

Emerging to What New Age

Today the influential Oprah Winfrey is zealously teaching the popular new-age beliefs to hundreds of thousands of her viewers. It swarms with emphasis on miracles and spirituality. She was asked how she could reconcile those beliefs with her Christian faith. To be sure, the teachings of the New Age at first sound biblical-that is until one takes a closer look.

Why is this teaching so attractive to the modern mind? First, on the surface, it teaches that all religions are good. Second, it *demand*s that you accept that all religions lead to heaven. Third, it believes that you are part of the divine and through meditations and spirituality you can get in touch with your divine self.

On the contrary, biblical Christianity accepts Christ alone as the only human divine person and Savior of the world. It declares that God alone is immortal and that humanity is a creation of the Divine. Prayer and meditation are the means to get in touch with Him, not you. Yet, it was this exclusiveness that maddened the old Roman Empire into the early Christians. They were happy to have Jesus added to their many gods but were unwilling to have their gods rejected by anyone. Of course, despite its sounds of universal salvation, the New Age, like old Rome, can turn ugly. In no uncertain terms they declare that anyone who rejects their 'many ways to heaven' concept must be destroyed.

When the late Pope John Paul II prayed with leaders of all kinds of pagan religions, he declared, "We are all praying to the same God." Rome has ever shown itself capable of absorbing pagan beliefs and wrapping them in the garb of Christianity. It is in a strong position to pull this Babylonian thinking under its umbrella.

Another powerful child of this new age thinking is the emerging church. One website strongly proclaims, "We're NOT your Grandma's church!" It continues, "We feature strobe lights, heart-thumping music, and dangerous messages ..." Certainly they are right about the dangerous messages. One person summed it up this way, the "emergent [church] ... is ... repackaging Christianity into a kaleidoscope of ever fluctuating mystical images while we're seeking to align our wills with God's will ..." They are seeking the will of God, I might add, in mystical images instead of the Scriptures. This is a fast track to deception, spiritualism, and eternal death. Paul Edwards is a non-Adventist columnist and pastor heard daily on WLQV in Detroit. He is very concerned about the emerging church's impact on Christianity. His interview with John MacArthur, pastor/teacher of the Grace Community Church explains what this movement is.

John MacArthur: *What he [emerging church leader] was saying is really simple.... It doesn't matter whether you're a Buddhist, a Hindu or a Muslim-doesn't matter whether you're a Christian really; we're all going to end up in this wonderful, warm and-fuzzy relationship with God.*

What you have here is a ... form of paganism that basically wants to be thought of as Christian... But the underlying bottom line of this whole emerging movement is that they don't believe in any doctrine, they don't believe in any theology. . . In other words ... let's just be open to everything. Let's not take a position on theology, or for that matter, on morality or behavior. . . . It is blatantly, flagrantly non-Christian....

Edwards: *Whenever people like you... point out the error both in the emergent church and in the seeker movement, people will immediately run to I Corinthians 9, and [say], You know Paul said, "I became all things to all men," which means to the grunge, I become as a grunge, to the Universalist, I become as a Universalist.*

MacArthur: *Every time the Apostle Paul preached to the Jews, he started with the Scripture-the Old Testament Scripture. Every time he evangelized Gentiles he started with creation ... All he is saying ...is you must understand the starting point of your audience. . . What are the ideas, the theories, the viewpoints that they hold? It's not about identifying with their lifestyle; [or} being able to converse about every episode of South Park, every R-rated movie and every Rap song ... That's a far cry from saying that to reach this generation we must do their music; we must dress the way they dress; we must live the way they live... That's a million miles from what the Apostle Paul had in mind.*

As Adventists, we should ask where is this new-age emerging church leading? Is it possible that this is a huge step to the fulfillment of this prophecy? "Through spiritualism, Satan appears as a benefactor of the race, healing the diseases of the people, and professing to present a new and more exalted system of religious faith ... " (GC, p. 589)

Spiritualism doesn't always come packaged in the traditional forms we have been warned about. Today it is masquerading under meditation, prayer, and spirituality. For sure, we need to be spiritual, but where do the spirits come from that make us spiritual? The modern cavalier attitude toward Scripture has made spirituality in and doctrine out. I wish I could tell you this emerging church movement is having no impact within the Adventist church. But I can't.

How does a church test spirituality? Since Jesus, Himself, warned us against false spirituality, then surely there must be a way to objectively test people's claims about spirituality. You know the answer. Do we know, really know the Bible? Do we know its doctrine? Are we surrendered to it? Are we really ready for the storm of deception whose lightening we can already see? These seducing spirits are very clever. Deception is conditioned for the prey. Adventists are not immune.

From the lips of Jesus we are warned, if it were possible, Satan would deceive the very elect. In the end of time here will be a counterfeit emerging spirituality. It sounds so attractive. It feels so good. But it leads, it not to a new age of enlightenment, but to the dreaded second death.