

APPENDIX E

THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT AND SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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I. INTRODUCTION:

In recent years some Seventh-day Adventists have participated in a variety of strange experiences. Are these phenomena harbingers of the coming outpouring of the Holy Spirit (as sometimes claimed), or do they disclose a subtle attempt by Satan to ensnare unwary members of the remnant church? A few instances will highlight the nature of the problem:

- A nurse places her hands in certain positions on her own abdomen for twenty-minute periods several times a day. Although formerly a sufferer from chronic constipation, she now has relief by correcting the disordered electrical currents of her body.
- A concerned mother swings a pendulum over her cancer-afflicted son to discover what herbs are needed to cure his diseased condition.
- A lady suspends a lead crystal pendant over a handful of vitamin C Pills to determine her daily dosage. The number varies from day to day.
- Books on iridology, a psychic method for diagnosing disease through the iris of the eye, on sale in a college-operated supermarket. Another popular volume on the same shelf: *Magnetic Therapy: Healing in Your Own Hands*, by Abbot George Burke. The author refers with approval to the studies of Dr. Franz Mesmer (from whom the term “mesmerism” derives) and traces his research through pagan thought to Isis, a famous goddess of ancient Egypt.
- A young man in ill health is tied to a tree with his back to its “window” or “door.” The aperture has been located by means of a pendulum. It is believed that electrical energy will flow into the patient to bring renewed vigor.
- A gentleman, attending a Pathfinder dinner, dangles a nail tied to a string over a small amount of food in his hand to discover what he may safely eat. In a similar manner a child checks her lunch at the school cafeteria.
- After a Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking clinic meeting, a participant places a cigarette behind his ear and extends his arm out from his side. The director grasps the arm and easily moves it back to the participants’ side. The gentleman removes the cigarette from his person and extends his arm again. Now his arm becomes rigid and the director is unable to move it. The phenomenon is cited as striking evidence against the use of tobacco.
- The practitioner places one hand on the patient’s pain-wracked leg and with the other directs a pendulum over several pictures depicting a variety of diseases. The positive spinning of the pendulum over a picture of tuberculosis of the bone indicates this disease as the cause of the patient’s affliction.
- House wives, shopping for groceries, hold their pendulums over lettuce and other products to determine freshness or wholesomeness.
- A lady on medication for epilepsy is told by an herbal practitioner that toxoplasmosis is probably the cause for her epilepsy (toxoplasmosis is a disease caused by the presence of parasitic microorganisms known as toxoplasmas). The patient is assured that the disease can be killed by using “vital therapy.”

“Vital therapy” is based on the belief that the right side of the body, including the hand and foot, is electrically positive; the left side is negative. “To draw out” from the sick

person the practitioner places his left hand with the palm open toward the body of the patient; the right hand is held palm open and downward, parallel to the ground. This allows the "bad electricity" to flow away from the patient. "To put in" natural life-force the practitioner places the right hand over the patient and holds the left hand up over his head with the palm facing directly upward and the fingers curved as though holding a ball. This allows energy to flow into the patient. It is this flow of energy that does the healing; it can be balanced or increased by these motions of the hands.

Participants in a 14-hour video-tape course entitled, "Achieve Your Potential," are taught to exercise the "God" "power" that "everyone" has "within."

These experiences could be multiplied. They all involve Seventh-day Adventist church members; in certain instances, personnel in denominational churches and schools. Professional and college-educated persons are engaged in these practices as well as individuals with lesser educational backgrounds. Actually, the above experiences have a common denominator: We believe they reflect an intrusion here and there of some aspects of the so-called New Age movement into the ranks of Seventh-day Adventists.

II. THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT: SOME BELIEFS

The roots of the New Age movement may be traced to the 1960's when many American young people became enamored not only with the occult but also with the oriental religions and their explanations of reality. Thus a movement began. In the last two decades Western occultism has linked with Eastern mysticism to present a new face to modern society under the general name of the "New Age movement."

The New Age movement, however, is not a denomination with a structured organization and a central headquarters. Actually, the "movement" is a broad coalition of religions and organizations which hold in common similar views of reality. Theories and practices based on the so-called "ancient wisdom" have penetrated virtually every area of contemporary life: science, business, health/medicine, education, psychology, religion, politics, the arts, and especially entertainment. In fact mass entertainment and the media in general have made many concepts of the New Age philosophy familiar household terms.

The foundational belief which ties together the diversified groups of New Agers is the unbiblical world view of pantheism. Pantheism once knocked on the Adventist door through the teaching and influence of Dr. J.H. Kellogg, superintendent of the Battle Creek Sanitarium in Michigan, as well as others. We believe it is knocking again today in more insidious ways. Whereas Kellogg emphasized the "God" was in everything (flower, tree) and in people (cf. the title of his book, *The Living Temple*), the modern emphasis is on a universal "consciousness" (cf. Hindu, "world soul;" Christian Science, "divine mind") or "energy" as the true reality that

undergirds all nature and which may be manipulated. There is a subjective emphasis on activating a person's "higher powers" as the source for insight and healing rather than looking to an external, transcendent God and to objective guidelines that exist outside oneself. The word "pantheism" itself is not used in New Age literature. However, the terms employed by writers presenting the New Age world view simply mask this unbiblical teaching.

Why would modern humanity, after achieving such great feats through the scientific methods, be attracted to pantheism? For one thing, there are not many options, as Robert Burrows, editor of publications for Spiritual Counterfeits Project, points out:

The religious options open to humanity are limited: We can believe in no God and be atheists. We can believe in one God and be theists. Or we can believe that all is God and be pantheists. Of these three, pantheism has been humanity's major preoccupation throughout history....In the absence of revealed religion, humanity gravitates to natural religion, assumes nature is all that is, and deifies it and humanity accordingly. ("Americans Get Religion in the New Age," *Christianity Today*, May 16, 1986, 17)

According to Norman L. Geisler, professor of Systematic Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary, "Western society is experiencing an ideological shift from an atheistic to a pantheistic orientation." Strange as it may seem the two perspectives have much in common since both take a naturalistic approach to the world.

(1) Both deny an absolute distinction between Creator and creation. Both deny there is any God beyond the universe. (2) Both deny that a God supernaturally intervenes in the universe (by miracles). (3) And in the final analysis both believe that man is God (or Ultimate), though not all atheists admit this. ("The New Age Movement," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January-March, 1987, 79-80)

It is clear that any religion or movement that puts man at the center and underscores his self-centeredness will appeal to the sinful heart equally well whether the orientation of the religion is atheistic or pantheistic. Consequently both schools of thought are directly opposed to the God-centered faith of Christianity.

