not to utilize a specific practice in the church. For instance, all of the Enneagram teachers analyzed in this dissertation hold to a theological method that affirms experience over the divine revelation of Scripture as the best method of determining whether or not to incorporate a practice into Christianity. Additionally, the two most prominent Christian Enneagram proponents both hold orthodox theology in contempt and affirm doctrines like panentheism, universal salvation, and Pelagianism. They also demonstrate a lack of proper respect for Scripture as they attempt to defend the Enneagram through eisegesis and taking verses out of context.

The analysis of the Enneagram closes with an evaluation of the Enneagram doctrine according to the criteria established in Chapter 3. Below is a chart recording the level of syncretization and heterodoxy that the Enneagram exhibits.

**Table 4.8. Summary of the Enneagram Criteria Assessment**

| Number of theological topics that showed syncretism | 41 (68 percent) |
| Number of theological topics that were unorthodox | 12 (20 percent) |
| Number of theological topics that were orthodox | 0 (0 percent) |
| Number of theological topics that were irrelevant | 7 (12 percent) |
| Total number of theological topics | 60 (100 percent) |
The results of this study necessitate a full rejection of the Enneagram by all Christians. The Enneagram is a New Age occult tool that has no place in the life of a Christian. Any benefits that people may gain by using the Enneagram cannot be used to justify its utilization as it presents a fundamentally anti-Christian, anti-biblical theology that denies Christ. It is recommended that churches and Christians stop using the Enneagram immediately and treat it like they do astrology or numerology, which is exactly what it is. Additionally, Christian book publishers should cease selling all books on the Enneagram as it is a direct violation of their faith statements. The Christian Enneagram is so fully syncretized with the New Age Movement that it is virtually indistinguishable from it. As a form of worldly wisdom, the Enneagram is not under the redemption mandate. To engage with the Enneagram is to engage in idolatry of self.

The removal of the Enneagram will leave a hole in Christians’ lives that needs to be addressed by the Church through Scripture. This hole can be filled using the doctrines of anthropology and soteriology. Christians need to be taught the truth about who they are in Christ and how God is saving them throughout history. First, from the penalty of sin, then from the desire to sin, and finally from death through the resurrection. If Scripture can again take center stage in the life of Christians, they will be able to break free of the Enneagram and live as God intended.

Church Practice #2: Yoga

Fundamentals of All Yoga Forms

Manipulating Physicality to Foster Spiritual Experience

Though yoga is often presented as a set of “physical practices for stretching and stress reduction,” the fundamental purpose of traditional Hindu forms of yoga is to achieve
“understanding and complete mastery over the mind.” All aspects of both the postures and breathing techniques are directed at “the restraint of the mental modification” of the mind. Through yoga, one is able to prevent external forces from having an impact on one’s mind or mental state. Through the removal of mental and physiological reactions, the yoga practitioner can achieve the “purest intelligence,” “pure awareness,” and “omniscience.” This omniscience is also called “cosmic knowledge,” or the “Supreme Soul.” In Hindu theology, the Supreme Soul is the Brahman or god. Thus, at its core, yoga is an attempt to attain to a spiritual experience through the manipulation of the physical body.

Though spiritual encounter is at the core of yoga, it has not prevented Americans from attempting to redefine yoga compartmentally. For example, Usharbudh Arya, a critic of compartmental yoga, states that Western Americans have attempted to split yoga into three types. First, “Hollywood Yoga” emphasizes the athletic and physical benefits of yoga and is designed for “people who want merely to look young, stay young and feel young, both mentally and physically.” Those who wish to study the mental and psychological effects of yoga are called practitioners of “Harvard Yoga,” and focus on the “transformation of a human being”

167 Ibid, Kindle, 258.
168 Ibid, Kindle, 832, 3249.
through “personality” changes. Finally, “Cultic Yoga” attempts to utilize yogic practice to achieve “personal powers” like astral projection, spiritual highs, and “enlightenment.”

However, in spite of attempts to split yoga into different beneficial categories, people continually revert to the spiritual benefits as either the primary or secondary motivation for engaging with yoga. In 2016, Crystal Park et al. conducted a “national survey of yoga practitioners” consisting of 360 yoga students and 156 yoga teachers. Of the students, 61.3 percent reported that they changed their “primary reason” for engaging in yoga as they become more acquainted with the practice, and of those that changed, the most common new reason was “spirituality.” Additionally, 85.5 percent of teachers also shifted their primary purpose for engaging in yoga and again “spirituality was the most common” new reason. Bussing et al. found a similar shift along religious grounds in their study on yoga’s effects on spirituality. They report that “an intensive yoga practice may significantly increase specific aspects of practitioners’ spirituality, mindfulness, and mood.”

A nationwide study in Australia, conducted by Penman et al., found that yoga practice “may correlate with a possible reduction in Christian orientation with years of practice (up to 7 years), and a corresponding potential

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171 Ibid, 17.


173 Ibid, 891.

174 Ibid, 892.

increase in non-religious spirituality and Buddhism over the same period.”

Henrichsen-Schrembs and Versteeg argue that most people initially join yoga as pragmatists who only engage for the physical benefits, but as those benefits come about, they slowly migrate toward the true goal of yoga as “new spirituality.”

Christian versions of yoga also emphasize the spiritual growth aspect and benefits of yoga. For instance, one large Christian Yoga organization, Holy Yoga®, utilizes a combination of “Hatha Yoga” and “Bhakti Yoga” to promote “getting in touch with the Holy Spirit by following the outpourings of our hearts” and using “the postures of Hatha Yoga together with the spiritual intent . . . of Bhakti Yoga” to experience spiritual growth. Additionally, Christian Yoga utilizes Hatha Yoga, “which promises the ‘union’ with the divine in the here . . . if one follows its teachings in a disciplined and consistent fashion.” Similarly, the founders of Yahweh Yoga® affirm the spiritual goal of their brand of yoga stating that “every student we have ever taught has had profound spiritual awakening or strengthening while in training.” Both yoga practices and yoga organizations demonstrate that one of yoga’s main goals is spiritual development through physical manipulation of body and breath.


Yoga’s understanding of spirituality is at odds with Scripture at several points. First, yoga defines spiritual growth in terms of physicality, whereas the Bible depicts spiritual growth along the lines of Christlikeness, emphasizing love of God and neighbor. Second, yoga’s assertion that the physical affects the spiritual violates God’s command against attempting to manipulate the spiritual realm via natural means. Third, yoga’s emphasis on spirituality promotes the idea that people can engage in yogic practices to get closer to or reunite with God. Thus, even Christian versions of yoga can do severe damage to Christians’ understanding of the gospel.

Union with God is Esoteric

By definition, yoga means “be in union with” and is central to the practice no matter which form one chooses to follow. In classical Hindu Yoga, union means ontologically becoming god itself as either Shiva or Brahman. However, even among traditional yogic philosophies, union takes on different forms. For example, the Hindu American Foundation states, “yoga . . . does not offer ways to believe in God; it offers ways to know God.” Thus, union does not need to be ontological per say; rather it can and often is depicted as being esoteric or rooted in the acquisition of gnostic spiritual knowledge.
For instance, in a commentary on the yoga sutras, Swami Satchidananda states that “although all Knowledge is within you and you need not get it from outside, somebody is still necessary to help you understand your own knowledge.”185 This “cosmic knowledge is called the Supreme Soul,” and union with god can be rephrased as understanding the true omniscient knowledge that is already in oneself. Under this paradigm, yoga, as union, involves the manipulation of the body to achieve mental or spiritual knowledge. The mind becomes unified through the “path of self-realization” whereby one recognizes that one is god or can acquire divine knowledge that leads to spiritual development.186

Though the terminology and phraseology often change, Christianized versions of yoga also understand union with God to be the acquisition of various types of esoteric knowledge. Holy Yoga creator, Brooke Boon, states that her version of Bhakti Yoga “leads to a state of mind that can be described as being immersed in the Holy Spirit.”187 Through the “ancient disciplines,” Christians can find “communion with Christ” or “Christ-awareness.”188 In her version of yoga, one gains experiential knowledge of God through yoga, which leads to one being mentally and spiritually aware of Christ. This awareness is Boon’s understanding of spiritual growth.

The Christian Yoga Association defines Christian Yoga as “a physical practice of connecting profoundly [and] intimately to our Creator and living God, Jesus Christ with our


188 Ibid, 288.
entire being; physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.” As an extension of this definition, the union found in yoga is the “uniting [of] our breath, body and spirit with Christ, truly becoming one with Him,” and can be attained in “the sacred space of His presence.” Though these concepts are not explained further, they are given in context of Jean Marie Dechanet’s teaching on yoga as a way to use “physical exercise and various forms as a way to connect with God.” Thus, knowledge about how to unite the body, breath, and spirit with God is required for having a truly authentic relationship with God.

Christian theologians have also recognized the place of esoteric knowledge in all forms of yoga. For example, the Catholic Church issued a formal letter about Eastern practices stating that “some physical exercises automatically produce a feeling of quiet and relaxation, pleasing sensations, perhaps even phenomena of light and warmth . . . to take such feelings for the authentic consolations of the Holy Spirit would be a totally erroneous way of conceiving the spiritual life.” As Cardinal Ratzinger affirms, the biblical understanding of spirituality is not found in emotions, feelings, man-made works, or ecstatic experiences; it is found in the actions of the Holy Spirit Himself.

The yogic understanding of union with God differs heavily from the Christian understanding. In yoga, union with God is physical, mystical, and involves uniting human nature with God in some way. In contrast, the Bible depicts union with Christ as an identification with


190 Ibid.

191 Ibid.

Christ in His death and resurrection. Christians share in sonship through adoption, in inheritance through eternal life, and in relationship with God through Christ’s sacrifice. Thus, while the yogic union with God is ontological, the Christian union with God is relational.

Breath Control is Energy Control

In yogic theology, bodily movement and the mind are connected by proper control of the *prana* or breath.¹⁹³ Hindu versions of yoga assert that the breath controls the “divine energy within the human body . . . to promote health and spiritual [occult] consciousness and evolution.”¹⁹⁴ The breath is the aspect of the Brahman that exists within each person, and by controlling it, yoga practitioners can gain “infinite knowledge, infinite power, now.”¹⁹⁵ Yogis assert that this knowledge is the ultimate form of knowledge in the universe, and “there will be no more need to go to books for knowledge” as “your own mind will have become your book.”¹⁹⁶ Given that the breath work in traditional yoga has little to do with physical health and everything to do with controlling hidden power within, it seems pertinent to agree with Dave Fetcho of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project in his assessment that “physical yoga . . . is inherently and functionally incapable of being separated from Eastern religious metaphysics” which include impersonal divine substance being found in mankind.¹⁹⁷

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¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 605.

Christianization of yoga does not attempt to remove the breath control aspects of yoga; rather, teachers focus on recontextualizing breath control and changing the language used to describe it. For example, yoga trainer, Luke Frederick, maintains the traditional teaching on the Hindu chakras while arguing that they are defended in 1 John 4:8. He maintains that an “understanding of energy centers should always point us to a deeper connection with God’s truths… and knowledge about chakras can only enhance our physical, spiritual, and emotional bodies.”\(^{198}\) Though he admits that “energy,” “yoga,” and “chakras” are not found in the Bible, he argues that the Bible contains echoes of these principles.\(^{199}\) He then explicitly states that yoga practitioners can intentionally contract their muscles, called “energetic locks,” “with the aim of redirecting the energy flow within the body” causing “the rise of energy of from our most base (physical body) to our highest (spiritual body).”\(^{200}\)

Susan Bordenkircher, founder of Outstretched in Worship\(^{®}\), states that “God’s presence is in your breath.”\(^{201}\) In complete agreement with traditional yogic philosophy, she teaches that “your breath is what connects your mind to your body.”\(^{202}\) In fact, she argues that the breath “is also your gateway to actually feeling the Holy Spirit moving and working within you . . . God’s presence is only as far away as your breath.”\(^{203}\) Her brand of yoga also understands the breath as

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\(^{199}\) Ibid.

\(^{200}\) Ibid.


\(^{202}\) Ibid, Kindle, 388.

\(^{203}\) Ibid, Kindle, 395.
a way to increase the amount of the Holy Spirit you possess, as she teaches one to “inhale the Holy Spirit . . . inhale the freedom that comes only through Christ.”

In general, Christianized yoga holds to the traditional yogic understanding of the breath as energy and as the way through which the body and mind may be united. Though they typically attempt to change the language and phraseology, this understanding remains the core of how Christian Yoga attempts to accomplish spiritual growth. Additionally, it is important to note that Christian Yoga’s doctrine on breath changes spiritual growth from being Christ-like in morality and holiness to the experience of emotions about God and the heightened consciousness or awareness of God’s presence inside a person.

