

The Bible vs. The New Age Movement

The devil's at it again. The very lies and play of words he used in the beginning chapters of human history to bring our first parents to fall into sin are seducing many today in the opening chapters of the twenty-first century. "*Yea, hath God said...?*" (Gen. 3:1) was his question raised to undermine the authority of God's Word. "*Ye shall not surely die...*," (Gen. 3:4) was intended to directly contradict what God said would be the penalty for man's disobedience - death (Gen. 2:17). "*Ye shall be as gods...*" (Gen. 3:5) was the devil's deceptive but flattering incentive to allure Eve to sin. The New Age Movement (NAM) does these very same things. It disregards the authority of the Word of God. It flatly denies the resurrection but believes in reincarnation. In a sense, it tells man that he "shall not surely die." It caters to man's sinful and selfish nature by offering him the intoxicating thought of becoming god. What is unfortunate is many have not recognized these propositions as originating from Satan.

The movement has been invading our society and has practically saturated every possible avenue to promote their basic propositions. One pamphlet says it is "the most powerful social force in the world today," according to Dr. Carl A. Raschke, a professor of religious studies at the University of Denver. He further states, "I think it's as much a political movement as a religious movement...." Elliot Miller refers to it among other things as a "historical movement that can be traced over a period of more than two centuries in the West from orthodox Christianity back to paganism." Texe Marrs calls it "the New Age World religion" and says it has "become the fastest growing religious movement on earth." This has led to a revival of interest in the realm of the occult, the paranormal, of psychic healing, eastern mysticism and the like. Their voice is heard on television, radio, and print media. They have infiltrated the fields of politics, business, entertainment, health care, psychology, education, arts, and sports. Generally, their major proponents are well-known personalities successful in their respective fields and come from both the East and West.

Unlike known cults and old religious systems such as Mormonism, Seventh Day Adventism, or the Jehovah's Witnesses, this movement is not an organized religion in the sense that it has a system of doctrinal beliefs with official creeds or bodies of literature. Yet proponents convey common themes in their writings and talks. No one is spared from being reached by their beliefs - not even fundamental, separatistic Bible-believing Christians since they are more likely to hear of what the New Age has to offer from any of their world-wide but loosely structured network of networks. Cumbey writes that "by networking they have achieved a synergetic effect that makes them nearly unstoppable. By networking they have indeed achieved a lack of dependency on any group or leader." What is more alarming is that some of their assumptions have successfully infiltrated groups and influenced teachers who operate under the banner of evangelical Christianity. Some discerning and more outspoken Western authors have written books on the subject to wake up the evangelical community to the menace of this movement. Most of them believe that NAM's visions compare with the Biblical description of that of the coming Antichrist. One gave a hazy description of it in a leading local magazine in this fashion:

"Something is definitely going on around us ... but what is it really? There is an undercurrent of change and renewal, of joy and adventure, of encountering the known and recovering what has always been our own. It has been called the New Age, the New Prosperity, the New Mind. There seems to be so many diverse strands to pull together, it is not easy to get a consensus on what it is all about, not only here but also in the West where it was first recognized as a phenomenon of our times. "A strange mix of spirituality and superstition, fad and farce ... an

essentially harmless anthology of illusions," snorted Time Magazine in 1987. But it conceded that the "movement" was growing steadily, judging from the doubling of the number of New Age bookstores in the United States in the past five years."

But what really is the substance of the New Age Movement? What are its basic tenets, underlying philosophies, or their main message? What are its implications for Filipino culture and for Christian workers in the local scene? Why has it aroused the interest of many? Is it really "... essentially a harmless anthology of illusions"?

There is a vast and complex field to cover when discussing this subject. This paper will be a mere sketchy overview. But it is important to point out that this is being written not in order to judge the motives of NAM's proponents. Ex-advocate of NAM and Christian apologist Elliot Miller was careful to point out that-

"New Agers are generally sincere.... Many New Agers are genuinely humanitarian.... It is not that there is nothing sinister or dangerous about the New Age Movement - but evangelicals should resist the temptation to try to locate the evil in simplistic black-or-white categories, for in so doing they will fail to see New Agers for who they really are."

We share the same concern for those who have been misled into this movement. But we seriously believe, too, that its underlying fundamental assumptions need to be exposed and viewed as it really is - paganism in modern dress, a new name for an old tactic of the old serpent to deceive people into believing an old lie. Thus, in attempting to answer the above questions, we shall concentrate on the movement's underlying tenets that blatantly undermine and which constantly struggle for supremacy over the heart and soul of the Biblical faith.