According to Dr. Geisler at least fourteen doctrines are typical of the New Age groups (though some do not embrace all of them.) A pantheistic coloring is given to most (Ibid., 85):

1. An impersonal god (force). Some designate this as "mind"
2. An eternal universe
3. The illusory nature of matter
4. The cyclical nature of life
5. The necessity of reincarnations
6. The evolution of man into Godhead

7. Continuing revelation from spirit beings beyond this 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
14. Syncretism (unity of all religions)

If confronted with a clear statement of faith (such as listed above), most Seventh-day Adventists would perceive immediately that these New Age teachings are foreign to the Christian religion. Indeed, they clash with the plainest teachings and claims of the Christian Scriptures. But the approach of New Age ideas and practices has caught the attention of some Adventists by more subtle means. Before examining the ways by which specific inroads have been made in the church, we turn to two important biblical teachings that impact on this topic.

III. BIBLE BACKGROUNDS

The Existence of Evil Angels

The Bible teaches the existence of an evil personage known as Satan and his hosts of devils. These supernatural beings are in constant warfare against God, the human race, God's people, and all that is holy and good.

Christ, as God the Son, created all things. "For in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him" (Col. 1:16). Thus, it is evident that Christ created the angels (cf. also Ps 148:2, 5). The angels presently in heaven form an innumerable multitude of intelligent beings (Rev 5:11) who joyfully serve the Creator as He directs (Ps 103: 19-21; Heb 1:14).

Devils (also referred to as demons and unclean spirits) were once part of these angelic armies whom Christ created at some point in eternity past. However, under the leadership of Lucifer (Satan) these angels rebelled against the authority of God and were expelled from heaven (Isa. 14:12-15; Rev 12:7-9; 2 Peter 2:4). As fallen angels they form the dark forces of evil which war against God and the human race.

The connection of the visible with the invisible world, the ministration of angels of God, and the agency of evil spirits are plainly revealed in the Scriptures, and inseparably interwoven with human history. There is a growing tendency to disbelief in the existence of evil spirits, while the holy angels that "minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" ...are regarded by many as spirits of the dead.

But the Scriptures not only teach the existence of angels, both good and evil, but present unquestionable proof that these are not disembodied spirits of dead men....

Evil spirits, in the beginning created sinless, were equal in nature, power, and glory with the holy beings that are now God's messengers. But fallen through sin, they are leagued together for the dishonor of God and the destruction of men. United with Satan in his rebellion, and with him cast out from heaven, they have, through all succeeding ages, co-operated with him in his warfare against the divine authority. We are told in Scripture of their confederacy and government, of their various orders, of their intelligence and subtlety, and of their malicious designs against the peace and happiness of men. (*The Great Controversy*, 511, 513)

From the beginning of their operation in the earth demonic forces under Satan have been connected intimately with all forms of pagan idolatry and the occult practices involved. Israel was warned strictly not to unite with the pagan idolaters in their religious rites. The reason was underscored: If they participated in the rites of paganism and in the practices of the occult, they would thereby commit themselves to the service and control of the demons (cf. Rom 6:16). Note the implication of the following passages:

They stirred him (God) to jealousy with strange gods: with abominable practices they provoked him to anger. *They sacrificed to demons which were no gods....* (Deut 32:16-17)

They served their idols, which became a snare to them. *They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons;* they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood. (Ps 106:36-38)

I imply that *what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons* and not to God. *I do not want you to be partners with demons.* You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. (1 Cor. 10:20-21)

The occult-mystical philosophy of ancient forms of paganism lives on today in the modern activities of the New Age movement. Some practices like Spiritualism continue on, unchanged, more or less; however, New Agers emphasize the presence of good spirits who can guide and empower the human mind. Then, there are new practices, adapted to the interests and concerns of modern society. We will consider some of these.

We believe the Christian needs to be warned that the same unbiblical philosophical base and the same demonic power lie behind many of the practices now being offered contemporary society by the occult-mystical oriented New Age programs. The same possibility of coming

under occult oppression—under Satanic deception, domination, and control—is as real now as in ancient times. On this point God has given end-time Christians specific cautions:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. (1 Tim 4:1)

THE BIBLICAL WORLD VIEW

Today's secularized society is ripe for Satanic delusions. Since in any era the church must cope with intrusion of worldly culture and philosophy, we are safe in saying that some/many in the church stand in a similar danger.

To a large extent the modern scientific mind has abandoned the Bible and its claims and the authority of the God revealed there. Secular humanity likewise rejects belief in a personal being known as Satan or in the existence of evil spirits. Quantum physics now views fundamental reality "as a seamless web of vibrant, pulsating energy" (Burrows). This has led certain physicists who have accepted New Age occultism to identify this fundamental energy with Eastern mysticism's pantheistic "god"—consciousness, life-force, or mind that it alleges permeates the universe. Thus the New Age movement has developed as an endeavor to join modern science, the occult and Eastern mysticism into one world system of pantheistic belief.

This current thrust toward a pantheistic view of reality clashes with the clear, unambiguous testimony of the Bible. We summarize a few of its basic teachings:

1. *The Bible affirms the existence of a personal God who, as Creator, stands outside and separate from His creation.* Jesus taught us to address God as "our Father." By contrast pantheism perceives "god" as an impersonal force, energy, or "mind" permeating all nature, including ourselves.
2. *The Bible affirms that men and women are creatures—created by God in His own image but distinct from Him and dependent upon Him for existence.* Humanity is in no sense divine, although it is called to reflect God's character. By contrast pantheism sees the human as an extension of "god." The divine essence within is the person's true self; he is "god" and through a series of lives humanity will evolve into a more mature understanding of its godhead.
3. *The Bible affirms the reality of the external world of nature and the universe and acknowledges all things as the handiwork of the Creator.* "I look at the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established" (Ps 8:3). "and God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31).
4. *The Bible affirms that the human family has sinned against God by transgressing His will as revealed in His Law. It further affirms that the sinner can be redeemed only through his personal acceptance of the merits of the sinless life and atoning death of the Savior, Jesus Christ.* Pantheism rejects the Christian gospel and its premises. Humanity is

essentially good, not fallen nor a transgressor of God's laws. Pantheists argue that the problem lies in our forgetting that humanity is divine. The goal is for each to discover his or her essential deity.

In pantheistic thought ultimate salvation is unification with "god" after a series of lives and reincarnations. Jesus is regarded as a great religious teacher influenced by the "Christ Spirit" which has dwelt in others as well. It is denied that Jesus died for man's sin. In fact, a consistent pantheist would argue that Jesus never died at all, but while in the tomb solved the problem of the ages by transmuting his human flesh into divine flesh.

5. *The Bible affirms the value of prayer-communion between the believer and God.*

Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7)

In any time of need the believer is encouraged to approach God in prayer through the intercession of Christ, our understanding high priest (Heb 4: 14-16).

Pantheism denies this kind of prayer relationship between two distinct beings—between God and the believer. Since the human is held to be essentially divine, "prayer" takes the form of a kind of "meditation." Various techniques for "consciousness-altering" are employed to enable the meditator to move through levels of consciousness until he is able to invoke, or to come into union with, or to tap the god-energy within. By contrast Christian meditation directs the mind of believers to the Creator God who is external to them.

6. *The Bible affirms the presence of evil angels, confederated under Satan, who war against God and humanity.* Pantheism denies the presence of evil in the universe. It claims, however, that the cosmos is a multidimensional reality and that it is inhabited by spirits who are viewed as sources of power and guidance. Hence the New Ager is open—but blind—to the deceptions of evil angels.

