

“The Kingdom of God is Within You”
An adapted excerpt from *Oprah’s New Age Church?*
by Charlie Brackett¹

Oprah’s online course interviewing Eckhart Tolle and reviewing his book, *A New Earth*, began with an audience of tens of thousands, some reports claimed over 500,000. As the course started, a lady in Oprah’s studio audience stood up and asked if the teaching was what is called New Age. She added that she was a Christian, and it seemed obvious she had been warned against New Age teaching. Oprah answered rather indirectly. Speaking of Tolle’s New Age teaching, she said, “If you are a Christian, but do not believe your way is the only way, it will only enhance you.” This is clearly an answer the Lord would not approve. There are not many ways. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6) His way is narrow and difficult, and few there are that enter in by it (Matthew 6:14).

What is the New Age Movement?

The online encyclopedia Wikipedia cites J. Gordon Melton, Director of the Institute for the Study of American Religion as reporting “one academic study suggests that those who sample many diverse teachings and practices from both ‘mainstream’ and ‘fringe’ traditions and formulate their own beliefs and practices based on their experiences can be considered as New Age.” This definition would include some “Christians” as well as many others ranging from the occult to Eastern religions to those who might be broadly classed agnostic, that is, believing in some form of god-force but not the personal God of the Bible. As you can see, the Movement is broad. It is a system of belief that is gaining many new followers (some estimates now have Oprah’s assembly at over two million), but don’t be fooled by the name. There is nothing really new about New Age. It is very old with its roots in mystical Far Eastern religions and the occult that predate Christianity: Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Western Occultism. At this writing its influence is worldwide and affects every aspect of our western society.

If you would like a more complete description of the New Age, or as it is sometimes called the New Thought Movement, there is one at <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Cults/newage.htm>, where you will find among other information the following quote listing key beliefs generally found among the New Agers:

“Douglas R. Groothuis, author of *Unmasking the New Age* and *Confronting the New Age*, identifies six distinctives of New Age thinking: (1) all is one; (2) all is God; (3) humanity is God; (4) a change in consciousness; (5) all religions are one; and (6) cosmic evolutionary optimism. Norman Geisler details 14 primary "doctrines" of New Age religions: (1) an impersonal god (force); (2) an eternal universe; (3) an illusory nature of matter; (4) a cyclical nature of life; (5) the necessity of reincarnations; (6) the evolution of man into Godhood; (7) continuing revelations from beings beyond the world; (8) the identity of man with God; (9) the need for meditation (or other consciousness-changing techniques); (10) occult practices (astrology, mediums, etc.);

(11) vegetarianism and holistic health; (12) pacifism (or anti-war activities); (13) one world (global) order; and (14) syncretism (unity of all religions).”

What does it all mean to Christians?

While much of New Age teaching is attractive and professes to promote peace among all men, it is a religious view that is alien and hostile to Christianity. Inasmuch as true peace can be found only in Jesus Christ, any doctrine to the contrary offers what it cannot deliver.

The primary reason New Age is hostile to Christianity lies in Oprah’s answer to the young woman’s question: “If you do not believe your way is the only way, it will enhance you.” Oprah may like to think there are many legitimate ways to God within and without Christianity, but there are not. True (undenominational) Christianity claims to be the only way. It is really rather simple. If Christianity is true, all other ways are false. Oprah actually used something Jesus said to support her view, this fundamental belief of the New Age Movement that whichever way you choose is fine. She quoted the thought of Luke 17:21, “...the kingdom of heaven is within you.” Oprah would like us to believe Jesus was referring to the source of one’s enlightenment because New Agers recognize no external source of authority – only an internal one, “the god within”. The fact is, Jesus was referring not to an inside, personal human source, but to His kingdom.

In that first interview, Oprah told one viewer about Elizabeth Lesser’s book entitled *The Seeker’s Guide*, where she talks about the new spirituality versus the old.³ Oprah said, “She talks about... the old way is the hierarchy has the authority. Church authorities tell you how to worship in church and how to behave outside of church. The new spirituality is that you are your own best authority as you work to know and love yourself, you discover how to live a more spiritual life.” In other words, listen to the god within.

During the interview, Oprah asked Tolle about where he got the inspiration to write his book: “Were you asking life, universal energy? I don’t know. What do you call that? As a word – do you – I call it ‘God.’ What do you, what word do you use for that?” Tolle’s answer was interesting, concise and very revealing: “Consciousness...” In other words, Self, the inner voice of one’s own experience and wisdom. In what Oprah and Eckhart Tolle affirmed, we find a key platform shared by virtually all in the New Age Movement.

New Age belief about the source of authority

Those in the New Age Movement believe the individual is the standard of truth, saying that “truth as an objective reality simply does not exist.”⁴ New Testament teaching to the contrary is abundant: 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21; Matthew 5:18; and many more. When all is said and done, when this world has run its course, from the storehouse of all available knowledge it will be only God’s eternal truth that continues. It is as Peter said of those who have believed in and obeyed God’s Word, “...having been born again, not

of corruptible seed but the incorruptible word of God which lives and abides forever, because All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” (1 Peter 1:23-25)

One prominent New Age guru, Neale Donald Walsch, had this to say about truth, “God has also shown me the way. Actually, not the way, but a way. For God’s greatest truth is that there is not one way only but many ways Home. There are a thousand paths to God, and every one will get you there. Indeed all paths lead to God. This is because there is no other place to go.”⁵

Clearly, this popular movement is deceitful and insidious, a great threat to our faith and that of our children and grandchildren.

¹ Brackett, Charlie, *Oprah’s New Age Church* (2008), pp.10-12, Clarion Word Publishing, Chattanooga, TN.

² Ibid, p. 38, quoting Oprah Winfrey.

³ Lesser, Elizabeth, *The Seeker’s Guide* (2000), pp. 51-52, Random House Publishing Group, New York, NY.

⁴ MacLaine, Shirley, *It’s All in the Playing* (1987), Bantam Books, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., New York, NY.

⁵ Walsch, Neale Donald, *Communion With God* (2000), pp.6 and 7, G. P. Putnam’s Sons, New York, NY.