COMMON NEW AGE PRESUPPOSITIONS AND BELIEFS

1. NAM espouses a pantheistic world-view. This is the belief that All is God - not just "God is everywhere" (omnipresent) but that "God is everything," the sum total of all that exists. This, of course, fails to recognize God's transcendence and over emphasizes His immanence. The line of distinction between the Infinite from the finite is practically removed, qualities that describe God the Creator and His creation, respectively. And when this happens, man is no longer seen as a responsible creature. He becomes accountable to no one, to no authority outside of himself. Mariel Francisco points out that the aspect in New Age thought Filipinos will happily take is its "new creation-centered theology."

Christian apologist, the late Dr. Walter Martin, quotes one of the leading proponents of NAM in the West, Benjamin Crème, as stating: "In a sense there is no such thing as God, God does not exist. And in another sense, there is nothing else but God, only God exists All is god. And because all is god, there is no God."

2. NAM believes each one creates his own reality, similar to what Hindu pantheism calls "maya." This is "illusion." Accepting this results into believing that there are no absolute and universal standards between right and wrong. The January 26, 1992 issue of the Sunday Inquirer Magazine was practically an issue for NAM. In it, we read:

"... Evil comes into being because something that was good in the form in which it existed in an earlier epoch retains this form in a later age. In failing to transform itself it become retrogressive. Therefore Evil is Good manifesting out of its appropriate time. In this sense,

the worst thing one can be is to be obsolete, behind the times, stuck in the past. If we are unable to see ourselves in a New Age, this is what, tragically, we may become."

This then makes self the creator of his own reality where self decides which one is right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate, what pleases self and what does not. This is otherwise known as moral relativism. It is not surprising that NAM "often tolerates rather than challenges such unchristian behavior as sex between unmarried partners, homosexuality, and (in some circles) recreational use of drugs, thus providing a "spiritual" alternative to the many in our time who are unwilling to abandon such lifestyles."

3. Man is divine and Jesus is like all other men who became "the Christ." They generally claim that within every man is a spark of divinity that can be self-realized when he goes through the altered states of consciousness. Consider what psychic researcher and NAM local counterpart Jaime Licauco says as he speaks on "The Other Meaning of Christ's Birth." He says:

"I think that this interpretation, i. e. that Christ's birth represents God's becoming man, is only half of the story. What man seems to have lost sight of is the fact that the same story also represents the possibility of man's becoming God. And this to me is the more meaningful message of Christ's birth and the only one that ultimately makes sense. For why should God descend to the level of man except to lift him up, and to show that he, too, can become God?... That God can assume a human form is not difficult for us to accept; but the idea of man becoming God is still difficult for us to conceive. Yet that is one message that the birth of Christ truly brings."

He further infers from controversial French Jesuit priest/paleontologist Teilhard de Chardin's writings (noted as Father of the New Age), and then concludes that "... we will become Christs, not merely Christlike. In other words, we will all be gods." This is an open attack on the Person of Jesus Christ - a defiance of God and a deification of man. This is nothing but the serpent's lie: "ye shall be as gods!" This naturally results in self-worship. The contemporary emphasis on the belief in the powers of the human potential is an outgrowth of this.

4. NAM believes the Law of Rebirth, Reincarnation and Karma. This basically teaches that man does not really die. He is, instead, "endlessly reborn into new life cycles until such time as he perfects himself sufficiently to qualify for endless rest (nirvana)." Here, the soul returns into another body after death and the quality of the next life will be determined by how he has lived in the past life.

The Bible teaches that except for living believers at the rapture, "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). At death, believers in Christ come to be at home with the Lord in heaven, while unbelievers go to hell. Those who enter the former do so not because of any human merit but because of the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed on them by faith in Him.

Walter Martin quotes from Alice Bailey, one of the more often quoted sources of New Age thought stating:

"... through the constant return of the incarnating soul to the school of life on earth, there to undergo the perfection process of which He (Jesus) was the outstanding example. That is the meaning and teaching of reincarnation.... The immortality of the human soul, and the innate ability of the spiritual, inner man to work out his salvation under the Law of Rebirth, in

response to the Law of Cause and Effect, are the underlying factors governing all human conduct and all human aspiration."

5. Central to NAM's belief system is the belief in evolution - that we have all evolved from lower forms of life, but some of us evolved more highly than others just as some of us "manifest our divinity" more than others. This more evolved and advanced form is achieved by employing mind-expansion techniques such as meditation.