7. *The Bible affirms the reality of death and a final judgment of mankind.* It is appointed for men to die once, after that comes judgment" (Heb 9:27). Pantheism denies both events. Life is upward and mobile through a series of reincarnations. The Bible knows nothing about a series of lives and reincarnations by which one gradually "improves" as he moves toward full reunion with "god."

The Bible teaches that one may be fully saved in this present life through the acceptance of Jesus Christ and in union with Him. Should the believer die before the actual return of Christ in His kingdom of glory, he will be resurrected then with an

immortal body. The living saints will be translated; both groups will be gathered to Christ at that great event and will remain with Him eternally (1 Thess 4:16-18; 1 Cor 15:51-55). This earth, renewed by the Creator's hand, will become the eternal home of the redeemed (Rev 21: 1-5; Matt 5:5).

8. *The Bible affirms the reality of miracles by the power of God. It also recognizes that Satan and the evil angels work apparent miracles through their agencies* (Exod 7:10-12, 20-22; 8:6-7; Matt 24:24; Rev 16:13-14). Pantheism attributes physical phenomena such as the curing of disease to the activating of latent "higher powers" within the human mind or to the manipulating of the aura of energy which is alleged to envelop each person and object.

The above Bible affirmation does not negate the fact that the mind and the body are intimately related (cf. psychosomatic medicine). Some diseases are related to mental attitudes. Thus their cures are effected by changes in thinking rather than through direct miracles by a supernatural agency. Ellen White has written:

Disease is sometimes produced, and is often greatly aggravated, by the imagination. Many are lifelong invalids who might be well if they only thought so....Many die from disease the cause of which is wholly imaginary.

Courage, hope, faith, sympathy, love, promote health and prolong life. A contented mind, a cheerful spirit, is health to the body and strength to the soul....

In the treatment of the sick the effect of mental influence should not be over-looked. Rightly used, this influence affords one of the most effective agencies for combating disease. (*The Ministry of Healing*, 241)

It is evident from this brief summary that the Christian faith revealed in the Holy Scriptures is in open conflict with the pantheistic-oriented beliefs that undergird the New Age movement. Christians must reject New Age practices and procedures which derive from or support a pantheistic world view contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

IV. HOLISTIC HEALTH

HEALTH AND WHOLENESS

One aspect of the New Age movement that can prove alluringly deceptive to Seventh-day Adventists is its emphasis on holistic health. Adventists long have believed in the "wholeness" of the human being. We know that mind and body interact, thus the individual should be

treated as a whole person. However, New Age holistic health means “wholeness” on pantheistic grounds (“All is One”; “We are All God”) and not the Bible’s view of the nature of man. There is a sharp difference.

In recent years a strong movement has developed in the United States to establish medical centers that unite physicians practicing scientific medicine with the practitioner of occult and eastern healing arts. In 1979 the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported the existence of more than 500 such centers/clinics in the country headed and staffed by physicians and 10,000 holistic health care practitioners (November 16, 1979). Thus, “ancient” (that is, occult-Eastern) methods of healing and modern medicine are joined.

In 1977 the prestigious Johns Hopkins University opened its doors to lectures in “psychic healing” and other “unconventional treatments.” According to news reports Dr. Lawrence Green, head of the school’s division of Health Education, “helped organize a series of seven lectures at the Baltimore, Maryland, school that included demonstrations and talks by practitioner in psychic healing, laying on of hands, yoga, meditation and nutritional therapy” (cited in *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal*, August 1978, 6). Later in the same year (1977), the New York Times reported:

An unorthodox therapy in which nurses attempt to make sick patients feel better by “laying hands” on them is being introduced in hospitals and nursing schools throughout the country.

In many ways similar to the laying –on of hands that is practiced by faith healers and mystics and that is scoffed at by medical science, the therapy is being taught at the graduate level by Dr. Dolores Krieger, a nurse and a professor at the New York University School of Education, Health, Nursing and Arts Professions (Ron Sullivan, “Hospitals Introducing a Therapy Resembling ‘Laying on of Hands,’” *New York Times*, November 6, 1977, cited in *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal*, August 1978,7)

It should be observed that Dr. Dolores Krieger (R.N., Ph.D.), an advocate of Eastern mystical energy concepts, was tutored under a psychic by the name of Dora Kunz. She openly admits the source of her therapy: “I had been taught the technique of laying on of hands by Kunz” (“Therapeutic Touch and healing Energies From Laying On of Hands,” 28-29, cited in John Weldon and Zola Levitt, *Psychic Healing* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1982], 22).

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

Success has become the goal for contemporary professionals. Natural desire provides access to the modern mind for New Age thought under the guise of Human Potential seminars. A variety of courses are offered to enable the professional to activate his latent “higher powers.” Varying approaches have been devised, but they commonly include some form of meditation accompanied by physical, breathing, and relaxation exercises. The Eastern mystical context

from which these techniques are drawn to bring about states of consciousness usually is omitted. The participant is led to think he is tapping a “reservoir of magnificence” within himself. (see Burrows, *Christianity Today*, May 16, 1987, 17, 19-20)

The Bible acknowledges that the Creator has endowed human beings with many talents and abilities. It challenges every person to improve these. There is, therefore, a true realization of the human potential from a Christian perspective. However, there is a difference between developing an ability by study and practice and attempting to tap an alleged inner power by mystical forms of meditation. From a Christian perspective a developed ability brings honor to the Creator; from the New Age perspective any development is self-centered and brings honor to the person.

But a greater danger may lie in the meditative process. The unstated goal behind such techniques (whether the participant senses it) is to alter consciousness to achieve union with the “god” or “god-power” within. But in such a state of passive neutrality the mind could be subject to Satanic invasion and delusion.

Registered nurse, Sharon Fish summarizes David Haddon’s remarks on Transcendental Meditation on this point:

In his analysis of TM, David Haddon notes that the alteration of consciousness which results from practicing the various forms of Eastern meditation can have adverse spiritual effects. Sensory perception gradually shuts down with the repetition of a word or mantra, for example, and the conceptual activity of the mind ceases as the brain shifts gears to neutral. This passive state, Haddon notes, resembles that sought by mediums in order to make contact with spirits. . . . “ (David Haddon, “Transcendental Meditation Wants You, Eternity [November 1974], 24-25, cited in Sharon Fish, “Holistic Health and the Nursing Profession,” *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal*, August 1978, 41)

MEETING STRESS

Emotional and physical stress are characteristic of contemporary society. The need to cope with these also has opened doors to the New Age holistic health approach. Americans who once flocked to psychiatrists, encounter groups, or chiropractors, now go to teachers of Transcendental Meditation, yoga classes, and biomedical feedback labs where they learn to control muscle tension by meditation into an altered state of consciousness (see *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal*, August 1978, 29-40). Transcendental Meditation, yoga, and biomedical feedback (some forms of the latter may be neutral) are three of the most common stress reducers popularized in holistic health.

