

DEFINING DECEPTION: WHAT IS YOGA, MYSTICISM, NEW AGE AND THE OCCULT?

By Chris Lawson

***Let no man deceive you by any means...
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.

Cultists, spiritual abusers and false Christian leaders are experts at *redefining* Biblical terminology. Simply put, they load biblically terminology with meanings that are not accurate. They take different forms of pagan spirituality, contemplative spirituality, mysticism, and even pure occultism, and lightly spray these forms of spirituality with Christian terminology, thus deceiving the non-believers and undiscerning Christians alike. As a result of this people are led into grave error by attempting to worship the true God of the Bible in ways that are not Christian at all.

As any educator, teacher or grammarian knows, it is wise and necessary to define terminology, in all contexts. Defining terms helps us to have knowledge of what is bad and of what we ought to avoid. To follow a cultist or a false Christian leader who abuses Biblical terminology is unwise and very dangerous. Entering a Christ-less eternity is oftentimes the end result of what happens to people who refuse to define biblical terms properly. The exhortation here is simply this - before you dive into the next new spiritual thing that comes along, do some research and find out just what it is that people are trying to lull you into. Define your terms, learn how others are defining the terms they are using! To not do so is dangerous! You have been warned!

To illustrate this point, which 'Jesus' do you have? Which 'spirit' influences your mind and actions? Which 'gospel' do you believe in? The biblical Jesus and the biblical gospel or the Jesus of the cults and the spirit of anti-Christ? Paul the Apostle dealt with this exact type of thing close to 2000 years ago.

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him. (2 Cor. 11:3-4)

AN IMPORTANT REMINDER

Something important to remember is this: Casting aside the Biblical standard of divine revelation in order to have an "experience with God" will always end in spiritual disaster. The world of pagan [and Christian] *mysticism* and the kingdom of the *occult* do just this. They both either reject Biblical truth outright or they cleverly redefine it in order to justify having an unbiblical "direct experience" with the divine. This is done in the name of spirituality and according to the wisdom of men, not God.

It must be noted that the world of satanic deception is based on one thing - *Experience!* People somehow think that if they have a spiritual experience it must be of God right? WRONG! Which God? Jehovah, the God of truth? Or Satan, the god of this world?

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

When Biblical truth is cast aside or distorted and in order to fit ones own cleverly designed spirituality, one can be sure that deception will come. This is how Satan works!

In order to be spared from spiritual disaster, the divine revelation of Scripture must always be the standard and measure for everything. Anything less will not do. To cast aside the Word of God and not test everything—people, leaders, prophets, doctrines, experiences, etc., is not only unwise, it is foolish. When the Word of God is no longer the standard of measure for Christian worship and living, then men's opinions and experiences will be. Which is wiser and safer, obeying Scripture and testing all things by the Word of God, or following someone's creative imagination and subjective experience? God has given us His Word, the Bible, and He expects Christians to obey it. Yes, God expects Christians to:

Test all things, hold fast [cling tenaciously] to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22)

With these things in mind, one must remember that integrating any form of paganism into Christian spirituality is a form of evil and considered by God an abomination. Simply relabeling or redefining pagan spirituality for Christians does not make it Christian or Biblical. Call it "centering prayer", Christian yoga", Christian mantra's", Visualizing Jesus" "Eucharistic adoration", etc., it is simply pagan spirituality lightly sprayed with Christian terminology. People too often forget that one of Satan's goals is to bring mysticism and occultism into the church and deceive people into thinking they are "communing with the Divine".

The heart of paganism, occultism and mysticism is to have a direct spiritual EXPERIENCE with the divine—but in doing so, intentionally or unintentionally sacrificing the divine revelation in the form of Biblical truth and discernment.

In order to spare Christians from getting involved with pagan spirituality that leads to spiritual darkness and despair, we have defined the terms below. Our desire is to help Christians be more discerning before they just jump into new and exciting spiritual things that are really just forms of paganism, occultism, mysticism and New Age spirituality relabelled for the Christian church...in the name of "deeper communion with God".