Relationship and Connection to God is a Product of Human Effort

Fundamental to traditional yoga is the necessity of human effort to cultivate and maintain a relationship with and connection to God. This is done through the induction of “transpersonal states” that have the effect of “produce[ing] mystical experience[s] and spiritual (occult) insight.” By utilizing proper body positions and breathing techniques one can “transcend the mind” and “feel the cosmic force or God.” As one learns the postures, positions, and breathing, one is able to progress further down the path of altered consciousness and will continually experience ecstatic physiological and mental encounters with the supernatural. The end goal of the “physical exercises of yoga” is “attaining godhood.” This is often described as

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204 Bordenkircher, Yoga for Christians: A Christ-Centered Approach to Physical and Spiritual Health through Yoga, Kindle, 419.


207 Ankerberg and Weldon, Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs, 596.
“self-realization” or “the union of man with the Absolute Reality” whereby one realizes that “man’s true nature is divine.”\(^{208}\) Whether or not one is able to reach this state is entirely dependent on one’s ability to probe the mysteries of yoga to their fullest extent. Additionally, the guidance of a yogi is often highly recommended and, in some cases, necessary to fully experience the spiritual benefits of yoga. For instance, one former yoga enthusiast reports that sitting under the famous Yogi Swami Rama was necessary to be “initiated,” and “as he laid his hands upon her head, the typical transfer of occult energy began” which looked like “currents of electrical energy” flowing from her head though her body which she likened to being “touched by God.”\(^{209}\) Thus, whether by oneself or through another, connection to and relationship with God is fundamentally anthropocentric.

This remains the same for those who teach Christian Yoga. Often, Christian Yogis rely heavily on the Christian mystics’ understanding of spiritual development to justify their practices. For example, in his dissertation on the Christian use of yoga, Matus states that he sees little difference between the “use of bodily attitudes and breath control” of Yoga and the “similar practices in the Ignatian Exercises.”\(^{210}\) He also cites that Symeon the New Theologian’s understanding of prayer resembles Tantric Yoga “in his emphasis on the contemplative’s interiorization of liturgical rites.”\(^{211}\) Similarly, former Benedictine monk, Russill Paul, disparages the way that Christian mystics, like Meister Eckhart who was “silenced as a heretic,”


\(^{211}\) Ibid, 187.
were rejected for embracing the Eastern view that God and Creation are one.\textsuperscript{212} He argues this has prevented Christians from utilizing “the chakras and Yogic states of consciousness” in order to develop the “advanced mystical experience within oneself.”\textsuperscript{213} Boon argues that these advanced experiences can be achieved as one “dedicate[s] your practice to Him and Him alone” resulting in her brand of “Holy Yoga becom[ing] your own unique way to worship God with all of yourself through the ancient disciplines of bodily prayer.”\textsuperscript{214}

As a counterpoint to Christian Yoga, Christian stretching programs recognize that Christian Yoga involves an attempt to reach God through one’s own works. For instance, WholyFit\textsuperscript{®}, an alternative to Christian Yoga, asserts that in their program,

body position is not intended to affect the Holy Spirit. Believers cannot manipulate the Holy Spirit and do not want to. Instead, we use body position, as dance does, to express emotion and worship to God Almighty. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God who indwells the bodies of believers in Jesus.\textsuperscript{215}

The reality that yoga offers a way to God through human means is not mitigated by Christian language; instead, it seems to be one of the main reasons Christians engage with Christian Yoga. Given that Christian Yoga programs must include the aforementioned spiritual aspects, it is impossible to see Christian Yoga as affirming the gospel. Instead, Christian Yoga promotes a works-based approach to developing a relationship with God.


Eight Arms of Yoga

In explaining Raja or Royal Yoga, Swami Satchidnanda breaks down all of yogic philosophy into “eight limbs,” through which one must progress in order to receive the full benefits of yoga.\(^{216}\) It is believed that these eight arms are express matters of “universal import,” and are what make yoga “available to all.”\(^ {217}\) Those who argue for Christian use of yoga indicate that yoga “is not a religion \textit{per se},” and that the “plurality of practices, styles and modalities” present in yogic philosophy are easily “individualized” to fit the needs of a particular community.\(^ {218}\) Though the language can differ substantially between different versions of yoga, all of them contextualize the eight limbs in some way, as they are “equal” to each other and “necessary” or the practice ceases to be yoga.\(^ {219}\)

Though one can engage in the limbs simultaneously, they are ordered in such a way as to make mastery of each limb a precursor to being able to continue along the path. The first two limbs govern external and internal morality. To satisfy “\textit{Yama}” —the first limb—one must refrain from causing others “pain,” tell the truth, refrain from stealing, exhibit sexual self-restraint, and live in moderation.\(^ {220}\) \textit{Yama} also refers to the right and proper devotion to the gods, or a commitment to understanding them and relating to them in the proscribed manner; thus, it is an injunction to the yogic understanding of worship.\(^ {221}\) The second limb, or “\textit{niyama},” governs

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\(^{216}\) Swami Satchidananda, \textit{The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali}, Kindle, 2153.


\(^{218}\) Ibid.

\(^{219}\) Swami Satchidananda, \textit{The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali}.

\(^{220}\) Ibid, 2170.

\(^{221}\) Ankerberg and Weldon, \textit{Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs}, 601.
internal morality. This includes the maintenance of ritual or physical “purity,” cultivating a state of “contentment” which looks like mastery over physical desires, the study of “spiritual” books for the purpose of understanding the “self” and “god,” and total worship and self-surrender unto god.\textsuperscript{222} In terms of application and contextualization to other religions, these two limbs are often compared to ethical codes like the Ten Commandments with the argument that they are similar enough in their purpose.\textsuperscript{223} Brooke Boon reinvents these limbs through the understanding of “self-discipline;” she relates the limbs to 1 Timothy 4:7, which reads, “train yourself in godliness.”\textsuperscript{224}

The third and fourth limbs of yoga are what most people traditionally think of when they use the term “yoga.” The third limb or “Asana” refers to the meditation postures that one moves through in a yoga session. These poses act as a “path of meditation” that facilitates “connectedness, balance, [and] liberation.”\textsuperscript{225} It is also recognized in alignment with many Americanized versions of yoga, that “postures alone, taught and practiced with the correct context, intention, and container, can serve as both vehicle to and expression of awakening.”\textsuperscript{226} Hatha Yoga, the dominant form of Christian Yoga in America, was developed in part as an emphasis on utilizing the postures to purify the body.\textsuperscript{227} All forms of yoga utilize postures and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{222}Swami Satchidananda, \textit{The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali}, Kindle, 2187-.
  \item \textsuperscript{223}Ibid, 2193.
  \item \textsuperscript{224}Boon, \textit{Holy Yoga: Exercise for the Christian Body and Soul}, Kindle, 327; 1 Timothy 4:7; It is interesting to note that Boon did not quote the entire verse which reads: "But have nothing to do with irreverent and silly myths. Rather, train yourself in godliness."
  \item \textsuperscript{225}Yoga Isn’t Only Physical Yogasana--But Here’s Why Postures Are an Important Part of the Practice, Video (Yoga Journal, n.d.), https://www.yogajournal.com/videos/culture-practice-yama-why-you-need-asana.
  \item \textsuperscript{227}Swami Satchidananda, \textit{The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali}, 2611.
\end{itemize}
movements in some way, though American forms of yoga place much more emphasis on this limb of yoga than traditional versions do. However, a 2012 *New York Times* article mentioned how fitness forms of yoga introduce practitioners to meditation and that a shift back toward meditation is taking place.228

“Asana” is always paired with “Pranayama,” or breath-control. Traditionally, this limb was understood as “increasing the depth, intensity, quality and subtlety of the knowledge and the database related to the Self” through control of the breath.229 Though “Pranayama” has a wide range of definitions in modern understanding, most Yoga instructors use it to mean “inhalation, exhalation and suspension of breath during the [practice] of yoga.”230 On the psychophysiological level, breath-control has the effect of bringing one into “different states of consciousness/awareness” with relation to the self and god.231 Traditional Yoga and Hatha Yoga in particular utilize the third and fourth arms in the “hope of awakening Kundalini, the potential that is dormant in every individual.”232 Thus, the poses and breath-control practices cannot be separated from what they were designed to do which is control of the nearly limitless energy within the individual person. These arms of yoga form the core of all Christian versions of yoga, as the physical benefits are the primary way in which it is sold to Christians. Though these practices do have health benefits, their design cannot be unlinked from their place in the eight


230 Ibid, 10.

231 Ibid, 12.

limbs. Additionally, it is important to note that some Christian Yoga programs liken
“Pranayama” to “breathing in the Holy Spirit,” which is akin to representing the Holy Spirit as a
force that one controls through one’s breath.233

The fifth limb of yoga, “Pratyaharah,” can be considered one of the primary goals of
yoga. Through the first four limbs of yoga, one learns to control the mind in such a way that one
maintains full control of one’s actions and energy. The fifth limb details the ways in which a
person controls his or her senses. It is recognized that the senses act as profound motivators of
human action, and thus, this limb teaches practitioners how to ignore the senses and act free of
them, demonstrating mastery over them.234 In Christian Yoga, this is often related to one’s ability
to block out all other things so that one can focus on God alone. Christian Yoga instructor,
Bordenkircher, states that “moods and conditions” can be modified and quelled through proper
yoga practice.235

The final three limbs of yoga are concerned with the mental activities needed to attain
enlightenment. The sixth limb, called “dharana,” pertains to working on one’s ability to
concentrate the mind on a single thing.236 The primary way of learning yogic concentration is to
focus on a single thing and refocus on it every time the mind strays to a different topic.237 This

233 Bordenkircher, Yoga for Christians: A Christ-Centered Approach to Physical and Spiritual Health
through Yoga, Kindle, 386.


235 Bordenkircher, Yoga for Christians: A Christ-Centered Approach to Physical and Spiritual Health
through Yoga, Kindle, 507.

236 Swami Satchidananda, The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, Kindle, 2867.

237 Ibid, Kindle, 2900. It is vital to understand that the sixth limb does not pertain to reflection on a topic
nor does it amount to concentrated focus in terms of in-depth study or singlemindedness in completing a task. The
method that one attains intense concentration in Yoga is called “gazing” or a detached form of thinking whereby one
simply exists with one’s thought or picture. Extraneous thought about the picture or reasoning about the symbol
process also involves treating the mind as a separate entity than oneself that can be directly controlled by the conscious self. The seventh limb, “Dhyanā,” is “deep contemplation from occult meditation.” This results in “a mental state characterized by deep relaxation along with attention directed inwards.” This second type of meditation is often referred to as “Transcendental Meditation” and is “similar to sleep” in that “you don’t know you have a body.” In this form of meditation, “you transcend the body” and have “beautiful visions” including “beautiful light.” These phenomena are not imagined; they are real experiences that “just happen” when people engage in yoga. Finally, the culmination of meditation results in the achievement of the eighth limb, “samādhi.” The eighth limb is not something one can “consciously practice” it is something that simply happens when all else is practiced appropriately. This is the aspect of yoga that is focused on union. When one achieves a state of “samādhi” the distinction between the person doing yoga and the object of meditation ceases to exist. Thus, if one contemplates god in meditation through yoga, one eventually becomes god.

negates the purpose of gazing and of dharana. Thus, to attempt to engage in Christian concentration which involves reasoning, active thinking, and focus is to engage in the opposite of dharana.


242 Ibid.

243 Ibid, Kindle, 2938.

244 Ibid.

245 Ibid, Kindle, 2938.
Christian Yoga also fully integrates the final three limbs of traditional yoga. Typically, Christian Yoga utilizes the sixth limb of yoga as a means for meditating on short portions of Scripture. Christian Yoga specialist, Thomas Ryan, teaches that the method for contemplative prayer used as meditation in yoga involves “simply learning to say your word from the beginning to the end of the meditation.”  

246 He argues that you need to select a word like “maranatha” which does not “have a lot of mental associations or images attached to it,” so that people can focus on the word alone through meditation.  

247 He argues that this form of meditation allows one to transcend into the seventh limb where “continuous repetition eventually unhooks our minds from that amalgam of images, ideas, concepts, words and thoughts,” where one in an “act of faith” “leave[s] oneself behind.”  

248 In justification, he argues that Augustine said we should “transcend the self (ego) which is not God in order to encounter our real Self, ‘who is deeper than my inmost being and higher than my greatest height’ yet who is in us and with us, but transcends us in mystery.”  

249 Bordenkircher utilizes this form of meditation in her version of Christian Yoga, with the intention of becoming filled with “the energy, strength, and joy that only comes from Him.”  

250 Finally, some see the final arm of yoga in the Christian mystics’ experiences of union with God. For example, St. Teresa de Avila recounts that “while seeking God in this way, the


247 Ibid.

248 Ibid, Kindle, 1021.

249 Ibid, Kindle, 1030; This quote is not cited in Ryan's book. An attempt to search for this quote in Augustine did not turn up any citations. Ryan's interpretation of Augustine is highly suspect as he seems to be affirming that Augustine believed the higher Self was God.