Another is “Guided Imagery.” For example, a nurse first leads her patient into a relaxed mood by means of deep breathing exercises. The patient then is invited to close her eyes and accompany the nurse on a beautiful walk in her imagination as it is described to her. In the

course of the imagined stroll the two arrive at a fence enclosing a pleasant meadow. They enter, and the patient is told that this is to be her own private meadow. Walking across the grass, they come to a large tree and sit down under its shade. Then touch it. The nurse tells the patient to let the strength of the tree flow through her, to express her fears, and to cry if she needs to. Then, in imagination, they return home. Now the patient is informed that this imaginary walk has provided her with a personal experience, and whenever she cannot take the pain, she should return to the meadow in her mind and talk to the tree. (See *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal*, August 1978, 39).

We recognize kindness in this technique and a rational attempt to divert the mind of a suffering person from pain to something more pleasant, but from a Christian point of view it bypasses the privilege of prayer and the Christian's personal relationship with God. Instead of sharing her pain and her need with God through prayer, the patient is told to consult with an imaginary tree and not to be afraid to cry before it. This particular example reveals the shallow dimensions of pantheism: there is no personal God to whom one can turn. The participant ends up taking to an illusion—her imagined tree: in reality talking to herself.

It may be asked whether there is really any danger to spiritual experience for a Christian to adopt a holistic technique for bringing about relaxation or reducing stress. Dr. Kenneth R. Pelletier, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California, School of Medicine in San Francisco and a prominent advocate for holistic health, candidly addresses this question. Let Christians take note:

A person entering into meditation has already in some sense committed himself to an accompanying philosophical system. This factor of the individual's attitude as he approaches meditation practice cannot be underestimated in understanding the positive effects of such practice. (*Mind as Healer, Mind as Slayer: A Holistic Approach to Preventing Stress Disorders* [New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1977], 195, cited in Brooks Alexander, "Holistic Health From the Inside," *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal*, August 1978, 16)

Sharon Fish summarizes Dr. Pelletier's further remarks thus:

Pelletier notes that though the information received from the body by the mind in biofeedback is neutral and various forms of meditation may be engaged in without adhering to a particular belief system, *this is the exception rather than the rule*. In the apparent simplicity of each technique, he says, lies a common search for a deeper meaning as a person moves from early meditative states to deeper and deeper states of meditation, it should be clear, states Pelletier, that meditation is more than a simple means of stress reduction and that each system of healing is based on certain philosophical assumptions....

While the practice of meditation will probably not lead most people to the extreme of demonic contact or possession, there are other spiritual effects. As Pelletier and other advocates of holistic health have noted with enthusiasm, there is often a change in one's belief system that accompanies meditation—a change that reflects the assumptions of pantheistic theology underlying most of the proposed healing techniques. (“Holistic Health and the Nursing Profession,” *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal*, August 1978, 40, 41, emphasis added)

DIAGNOSING AND HEALING DISEASE

Psychic healing has always been an important aspect of the occult. The current holistic health emphasis is no exception. It presents a bewildering array of techniques for diagnosing and healing disease. We list only a few of the better known ones such as: Radionics or Radiaesthesia (use of objects, pendulum, black box, etc.), acupuncture, acupressure, reflexology, applied kinesiology, iridology, herbal therapy, color therapy, gem therapy, etc.

We recognize that a scientific basis is argued for some of the above, yet these and scores of other practices in holistic health are closely related to either an occult, humanist, or Eastern world view that is anti-biblical. Therein lies the danger to the Christian who is tempted to adapt these techniques to his biblical world view. We believe that in most cases this is not possible.

We wish to underscore this warning. Conservative Christians who have studied holistic health over the last two decades (see appended bibliography for a few examples) are convinced that its diagnosing and healing procedures are based squarely on occult and mystical concepts. **While some elements in holistic health may be matters of indifference, no distinctive occult technique can be viewed as “neutral” even when separated ostensibly from its roots. (emphasis added)** Note the following assertions by the editor of the *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal*:

The original purpose of this article was to answer the question: To what extent does the holistic movement commonly recognize occult metaphysics and Eastern mystical spiritual experience as an operation basis for its activities and its self-understanding? Most of the evidence available for inspection indicates that the answer can be given without qualification: Overwhelmingly. It appears that the movement as a whole is dominated, if not controlled, by a consistent and systematic form of spirituality that is radically antithetical to biblical Christianity....

It is probably that none of the Eastern or occult healing techniques are “neutral” in themselves, even when ostensibly divorced from overt philosophical statements; the metaphysical framework from which they emerge is so pervasive and encompassing that every detail of practice is intricately related to elements of the underlying belief system. As a result, the technique taken as a whole will carry overtones and implications of the metaphysical system from which it is derived, even if that system is

not *explicitly* attached. (Brooks Alexander, "Holistic Health From the Inside," *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal*, August 1978, 15-16)

We believe the above conviction will be confirmed as we proceed.

The Magnetic Energy Field. An assumption that is fundamental to many of the diagnosing and healing techniques of holistic health is the belief that every individual (all objects as well) is enveloped in an energy field. This energy, sometimes designated as the "aura," is viewed as *external* to the human body, although it is alleged to be composed of seven rays issuing from seven centers within the body. The energy field is presumed to act as a medium for the interplay of other energies with which it may interact. It is obvious that such a view follows logically from the movement's pantheistic orientation which teaches that force or energy is the fundamental reality that permeates and binds the universe together.

When illness occurs in the body, it is alleged that the magnetic energy field around the sick person is disturbed and an imbalance is developed. The holistic health practitioner can manipulate this magnetic field of energy both to determine the nature of the disease and to treat it. The healer may be present with the sick person or actually at a distance from his subject. In this case he may diagnose and heal by working with a picture or writing of the patient or some object he has handled.

It is claimed that some practitioners, as "sensitives," can perceive subjectively the aura and its balance or imbalance. Others may view the aura objectively through the Kilner screen (a special type of glass). Here the occult "slip" is showing. In actual fact, *the magnetic energy field or aura cannot be scientifically demonstrated*. It can be perceived only by persons who are sensitives or mediumistic.