This is a direct affront to the Scriptural teaching of man's origin and nature - that he is a creature of God made after God's own image, distinct and separate from his Creator. Man is a finite person, a 'derivative replica' of his Infinite Creator.

6. NAM offers a salvation by "gnosis." Gnosis is simply the Greek word for knowledge. But NAM uses the term to refer to their "experiences of enlightenment that help the New Ager supposedly go through a spiritual evolution towards becoming god. This is the heart and core of "the New World Religion." And New Agers often appeal to the right/left-brain distinction where the latter is supposedly analytical and the former intuitive, creative, and subjective. This is used so as to abandon analytical thought - an excuse to barter away rationality in order to gain a subjective and renewed sense of spirituality to discover one's "higher self" or attain "higher consciousness." When one assumes this, his concept of sin and the need for Jesus Christ's atonement for his sin becomes insignificant. This vilifies the work of Jesus Christ and man's need for his salvation from the guilt, penalty and power of sin.

All this sounds very impressive, especially when the New Ager refers to various authorities who do not know the grace of God and who have Ph.Ds from Europe and North America. This gives a cloak of pseudo-scientific scholarship that makes the New Ager appear credible. But in reality, this openness to the subjective, to the unknown also opens the doors of gullibility to the spiritual realm of demonic spirits.

7. Most NAM spokespersons have had some contact with superhuman "masters" or "higher beings." These "divine" messengers are contacted through what has been called channeling - simply a contemporary term for the spiritist's mediumship. American actress Shirley Maclaine, spokesperson David Sprangler, Silva Mind Control System's founder Jose Silva, Russian Theosophy founder Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and even local counterpart Jaime Licaucó all openly claim to receive direction or special revelation from these spirit guides.

Once again, we have here a Satanic substitute for the God-given special revelation of Himself and His will for man's life through His inspired, complete, and final Word, the Bible. From a Scriptural perspective, these "Ascended Masters of Wisdom," as they are sometimes called, are actually demonic beings alluring people away from the one true God. This may also explain why New Agers have a common base of beliefs. The geniuses behind these spokespersons are intelligent, personal, fallen beings out to delude sinners to let them remain in the bondage of their sin.

8. NAM's strong belief in the human potential, especially his potential to evolve into god through the altered states of consciousness gives no room for the Biblical doctrine of the incarnation and the physical, literal return of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is also contrary to the Biblical doctrine of sin and depravity. To them, the manifesting of divinity achieved by employing mind expansion techniques is the coming of the Christ, which they refer to as "the Christ-Consciousness." This is allegedly a higher state of mind that everyone can attain.

Also inherent in this New Age belief is the denial of the truth of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. As it was in New Testament days, these are the present-day resurrection deniers. This is but expected from a demon-inspired religion since all the other foundational doctrines of the Christian faith hang on the veracity of the literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. His person, His work, all His teachings, even the inerrancy and authority of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures were and are all vindicated by that miraculous event. Thus, it should not surprise us why Satan would consolidate all his efforts to let people doubt, if not fully deny, its truthfulness.

TRACES OF NEW AGE THOUGHT WITHIN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY

Traces of New Age thought are seen within evangelical circles due to the recent emphasis on Selfism or Narcissism. We do not necessarily imply that all such emphases come directly from the NAM. But in so far as the underlying premises and philosophies of "selfish" teachings have been drawn from the same sources that present-day New Agers refer to, such as the highly respected works of Carl Jung, these have definitely affected the evangelical camp. Note the following quotations:

"Pray to yourself, because I'm in your self and you are in Myself. We are one Spirit, saith the Lord."

"You need to realize that you are not a spiritual schizophrenic - half-God and half-Satan - you are all God."

"Man had total authority to rule as a god over every living creature on earth, and he was to rule by speaking words."

"You don't have a god in you. You are one!"

"I say this and repeat it so it don't upset you too bad.... When I read the Bible where he (Jesus) says, 'I Am,' I say, 'I Am, too!'"

These are statements made by Kenneth Copeland as quoted by Michael Horton.

Hunt and McMahon quote Gloria Copeland as she narrates about a house she wanted to buy:

I began to see that I already had authority over that house and authority over the money I needed to purchase it. I said, "In the name of Jesus, I take authority over the money I need. (I called out a specific amount.) I command you to come to me... in Jesus Name. Ministering spirits, you go and cause it to come."

(Speaking of angels... when you become the voice of God in the earth by putting His Words in your mouth, you put your angels to work! They are highly trained and capable helpers, they know how to get the job done).