250 Bordenkircher, Yoga for Christians: A Christ-Centered Approach to Physical and Spiritual Health through Yoga, Kindle, 521.
soul becomes conscious that it is fainting almost completely away, in a kind of swoon, with an exceeding great and sweet delight. It gradually ceases to breathe, and all its bodily strength begins to fail it.” Meditation researcher, Uhuru Hotep, argues that St. Theresa’s experience is a prime example of the “mystic union” expressed in many religions, including the yogic “samadhi.” Through this examination of Christian practitioners’ recontextualization of the eight limbs of Yoga, it is clear that they have been unable to separate Hindu and New Age theology from the practice. All of the Christian Yoga instructors assessed here focus on equivocating the New Age or Hindu language with Christian terms in order to make it more palatable to a Christian audience. Most concerning is the Christian Yoga interpretation of prana, or the breath, which amounts to either a pseudo-spiritual force or a reduction of God to something that people can control. Additionally, the meditative aspects of yoga are not reflective of biblical meditation, which is focused on reflection on the meaning of Scripture. Instead, Christian Yoga meditation is essentially Buddhist/Hindu meditation using words and phrases found in the Bible. The intent is not to know Scripture better, but to cultivate a spiritual mindset or higher consciousness. In conclusion, yogic philosophy is inseparable from yoga practice and Christian Yoga can be nothing but syncretistic with New Age principles.

Physical and Psychological Consequences of Yoga

The positive physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits of yoga have extensive documentation throughout a wide variety of sources and will be assumed to be valid. However, yoga also has documented negative effects which will be detailed in this section. First, the yogis


themselves recognize that yoga, if practiced improperly, can lead to severe, permanent disabilities and diseases. Shree Purohit Swami states that when people do not practice the limbs of yoga properly and in their designated order, they suffer great injury. He reports that he found “three hundred people who suffered permanently from wrong practices” across “India and Europe.”253 Other yoga instructors report similar issues; for instance, Richard Kieninger reports that he knew a woman who “upset her hormonal balance doing this yoga exercise, and it produced a malfunction in her adrenal glands,” from which “she soon died.”254 Similarly, Swami Rama argued that “advanced forms of patterned breathing . . . can cause a person to harm himself irreparably.”255 A spiritual advisor to the United Nations, Sri Chinmoy, also affirmed that “to practice pranayama . . . without any real guidance is very dangerous,” and that he knew “of three persons who have died from it.”256 Hans Ulrich Rieker, in his book The Yoga of Light, affirms these drastic consequences saying, “any misunderstanding in the practice of yoga can mean death and insanity.”257 Of special concern are Gopi Krishna’s statements on Hatha Yoga, the most common form found in America, which will be reprinted in full:

In Hatha Yoga the breathing exercises are more strenuous, attended by some abnormal positions of the chin, the diaphragm, the tongue, and other parts of the body to prevent expulsion or inhalation of air into the lungs in order to induce a state of suspended breathing. This can have drastic effects on the nervous system and the brain, and it is

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255 Ibid.
obvious that such a discipline can be very dangerous. Even in India, only those prepared
to face death dare to undergo the extreme discipline of Hatha Yoga.\footnote{Gopi Krishna, “The True Aim of Yoga,” \textit{Psychic}, February 1973, 13.}

Thus, even so-called neutral forms of yoga like the Hatha variety can come with deadly
consequences when practiced as a form of exercise.

Aside from death, there are also a number of other potential maladies that can arise as a
result of practicing yoga. Sir John Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon) recounts that yoga practice can
lead to “considerable pain, physical disorder, and even disease.”\footnote{Arthur Avalon, \textit{The Serpent Power: The Secrets of Tantric and Shaktic Yoga} (New York City, NY: Dover Publications, 1974), 12.} Ernest Wood corroborates the
maladies that yoga can produce saying that engagement with yoga puts one at “imminent risk of
most serious bodily disorder, disease, and even madness.”\footnote{Ernest Wood, \textit{Seven Schools of Yoga: An Introduction} (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1975), 14.} Among these diseases, he includes:
“cough, asthma, head, eye, and ear pains.”\footnote{Ibid, 78.}

There are also a number of severe psychological issues that can arise when practicing any
form of yoga that are typically related to the accidental release of what is known as the Kundalini
force, which is “the mainstay of all yoga practices.”\footnote{Rieker, \textit{The Yoga of Light: Hatha Yoga Pradipika}, 101.} The Kundalini awakening occurs when,
through the use of yoga, one opens all seven of the chakra body portals and the Kundalini energy
dormant at the base of the spine rises up to the crown chakra, causing a wide variety of
supernatural phenomena.\footnote{Ankerberg and Weldon, \textit{Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs}, 606.} Gopi Krishna argues that many modern teachers of yoga are
woefully unaware that the awakening of Kundalini through yoga can “lead to awful mental
states, to almost every form of mental disorder, from hardly noticeable aberrations to the most horrible forms of insanity, to neurotic and paranoid states, to megalomania and, by causing tormenting pressure on reproductive organs, to an all-consuming sexual thirst that is never assuaged.”

Swami Narayanananda also describes the potential phenomena, saying that the Kundalini energy can “make the mind fickle, bring insomnia, brain disorder, insanity and incurable disease . . . ruin[ing] the whole life of a person.” He also states that he has “seen many become insane, many get brain defects, and many others get some incurable diseases after deep sorrow.”

In conclusion, no matter the form of yoga, it is impossible to fully and definitively protect oneself from the physical and psychological dangers of yogic practice.

Attempts to Christianize Yoga

Holy Yoga®

Brooke Boon, Holy Yoga® creator, engaged with standard yoga practices prior to becoming a Christian.266 After her salvation experience, she continued to find good in yoga, but became uncomfortable with the Hindu philosophy surrounding it.267 In her book, she attempts to redeem yoga through Christian theology. She admits that she is not a theologian nor a trained seminarian and focuses on “weaving the Word into [her] personal yoga practice.”268

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267 Ibid, Kindle, 68.

268 Ibid, Kindle, 75.
methodology is decidedly anthropocentric as she emphasizes how she “invite[s] God to be part of this practice.”

She opens her description of her yoga practice by stating that it is an entirely new type or field of yoga: “holy yoga.” Boon takes her definition of holy from Webster’s dictionary, which states that to be holy is to be “dedicated or devoted to the service of worship of God, the church, or religion.” Thus, to make yoga holy is to take the movement forms and couple them in worshipful practices that are focused on Jesus. She argues that yoga increases her “ability to pray” and strengthens her “connection to Christ.”

Her version of yoga is a combination of Hatha Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. Unlike other Christian Yoga forms, Boon’s yoga fully embraces the fact that yoga is “designed to increase spiritual growth.” She describes Holy Yoga as the “practice of bodily alignment, mindful breathing, and purposeful reliance on God.” This experience brings Christians into a place where they can be their “most authentic, real, whole selves,” because people need to put themselves in a position “for [God] to work in and through us.”

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272 Ibid, Kindle, 82, 89.


274 Ibid, Kindle, 89.

275 Ibid, Kindle, 89.

276 Ibid, Kindle, 190, 335.
root of humanity’s problem with connecting to God is that the “schisms between mind, body, and spirit” are preventing people from “worship[ping] Him completely.”\textsuperscript{277}

In order to justify the utilization of yoga in the Christian life, she makes two assertions. First, she argues that the yoga positions are not Hindu. They were co-opted by Hinduism but originated more than “five thousand years” ago, prior to “written history.”\textsuperscript{278} The website that she uses to defend her position is no longer accessible, but there is a similar site from the same organization arguing her points.\textsuperscript{279} She states that the yoga positions were passed down through “collective experiences” for centuries, and that originally they did not have a religious connotation.\textsuperscript{280} Along these lines, she argues that “no single religion or cult can claim to ‘own’ the ways we move our bodies and use them to worship our God.”\textsuperscript{281}

One of the primary aspects of yoga that she deems potentially demonic is the use of music with “low and heavy and dark” tones along with “ohm” repetition and “chanting.”\textsuperscript{282} She personally felt uncomfortable with the continued use of these practices after becoming a Christian. In her version of Holy Yoga\textsuperscript{®}, she only utilizes music that is marked by “light, joy, [and] peace.”\textsuperscript{283} She also admits that the music she uses in yoga classes is “designed to bring the

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\textsuperscript{277} Boon, \textit{Holy Yoga: Exercise for the Christian Body and Soul}, Kindle, 190.
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\textsuperscript{278} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{281} Ibid, Kindle, 584.
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\textsuperscript{282} Ibid, Kindle, 615.
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\textsuperscript{283} Ibid, Kindle, 615.
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brain into an alpha state, a deeply relaxed and calm condition.”284 She argues that this allows Christians to relinquish “control” and become “dependent on Him.”285

There are a number of issues with Boon’s “Holy Yoga®” that stem from the core of her theological convictions. First, her defense of the human origin of yoga as opposed to the Hindu origin of yoga is severely anemic. Though her sole source is no longer available, the American Yoga Association firmly asserts that yoga philosophy and Hinduism are deeply connected.286 The association even affirms a Hindu worldview in its explanation of the origins of yoga. Additionally, Professor Subhas Tiwari of Hindu University of America asserts that the fundamental principles of yoga are Hindu in origin, and to remove Hinduism from yoga “runs counter to the fundamental principles upon which yoga itself is premised.”287 He argues that yoga is “an instrument which can lead one to apprehend the Absolute, Ultimate Reality, called the Brahman Reality or God.”288

Second, Boon recognizes that the Hindu understanding of unity is different than the Christian understanding of unity but fails to demonstrate how practices designed for pantheistic unity can be utilized for generating biblical unity. Boon states that by changing one’s perspective from unifying “body, mind, and spirit” to unifying “body, mind, and His Holy Spirit that dwells within us,” the yoga practices will shift what they accomplish.289 However, there are several

285 Ibid, Kindle, 626.
286 “Sources of Yoga.”
288 Subhas Tiwari, “Yoga Renamed Is Still Hindu.”
reasons to reject her understanding. One, Hatha yoga works by corralling “two sets of currents and, by making them unite, to still both body and mind.” This “energy is pushed down to the base of the spine” where it is stored until the yoga poses release it upon which “spiritual life [becomes] all at once much easier.” This procedure is thoroughly Hindu/pantheistic and is not an authorized means by which one may commune with God. Hatha Yoga is focused on “liberation” of the body so that the “Kundalini-power… can ‘regain its lost empire’ and gradually rid itself of ‘the human condition’ and achieve divinity.” The practice itself is what accomplishes this task, not the mental beliefs behind it. Additionally, by incorporating Bhakti Yoga into her philosophy, she buys into the false teaching that “attachment to material things” is one of the reasons people are unable to properly connect with God and yoga helps one focus on God and not the world.

Third, there is strong reason to suspect that people who practice yoga are opening themselves up to “demonic power regardless of whether [they] want it or not.” For example, yoga instructor, Nora Isaacs, readily admits that practicing yoga can lead to “a psychotic break, where practitioners go through altered sleep cycles, changes in identity, or depression.” Additionally, other sources report that yoga can cause “pressure in the head, visions, whole-body sexual stimulation, pains in back and neck, intense feelings [in the] head, and involuntary jerks

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291 Ibid, 73.
292 Ibid, 73.
293 Ibid, 74.
and movements.” Thus, the practice of yoga is not easily separated from what it was designed to accomplish in the spiritual realm.

Christ Centered Yoga®

Christ Centered Yoga® was founded by Becky Martin in 2002. At the time of this writing, both of her websites, www.becky-martin.com and www.christcenteredyoga.com are not in operation. Additionally, she does not have any published books describing her philosophy of Christian Yoga. However, she regularly conducts yoga services on Facebook. The following section will assess her philosophy and methods from these services.

The key distinctives of Christ Centered Yoga® are Martin’s use of Scripture and guided prayer that emphasizes the Christian God. She does not make any attempt to Christianize the language of yoga, nor does she change the philosophical, metaphysical underpinnings of yoga. Linguistically, she uses the traditional yoga names for the poses, including “cat pose” and “cow pose.” One of the major metaphysical examples concerns Martin’s understanding of “Pranayama,” which is fundamentally yogic in nature. Her understanding of “breath” is not air, nor is it one’s soul or spirit, in reference to Genesis 1-2. Rather, she affirms that the “breath lives inside of us.” During her yoga instruction, Martin tells her followers to “focus on God and His breath inside of you.” She then goes on to emphasize that God’s “breath is a tool.”

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298 Ibid.
understanding of “breath” is the yogic understanding of “Prana.” The breath is not equivalent to the self, nor is it equivalent to God; instead, it is an impersonal force that one can control to manipulate the physical, mental, and spiritual realms. She affirms that the “breath” is something that is a part of God that exists inside all people, and all people can use it to accomplish personal growth. Against Martin’s understanding, evangelical commentator, Mathews, argues God’s breath is a “metonymy,” or a substitute term for “life;” thus, “to possess the ‘breath of life,’ or ‘breath,’ is to be alive.” The biblical view does not posit an aspect of God that resides in humanity for them to control; instead, the Bible teaches that breath is synonymous with living as found in Job: “as long as my breath is still in me and the breath from God remains in my nostrils.”