Ellen G. White Statements on Body Electricity. Some Seventh-day Adventists have been led to believe that the writings of Ellen White endorse the various holistic health techniques and their philosophical premises. This is based upon several of her statements where she alludes to the electrical currents of the body. We will examine this point briefly, noting meanwhile that although both sources may use some common terminology, the differences in the meaning are profound. Ellen White speaks of electrical currents in harmony with the biblical world view; holistic health writers speak from a pantheistic orientation. We cite Mrs. White's principal statements without attempting to be exhaustive:

The sensitive nerves of the brain have lost their healthy tone by morbid excitation to gratify an unnatural desire for sensual indulgence. The brain nerves which communicate with the entire system are the only medium through which Heaven can communicate to man and affect his inmost life. *Whatever disturbs the circulation of the electric currents in the nervous system lessens the strength of the vital powers, and the result is a deadening of the sensibilities of the mind.* In consideration of these facts, how important that ministers and people who profess godliness should stand

forth clear and untainted from this soul debasing vice! (*Child Guidance*, 447; see also *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 347)

God endowed man with so great vital force that he has withstood the accumulation of disease brought upon the race in consequence of perverted habits, and has continued for six thousand years. *This fact of itself is enough to evidence to us the strength and electrical energy that God gave to man at his creation.* It took more than two thousand years of crime and indulgence of base passions to bring bodily disease upon the race to any great extent. If Adam, at his creation, had not been endowed with twenty times as much vital force as men now have, the race, with their present habits of living in violation of natural law, would have become extinct. (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, 138-39)

This class fall more readily if attacked by disease; the system is vitalized by the electrical force of the brain to resist disease. (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, 157)

The influence of the mind on the body, as well as of the body on the mind, should be emphasized. *The electrical power of the brain, promoted by mental activity, vitalizes the whole system, and is thus an invaluable aid in resisting disease.* (*Education*, 197, emphasis added)

Physical inaction lessens not only mental but moral power. The brain nerves that connect with the whole system are the medium through which heaven communicates with man and affects the inmost life. *Whatever hinders the circulation of the electric current in the nervous system, thus weakening the vital powers and lessening mental susceptibility, makes it more difficult to arouse the moral nature.* (*Education*, 209, emphasis added)

Although the tracks of truth and error lie nearby at times, it is clear from these statements that Ellen White gives no support to the pantheistic view that the individual is surrounded by an aura of energy comparable to a halo or magnetic energy field. Her statements pertain to “the circulation of the electrical current in the nervous system” *within the physical body of the individual.*

Although Mrs. White wrote the statements before the advent of modern medicine, the presence of these electrical impulses can be scientifically demonstrated now. Electrocardiographs and electroencephalographs are well-known in conventional medicine. The tracings of these natural electrical impulses generated within the body can assist the modern physician with his treatment of disease.

But Ellen White never suggests or implies that an *external* aura of electrical energy surrounds every person and object. Nor does she teach that such can be manipulated to determine or heal human sickness. To superimpose views of holistic healers upon her clear-cut statements is to distort what Ellen White actually is saying.

Ellen G. White's View on Occult Healing. But Ellen White did recognize that occult healers claimed to heal through the manipulation of electrical currents. In fact, she claimed that the healers were "channels for Satan's electric currents." In an article entitled "Shall We Consult Spiritualist Physicians" (part of Testimony 31, published in 1882) she spoke to this issue, basing her remarks on King Ahaziah's appeal to Baalzebub the god of Ekron for healing (see 2 Kings 1):

The heathen oracles have their counterpart in the spiritualistic mediums, the clairvoyants, and fortunetellers of today. The mystic voices that spoke at Endor are still by their lying words misleading the children of men. The prince of darkness has but appeared under a new guise.... While they (modern people) speak with scorn of the magicians of old, the great deceiver laughs in triumph as they yield to his arts under a different form.

His agents still claim to cure disease. They attribute their power to electricity, magnetism, or the so-called "sympathetic remedies." In truth, they are but channels for Satan's electric currents. By this means he casts his spell over the bodies and souls of men.

I have from time to time received letters both from ministers and lay members of the church, *inquiring if I think it wrong to consult spiritualist and clairvoyant physicians.* I have not answered these letters for want of time. But just now the subject is again urged upon my attention. *So numerous are these agents of Satan becoming, and so general is the practice of seeking counsel from them, that it seems needful to utter words of warning....*

Not a few in this Christian age and Christian nation resort to evil spirits rather than trust to the power of the living God. The mother, watching by the sickbed of her child, exclaims: "I can do no more. Is there no physician who has power to restore my child?" She is told of the wonderful cures performed by some clairvoyant or magnetic healer, and she trusts her dear one to his charge, placing it as verily in the hands of Satan as if he were standing by her side. In many instances the future life of the child is controlled by a satanic power which it seems impossible to break....

In the name of Christ I would address His professed followers: Abide in the faith which you have received from the beginning. Shun profane and vain babblings. *Instead of putting your trust in witchcraft, have faith in the living God.* Cursed is the path that leads to Endor or to Ekron. The feet will stumble and fall that venture upon the forbidden ground. There is a God in Israel, with whom is deliverance for all that are oppressed. Righteousness is the habitation of His throne....

Angels of God will preserve His people while they walk in the path of duty, but there is no assurance of such protection for those who deliberately venture upon Satan's ground. An agent of the great deceiver will say and do anything to

gain his object. It matters little whether he calls himself a spiritualist, an 'electric physician,' or a 'magnetic healer.' By specious pretenses he wins the confidence of the unwary....

Those who give themselves up to the sorcery of Satan may boast of great benefit received thereby, but does this prove their course to be wise or sage? What if life should be prolonged? Will it pay in the end to disregard the will of God? All such apparent gain will prove at last an irrecoverable loss. *We cannot with impunity break down a single barrier which God has erected to guard His people from Satan's power.* (*Testimonies*, vol. 5, 193-4, 197-99, emphasis added)

The counsel is clear. In harmony with the Bible Ellen White recognizes the presence of Satan and evil angels behind the occult systems of healing. To pursue recovery from sickness at such sources simply opens the door to satanic deceptions and control. The Ellen G. White writings give no support to the holistic health's pantheistic view or reality and emphatically reject this approach to healing.

V. PSYCHOMETRY AND RADIONICS/RADIAESTHESIA

We return now to some techniques associated with assuming that a magnetic energy field or aura surrounds every object and every person, and how this assumption is employed for diagnosing and treating disease in holistic circles.

Psychometry, a holistic method of diagnosing a patient's illness, rests on the assumption that the energy radiating from the patient (his aura) attaches itself to objects he may handle. It is alleged that the practitioner—even at a distance—can gather "impressions" by touching the object and thereby determine the person's illness and prescribe for its cure.

Radionics or Radiaesthesia are names given to that branch of holistic health that uses some device to diagnose disease. The device may be in the form of a pendulum, a black box (Abrams' Box), or some complicated machine. The common pendulum may be constructed by tying a weight to the end of a piece of string. The weight may be most anything: a lead crystal ball, a metal object such as a nail, machinist's nut, or metal button—or even a plastic button. It is explained that the pendulum ascertains the condition of the aura surrounding the body. Disturbances or imbalances in the aura which the pendulum detects indicate the presence of disease in the body. When held over a given organ of the body, a clockwise movement (positive) of the pendulum indicates the organ is healthy. A counter-clockwise movement (negative) indicates an imbalance in the magnetic energy field and a diseased condition of the body. If no movement occurs in the pendulum, it may indicate to the practitioner that the ill person does not have sufficient vital force or energy to affect the pendulum.

The pendulum is used in a variety of ways to diagnose disease. It is also used in determining what medication or herbs the patient should take, or what foods he should or should not eat.