When reading the definitions below, please keep in mind how Israel provoked the LORD to anger when they served idols and integrated paganism into worship of the true God. God very clearly said to them:

You shall not do this thing. (2 Kings 17:10-12)

Remember also what the Apostle told the believing Christians at Ephesus:

Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Ephesians 5:6-11)

WHAT IS YOGA?

The *Concise Dictionary of the Occult and New Age*, written by Debra Lardie, describes Yoga this way:

A Hindu physical and mental discipline. Hinduism teaches that the self is divine and

distinct from the activity associated with the body, mind, and will. Through yoga's system of exercises, people can train their consciousness to control the body and mind, thereby attaining a higher state of awareness... ²

Through the regular practice of yoga, people can achieve perfect spiritual insight, tranquillity, and well-being, experiencing freedom from ignorance, suffering, and ultimately achieving rebirth. ³

This dictionary then goes on to describe the etymology of the word "Yoga."

The name "yoga" comes from the Sanskrit term that means "to join" or "to unite." This etymology fits with the underlying philosophy of yoga. Hindus claim that God is a vital energy source from which all reality emanates. People are connected to this universal life force and are archetypes of it. According to Hindu teaching, the human predicament is caused by a lack of awareness of this vital link between people and the cosmic consciousness." ⁴

THE GOAL OF YOGA:

The goal of yoga is to help practitioners reexperience their oneness with the universal self. As people practice yoga, a higher level of connection with the infinite Oneness will result. Their view of the world will be radically changed as a particularization of Ultimate Reality."⁵

SEVERAL TYPES OF YOGA EXIST:

Several types of yoga exist. Jnana yoga refers both to the path of discrimination and wisdom, whereas bhakti yoga refers to the path of love and devotion to a personal god. Kama yoga refers to the path of selfless action, whereas hatha yoga, which is popular in the West, stresses physical postures or positions. Japa yoga requires the repetition of mantras, or sacred sounds, to enable a person to concentrate without being interrupted by external distractions. Kriya yoga enables devotees to channel cosmic energy to their souls in order to establish a harmonious union of the mind, body, and spirit, releasing innate miraculous powers. Kundalini yoga emphasizes opening psychic energy centers called chakras supposedly located up and down the spinal column. This is thought to animate the Kundalini, a cosmic force coiled at the base of the spine. ⁶

GURUS TEACH SPIRITUAL TECHNIQUES:

Typical exercises, such as those found in hatha yoga, are practiced under the tutelage of a guru or yogi, a personal religious guide and spiritual teacher. Gurus teach students to combine a variety of breathing techniques with asanas, or relaxation postures. In each of the postures, students must first enter the position, then maintain it for a certain length of time, and finally leave it. ⁷

And now we come to the place where this writer states very clearly how Westerners have mistaken yoga to be "mere breathing and relaxation exercises" when in reality "*The practice of yoga serves as a gateway to Eastern mysticism and occult.*"

Author Debra Lardie states:

Some in the West incorrectly think of yoga as mere breathing and relaxation exercises to develop, stretch, and strengthen the body's muscles, extend and align the spinal column, and enhance cardiovascular circulation. The practice of yoga serves as a gateway to Eastern mysticism and occult. Certain postures, such as the lotus position, are taken to activate the psychic energy centers. And specific breathing exercises are practiced to infuse the soul with cosmic energy floating in the air. A guru might have students gaze at a single object, such as a candle, to develop and focus concentration. The guru might have them chant a mantra to clear their minds and become one with the object in front of

them. The goal is to achieve increasingly higher meditative states until reaching oneness with the cosmic consciousness. This state of being is characterized by a blank stare in which the devotee is receptive to esoteric wisdom from the Universal Mind. See also: CHAKRA; HINDUISM; KUNDALINI; LOTUS; MANTRA; YOGANANDA; MPARAMAHANSA ⁸

WHAT IS MYSTICISM?

Mysticism is a vast subject. Many mystics and many dictionaries define mysticism in a myriad of ways. Here is a very basic definition from the Miriam-Webster Online Dictionary:

Mysticism

One entry found for mysticism.