Paul Yonggi Cho, pastor of the biggest church in the world based in Korea calls this "the Law of the Fourth Dimension." Others from the West refer to it as "the Positive and Possibility Thinking and Positive Confession." It basically states that all is governed by some "higher law" so that when one learns to apply that "law," they can get the expected results. According to adherents of this, anyone, including occultists can apply this "law" and perform miracles.

Again, Hunt and McMahon quote from a sequel to Cho's "The Fourth Dimension" as stating:

We've got to learn how... to visualize and dream the answer as being completed as we go to the Lord in prayer. We should always try to visualize the end result as we pray.

In that way, with the power of the Holy Spirit we can incubate that which we want God to do for us....

God used this process of visualizing the situation to help Abraham.... By the visualization through the associated thought, Abraham... could incubate his (future) children and dispel the doubts from his heart.... The main thing is that we know the importance of visualization.

What are some of the problems with this kind of thinking? *First*, it is "selfish." Praying in this fashion is not faith, but presumption. It makes God submit to every whim that the Christian might want to request. Certainly, this is an incredible concept for these so-called Christians! The Bible teaches that we are to bring our requests to God with the heart attitude of seeking that God's *"... will be done on earth, as it is in heaven"* (Matt. 6:10). The Scriptures assure us that *"we have the petitions we desired of Him"* if *"we ask any thing according to His will,"* not ours (I Jn. 5:14-15). And this includes not only that which we asked for, but the timing of receiving the request as well. Biblical praying is God-centered, not man-centered.

Second, it fails to recognize the sovereignty of God, not only by placing the outcome of the prayer request as practically dependent on how the Christian will apply the so-called "Law of the Fourth Dimension", but also by making God submit to that "Law." God does not submit to any law for He is the Law-Giver. This does not make God lawless in the same sense as man is since God is holy and pure and can never sin. He is never associated with sin and abhors sin in all its forms. He always acts in perfect harmony with all His other perfect attributes. Thus, everything He does is done in accordance with the sovereign pleasure of His perfect, righteous, holy, loving and good will. That includes the way He answers our prayers.

And yet, such thinking and teaching has successfully infiltrated religious and evangelical groups, particularly among Catholic Charismatic and Pentecostal circles. Most televangelists in the Philippines bear this doctrine in their preaching, such as Mike Velarde of the "El Shaddai" and Eddie Villanueva of the "Jesus Is Lord Fellowship," to name a few. This teaching exalts man to a level of deity and degrades the Almighty God. It presupposes that man has the divine right to the things of God. This is a sharp contrast to the heart of the Apostle Paul who wrote: *"But by the grace of God* (unmerited favor) *I am what I am"* (I Cor. 15:10).

IMPLICATIONS TO PHILIPPINES CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Before Ferdinand Magellan of Spain arrived in Philippines soil in 1521, the people of the archipelago were religiously animistic in that their religion was centered on the spirit-world. The coming of the Spaniards meant the conversion of many of the natives to Roman Catholicism so that, a week later, Magellan baptized the king, queen, and practically the entire population of Cebu.

Over three hundred years later, by the time of the Spanish-American War in 1898, it was estimated that about 90% of the population had turned Roman Catholic, while the remaining either stayed as animists, worshipping forest spirits, or Muslim Moros who inhabited the extreme south of Mindanao. The Americas then brought in Protestantism into the islands.

American missionary to the Philippines, Rodney Henry, makes the interesting observation that in both cases, a particular brand of "Folk Catholicism" and "Folk Protestantism" has emerged due to a "conspiracy of silence" that existed among the Filipinos. By this, he meant that both Spain's Romanism and American Protestantism offered help which dealt with "ultimate concerns (such as getting saved and going to heaven)," but the underlying basis of belief of the Filipino for "everyday concerns" remained animistic. He contends that, generally, American Protestantism ignored a spirit-world belief system which was held by most of the nationals and which resulted in the taking of their unmet spiritual needs to "out-of-church spirit-world practitioners" such as the spiritists and faith healers.

This, in a way, explains why we continue to see, for instance, in Roman Catholic processions a mixture of paganism and their brand of Christianity where a dancing "ati-atihan" troop is followed by the people who bear the idolatrous statues of the religious system. Some Protestants, on the other hand, knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, hold to their Bibles but reckon it as an amulet or good luck charm to protect them from some form of evil or imminent danger. This was further seen in the 1986 EDSA Revolution where the people in the streets held up their rosaries, statues, and Bibles to stop the approaching military tanks.