The “black box” (or Abrams’ box, named after its developer, Dr. Albert Abrams, d. 1924), contains devices for measuring electrical current. A drop of blood or a hair from the patient is placed within the box. The box is viewed as a complex form of pendulum since it functions on the same theory that it can detect disturbances in the patient’s aura. Strange as it may seem, practitioners using the “black box” have made supposedly accurate diagnoses even when they had forgotten to place blood samples in the box! (See John Weldon and Zola Levitt, *Psychic Health* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 56-57.

It is admitted openly by knowledgeable persons within the holistic health movement that success in diagnosing disease is not dependent on the pendulum, black box, or one of the more sophisticated diagnostic machines. *It depends, rather, on the human operator, the practitioner.* If diagnosing by these devices were a matter of working with genuine electrical currents in the body—such as are picked up in an electrocardiograph reading—then anyone could determine disease by these methods. However, this is not so. The pendulum and box will not work for some. The fact is—and this is emphasized by those within the movement—that *we are dealing with psychic healing and not conventional scientific medicine. It takes “sensitives” or psychics to obtain results from psychic or occult methods of treating disease.*

Note these plain statements by the Theosophical Research Centre, an influential organization within the occult movement:

But no good will be done either to medical or psychic research by denying or ignoring the psychic and psychological factors involved in their (pendulum, box, etc.) use....

These criticisms do not imply that cures do not appear to take place in association with the use of these machines. What we wish to emphasize is that the diagnoses and treatments involved should be considered as psychic or extra-sensory phenomena, and that the claims made as to their being based upon purely physical science and its known laws cannot be substantiated. (*The Mystery of Healing* (Theosophical Publishing House 1958_, 63-65, cited in John Weldon and Zola Levitt, *Psychic Healing* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982), 61-62)

VI. BIBLE COUNSELS

It may be helpful at this juncture to summarize two specific points that emerge in this brief survey on diagnosing and healing disease in the holistic health manner.

1. *From a strictly scientific viewpoint the holistic health approach to the diagnosing and treating of human sickness is highly irrational.*

In fact no magnetic energy field can be shown to exist externally to the body, enveloping it like an atmosphere or halo. Consequently, no pendulum or other device can determine the

internal condition of the physical body by detecting an imbalance in a non-existent energy field. At times the pendulum is not even made of material that will conduct electricity. In addition, the belief that an object handled by a sick person absorbs rays of energy from him which (at a touch) can replay to the practitioner information concerning the patient's physical condition is not viable.

2. *Proponents of holistic healing admit that their approach is psychic healing, that is, occult healing. This is the only basis upon which it can be fully understood.*

The techniques used function within the framework of a pantheistic world view which holds that there is only one fundamental reality at the base of the universe: energy or force (some call it "mind," "consciousness," "god"). Thus the same essence of energy runs through practitioner, pendulum, patient, or any other object. If healing takes place—and it often does—it is not due to the restorative powers of the Creator God of the Bible, but to the dark powers that stand behind the occult.

The Canaanites were deeply involved in the occult—in all its forms. It was an integral part of their idolatry. As we saw earlier from the Bible, the devil and his forces of evil angels—are intimately associated with these systems. Consequently, God warned His people strictly not to adopt the occult practices of the surrounding nations:

You shall not practice augury (*nahas*, "divination") or witchcraft. (Lev. 19:26)

When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, *you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of these nations*. There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination [*qasam*], a soothsayer, or an augur (*nahas*), or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. *For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord*; and because of these abominable practices the Lord your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. For these nations, which you are about to dispossess, give heed to soothsayers and to diviners (*qasam*); but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you so to do. (Deut. 18:19-14)

The exact meaning of every Hebrew term listed in Deuteronomy is not presently known, but it is clear that the Levitical code prohibited all forms of divination, magic, and spiritism—the whole range of occult practices.

The Hebrew word *nahas* rendered "enchantment/enchanter" in the KJV and "augury/augur" is one of the Hebrew words that carry the meaning "to divine"—to determine the future or to discover hidden knowledge by occult means. Joseph's servant claimed that his master could "divine" (*nahas*) with his silver cup (Gen 44:5). Another term, *qasam*, also means "to divine."

Nebuchadnezzar “divined” (*qasam*) which nation he should attack first (Judah or the Ammonites) by consulting a quiver of arrows, figurines, and an animal liver (Ezek 21:21).

While these procedures appear irrational to us—and they are—we must not forget that Satanic agencies stand behind these actions. In occult practice divining may take a variety of forms. It links itself naturally with two large areas of human concern: (1) the desire to know the future, and (2) the desire to diagnose and cure disease. Psychic healing has always been an important aspect of the occult.

It can be seen readily that the diagnosing of disease by means of a pendulum, a black box, or by one of the several holistic health techniques is simply a form of occult divining. The practitioner swinging a pendulum over the body of the sick person is not practicing scientific medicine; in reality he is using an occult instrument to “divine” the cause of the illness. It is admitted within the holistic health movements itself that it takes a psychic or a person who is open to develop the sensitivity of a psychic to be successful with these methods. It is clear from the Bible counsels that psychic healing—diagnosing disease by “divining”—is simply another form of the forbidden occult.

We believe it is dangerous reasoning for Christians to think they can adopt and adapt them from their original context—as though healing rested in the technique only, a procedure which at times may be irrational in itself. We question whether an occult practice can be superimposed upon a Christian base without bringing to the patient (in time) a false world view or making such persons liable to oppression from the demonic powers who originated the occult-mystical practice in the first place.

God has not changed. He strictly forbade ancient Israel to adopt occult practices. We believe He would say the same things to Seventh-day Adventists Christians today:

“For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord;...You shall be blameless before the Lord your God....God has not allowed you so to do”
(Deut 18: 12-14).

VII. SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MEDICAL EMPHASIS

In her comments on King Ahaziah’s sin in seeking healing from Baalzebub the god of Ekron (2 Kings 1) *Ellen White warns that spiritism may take many different forms:*

There are many who shrink with horror from the thought of consulting spirit mediums, but *who are attracted by more pleasing forms of spiritism.* Others are attracted by the teachings of *Christian Science, and by the mysticism of Theosophy and other Oriental religions.* (*Prophets and Kings*, 210, emphasis added; see *Evangelism*, 606 for a slightly different phrasing.)

The setting and phrasing imply that Christian Science, Theosophy, and Oriental religions are some of the “more pleasing forms of spiritism.” It is indeed significant that this grouping encircles religions that entertain the world view of pantheism. In other words, pantheistically oriented religions compose some of the “more pleasing forms of spiritism.” This warning, therefore, is especially applicable to Seventh-day Adventists living in the close of the twentieth century who face the challenge of the New Age movement—a union of Western occultism and Eastern mysticism—and its emphasis on holistic health.

The séance is only one avenue by which the dark powers seek to promote spiritism. The holistic health emphasis of the New Age movement appears also to foster one of the “more pleasing forms of spiritism.” Its inroads into the church raise just cause for concern.

Ellen White continues in the next paragraph (after the above citation) with an observation about the link between “all forms of spiritism” and their “power to heal.”

