

DEFINING DECEPTION: WHAT IS A CULT, WHAT IS THE OCCULT, WHAT IS NEW AGE?

By Chris Lawson

***“Let no man deceive you by any means:
for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first...”
Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you,
I told you these things?
(2 Thessalonians 2:3-5)***

The word “imperative” is defined as: “a command; an order; an obligation; a duty.”¹ Applied to the world of spirituality and terminology, we would say that it is “imperative” that we define our terms. As discerning Christians it is part of our duty to know what spiritual terms mean and to stay away from those things that could lead to spiritual harm. To not do so can be disastrous.

CULT, OCCULT, NEW AGE

Many Christians today have no idea what is referred to when terms such as *New Age, occult, cult, contemplative spirituality, yoga, Reiki, Word Faith, positive confession, centering prayer, etc.* are used in everyday conversation. Because of ignorance, undiscerning people are oftentimes led into these things and they fall away from the truth. When defining terms such as these, we are not trying to belittle group leaders or pigeon-hole individuals as “evil”, “unkind” or “immoral” people. We are simply defining terms that describe movements, teachings, groups and individuals that are involved with doctrine or practices which are generally considered to be outside of the doctrines of historic Christianity.

WHAT IS A “CULT”?

The term “cult” is based on a farming term [Latin—*cultus*] meaning cultivation and is oftentimes used in relation to a religious structure or belief system that has meanings unique to their disciplines or group. In the Christian setting, the term “cult” can refer to **a system of religious beliefs or rituals that are polarized around one persons misinterpretation of the biblical person of Jesus Christ.** In many cases, inside and outside the church, the term “cult” has been used as a loaded term to describe any religious group one views as strange or dangerous. People also use the word “cult” to describe “religious leaders or organizations that employ abusive, manipulative, or illegal control over their followers’ lives.” Christians generally consider “cults” to believe and teach doctrines that are outside the confines of the essential doctrines of the historic Christian faith. In this sense, “cults” and “cultic teachings” derive from serious deviations from the essential doctrines of classical Christianity. Furthermore, as previously stated, most “cults” revolve around a leaders unbiblical interpretation of the person and work of Jesus Christ. In most cases, groups that claim to be Christian but have severely deviated from the central doctrines of the Christian faith (God, Jesus, and salvation), should be recognized as “non-Christian cults” or “psudeo-Christian cults.” That is they say they are Christian and *appear* to be Christian, *but they are clearly not Christian at all* (i.e. Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormon's, Christian Science, Christadelphians, etc.). Theologically, these are not Christian groups and they have no place calling themselves Christian. The reason is is that their unbiblical teachings attack the foundations of the Christian faith.

WHAT IS THE “OCCULT”?

The term, “occult” comes from the Latin *occultus* or “hidden.” The word “occult” is generally used to describe secret and mysterious supernatural powers or magical [magick], religious rituals. Throughout history, “occult” practitioners have attempted to gain supernatural power or knowledge apart from the God of the Bible. The term “occult” or occultism generally refers to witchcraft,

Satanism, neo-paganism, or any of the various forms of Psychic discernment such as astrology, séances, palm reading, etc. God's Word clearly condemns occultism in all its forms. The reason? Once an occult practitioner opens the door to the occult, the demonic inevitably comes through. All who dabble in the occult, including Christians, place themselves in hostile opposition to the creator of the universe. Furthermore, statistics reveal that occult practitioners across the globe oftentimes suffer the consequences of delusion, psychoses, paranoia, undiagnosable diseases, immorality including sexual perversion, demonic possession, suicide, etc. For good reason God says don't have anything to do with it!

WHAT IS THE NEW AGE?

The New Age movement is a belief system which “encompasses thousands of autonomous and oftentimes contradictory beliefs.” New Age practitioners oftentimes utilize occult methods and techniques for ‘enlightenment’, ‘energy balancing’, and channeling. The New Age is actually ancient paganism clothed in 21st century dress. Western New Ageism borrows its theology from pantheistic Eastern religions. Many of its practices come from 19th century Western occultism that have been brought to the West through Eastern religious leaders, cultists, yoga instructors, etc.

The *Index of Cults and Religions* states that those caught up in the "New Age Movement" generally exhibit one or more of the following beliefs [oftentimes in conjunction with "occult" methodology]: (1) “All is one, all reality is part of the whole; (2) Everything is God and God is everything (pantheism and pan-en-theism); (3) Man is God or a part of God; (4) Man never dies, but continues to live through reincarnation; (5) Man can create his own reality and/or values through transformed consciousness or altered states of consciousness.”

PARTING WORDS

Dear reader, anyone who promotes, teaches, practices, or endorses any type of cultism, mysticism, occultism or New Ageism is seriously misled and is misleading others! The following Bible verses ought to be seriously heeded by Christians and non-Christians alike. All who place any value whatsoever on human life ought not to dabble in these things. The reason? Because when one opens the door to the kingdom of darkness the demonic realm is more than willing to come flooding through.

In Deuteronomy 18:9-14 God says:

When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.

It is up to you and you alone to read your Bible, discern between truth and error, and contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. (Jude 3-4)

“Prove [test] all things; hold fast [cling tenaciously to] that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22)

ⁱ <http://www.answers.com/topic/imperative>