Given this, the entrance of the NAM in Philippine culture and society will only serve to strengthen and reaffirm the Filipino's belief in the spirit-world. This is not necessarily wrong for the Scriptures do teach the existence and reality of it. Only, many Filipinos attribute all supernatural occurrences as from God. NAM's belief to revive the occult (it is "the occult going public" or "coming out of the closet" as Miller puts it) will cater to the Filipino's animistic roots. This may also explain why Mariel Francisco believes that "an aspect of New Age thought that, no doubt, Filipinos will happily take is the new creation centered theology."

The growing nationalism together with the desire to preserve her roots, including some animistic expressions of it, (Folk Catholicism in particular) and the Filipino's colonial mentality or his desire to westernize his lifestyle or update his technology blend perfectly well with NAM's pseudo-scientific appearance. All these make Philippine culture and society a fertile ground for NAM's acceptance and growth. After all, New Age thought is basically a reversal to Eastern mysticism and occultism without leaving its Western trappings. It is a newly wrapped package with the old contents practically as old as the garden of Eden.

SCRIPTURE WRESTLING

By now, it should be pretty obvious to the reader of this paper that the world-view the NAM offers is directly antithetical to Biblical Christianity. The NAM is against the Bible because the Bible is against NAM. Any attempt to make it appear that one complements the other is not only impossible, but also dishonest and deceiving. But some have actually done this. They have cited Scripture passages, not in order to test the validity of their assumptions. Rather, they have done so to make it appear that Scripture does agree with their assumptions, even though they do not believe and submit to its divine origin and authority in the first place. One cannot do this without twisting the Scriptures to fit their religions or philosophical systems of thought. Let's cite three, which Jaime Licauco has used. The first two are taken from his article, "The Other Meaning of Christ's Birth," and the third in "Science and ESP."

1. John 10:34 - This passage has been cited to make it appear that Jesus was attributing divinity to His audience. But is this what Jesus meant here?

In verse 30, Jesus gave a statement that was tantamount to a claim of deity for Himself. *"I and my Father are one."* So clear was Jesus' point that His original audience reacted by stoning Him while charging Him of blasphemy. They retorted by saying, *"... because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."* It is then here when our Lord quotes from "your law," a reference to the 82nd chapter of the Book of Psalms. The context is clear. Jesus was defending His claim of deity, which the Jews refused to believe. But what does the phrase, "Ye are gods," in Psalms mean?

A context of Psalms 82 will show that the "gods" whom God judgeth is a reference to the judges of Israel. They were expected to *"defend the poor and fatherless," "do justice to the afflicted and needy," "deliver the poor and needy,"* and *"rid them out of the hand of the wicked,"* Psalm 82:2-4. Asaph, human author of this Psalm, was calling for God to act on His justice and warning the judges who did not do what was expected of them. They were, in a sense, "gods" in their role of judging the people and were "mighty ones" (the meaning of the Hebrew word) before the eyes of the people since they accorded them great respect. These unjust judges abused their God-given privileges so that God judged and mocked them when He said in verses 6 and 7 "... Ye are gods... but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes."

How does the phrase fit the context of our Lord claiming deity amidst Christ-rejecting Jews? Our Lord used irony to provoke the angry mob. Irony conveys disapproval under the cover of apparent approval. Walter Martin says, "Jesus mocks the people as if to say, 'You all think you're gods yourselves. What's one more god among you?'" In other words, Jesus was not teaching but provoking and mocking His critics.

2. John 14:12 - Those who have cited this passage have inferred that since we can be gods, we can do much more than Jesus did. Apparently, Licauco and others who quote this in this manner have taken the passage out of its context in order to fit it into the context of the New Ager's world-view. We are still left, however, with the question: if Jesus did not mean what New Agers make it to mean, then what did Jesus mean by this?

We need to take note that the Lord said this in the context of speaking about His ascension - *"I go to prepare a place for you,"* (Jn. 14:1). *"I go unto my Father,"* (14:12) - an event that was fulfilled and recorded in the first chapter of Acts. There at Mount Olivet, He commanded His disciples not to depart from Jerusalem, but "wait for the promise of the Father" regarding the Holy Spirit's baptism, which was to happen to them "not many days hence." This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost and recorded in the second chapter of Acts. They were, in one day, instrumental in the salvation of three thousand souls. This was only possible because Jesus had gone to the Father and had sent the Holy Spirit. A massive discipling program continued so that the disciples were able to do truly "greater works" than those of Jesus'. It is in this sense that Jesus' disciples did "greater works."