By maintaining that the “breath inside of us is His,” Martin has unknowingly affirmed several unorthodox theological standpoints. First, her view comes perilously close to a panentheistic view, whereby God resides in each human being in a spiritual sense. For example, in her affirmation to focus on “God and His breath,” she brings the two together through meditation that lends itself to worshipping both God and His breath. The worship of God and His Spirit would be acceptable as it can be formulated in a Trinitarian framework, but focusing on God and His breath in us is neither scriptural nor theologically orthodox. Second, by speaking of God’s breath as residing in each person she seems to deny the simplicity of God. If God can

299 Martin, Sharing Christ Centered Yoga with Senior High Students in Chapel.

300 Mathews, Genesis 1-11:26, vol. 1A, Kindle, 4483.

301 Job 27:3.

302 Martin, Sharing Christ Centered Yoga with Senior High Students in Chapel.
manifest part of Himself in a completely spatial-temporal sense that is fundamentally apart from
Himself, then He is a composite being which is a denial of classical theism.

Related to this is a third theological problem which is the idea that God resides in
everyone as a cosmic force, can help everyone, yet has not regenerated everyone. There is
nothing stopping someone from using Martin’s yoga method to achieve the same healing results,
and yet, never acknowledge Christ. If the breath inside of a person is truly a tool, then the
addition of Scripture and prayer to the mix is superfluous, or at best, additive to the healing
power that innately resides in each person.

Fourth, her understanding of yoga and its application to mental health detracts from the
gospel message and the atonement, as it presents a works-based approach to healing and
salvation. She argues that the point of her yoga is to “relax the body, mind, and spirit” through
the use of “asanas,” or postures, slow tempo music, meditation, and breath-control. The poses
manifest in the physical realm what Scripture is saying spiritually. If these are done properly,
they result in the “body responding to its creator” and benefits such as lowered blood pressure
will automatically result.

She also describes the spiritual benefits by saying that as one focuses on God through
meditation one is able to “breathe in His goodness, glory, and grace” as well as “relinquish your
need to know . . . and your desire to control.” This thinking turns real goodness, glory, and
grace into abstract concepts detached from any real meaning. If one can simply breathe in

303 Martin, Sharing Christ Centered Yoga with Senior High Students in Chapel.
304 Ibid.
305 Ibid.
goodness, what need is there to actually exhibit or receive goodness relationally? Similarly, if God’s glory can be breathed in, what does it mean to reflect His glory or is there anything truly magnificent about His glory being seen in person? In terms of negative emotions, Martin holds to this stance, indicating that they can be focused on and exhaled. For instance, she guides students to “move our thoughts from our heads to our hearts” in order to utilize the “mind’s eye” to visualize Christ as an empty vessel that was ready to receive all of the negative things about us that we are willing to give Him. Rather than spiritual healing being a work of the Holy Spirit, it is a work of mankind and based on one’s ability to isolate the negative aspects of oneself and then drown them in the infinity empty well that is Jesus. Overall, Christ Centered Yoga® is a near carbon copy of traditional yoga with a few Bible verses and prayer points sprinkled throughout.

Yahweh Yoga®

Yahweh Yoga® was founded by the “enthusiastic and caring mother-daughter team DeAnna Smothers and Courtney Chalfant” in 2005. Smothers has been a yoga practitioner for over thirty years and has developed her version of yoga to foster a “sense of well-being” that comes from making better “lifestyle choices.” Their version of yoga, called Yahweh Yoga®, is “similar to Bikram; Anusara; Ashtanga style yoga.” Ashtanga Yoga incorporates all eight of the limbs of yoga and is often called Raja Yoga. It is the most traditional type of yoga and the

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306 Martin, *Sharing Christ Centered Yoga with Senior High Students in Chapel*.


308 Ibid.

309 Smothers and Chalfant, “About Yahweh Yoga.” In the book on Yahweh Yoga, the author Jennifer Zach states that their form of Yoga is Hatha Yoga, which is in conflict with the official website.
Jennifer Zach, a writer for Yahweh Yoga®, argues that yoga’s use by Christians is defensible for three reasons. First, she argues that yoga postures have been found that date back to “3,000 to 5,000 B.C.;” thus, they predate the earliest extant Vedantic Scriptures, which come from “1,500 years” ago.312 Second, she states that “it is overwhelmingly stated throughout yoga literature that yoga is not a religion,” thus “may be practiced within or without the context of any faith.”313 Third, she asserts as a presupposition that “God is the origin of all truth and beauty and that things that are true can be redeemed and consecrated for His glory.”314 In defense of this last point, she states that yoga is covered in 1 Timothy 4:4-5 as part of “everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.”315 Fourth, Zach makes a hard distinction between the body postures and any potential religious or spiritual impact that they may have, asserting “that there is nothing inherently spiritual (good or evil) about a leg bend

310 Smothers and Chalfant, “About Yahweh Yoga.”

311 Ibid.

312 Jennifer Zach, Deanna Smothers, and Courtney Chalfant, Christian Yoga: Restoration for Both and Soul: An Illustrated Guide to Self-Care (Phoenix, AZ: Yahweh Yoga, 2007), 14. This may be a mistake on the part of the author. Her language seems to indicate that the Vedic Scriptures date to 500 A.D.; however, most sources date them to 1500 B.C.

313 Ibid.

314 Ibid.

315 Ibid.
or downward dog.”  

She also acknowledges that “some methods of breath control seek to liberate the soul from the constraints of the body,” and that this “idea is fundamentally incompatible with the Christian worldview.”

Unfortunately, there are many problems with her argument in support of the contextualization of yoga for Christian use. First, Zach asserts that Hinduism and yoga are not inextricably linked, yoga predates Hinduism by thousands of years, and most yoga literature argues for the differentiation between yoga and Hinduism. The Hindu American Foundation recognizes the trend in publications by Yoga Journal and in a letter of redress affirmed Hinduism as a “5000”-year-old religion with “one of its greatest contributions” being yoga. Thus, unlike Zach’s assertion, yoga practitioners are not in unanimous agreement on this issue. Furthermore, her use of 1 Timothy 4:4-5 is highly problematic. In 1 Timothy 4:1-5, Paul is arguing against teachers who forbid “people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving.” Paul then goes on to say that “everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.” The Bible is clear that God created all physical things and that God created the institution of marriage, thus Paul’s argument holds water in that things created by God cannot be inherently evil. However, Zach argues that God also created yoga as He created the human body that could put itself into

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316 Zach, et. al., Christian Yoga: Restoration for Both and Soul, 15.
317 Ibid.
321 Ibid.
yoga postures. This is categorically false. Yoga was not created by God, nor is it found as part of divine revelation in Scripture. Rather, yoga, in both posture and philosophy, is fundamentally a human construction and not governed by these verses.

Zach also attempts to address concerns of syncretism in Yahweh Yoga® and makes the following rebuttals. As justification for the utilization of yogic methods, Zach states that “intent and purpose are key,” and quotes Tilden Edwards, saying, “What makes a particular practice Christian is not its source, but its intent. If our intent in assuming a particular bodily practice is to deepen our awareness in Christ, then it is Christian. If this is not our intent in any spiritual practice, then even the reading of Scripture loses its Christian authenticity.”

Zach also addresses syncretism by saying that the truths of the Hindu versions of yoga can often match biblical teaching. For instance, she states that the first two steps of Patanjali’s eight-fold path resemble the teachings of the Ten Commandments and are thus fine to follow. However, when addressing the eighth limb, Samadhi, she states that it is fundamentally counter to the biblical teaching of grace through faith.

In contrast to Hindu leaders, Zach is trying to separate what is known as “asana” from the rest of yoga, yoga philosophy, and the other limbs. This is known as the “commercialization of yoga” through an attempt to reduce it to a “mere exercise.” If this can actually be done, and there are significant indications that it cannot, the activity one is doing is no longer yoga. The purpose of “asana” postures is not for physical benefit, even though physical benefits do occur; rather, yoga specialist, Iyengar, states that “asanas” are designed “for conquering the elements,

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322 Lea and Griffin, 1, 2, Timothy, Titus, 18; Nancy Roth and Tilden Edwards, An Invitation to Christian Yoga (New York City, NY: Seabury Books, 2005), xii.

energy, and so on . . . to balance the energy in the body . . . to control the five elements . . . how to balance the various aspect of the mind without mixing them all together, and how to be able to perceive the difference between the gunas, and to experience that there is something behind them, operating in the world of man—that is what asanas are for.”

Similarly, yogi, K. Pattabhi Jois, argues that doing yoga “for physical practice is no good [and] of no use.” Rather, he argues that the true purpose of yoga is spiritual, and that “when the nervous system is purified, when your mind rests in the atman [the Self], then you can experience the true greatness of yoga.”

Thus, the issue that defines yoga as a practice is not, as Zach asserts, purpose and intention. Instead, yoga, by definition, is the combination of all the aspects of the eight limbs of yoga to achieve a spiritual goal. Because the practices themselves bring about the stated spiritual goal, to separate them out and attempt to divorce them from each other results in the destruction of the yoga practice.

It seems that Zach and the creators of Yahweh Yoga do indeed recognize this, as the creators describe Yahweh Yoga as being closely related to Ashtanga Yoga which utilizes all eight limbs. The dangers of this are evident in their depiction of the “prana” or breath. They state that “we hunger and thirst for God, we breathe him too.” They then use an eisegetical translation of Psalm 34:2 to justify that “I live and breathe God.”

In no other form of their

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325 Ibid.

326 Ibid.


328 Psalm 34:2 (The Message); Hebrew for comparison: ויהי תַּחֲרֵי אוֹר ה' וְיֵשֵׁב בְּנִשְׁפֵּטִי HCSB for comparison: I will boast in the Lord; the humble will hear and be glad.
materials do they ever attempt to separate out the exercise portions of yoga from the rest of yoga. Rather, they make every effort to reinterpret traditional yoga teachings with a Christian veneer, despite their assertion to the contrary. In conclusion, Yahweh Yoga® is virtually indistinguishable from Hindi Yoga and only attempts to dress yoga up as Christian through Bible verses and focus on the Christian God.

Outstretched in Worship®

Susan Bordenkircher was a fitness instructor for 10 years at her local YMCA when she was tasked with attending a yoga training program.329 As a result of her study, she eventually developed her own Christ-Centered yoga program, called “Outstretched in Worship®.” In her book on her version of yoga, she asks two fundamental questions, one of which is the key to understanding her yoga: “Will this Eastern practice compromise my beliefs?”330 While it is not clear what her beliefs were to begin with, her understanding of yoga breaks orthodox belief on a number of doctrines.

The first issue with Bordenkircher’s yoga is that it holds that a healthy body is essential to Christianity. For example, she attempts to correct Christian thinking saying that “those who choose not to adequately care for their bodies soon become enslaved by them.”331 She even goes so far as to say that one is unable to “share the love of Jesus, the peace of God, and the freedom you have through salvation if all you feel is uncomfortable and cranky.”332 In Bordenkircher’s

329 Bordenkircher, Yoga for Christians: A Christ-Centered Approach to Physical and Spiritual Health through Yoga, Kindle, 78.

330 Ibid, Kindle, 86.

331 Ibid, Kindle, 125.

332 Ibid, Kindle, 140.
theology, the healthy body is directly linked to one’s ability to experience and “exhibit freedom in Christ,” and if the body is “out-of-tune” one completely lacks true freedom. She rebukes any Christian who is not physically healthy as presenting a poor representation of “Jesus to the world” and sending a message of “brokenness” and not one of “healing.” For these reasons she asserts that “God will bless your efforts at exercise when you practice from a perspective of healing.”

Bordenkircher is correct in her assertion that the body is good, as the Bible does not teach “any sharp antithesis between spirit (or mind) and body,” and the Bible’s view of the body affirms it is “God’s good creation.” However, she is gravely mistaken in linking the body to freedom in Christ, one’s ability to be a witness for Christ, and the body as a potential tool of enslavement. For example, in 2 Corinthians, Paul actively boasts in his physical sufferings which involved being “near death” many times. He also talked about how he had “many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and lacking clothing.” None of these things seemed to impact his Christian witness. Instead Paul reports that he would “gladly boast all the more about my weakness, so that Christ’s power might reside in me . . . so I take pleasure in my weakness, insults, catastrophes, persecutions, and in pressures, because of Christ . . . for when I


334 Ibid.

335 Ibid.

336 Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 206.

337 2 Corinthians 11:23.

338 2 Corinthians 11:27.
am weak, then I am strong.” Under Bordenkircher’s theology, Paul could be nothing other than a horrible evangelist, as he clearly did not care for his body since he routinely put himself into physically damaging situations. Additionally, Paul had every reason to feel uncomfortable and cranky, yet was one of the greatest evangelists in Christian history. Paul’s broken body was a message for healing, but not in the way Bordenkircher imagines. Paul’s physical brokenness was an identification with Christ’s suffering on the cross, and a direct result of Jesus’ statement, “I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” Finally, her assertion that exercise will be blessed because the focus is on healing opens the door to the use of virtually any pagan practice as long as one intends it for good.