The apostles of nearly all forms of spiritism claim to have power to heal. They attribute this power to electricity, magnetism, the so-called “sympathetic remedies,” or to latent forces within the mind of man. And there are not a few even in this Christian age, who go to these healers, instead of trusting in the power of the living God and the skill of well-qualified physicians.... (*Prophets and Kings*, 211, emphasis added)

It is significant that Ellen White contrasts *occult-mystic healers* and their claims to heal by electrical energy with “*well-qualified physicians*” who have been trained in scientific medicine.

From our beginning health and healing have been important to Seventh-day Adventists. Ellen White’s major, comprehensive vision on health was given in 1863, the same year that the General Conference organized. Her first written presentation appeared in a 30 page article entitled “Health,” published in *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4, in 1864. There she amplified this material in six articles entitled “*Disease and Its Causes*” for a series of pamphlets which were printed in 1865 under the general caption, “How to Live” (see *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, 410ff. for a reprint). While these messages recognized the wholeness of the human being (body, mind, and spirit), they presented this position from a biblical world view and the approach to health and healing was along rational lines.

The writings of Ellen White on health are voluminous. Her summary work, *The Ministry of Healing*, was published in 1905. Well-known compilations include *Counsels on Health*, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, *Medical Ministry*, and *Temperance*. None of these works give the slightest credence to occult-mystical techniques of diagnosing and healing. Instead they emphasize the Bible’s world view of God, man, the nature of sin, and the divine plan to save sinners. A sound, rational approach is taken to understand the cause for disease and to ameliorate its condition.

Early in their history the Lord guided Seventh-day Adventists to establish a health institution. “I was shown,” said Ellen White, “that we should provide a home for the afflicted and those

who wish to learn how to take care of their bodies that they may prevent sickness” (*Testimonies*, vol. 1, 489). In 1866 the Western Health Reform Institute opened in Battle Creek, Michigan (later known as the Battle Creek Sanitarium), the first of many medical units (clinics, sanitariums, hospitals, dispensaries) that would eventually encircle the globe.

In 1895 the doors of the American Medical Missionary College opened in Battle Creek, Michigan, offering a four-year course leading to the M.D. degree. In 1909 a charter was secured under the laws of the state of California authorizing the College of Medical Evangelists (now Loma Linda University) to grant degrees in the liberal arts and sciences, dentistry, and medicine. Since there still remained questions in the minds of some just what God intended by “a medical school,” the administrators addressed a letter to Mrs. White in January 26, 1910, which asked in part the following:

We are very anxious to preserve unity and harmony of action. In order to do this, we must have a clear understanding of what is to be done. Are we to understand, from what you have written concerning the establishment of a medical school at Loma Linda, that, according to the light you have received from the Lord, we are to establish a thoroughly equipped medical school, the graduates from which will be able to take State Board examination and become registered, qualified physicians?

Mrs. White’s reply was received the following day. It read in part:

The light given me is, We must provide that which is essential to qualify our youth who desire to be physicians, so that they may intelligently fit themselves to be able to stand the examinations required to prove their efficiency as physicians....

The medical school at Loma Linda is to be of the highest order,... and for the special preparation of those of our youth who have clear convictions of their duty to obtain a medical education that will enable them to pass the examinations required by law of all those who practice as regularly qualified physicians, we are to supply whatever may be required, so that these youth need not be compelled to go to medical schools conducted by men not of our faith.... (See *Review and Herald*, May 19, 1910, for both letters, cited in part in Dores E. Robinson, *The Story of Our Health Message* [Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1943], 326-27)

The medical work of the church includes not only the profession of medicine but other phases of the healing arts such as nursing, dentistry, dietetics, and various paramedical fields, and health education. Adventists emphasize five specific areas of the health care field:

- A. Medical education
- B. Health education (health evangelism)
- C. Clinical medicine (operating through sanitariums, hospitals, clinics, dispensaries, private practice, nursing homes, senior citizens homes)

- D. Preventive medicine
- E. Medical relief (food and medicine distribution)

In response to the light given Seventh-day Adventists through the prophetic gift we have proceeded to train medical personnel and qualify them with the best scientific training possible so that they may pass all necessary government regulations. This training has been scientific and rational and in harmony with the world view of the Christian Scriptures. We have not trained our youth in methods of psychic healing. Throughout our history as a denomination we have rejected both the philosophy and the techniques of occult-mystical healing. It is the only position consistent with the Christian faith.

Vegetarianism and herbal therapy. While an emphasis on these is found in holistic health, they are not really distinctive to it. The Creator provided a vegetarian diet for mankind at the beginning (Gen 1:29). The use of herbs to assist in healing has developed naturally. Ellen White notes: “The simplest remedies may assist nature, and leave no baleful effects after their use.” (*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, 249). Again she says:

There are many simple herbs which, if our nurses would learn the value of, they could use in the place of drugs, and find very effective. Many times I have been applied to for advice as to what should be done in cases of sickness or accident, and I have mentioned some of these simple remedies, and they have proved helpful. (*Ibid.*, 295)

While there is a proper and intelligent use of some simple herbs in certain situations, our people should be warned of the dangers that may arise from the free use of herbal remedies and concoctions advised by scientifically untrained person. Herbal treatments by laymen untaught in the science of pharmacology can be just as radical today and as poisonous as the use of the most dangerous drugs employed in Ellen White’s time.

The modern preparation of medications to meet human illnesses is a scientific study. It involves an intimate knowledge of physiology and the biological process, pathology, and chemistry, as well as considerable experimentation and testing in the laboratory. Employing the scientific method here is a necessity if a safe and useful product is to be produced.

On the other hand popular herbal medicine—such as may be seen in the literature advocating herbal remedies in health food stores and shopping mall bookstores—often is based on outdated information, folklore, superstition, wishful thinking, or even fantasy. More important than that, the uninformed use of herbal medication can lead to serious sickness. Some herbs are carcinogenic, some are toxic to the human system, while others may have serious side effects.

Again, we are led by the counsels of Ellen White to “preventive medicine”—to a daily way of living that involves a nutritious diet, an abundance of exercise, water, sunshine, air, and rest, a

temperate lifestyle and an abiding trust in God. For simple sicknesses, let simple remedies be used; for serious disease, “the skill of well-qualified physicians” (*Prophets and Kings*, 211) may be needed. Skilled medical personnel have their place. “There were *physicians* in Christ’s day and in the days of the apostles. Luke is called the beloved physician. He trusted in the Lord to make him skillful in the application of remedies.” (*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, 286).

VIII. CONCLUSION

Although the New Age movement is of recent origin in the United States, it is a revival in new forms of the “ancient wisdom” of paganism. It is a modern union of Western occultism and Eastern mysticism fully committed to a pantheistic world view. The movement is a complex of religions and organizations, and to some degree its views and practices have penetrated nearly every area of our culture.

The New Age movement presents a serious challenge to Christians because its world view is unbiblical. Yet its emphasis on holistic health has led many Christians, including some Seventh-day Adventists, to adopt certain of its techniques and therapies. The bewildering array of techniques and therapies, and seminars and workshops—some of which appear quite neutral in tone—has produced confusion in Christian circles about whether the holistic health aspect of the movement would be dangerous to Christian faith and experience. As in most deceptions, truth and error are mixed in varying proportions.