Main Entry: **mys·ti·cism**

Pronunciation: 'mis-t&-"si-z&m

Function: noun

1: the experience of mystical union or direct communion with ultimate reality reported by mystics
2: the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience (as intuition or insight) **3 a:** vague speculation: a belief without sound basis **b:** a theory postulating the possibility of direct and intuitive acquisition of ineffable knowledge or power ⁹

Here also is how the *Concise Dictionary of the Occult and New Age* defines mysticism:

The view that awareness of Ultimate Reality may be gained through a heightened state of mental perception and excitement. The mystical experience is designed to take participants beyond the boundaries of reality through a succession of physical sensations, resulting in the perception of direct communication with the inner god. The goal is to become awakened to the deity within, thereby uniting with the universal life force. Sharing in this common objective are the Ultimate Reality of the New Age, the satori of Zen, the samadhi of Yoga, and the Nirvana of Hinduism...New Age mysticism gained its initial popularity during the 1960's. Eastern mystics promised their followers personal freedom, spiritual fulfillment, and a limitless array of innate abilities. Even today, proponents tell initiates they can achieve altered states of consciousness through self-discipline, diet, meditation, and the use of hallucinogenic drugs. They introduce these initiates to ascended masters who will guide them in their journey to enlightenment. New Age mystics report feelings of euphoria, peace, and universal oneness, as well as a renewal of energy and a greater appreciation for the earth's beauty. They assert that universal life forces have given them intuitive bursts of insight and creativity. See also: ALTERED STATES, NEW AGE MOVEMENT, SATORI, TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION ¹⁰

NOTE ON MYSTICISM:

Reader, please note carefully that Christians who practice yoga, Contemplative "centering prayer", "visualizing Jesus" "chanting" or inwardly rehearsing "mantra's", *the exact same thing as stated above - "Awakened to the deity within, thereby uniting with the universal life force."*

The goal [of mysticism] is to become awakened to the deity within, thereby uniting with the universal life force. Sharing in this common objective are the Ultimate Reality of the New Age, the satori of Zen, the samadhi of Yoga, and the Nirvana of Hinduism...New Age mystics report feelings of euphoria, peace, and universal oneness, as well as a renewal of energy and a greater appreciation for the earth's beauty. They assert that universal life forces have given them intuitive bursts of insight and creativity. ¹¹

Undiscerning Christians are taking pagan concepts, techniques and method and **"Sharing in this common [unbiblical] objective" of experiencing "the Ultimate Reality of the New Age, the satori of Zen, the samadhi of Yoga, and the Nirvana of Hinduism..."** [Emphasis added] This ought to cause serious alarm to any who profess to follow the Biblical Jesus Christ and yet are dabbling in these things or

are teaching and promoting them.

New Age, Zen, Yoga, Hinduism?

WHAT IS THE NEW AGE?

The New Age movement is a belief system that “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*¹² 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. ¹³

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.

It's for good reason God says don't have anything to do with these dark arts! The God of the Bible severely condemns occultism in any of its forms. God is Holy and is to be worshipped, not through occult means, but in spirit and in truth. We read in John 4:24:

God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Furthermore, it is the Holy Spirit who guides people to worship God in spirit and in truth, not the wisdom of men, fallen angels or Satan.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (John 16:5)

PARTING WORDS

Dear reader, any Christian leader who promotes, teaches, practices, or endorses any type of “Christian spirituality” that mixes yoga and these other influences into it is a leader that has been seriously misled and is misleading others! The following Bible verses ought to be seriously heeded by Christians and all who place any value on human life. The reason? Because when one opens the door to yoga, mysticism, the New Age and occultism, the kingdom of darkness 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)

Notes:

¹ <http://www.answers.com/topic/imperative>

² Debra Lardie (Dan Lioy and Paul Ingram - Contributing Editors), *Concise Dictionary of the Occult and New Age* [Grand Rapids, Michigan, Kregel Publications, 2000], pp. 288-289.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/mysticism>

¹⁰ Debra Lardie (Dan Lioy and Paul Ingram - Contributing Editors), *Concise Dictionary of the Occult and New Age*, p. 180.

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 288-289.

¹² <http://www.watchman.org/cat95.htm>

¹³ Ibid.