Second, Bordenkircher, like most other major Christian Yoga practitioners, does not utilize yoga solely for physical benefits. Rather, she argues that “when practiced with Christ-centered intention, [yoga] could provide spiritual benefits for the Christian.” In her book, she heavily emphasizes the idea that “there is no practice like yoga for integrating the mind and body in unity.” In fact, in her affirmation of the spiritual benefits the physical aspects of yoga often disappear. She argues that “for a Christian, yoga becomes meditation in motion, preparing your heart and body to work together as tools for worship.”

The fundamental problem with this view of worship is that it completely misses the point of worship. In her view, worship is reduced to a physical state of peace where one holds the ideas

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341 Bordenkircher, Yoga for Christians: A Christ-Centered Approach to Physical and Spiritual Health through Yoga, Kindle, 148.

342 Ibid.

343 Ibid, Kindle, 156.
or concepts about God in one’s mind. However, true worship, as detailed in the sections on authentic worship, is rightly responding to the revelation that God has given with adoration, reverence, praise, thanksgiving, and obedience. Her understanding of worship is essentially a psychophysical feeling that is devoid of moral content. Biblical worship on the other hand is worship precisely because of its moral content.

To defend her use of Christian Yoga, she argues that Christians should “keep in mind that it was God who created the breathing process, oxygen, muscles, movement, and our body’s natural relaxation process.”\(^\text{344}\) She then links the practice of yoga to a “deeper level of concentration” through which one can achieve “contentment and understanding . . . [that] ultimately leads us to the connection with our Divine Maker.”\(^\text{345}\) She also quotes Agnieszka Tennant, who articulated the following argument for yoga: “worship is a conscious act of the mind. If it’s busy overflowing with gratitude to Christ for the way He made my body, I simply don’t have the mental space to give up to an idol. Second, can a non-existent idol snatch me away from Father God who has adopted me as His child? No chance.”\(^\text{346}\)

The problem with Bordenkircher’s defense of Christian Yoga is that it conflates God’s creation of the physical/spiritual universe with how things are used in that universe. Yes, God created the general breathing process, but He did not create the specific breathing patterns used in yoga. Yes, God did create muscles, the ability to move, and oxygen, but He did not create the specific movement patterns found in yoga practice. People created yoga, its breathing patterns,


\(^{345}\) Ibid, Kindle, 250.

and its movement cycles. The question, then, is whether those patterns cause anything to happen in the human being that is against God’s created order, or whether those patterns constitute inappropriate or inauthentic worship. Her affirmation that “contentment and understanding” lead to “connection with our Divine Maker” seems to indicate that the type of worship she is offering is indeed inauthentic and lacking content. Connection to God comes through faith by grace as one confesses Jesus Christ as one’s Lord and Savior. Jesus’ death on the cross and His atonement for sin is the means by which one is brought close to God. In Bordenkircher’s theology, Christian Yoga comes perilously close to becoming a means of salvation.

Third, Bordenkircher emphasizes unorthodox views on mankind’s breath. As demonstrated earlier, God’s breath in mankind is not literally God’s wind in our lungs; it is a metonymy for life. However, Bordenkircher asserts that “God’s presence is in your breath,” and that “breath is what connects your mind to your body.” Though she most likely denies panentheism, her view on the breath seems to indicate that God’s Spirit resides at the core of every human being. Additionally, she also replaces relational engagement with the Holy Spirit with sensory engagement. For example, Bordenkircher states that, “your breath . . . is also your gateway to actually feeling the Holy Spirit moving and working within you.” Additionally, she links the primary means of experiencing God’s presence to the breath; she affirms “as a Christian God’s presence is only as far away as your breath.” Similarly, Bordenkircher teaches that, “your breath can become your tangible, physical opportunity to wake up to God’s presence.”


348 Ibid, Kindle, 395.

349 Ibid.

350 Ibid, Kindle, 403.
She also talks about the Holy Spirit in ways that depersonalize Him or present Him as a mystical force. For example, she encourages yoga practitioners to “inhale the Holy Spirit . . . exhale everything that is not of God . . . inhale the power that comes from God . . . exhale all that saps your strength . . . inhale the freedom that comes only through Christ . . . exhale and enjoy!”  

Fourth, she denies the proper use and sufficiency of Scripture, seeing it as a means to prepare oneself for the mystical encounter. In direct disobedience to Matthew 6:7—“When you pray, don’t babble like the idolaters” —Bordenkircher argues for a monastic use of Scripture in which “repetition” is the “key.” Rather than affirming that we “having died to sins, we might live for righteousness,” Bordenkircher sees sanctification as the result of meditation in which “repetition . . . leaves you empty of self and open to the Spirit.” Rather than using Scripture “for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,” Bordenkircher states that the “use of Scripture is simply an avenue to get you focused for your encounter with God; scriptures that you focus on shouldn’t necessarily challenge you, but soothe and quiet your spirit.” Her brand of yoga has the potential to radically shift people’s understanding of the Bible and spiritual growth, so the Bible no longer has authority and power over a person’s life, and spiritual growth is reduced to a works based attempt to cultivate an emotional response.

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351 Bordenkircher, *Yoga for Christians: A Christ-Centered Approach to Physical and Spiritual Health through Yoga*, Kindle, 419.

352 Ibid, Kindle, 476.

353 Ibid, Kindle, 484; 1 Peter 2:24.

Christian Alternatives to Yoga

WholyFit®

Laura Monica founded WholyFit® in 1981 as a wholistic “fitness system” that emphasizes proper stretching techniques in order to promote physical health.355 Near the beginning of her fitness journey, Laura engaged in yoga practice and attended a yoga certification course through one of the largest yoga organizations, Yoga Alliance.356 Though she was told yoga was not syncretistic with Hinduism, she found herself being “urged to worship Shiva with the class members” in a “dishonest and clandestine way.”357 Upon researching yoga further, she became convinced that yoga and Christianity are fundamentally incompatible, which bolstered her into finishing her stretching program as an alternative to Christian Yoga.

There are a number of key distinctives that set her program apart from Christian Yoga. First, on the WholyFit® website, there is extensive discussion about the fact that Christian Yoga is irrecoverably and extensively syncretistic with Hinduism. She acknowledges the issues with the yogic understanding of the breath and how that is linked to the promotion of physiological spiritual encounters. She also corrects syncretistic attempts to incorporate the Holy Spirit into the breath, saying, “body position is not intended to affect the Holy Spirit . . . believers cannot manipulate the Holy Spirit and do not want to.”358 She rightly affirms the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and His permanence in the life of the believer.359 In terms of meditation, she wholly rejects

356 Ibid.
357 Ibid.
358 “Frequently Asked Questions.”
359 Ibid.
the yogic understanding and affirms that Bible study is a key component of the biblical depiction of meditation.

In terms of the actual physical practice of yoga, she affirms that her stretch poses are not based on yogic poses, rather they “have been engineered from the ground up, solely for specific fitness purposes taking into account anatomical differences, with biomechanics known as safe according to American College of Sports Medicine, ACE, AFAA and IDEA criteria.” This is one of the most pivotal contrasts to yoga because yogic postures were developed explicitly to have spiritual effects. She does admit that some of the poses may resemble yogic poses, but it is “done inadvertently” due to the overlap of the use of the physical body. In terms of spirituality, WholyFit® completely separates the spiritual aspects from the physical aspects. Exercise and stretching are kept in the realm of physical care for the body. Scripture and prayer are the only sources of spirituality and engagement with God.

Overall, WholyFit® is a program and organization that stands against the rampant syncretism that is infiltrating the church through Christian Yoga. It effectively points out many of the central issues with Christian Yoga, and then demonstrates how one can engage in stretching and fitness without having to borrow from a religiously motivated and spiritually corrupt practice.

PraiseMoves®

Laurette Willis founded PraiseMoves® in 2001. When she was seven years old, she and her mother began engaging with yoga on a regular basis until she was 29 years old, at which

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360 “Frequently Asked Questions.”

361 Ibid.
point she accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior.\textsuperscript{362} Willis’ version of a Christian alternative to yoga also heavily emphasizes the serious issues with Christians associating with yoga in any way. Like Laura Monica, she also mentions yoga’s spiritual emphasis and the inability to separate Hinduism from yoga. However, she also hits on yoga’s redirection of all who practice it away from seeing faith as the primary means to interact with God, toward using feelings to interact and measure one’s relationship with God.\textsuperscript{363} She also decries yoga’s emphasis on the breath as the “manipulation of ‘life force energy,’” through pranayama breathing during exercises.\textsuperscript{364} Finally, she remarks that those who engage in yoga are heavily “impressionable” due to the meditative aspects of yoga, and yoga is the “missionary arm to Hinduism and the New Age Movement.”\textsuperscript{365}

As she designed her stretching program, Willis held to a number of principles that forced her to break any potential link of her program with yoga. First, she recreated the stretch postures from scratch, using Scripture as her inspiration. She also refused to incorporate “poses and gestures . . . because of their appearance and close association with other religions.”\textsuperscript{366} Second, she refused to incorporate any of the traditional symbols of yoga into her program, such as the use of “Namaste” for its pantheistic/panentheistic connotations and the “mudra” praying


\textsuperscript{364} Ibid.


gesture.\textsuperscript{367} Third, she argues that the foundation of PraiseMoves\textsuperscript{®} is not spirituality nor exercise, but the Word of God itself; thus, in the development of her postures, she emphasizes scriptural memorization and Biblical meditation.\textsuperscript{368} As a result of these principles, PraiseMoves\textsuperscript{®}, like WholyFit\textsuperscript{®}, is a good example of an alternative stretching and exercise program that can help people with their physical health without opening the door to New Age spirituality.

**Assessment Criteria**

Revelation

**Table 4.9. Revelation Criteria and Yoga**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Number</th>
<th>Criterion Description</th>
<th>Christian Teaching</th>
<th>New Age Movement Teaching</th>
<th>Christian Yoga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Form of authoritative revelation</td>
<td>Propositional revelation (Scripture)</td>
<td>New consciousness (spiritual enlightenment)</td>
<td>Esoteric knowledge of ancient yogis; mystical union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{367} Willis, “12 Reasons Why Yoga Is Not Good for Christians.”

\textsuperscript{368} Royce, “Should Christians Pratice Yoga?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>God’s ability to speak</th>
<th>God can speak authoritatively through prophecy and Scripture to mankind</th>
<th>God is impersonal and cannot speak with mankind; mankind becomes aware of divine essence</th>
<th>God speaks through scripture and through mankind’s ability to connect to the breath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Changeability of God’s speech</td>
<td>God’s written word cannot change</td>
<td>People’s consciousness and knowledge of god is always changing</td>
<td>God’s written word cannot change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Spiritual beings</td>
<td>Angels are God’s servants; demons are evil angels who are in rebellion against God</td>
<td>Spirits are generally good and in their own process of evolution</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Angelic contact</td>
<td>Angels are sent by God; they are not to be contacted by humans</td>
<td>Spirits are to be contacted directly by people</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Spiritual beings: work</td>
<td>Angels protect people and deliver God’s messages to people; demons physically harm people, attempt to thwart the gospel, and teach false doctrine</td>
<td>Spiritual beings assist people in attaining consciousness of their divinity, teach new doctrine, and show humans how to manipulate the physical world</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sufficiency of revelation</td>
<td>Scripture is sufficient for the knowledge of God and God’s redemptive plan for humanity</td>
<td>Further revelation through prophesy or channeling is required to attain divine consciousness</td>
<td>Further revelation is necessary through Yogis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>View of truth</td>
<td>Absolute truth exists and is knowable because God’s view of reality is complete and authoritative; He communicated</td>
<td>Absolute truth does not exist because the universal mind in impersonal and does not have a perspective of its</td>
<td>Absolute truth does exist, but God’s word is not sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Word of God</td>
<td>The Bible is identical to the word of God and thus is true and authoritative</td>
<td>Man’s words are divine words and thus create reality</td>
<td>The Bible is the Word of God, but through meditation mankind can create its own reality</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Divine authority</td>
<td>The apostolic-prophetic commission was given by Jesus to specific individuals to write the</td>
<td>Awareness of one’s Christ consciousness gives individuals the authority and power to speak what they want into being</td>
<td>Awareness of union with God and self is the ultimate authority. Anything that brings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion Number</td>
<td>Criterion Description</td>
<td>Christian Teaching</td>
<td>New Age Movement Teaching</td>
<td>Christian Yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ontological Creator/Creation Relationship</td>
<td>Creator and Creation are ontologically distinct</td>
<td>Creator and Creation are either ontologically identical, on a Panentheism: God's breath resides in a person, is not</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>continuum, or mixed in some way</td>
<td>the person, and is still God’s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Creation Event</td>
<td>God made creation apart from any external help</td>
<td>Creation continually remakes itself</td>
<td>God made creation apart from any external help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>God’s authority</td>
<td>God maintains full authority and sovereignty over creation</td>
<td>Creation governs itself</td>
<td>People can manipulate themselves in order to change their reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Creator and creation substance types</td>
<td>God and creation are different substances</td>
<td>God and creation are the same substance</td>
<td>God and creation are different substances, but God’s breath resides in man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>God’s presence to nature</td>
<td>All of nature is fully present but not identical to God at all times</td>
<td>God is one with nature</td>
<td>God is distinct from nature, but may reside in man through God’s breath</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>God’s presence to humanity</td>
<td>God makes Himself known to humanity through His word and works</td>
<td>God is the spirit of mankind; thus, man becomes internally aware he is god</td>
<td>God’s breath in man resembles the doctrine of God’s spirit being in mankind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>God and history</td>
<td>God is sovereign over history</td>
<td>Mankind and the Cosmos control history</td>
<td>Mankind is sovereign over himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Immutability of substance</td>
<td>God does not change ontologically</td>
<td>God is in process of spiritual evolution</td>
<td>God is the breath and can change and be manipulated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Immutability of Knowledge and Decree

| God’s knowledge is fixed, and His decree is eternal | God’s knowledge continuously increases, and it does not have a decree; individuals have changing decrees | God as existent within creation continues to gain knowledge |