Clearly the Bible condemns ancient occultism and identifies the power behind it as demonic (Satan/evil angels). Its teachings likewise deny pantheism and the false views developed from that source. Since neither of these false philosophies has changed from ancient times, the Bible’s condemnation of both remains valid for Seventh-day Adventists regardless of what new guises they may assume. In a similar manner the writings of Ellen G. White reject both occultism and pantheism and foretell the appearance of similar teachings in modern times in “more pleasing forms of spiritism.”

For Seventh-day Adventists the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy writings should be sufficient to safeguard members from New Age deceptions. We are a health-conscious people, realizing that physical health has an effect on our spiritual well-being. From its beginning our church has upheld a rational approach to health care and has qualified its medical and paramedical personnel with the best scientific training possible. Occult or psychic healing has never been accepted as consistent with our biblical world view. However, in recent years, some members have become enamored and involved in holistic health to the point that they are reluctant to believe that they are in any spiritual danger. In concluding this review we would like to address briefly three claims commonly raised in the connection.

1. ***It works.*** “I had such and such a problem. The practitioner diagnosed and treated me by using the pendulum, and I enjoy good health now.”

There is no question that healings take place with the use of occult methods. That is what makes them deceptive. We have observed already that according to the Bible the dark powers are well able to work miracles and to do wonders. It is not in the healing or the miracle that the evidence is to be sought. Both God and Satan can heal. Consequently, the Christian must look beyond the miracle or healing to the teachings being endorsed. Healing by occult-mystical world view places both the practitioner and the patient on Satan's ground to be oppressed by him at will.

Dr. Kurt Koch (now deceased), a German Lutheran pastor of some forty years experience, discovered the following solemn fact in counseling people involved in the occult:

These four examples from Christian counseling show the fact which has been observed a hundred-fold, that the pendulum therapy can accomplish certain relief and healings in the organic field. This organic relief must be paid for with disturbances in the psychic field. (Kurt Koch, *Between Christ and Satan* [Grand Rapids: Kregel Publication, n.d.], 52)

Ellen White makes similar observations. Again we cite a portion of the testimony entitled, "Shall We Consult Spiritualist Physicians?"

His (Satan's) agents still claim to cure disease....In truth, they are but channels for Satan's electric currents. By this means he casts his spell over the bodies and souls of men....

...she (the mother) is told of the wonderful cures performed by some clairvoyant or magnetic healer, and she trusts her dear one to his charge, *placing it as verily in the hands of Satan as if her were standing by her side. In many instances the future life of the child is controlled by a satanic power which seems impossible to break....*

Those who give themselves up to the sorcery of Satan may boast of great benefit received thereby, but does this prove their course to be wise or safe? What if life should be prolonged? What if temporal gain should be secured? Will it pay in the end to disregard the will of God? All such apparent gain will prove at last an irrecoverable loss. We cannot with impunity break down a single barrier which God has erected to guard His people from Satan's power: (Testimonies, vol. 5, 193, 194, 199, emphasis added)

2. The technique is neutral. It is argued that a holistic health practitioner may interpret its use in one manner; the Christian healer may interpret its use in another manner.

Our study of this subject concludes that a technique *distinctively* linked to an occult-mystical background cannot be treated as neutral. For example, no Christian can regard the Ouija board as neutral. This is a distinctive occult instrument that will always be linked with demonic powers of spiritism.

Psychometry and the use of the pendulum are other examples of distinctive occult procedures. Apart from an occult-mystical explanation they are irrational. They make sense only in the occult context. As admitted by their advocates, these methods are examples of psychic healing that can never be explained on a scientific basis. It takes a psychic or someone sensitive to developing psychic powers actually to achieve healing by these means.

Forms of meditation that alter consciousness are linked inseparably to Eastern mysticism. Can the Christian safely adopt these procedures by cutting away their roots? Those in the holistic health movement have observed: "There is often a change in one's belief system that accompanies meditation—a change that reflects the assumptions of pantheistic theology underlying most of the proposed healing techniques" (*Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal*, August 1978, 41, emphasis added).

We repeat an earlier observation: God explicitly forbade Israel to adopt the occult techniques of the pagan Canaanites (Deut. 18:9-14; Lev 19:26). Consequently we Adventist Christians function like a holistic healer by using techniques and therapies that are the distinctive property of the occult-mystic program. Nothing can prevent the demonic powers from intruding into the processes to affect either the practitioner, the patient, or both.

3. **Gray areas.** The complexity of the New Age movement and the numerous practices of its holistic health emphasis inevitably present a mix of the true and the false. While its philosophical base is anti-biblical, it has incorporated certain practices of proven value. For example, vegetarianism, deep breathing exercises, and possibly some relaxation techniques may not be distinctively occult or mystic. Such a blend presents a deceptive face to the inquiring Christian. Dr. Warren Peters suggests some criteria to assist the Christian in analyzing a given holistic health practice or therapy. We adapt the following statements from his publication, *Mystical Medicine*, 41-42. The Christian should ask:

1. Where did it come from: In other words, what is its source? Does it have psychic roots?
2. What company does the technique keep? Who uses it and what other therapies are included?

3. What is the ultimate direction to which this therapy leads? Am I led toward Jesus Christ or a way from Him? Do I still need Him as a Savior, or have I become my own savior? Does the therapy or technique follow the known laws of physiology? It is important to study the physiology or methods of action that have been delineated by those not involved in the therapy itself. The explanation given by the one pushing his technique, who profits from the product or the method, is rarely reliable.

4. We would add this further question: Does a given meditation technique alter my consciousness and close down my rational thought processes to such a neutral, passive state that I would be open to Satanic intrusion? The mind, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is my only means for detecting truth and error. I am never wise to let it slip out of my personal control.

Robert Burrows adds these further suggestions:

Because of the variety of New Age programs, it is impossible to list criteria that would serve as a basis for recognizing the unbiblical world view that undergirds them all. *World view is, however, the key ingredient. Knowing your own is essential for detecting another's....*

Be particularly world-view attentive if a therapy, seminar, or workshop is (1) explained in terms of harmonizing, manipulation, integrating, or balancing energies or polarities, (2) denigrates the value of the mind or belief; and (3) makes extravagant claims—if it seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Americans Get Religion in the New Age,” *Christianity Today*, May 16, 1986, 23, emphasis added)

Seventh-day Adventists have long taught that baffling delusions would precede the Second Coming of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). Jesus Himself warned: “False Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible even the elect” (Matt 24:24).

Our review of the New Age movement has led to the conclusion that it embodies one of the “more pleasing forms of spiritism preparing our society for the final deception. Members and health –care personnel presently advocating or participating in holistic health or in other programs of the New Age movement should give serious thought and prayer regarding their involvement. All such persons—patients and practitioners alike—should separate themselves from the movement and its distinctive practices.