3. John 14:2 - This passage is seen in the context of the passage already discussed previously. The Lord was talking about the many dwelling-places (or "mansions") at God the Father's house. This is very plain and simple when we read the text in its proper context. But Jaime Licauco quotes a certain M. Cristobal in his article, "Science and ESP." Note how they read into the Biblical text what the text is not saying.

The Perhaps an easy way to approach the subject is to begin with the knowledge of man's true nature. Except students of paranormal phenomena, I wonder how many people would readily

believe that man has seven bodies (physical, etheric, or bioplasmic, astral, three mental levels and spirit) which interpenetrate one another.

The Nazarene said, In my Father's house there are many mansions. More than merely a poetic expression, that was how the concept of the spirit could be covered at that time. Evidently Jesus was aware of such a concept and taught the same to his followers more than 2,000 years ago. Today we can somehow readily accept the concept that there are likely to be many levels or mansions to which the mind and spirit entity may advance after death....

To him, the "mansions" are many levels... to which the mind and spirit entity may advance after death. God's Word warns the *"unlearned and unstable [who] wrest, as they do the other Scriptures."* They do it *"unto their own destruction"* (II Peter 3:16b).

SCRIPTURAL MANDATE

God Cautioned His Old Testament people, the nation of Israel, regarding the serious dangers of having unholy alliances with the Canaanites. He spells out some of the detestable Canaanite practices, which were reasons for the Lord to use Israel to destroy them, Deuteronomy 18:9-14. They were:

1. Making their son or daughter (the practice of burning children to death as a sacrifice to the heathen gods);
2. Divination (getting false prophecy or trying to know the will of the so-called gods by examining and interpreting omens);
3. Observer of times was a sorcerer (he casts spells and attempts to control people or circumstances through demonic powers);
4. An enchanter uses any form of magic;
5. A witch;
6. A (serpent) charmer;
7. Consulter with familiar spirits is a present-day medium or channeler;
8. A wizard is one acquainted with the secrets of the unseen world;
9. Necromancy (the spiritist who communicates with the dead for the purposes of consultation or knowing the future, or help in manipulation).

God forbade these things because they were an abomination to Him. They were His reason for destroying them (18:12). God did not want His people to mingle with them because they were set apart unto Him (18:14). Reliance on these practices indicated a corresponding failure to trust the Lord with one's own life.

Modern names of some of these are fortune telling, clairvoyance, astrology, mesmerism, palmistry, spiritualism, and the like - all of which are associated with demonic activity. Although sometimes practiced by professing Christians, it is nonetheless as much an abomination to the Lord today as it was then.

CHALLENGE FOR CHRISTIANS AND FOR OTHERS

Considering the Filipino's animistic roots, the local field needs to be reminded of the reality of the spirit-world. What it needs to realize, however, is that not all supernatural phenomena is of God. An experience may be authentic, but the author of the experience ought to be discerned in the light of God's Word. If it does not square with the Bible's teachings, and it is supernatural, it must be of the devil.

Second, believers need to be instructed the whole counsel of God. In anticipation of the latter-day apostasy, Paul told Timothy to "preach the Word." It is the best antidote against false teaching. This will build the believer in his faith and teach him, not only to evangelize, (an emphasis that must be given appropriate attention) but also instruct him on how to live. For Filipino Christians, this will meet his true-to-life "everyday concerns," as well as his "ultimate concerns."

Thirdly, it will do the Christian well to heed apostolic injunction of the first century. They were faced with the problem of tolerance toward false doctrines such as Gnosticism and antinomianism. These two systems of thought bear the marks of the New Age Movement. Believing their assumptions resulted in denying the incarnation and the resurrection. It also resulted in careless living. The apostles called them to *"believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they are of God,"* (I John 4:1). They also cautioned the Church regarding first century resurrection-deniers and were admonished to watch out for the people they hang around with, and not to be deceived for *"... evil communications corrupt good manners,"* (I Cor. 15:33). And the only way to do this is to have a good and strategic grasp of the Scriptures, to know it so well, so that the slightest defection from the truth can be immediately detected and shunned away from. The Bible commands the regenerate to stay away from such influences.

Lastly, there might be someone reading this who has been enslaved into New Age philosophies or thinking. Perhaps, you are now beginning to see the dangers of it and would like to be delivered from them. We urge you to come to Christ, for He alone can save us from sin and its consequences. Jesus said: *"all that come to Me I will in no wise cast out"* (John 6:37).

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