### Depiction of God

| God is triune: three persons in one essence | God is an impersonal, unconscious, universal mind force out of which individual consciousnesses evolve | God is triune but His breath is treated as an impersonal, unconscious force that can be manipulated |

### Type of Theism

| Trinitarian monotheism | Pantheism or Panentheism | Trinitarian Monotheism and lite panentheism |

### Identity of Jesus

| Jesus is the only and unique ontological Son | Jesus is a human being who attained high levels of | Jesus can be visualized as whatever |
of God; He is the only Christ or Messiah
divine consciousness by being one among many who gained Christ consciousness
you need him to be; He is God and man

13 | Uniqueness of the Christ | Jesus is the only Christ and has been for eternity | All people can attain Christ consciousness and become Christs or anointed | Jesus is the only Christ

The Nature and Purpose of Humanity

Table 4.11. The Nature and Purpose of Humanity Criteria and Yoga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Number</th>
<th>Criterion Description</th>
<th>Christian Teaching</th>
<th>New Age Movement Teaching</th>
<th>Christian Yoga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Anthropology: substance</td>
<td>Mankind’s nature is both physical</td>
<td>Mankind, nature, and god are one</td>
<td>Mankind is made of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anthropology: creation of mankind</td>
<td>God created and defined mankind</td>
<td>Mankind creates and defines itself</td>
<td>God created mankind, but Mankind can modify itself</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>anthropological perspective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Anthropology: mankind’s relationship to God</td>
<td>Man is made in the image of God</td>
<td>Mankind is made from the substance of god</td>
<td>Mankind is made in the image of God, but the breath may be God’s substance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Anthropology: identity</td>
<td>Christians find their identity in Christ through His indwelling;</td>
<td>The acquisition of Christ consciousness allows one to</td>
<td>One’s identity is discovered as one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Eschatology: now</td>
<td>Eschatology: God’s role</td>
<td>Eschatology: humanity’s role</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Christ and believers remain distinct individuals</td>
<td>By the power of the Holy Spirit, God is creating the body of Christ who is being sanctified to participate in the eternal kingdom</td>
<td>By the power of the Holy Spirit, God is creating the body of Christ who is being sanctified to participate in the eternal kingdom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>become one’s true self</td>
<td>Through Christ consciousness, all distinctions on earth are being erased and conflict between people is being eradicated</td>
<td>Through Christ consciousness, all distinctions on earth are being erased and conflict between people is being eradicated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>comes more into union with oneself and God</td>
<td>Union of body, soul, and mind are occurring in the present</td>
<td>Union of body, soul, and mind are occurring in the present</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>God’s authority and kingdom are fully realized throughout the new heaven and new earth</td>
<td>God’s authority and kingdom are fully realized throughout the new heaven and new earth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As all distinctions are erased through awareness of the universal mind, war and conflict end; creation of a boundaryless worldwide country</td>
<td>As all distinctions are erased through awareness of the universal mind, war and conflict end; creation of a boundaryless worldwide country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>God’s breath is the unifying force present in mankind</td>
<td>God’s breath is the unifying force present in mankind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>To love God and love one’s neighbor</td>
<td>To affirm divine autonomy of every individual</td>
<td>To achieve union of the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criterion Number</td>
<td>Criterion Description</td>
<td>Christian Teaching</td>
<td>New Age Movement Teaching</td>
<td>Christian Yoga</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sin and Salvation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.12. Sin and Salvation Criteria and Yoga**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legend</th>
<th>Syncretism with New Age (Red)</th>
<th>Unique Heterodoxy (Yellow)</th>
<th>Orthodoxy (Green)</th>
<th>Gray (Not Applicable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

mind, body, and spirit
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Problem with humanity</th>
<th>Humanity has sinned against God and is separate from God</th>
<th>Ignorance of divine nature and true self</th>
<th>Disunity between body, mind, and spirit; breath is out of union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Consequence of problem</td>
<td>Spiritual and physical death; eternity in hell</td>
<td>Continual reincarnation</td>
<td>Personal disfunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Baseline state of humanity</td>
<td>Unholy, not good, sinful</td>
<td>Humanity is essentially good</td>
<td>Humanity is essentially good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Solution to the problem: mode</td>
<td>Penal substitutionary atonement</td>
<td>Acquisition of hidden or gnostic knowledge</td>
<td>Alignment of mind, body, and spirit with itself and God; method is hidden knowledge of Yogis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Solution to the problem: means</td>
<td>Faith in Jesus and His sacrifice</td>
<td>Spiritual encounters and religious practices lead to enlightened consciousness</td>
<td>Practice of Christian Yoga will bring union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Works versus faith salvation</td>
<td>Jesus’ atonement on the cross is fully sufficient for salvation; faith is all that is required</td>
<td>NAM practices require continual work and are not sufficient for total enlightenment</td>
<td>Spiritual growth is through Yoga practice, union with God is through Yoga practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sanctification: definition</td>
<td>Process by which God makes believers holy in character and set apart for Himself</td>
<td>Process by which adherents become aware of their connection to the Cosmos and discover their true self</td>
<td>Has little to do with character; focuses on unity of self and ecstatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sanctification: means</td>
<td>The Holy Spirit, through the regenerate heart and cooperation of the believer, purge sin from his or her life. Increased participation in spiritual practices causes individuals to become aware of their divine nature. Increased ability at Yoga causes union with self and God.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Destiny of mankind</td>
<td>Glorification through the general resurrection (new physical body), completion of sanctification, and reception of eternal life. Deification through becoming one with the Cosmos; no resurrection of the physical body, only reincarnation. Yoga is focused on making the body, mind, and spirit in union here and now.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Eschatological community</td>
<td>Eternal community of morally perfect beings. Recognition of the individual as alone in the universe. Community is not emphasized.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.13. Spirituality Criteria and Yoga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legend</th>
<th>Syncretism with New Age (Red)</th>
<th>Unique Heterodoxy (Yellow)</th>
<th>Orthodoxy (Green)</th>
<th>Gray (Not Applicable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion Number</th>
<th>Criterion Description</th>
<th>Christian Teaching</th>
<th>New Age Movement Teaching</th>
<th>Christian Yoga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Purpose of Spirituality</td>
<td>Spirituality is the deepening of one’s relationship with God through worship or the structured and ordered</td>
<td>To attain awareness of one’s own divinity and unite one with the Cosmos</td>
<td>To bring body, mind, and spirit into union. To bring one’s whole being into union with God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Focus of Spirituality</td>
<td>Adoration and praise for the triune God of Christianity</td>
<td>Celebration of one’s own divinity and power</td>
<td>Meditation on the force within oneself called the breath of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Experience of Spirituality</td>
<td>Transcendent meeting with the living God</td>
<td>Engagement with the part of self that is transcendent or divine</td>
<td>Emotional engagement with God through union of body, mind, and breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Centrality of Scripture and Doctrine</td>
<td>Practice reflects and emphasizes, God and His work as revealed in Scripture</td>
<td>Practice focuses on the self, self-divinity, and obtaining personal desires</td>
<td>Practices emphasizes the self, body, breath, meditation, and physical/psychological restoration. Lite references to Scripture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Exposure of False Doctrine</td>
<td>Authentic spirituality exposes false doctrine</td>
<td>Emphasizes the acceptance of false doctrine</td>
<td>Contains false doctrine, does little to nothing to expose or rectify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Separation of Theology and Practice</td>
<td>Scripture indicates that pagan religious practices are inextricably linked to idolatry and cannot be separated from their origins</td>
<td>The New Age Movement borrows practices from a variety of religions and contextualizes them in a new theological setting</td>
<td>Theology and practice can be separated, yoga is universal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Proper Sacrifice</td>
<td>Christ’s Sacrifice is sufficient for sins—People are living sacrifices</td>
<td>Material sacrifice (time, money, skills, work) in exchange for spiritual growth or ascension</td>
<td>Proper sacrifice is proper yoga practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Praising YHWH</td>
<td>Required</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proper Heart</td>
<td>Doing the will of God, Having an upright heart</td>
<td>Openness to all beliefs and worldviews</td>
<td>Proper focus on God and breath control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Connecting with God</td>
<td>Direct encounter with God (Prayer, Word of God, Holy Spirit)</td>
<td>Indirect Encounter (necromancy, mediumship, spiritism, channeling, use of physical medium)</td>
<td>Indirect encounter with the Holy Spirit through breath-control or Pranayama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Angelic Encounters</td>
<td>Sent by God</td>
<td>Contacted by man</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Purpose of Angelic Encounters</td>
<td>Deliver God’s message, protection</td>
<td>Reveal new truth and doctrine, assist in ascension of consciousness</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Links to Idolatry</td>
<td>Prohibited</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
<td>Many but not all Christian Yoga programs utilize traditional Yoga poses</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of Magic</td>
<td>Prohibited</td>
<td>Accepted (magic, occult, Gnosticism, sorcery, witchcraft, divination, fortune telling)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gnostic-like elements in knowledge gained from and through Yoga; potential for divination through breath control</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of Music</td>
<td>For thanksgiving and praise, with reverence to doctrine</td>
<td>For inducing a state of spiritual openness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To induce a state of relaxation and focus on God</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>Focused on who God is and in line with His teachings, cannot be repetitive</td>
<td>A means of ascending to a higher consciousness, can be repetitive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As a means of stilling the mind and focusing on God, is repetitive and based on Yogic meditation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prophecy</td>
<td>In line with prior revelation,</td>
<td>Can disagree with prior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis and Recommendation

The second part of Chapter 4 has focused on the assessment of yoga for Christian use. To begin this section, the core theological convictions of the Christian versions of yoga were exposed and compared to Scripture and orthodox doctrine. First, at the core of yoga is the claim that one can manipulate one’s physical body in order to foster heightened or enlightened spiritual experiences. The aim of yoga is to achieve mastery over the mind and the breath in order to prepare oneself for engaging with God through a heightened awareness. Christian versions of yoga emphasize that through yoga, one can experience spiritual growth through contact with the Holy Spirit. This is not framed in terms of morality nor study of Scripture; rather, it is purely experiential. This understanding of spiritual growth through the manipulation of the physical body runs contrary to the doctrine of sanctification. In Scripture, sanctification is about purging
sin from one’s person, dying to the self daily, and primarily concerns obedience to Christ and His Word. Though the Bible affirms the body as good, the health of the body is not necessary for sanctification, nor is it a mark of spiritual growth. This is evidenced by the fact that many in Scripture were willing to undergo severe persecution because of their faith in Christ and suffered greatly. Ultimately, Christian Yoga takes the focus off of God and His Word and places it on a works-based formula by which one can improve one’s physical health to get to God.

Second, Christian Yoga redefines what it means to be in union with God or Christ. Christian Yoga instructors have taken the traditional Hindu understanding of ontological union with Brahman and syncretized it with the traditional view of union with Christ. In Christian Yoga, the focus of being in union with God is a metaphysical, esoteric, and mystic immersion in the Holy Spirit. It is primarily experiential and leads to “Christ-awareness.” Thus, in Christian Yoga, one’s ability to know God and be in relationship with Him is absolutely and inextricably tied to whether or not one can practice yoga. Christian Yoga reduces one’s relationship with God to a mental state or emotional feeling of goodness and love that is as fickle as one’s personal health. This teaching is contrary to Scripture in that one’s relationship with God is based entirely on Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and one’s acceptance of Him as Lord and Savior. The relationship detailed in Scripture is literally one of relationality, not one of emotion or physical experience. Additionally, union with Christ is also relational. It is not a state of mind or emotional experience; rather, it is identification with Jesus the Messiah in His death, resurrection, and life. To mysticize union with Christ denies the foundations of the believer’s relationship with God and relativizes the gospel into personal feelings based on one’s health.

Third, the most concerning aspect of Christian Yoga, and also the most heavily criticized, is its insistence that God resides in all people as the mystical, esoteric energy-force called the
breath. The practice of breath control, or “pranayama,” is present in all forms of Christian Yoga, as it is one of the foundational limbs of yoga. Christian yogis tend to view this breath as being the very presence of God and something that allows people to literally feel God moving and working within them. Additionally, being a “breath,” it can also be controlled and manipulated, and one can literally inhale the Holy Spirit. There are numerous serious theological issues with the aforementioned view. One, this view denies the simplicity of God. By splitting up God into individual breaths, God is reduced to an energy-force that can be controlled, manipulated, and compartmentalized. Two, it denies the immutability and sovereignty of God. The breath can change and be manipulated through the practice of yoga, which allows the Christian to literally manipulate and change God. Three, the depiction of the breath as residing within individual people reinvents God in a panentheistic manner: God now resides in the souls of individuals. Four, this view promotes a type of universalism apart from Christ as one could theoretically do Christian Yoga to encounter God and restore one’s relationship. Five, this view denies the traditional view of the sufficiency of Scripture and replaces it with the esoteric ancient wisdom of yoga as the primary director of one’s understanding of God. In total, the Christian Yoga views on the breath are dangerous to traditional Christianity, orthodoxy, and salvation.

Fourth, Christian Yoga ties one’s relationship with God to human effort. Christian yogis look to the Christian mystics’ understanding of spiritual growth as primarily a product of human effort in order to justify their incorporation of yoga into the Christian life. They argue that yoga can create new states of consciousness through which one can have a deeper relationship with God. They also promote the development of unique and individualistic methods through which one can worship and approach God. This philosophy is essentially a copy of the pagan polytheistic and New Age forms of understanding worship. It relativizes the Christian
understanding of worship and denies that true worshippers must worship God in “spirit and in truth.” Refocusing one’s relationship with God around a physical activity transforms a God-ordained relationship into one in which God is manipulated through a man-made ritual. This is, by definition, how the NAM views worship: the use of ritual to control the spiritual realm. Thus, yoga is an occult practice that should be avoided.

Fifth, all forms of Christian Yoga incorporate the traditional eight arms or limbs of yoga, which can only be done in a syncretistic manner. These eight limbs are what are traditionally considered to be the universal aspects of yoga that make it available to all people, religions, and belief systems. To remove these limbs has been stated to be dangerous and reduces the practice to something less than authentic yoga. In brief summary, each of the eight limbs will be presented and their syncretistic elements elucidated with regard to Christianity. One, “Yama,” is the limb that governs external morality and how people relate to each other and God. Though there is some overlap between the moral requirements of “Yama” and the Bible, any deviation from biblical morality results in adding to or taking away from God’s law and is syncretistic. Two, “Niyama,” is the aspect of yoga that governs internal morality and how one conducts oneself in worship. This emphasizes mastery over oneself as the proper form of worship in direct contrast to the biblical portrayal of worship as being a living sacrifice. Three, “Asana,” is the limb of yoga that depicts the physical postures and movements that one goes through as one practices yoga. These are purposefully designed to prepare the body for separation from the spirit and to assist one in being able to appropriately control the mind in preparation for an experience of enlightened consciousness. The “asanas” stand in direct opposition to a relationship with God.

369 John 4:23.
370 Romans 12:1.
based on grace. Four, “Pranayama,” or breath control, is the limb of yoga that teaches one how to manipulate and control the cosmic energy-force called the breath in order to gain spiritual awareness and awakening. Breath control is fundamentally a type of magic ritual in that it is an attempt to manipulate God through creation and should be avoided at all costs. Five, “Pratyaharah,” is the limb that teaches that one can have full control of one’s acts and energy as a method for focusing on God alone. This goal is akin to the Hindu or Buddhist understanding of emptying oneself so that all one is aware of is God. The core problem with this understanding for Christians is that it removes the “I/Thou” aspect of the relationship with God and teaches a subsumed “I=Thou” understanding of how people experience God. Six, “Dharana,” is the limb that teaches one how to stay focused on a single thing through intense meditation. This limb does not represent biblical meditation, which looks more like intensive Bible study. Rather, this limb focuses on a single word or thought and is more of a mental exercise concerned with keeping that thought in one’s active mind than actually thinking about the topic or idea. Seven, “Dhyana,” is the limb that teaches occult meditation in which the body is transcended, and the mind is released. Christian yogis have called this the mystical experience with the Holy Spirit whereby one is lost in God. This is essentially astral projection and a forced out-of-body experience and is expressly prohibited by the Bible as occultism. Eight, “samadhi,” is the state whereby one achieves union with God in the mystical sense. As stated in previous sections, this form of union denies the relational and identification aspects of union that are depicted in Scripture. In conclusion, Christian Yoga is unable to extract the Hindu roots and philosophy from yoga. In all forms, Christian Yoga promotes anti-biblical practices and theology that should be avoided, or syncretism will become accepted.
The next part of the section details the negative physical and psychological consequences of practicing yoga. There is no denying that people experience positive effects from doing yoga; however, the negative effects cannot be ignored and many of the people that experience these negative effects did so without accepting the truth about what yoga really is, namely a spiritual manipulation tool. These negative effects included physiological damage to the body like hormonal imbalance, pain, and death. Additionally, others reported severe psychological damage like mental insanity, psychosis, paranoia, and torment. The spiritual effects are also prominent in the form of demonic possession and torment. Overall, there is no way to know whether one will encounter these effects or not, and thus, all forms of yoga should be avoided.

The third part of the section on Christian Yoga assesses the top Christian Yoga organizations and addresses various concerns that they raise in their print materials. One of the most popular Christian versions of yoga is Brooke Boon’s Holy Yoga®. She attempts to redeem yoga by removing as much of the Hindu theology as possible and replacing it with an emphasis on the Bible and God. While she was able to remove many of the direct references to the Hindu gods, she was unable to remove the underlying philosophy and metaphysical realities of the practice of yoga, and instead, syncretized them with the Christian understanding of spiritual growth. For instance, she completely accepts the yogic understanding of anthropology and the mystical connection between God and man as the primary purpose of yoga. Thus, while Boon was able to place a Christian veneer on yoga, she was unable to create a fundamentally Christian experience in yoga practice.

Another well-known Christian Yoga practice is called Christ Centered Yoga® and was founded by Becky Martin. She does not make any attempt to Christianize the terminology of yoga, nor does she attempt to remove any of the standard limbs of yoga from her practice.
Rather, she focuses on Christianization through the use of Bible verses, prayer, and meditation on God. However, due to her incorporation of the breath into her practice, she heavily syncretizes with the NAM teaching on God and is unable to keep her brand of Christian Yoga pure. She also makes one’s relationship with God dependent on being able to do yoga, as she affirms that it is through yoga that head religion becomes heart religion. In general, there is very little differentiating her brand of yoga from traditional Hindu Yoga.

Another Christian Yoga organization is Yahweh Yoga®, which is based on the Ashtanga style of yoga and incorporates all eight limbs. The focus in this version of yoga is on “Whole Health” and includes physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits. They defend their version of yoga through eisegetical usage of Scripture and by a faulty understanding of the history of yoga, denying its origin in Hindu theology. They also argue that yoga can be completely divorced from Hinduism and utilized in a Christian context by changing the intent and purpose for which one engages with the practice. This assertion ignores the vast underlying philosophy of yoga and results in a fully syncretistic version that is presented as Christian.

One of the earliest modern versions of Christian Yoga was developed by Susan Bordenkircher and is called Outstretched in Worship®. Throughout her literature she demonstrates a works-based understanding of salvation and spiritual development that emphasizes the body’s role in being sanctified. She even claims that it is impossible to truly glorify God and be a representative of Christ if one’s body is not in a healthy state. Her philosophy is a prime example of elevating the body and its perfection to a place that is unhealthy for the Christian and is counter to the grace-based understanding of the gospel. Additionally, promotes the idea that one can come to the best relationship and connection with God through yoga, as only yoga is truly capable of stilling the body and the mind to such an
extent that one can hear God. Bordenkircher also holds to the traditional yogic interpretation of the breath, and thus, is heavily syncretistic with NAM theology on the doctrine of God.

In contrast to the aforementioned yoga programs, there are at least two serious, viable alternatives to yoga for Christians to engage in that promote health and fitness without resorting to yogic philosophy. Both of these programs, WholyFit® and PraiseMoves®, show surprising similarity in their philosophy and will be discussed together in this summary. The creators of both programs attest that yoga is the primary method through which Hinduism is infiltrating American Christianity and that yogis are essentially Hindu missionaries. They both maintain that the yogic understanding of the breath is inherently occult and promotes a false view of God and a method through which one can manipulate God. They both completely reject yoga and developed their programs using medical knowledge. In general, both of these programs are excellent alternatives to yoga and have done Christianity a great service in providing fitness and health programs to Christians that are not syncretistic with Hinduism or the NAM.

The analysis of Christian Yoga closes with an evaluation of yogic doctrine according to the criteria established in Chapter 3. Below is summary of the results of that study.

**Table 4.14. Summary of Yoga Assessment Criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of theological topics that showed syncretism</td>
<td>29 (48 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of theological topics that were unorthodox</td>
<td>20 (33 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of theological topics that were orthodox</td>
<td>4 (7 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of theological topics that were irrelevant</td>
<td>7 (12 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of theological topics</td>
<td>60 (100 percent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In conclusion, Christian Yoga is not able to separate the practice from yoga’s underlying metaphysical and theological tenets. Christian Yoga is near fully syncretistic with Hindu and NAM theology. It is especially dangerous to believers as those who have developed Christian Yoga programs often make use of Scripture, Christian terms, and promises of a better relationship with God, all of which appeal to the average Christian. As a result of this study, it is recommended that all churches immediately discontinue any and all affiliation with yoga and cancel all yoga classes. Additionally, churches should make their congregations aware of the dangers of yoga and the reality that despite honest attempts, yoga is not compatible with Christianity. Finally, churches should make their members aware of alternative health and exercise programs like WholyFit® and PraiseMoves®, so health can be promoted in an orthodox and gospel-affirming way.
Chapter 5: Conclusion and Further Considerations

Summary of Study

This study set out to develop a set of criteria by which practices in the church could be assessed for New Age syncretism and then apply those criteria to the practices of Christian Yoga and the Christian Enneagram. The first chapter of this study opened by providing a brief assessment of contemporary American Christianity with special emphasis on its views on Scripture and spiritual practices. This review uncovered that American Christians are susceptible—now more than ever—to NAM syncretization due to their inherent distrust of Church authority, rejection of doctrine, and distaste for Scripture.

Next, this study presented a brief history of the origins of the New Age Movement and the myriad of ways in which it has attempted to infiltrate mainstream Christianity throughout the last 60 years. The historical review revealed that the cultural and political milieu of the 1960s played a substantial role in the development of New Age thought, as well as its quick propagation. The combination of disease, government failures, immigration, and global and personal crises gave rise to an entire generation of people who felt as though the world had failed them. Thus, they were primed for a new path and quickly turned to the spiritual leaders of the age who promoted a syncretistic hybrid spirituality that promised that the world was on the verge of a utopian age if they became aware of the divinity within.

Additionally, a specific strand of pseudo-Christianity that developed during the late 1800s was coming back into vogue. “New Thought,” which was originally developed by Phineas Quimby and popularized in the Christian cult called Christian Science was picked up by many New Age teachers throughout the 1900s. While it initially focused on healing, New Thought...
developed into a form of American prosperity, whereby whatever one thought about would be guaranteed to happen as a result of the cosmic forces at play in the fabric of the Cosmos. It reached a substantial level of popularity through Rhonda Byrne’s book *The Secret.*

Throughout the 1900s, the New Age Movement has attempted to make major incursions into the Christian Church. One of the most deceptive ways that the NAM has influenced Christianity is through supposed spiritual practices. With the influx of Hindu and Buddhist organizations, Christians found themselves turning to meditation, yoga, and the Enneagram to meet the spiritual needs they felt their pastors and Bibles were unable to address. This incursion was made worse by the publication of books by Christian publishers that reinforced these views and practices as normative. Some of the authors, like Richard Rohr, deny virtually every traditional doctrine of Christianity in favor of NAM theology, and yet, are still seen as great spiritual leaders in the Church.¹

The Pentecostal and Charismatic Church have been a special target for NAM infiltration and have had to fend off incursions throughout their short histories. Holiness theology played a major role in the theological foundation of the Pentecostal church and as a result, there were a number of doctrines and teachings that reflected New Age thinking being taught by Pentecostal pastors at the beginning of the movement. One of these syncretistic teachers was Charles Parham, who claimed there were different tiers of Christians and affirmed experientialism over Scripture. Another key leader, William Branham denied the sufficiency of Scripture and affirmed heretical sources of revelation, like the Zodiac, which paved the way for future syncretism as found in the Word of Faith movement.

¹ From earlier sections, this study found that Rohr denies the following: Creator/Creation distinction, original sin, sin as a moral problem, penal substitutionary atonement or any real atonement, the uniqueness of the Messiah, salvation by grace through faith (Enneagram required).
In terms of modern syncretistic movements, this study analyzed the New Apostolic
Reformation and its associated churches and ministries, which include Bethel Redding and the
International House of Prayer. The NAR has been a major influencer in modern Christianity, and
some of the most powerful organizations in the movement have fully embraced New Age
teaching and practices. The worst offender, Bethel Redding, has published a book, The Physics
of Heaven, which recounts how the major leaders at Bethel have fully embraced pseudoscience
and occultism in an effort to garner spiritual experiences and spiritual power.

In the final section of the introduction, the study reviewed a handful of books at the
academic, apologetic, and lay level with the intention of assessing the field of apologetics
addressing New Age syncretism. In the 70s and 80s when the New Age Movement was
organized around a series of high-profile spiritual gurus and organizations, there were a number
of excellent books published that broke down the New Age worldview and warned people about
its attempts to deceive. However, as the NAM became more integrated into society and more
mainstream, few apologists chose to address it during the 90s and early 00s. In recent years, a
number of popular level books have appeared that address the new NAM practices that are
steadily making their way into the church, but as of this writing, there are no books that fully
address NAM syncretism and provide a method for analyzing church practices.

The second chapter of this study presents the methodology that was used throughout the
dissertation. This study utilized the qualitative research design of content analysis to develop the
necessary criteria to assess the practices of yoga and the Enneagram for the purposes of
discovering whether or not they are fit for Christian use. This dissertation utilized a general
orthodox theology for its assessment and did not take doctrinal stances on theological topics that
are generally counted within orthodoxy, so the criteria developed could be utilized across a wide
variety of denominations. The core limitation of the study is that the NAM and the practices of yoga and the Enneagram are not uniform and so a subset of the data on all three were utilized that attempted to capture the essence of NAM theology and the core tenets of yoga and the Enneagram.

The third chapter focused on the development of the assessment criteria along the line of five central doctrinal themes. First, criteria related to authentic spirituality were developed. This study found that there is a strong linkage between proper worship and proper ritual or practice. The primary reasons for all biblical prohibitions were either that the practice was linked to idolatry, that it attempted to approach God in a way that denied an aspect of His nature and character, or that it attempted to manipulate God through creation. The biblical data concerning authentic spirituality remained consistent between the Old and New Testaments but differed in terms of the sacrificial system due to the finality of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. In contrast, the New Age Movement allows virtually any spiritual practice as long as it is seen as beneficial.

The next section examined the differences between Christianity and the NAM in the area of God and Creation. The Christian understanding of God and Creation is best represented by the doctrine of classical theism. In this view, God is the unique and only transcendent Creator who made the universe by the power of his Word. Though all of Creation is present to Him, He remains ontologically distinct from all of Creation and interacts with it through his Word and his power. The Bible portrays God as a Trinity of three persons in one essence, as the sovereign King over all Creation and history, and as the sole savior of mankind. By contrast, the New Age Movement affirms either pantheism or pantheism whereby God is either identical with Creation or He is somehow incarnate in Creation. Thus, NAM theology denies the transcendence of God and every other aspect of classical theism. The god of the NAM is an impersonal force that
people can manipulate to attain higher levels of enlightenment and eventually recognize their own divinity.

The third section details the different between Christianity’s and the NAM’s understanding of sin and salvation. The Bible portrays sin as rebellion against God and the fundamental reason why mankind is doomed to an eternity in hell and under judgment. Original sin is the concept that the first sin caused a fundamental shift in the inclination of human nature, whereby humanity no longer worships God naturally; rather, the inclination of mankind is bent on itself and is wholly self-serving. Salvation occurs as people accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and receive His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross as adequate and sufficient payment of the penalty that they were due for their sins. The NAM paints a completely different portrayal of mankind and sin. In NAM theology, sin is ignorance of the truth that individual people are divine or gods. Humanity is innately good, not evil, and through a lifetime of transcendent experiences, people can become enlightened to the truth about their own divinity. This is accomplished through rituals and practices that manipulate the body, mind, or Creation in an effort to overcome ignorance through esoteric, gnostic knowledge.

The fourth section deals with the doctrines of the nature and purpose of humanity. The biblical understanding of humanity is as a created being that is made in the image of God. Humanity was made complete upon its creation, and sin caused a moral degradation that rendered mankind functionally incapable of fulfilling its calling as God ordained. As mankind accepts the salvation offered by Jesus Christ, it undergoes a larger process of justification, sanctification, and glorification. These steps include the pronouncement of saved believers as being legally justified from all sin debts, the conformation of believers’ wills to the will of Jesus Christ, and the eventual resurrection of the believer, which includes the reception of a glorified,
perfect, and eternal body that will never again die. The NAM philosophy of the destiny of mankind is substantially different. In the New Age Movement, there is no hope of resurrection, only continual reincarnation. In each lifetime, NAM adherents are attempting to fully actualize their divinity, at which point they will be able to reshape their own private universe in whatever way they see fit. If they are unable to reach this omega point in their current life, they are given infinite chances by the cosmic god-force to be reincarnated and try again.

The fifth and final section of Chapter 3 shows the different between the two Christianity’s and the NAM’s understanding of revelation. In traditional, protestant Christianity, revelation is defined as the divine self-disclosure of God. It is recognized that the only absolute source of this revelation present to Christians today is Scripture. Thus, Scripture is the absolute, authoritative Word of God that governs everything including all aspects of faith and the church. The NAM holds to a new consciousness model of revelation. In NAM understanding, revelation is not propositional; rather, it is completely experiential and equivalent to the realization or feeling that one has ascended to a higher consciousness and recognized that one is god. Additionally, the NAM denies the authenticity and validity of Scripture and rejects it as a source of truth. In NAM theology, there is no such thing as absolute truth as each person perceives the universe through their own divinity and authority.

Chapter 4 contains the analysis of both the Enneagram and yoga and the application of the criteria to those practices. At the end of each section is a recommendation for specific actions that should be taken by the church and individual Christians as a result of the analysis. This section opens with a discussion of the fundamental tenets of all forms of the Enneagram. For instance, the Enneagram asserts that humanity is fundamentally good, and sin is essentially ignorance of one’s True Self. The purpose of the Enneagram is to bring oneself into a
mental/spiritual position through which one can encounter the True Self via a new consciousness form of revelation. Enneagram teachers argue that the means of attaining this privileged position is through the assumption of one’s Holy Idea and Holy Virtue, which allow oneself to overcome the False Self. Thus, the Enneagram teaches a works-based salvation apart from the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

The second Enneagram section assesses the content of the Enneagram types to determine if they depict a biblical view of mankind. The Enneagram types split humanity into two selves: the True Self and the False Self against the biblical understanding of fallen versus redeemed. The False Self was not a result of sin or disobedience toward God; instead, the Enneagram teaches that the False Self is a result of the coping mechanisms children utilize in response to their Childhood Wound. In order to overcome these wounds and the False Self, the Enneagram resorts to advice that mirrors Numerology and Astrology in both content and delivery.

The third Enneagram section details some of the teachings and beliefs held by the most popular and influential Christian Enneagram teachers and advocates. For instance, Richard Rohr affirms such theology as Christ Consciousness and panentheism. He teaches that God is incarnate on all of creation and that to recognize the true self is to recognize God within each one of us. He attempts to defend the use of the Enneagram through poor biblical interpretation and a fundamental denial of the atonement of Jesus Christ. Christopher Heuertz demonstrates how the Enneagram requires a theological method driven by experience. He affirms that the Enneagram is good because it works, and that the theology of the Enneagram is a good corrective for traditional orthodoxy due to its affirmation of the goodness of mankind rather than man’s fallenness.
The fourth and fifth sections of the Enneagram portion present the assessment through the criteria developed in Chapter 3 and the recommendations for churches and individuals based on the entire assessment. In general, the Enneagram shares most of its theology with the New Age Movement and presents its own heterodox teachings concerning Scripture and the ultimate destiny of mankind. Thus, it is recommended that Christians abstain from any use of the Enneagram as it is heavily syncretistic with the New Age Movement. Churches should cease speaking about, talking about, or affirming the Enneagram in their sermons, programs, and leadership development curriculum, as it ultimately opens the door to a false gospel. Finally, Christian booksellers should discontinue the publication of all Enneagram books and any books by authors who associate with the Enneagram.

The next section of Chapter 4 contains the assessment of Christian Yoga and the possibility of its use in the Church. First, the study assessed the fundamental aspects of yoga that are present in all versions of yoga, including Christian Yoga. Though yoga is often touted as a system of exercise that reduces stress and promotes physical health, its actual purpose is to foster transcendental spiritual experiences. In Christian versions, it fosters the mystical experience of union with God. This is accomplished through “pranayama,” In Christian versions, the breath which is present in every person is equated with the Holy Spirit Himself, and by breathing Him in, one can participate in intense spiritual experiences. Thus, one’s relationship and connection to God is tied to Christian Yoga and is a product of human effort. The short second section on yoga demonstrated that one cannot rule out the possibility of experiencing severely detrimental side effects from participating in yoga, no matter the type one engages with. These side effects can include paranoia, mental illness, demonic possession, and death.
The third section on yoga compared the most popular Christian Yoga varieties with two alternatives to Christian Yoga. All of the Christian Yoga teachers affirmed the presence of God in the breath, Hinduistic and Buddhist forms of meditation, and unorthodox views of God and creation. Additionally, all forms of Christian Yoga taught that yoga was the best way to form a relationship with God. In contrast, the two organizations that promoted yoga alternatives denied all fundamental tenets of yoga, including the idea that the Holy Spirit is in the breath and that one can manipulate one’s relationship with God through exercise. Thus, there is a substantial difference between yoga and standard exercise.

The final two sections on yoga report the assessment of Christian Yoga through the criteria developed in Chapter 3 and the recommendations for individuals and the church based on this assessment. Christian Yoga displayed a heavy emphasis on New Age doctrine in the areas of theology proper, anthropology, and revelation. However, in the area of the nature and purpose of humanity, Christian Yoga promoted its own brand of heterodox doctrine. Thus, due to the high degree of syncretism of Christian Yoga with the New Age Movement, and the impossibility of its separation from traditional yogic philosophy, Christians should discontinue all engagement with yoga of any kind. Additionally, churches should cease conducting yoga classes and begin educating their members about the dangers of Christian Yoga.

Future Research Considerations

One result of the creation of the criteria in Chapter 3 is that they can be applied to virtually any practice that is used by the Church. There are a number of practices that would be extremely beneficial to assess using these established criteria, such as: New Apostolic Reformation prophesy, contemplative prayer, Christian Tarot cards, quantum mysticism and healing, inner healing programs, methodologies for practicing spiritual gifts, and essential oil
use. A second avenue for further research is that the criteria grids could be expanded to include syncretism from all worldviews and religions, thus accounting for syncretism of any kind as opposed to just the NAM. Finally, it might prove fruitful to investigate general Christian practices like church organization, Christian holidays, and cultural rituals to see if their forms of syncretism are harmful or neutral.²

Concluding Remarks

Brothers, I tell you this: Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and corruption cannot inherit incorruption. Listen! I am telling you a mystery: We will not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this corruptible must be clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal must be clothed with immortality. When this corruptible is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting? Now the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!³

² Mark Forsyth, A Christmas Cornucopia: The Hidden Stories Behind Our Yuletide Traditions (London, U.K.: Penguin Books, 2016); Joseph F. Kelly, The Origins of Christmas (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2014); Stephen Nissenbaum, The Battle for Christmas (New York City, NY: Random House, 1997); Clifford and Johnson, Taboo or to Do?: Is Christianity Complementary with Yoga, Martial Arts, Hallowe’en, Mindfulness and Other Alternative Practices?: Philippe Walter, Christian Mythology: Revelations of Pagan Origins, 2nd ed. (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2014). In recent years, there have been a number of substantial publications that discuss the pagan origins of Christian rituals, organizations, and holidays. Though it would be beyond the scope of the dissertation to assess these practices, it is highly likely that if put through the aforementioned criteria, the syncretization inherent cultural practices would be highly variable and largely depend on whether one uses the practice, like Christmas, to celebrate the Incarnation of Christ or whether one engages in the pagan theological aspects of Christmas, such as consumerism, Santa Claus, and the celebration of good feelings.

³ 1 Corinthians 15:50-57.
In the heart of every person is a desire for a better future, a better life, and a better world. When the Church ceases to connect Scripture and the truth of the gospel to these future realities, it ceases to be relevant in people’s lives and leads to a scattered flock searching for answers in all the wrong places. It is my hope that through this study one may see the greatness of Scripture, the greatness of God, and the greatness of Jesus Christ’s atonement, and come to an understanding of the true blessings of the gospel. The New Age Movement and its practices, by comparison, are shallow, empty lies. Christians do not need mystical practices, nor hidden truths to have a relationship with God. All they need is the true God of the Bible and His promises and His work. True transformation does not occur through human effort but by the power and providence of God alone. If one is a Christian, one has everything one needs to experience perfection, peace, joy, and life eternal in the age to come. May we all praise God for His mercy and grace, and the power of His Spirit at work in our lives.
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