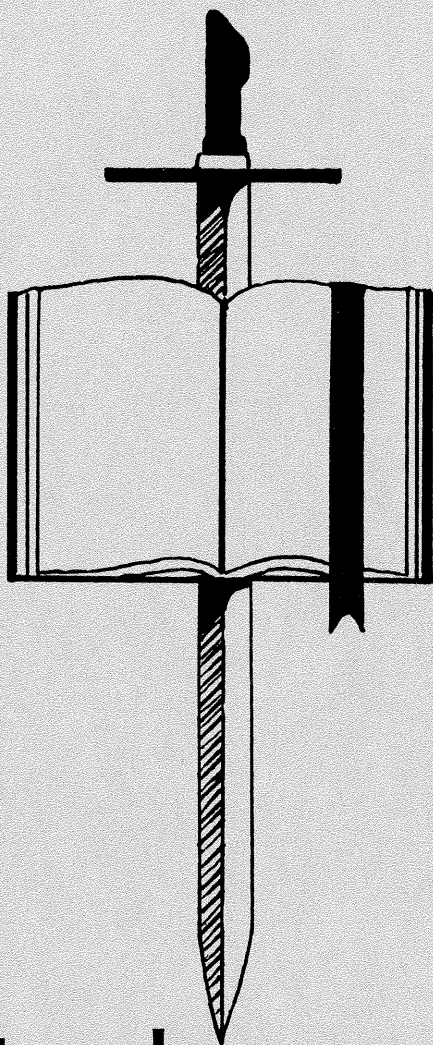


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F O R E W O R D

This issue of the Quarterly begins with a sermon by Pastor Harold Vetter, delivered at the dedication of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Iola, Wisconsin, on October 27, 1991. The Reverend Vetter is pastor of the congregation.

Also included is an enlightening and frightening essay by Professor Marcus Manthey who teaches at Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Saginaw, Michigan. Entitled "Testing the Spirit of the New Age," the author gives a biblical assessment of the New Age Movement and its impact on American education. This essay was delivered to the Wisconsin State Teachers convention of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod at Milwaukee on October 25, 1991. It is deserving of wider circulation and we are grateful to Professor Manthey for permission to print the essay in our Quarterly.

We conclude with an article by Pastor Thomas Rank entitled "Evangelism and Liturgy," in which he deals with the question: "To what extent should the confessional Lutheran Church in America accommodate late twentieth century culture in its liturgy for the purpose of reaching the lost?" This paper was recently delivered to the ELS Circuit #7 Winkel conference. The Reverend Rank is pastor of the Oklee Lutheran parish, Oklee, Minnesota.

We wish our readers a joyous Easter in the Name of Him "who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification."
(Romans 4:25)

-- WWP

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DEDICATION SERMON

for

REDEEMER EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH
Iola, Wisconsin

THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S HOUSE

Psalm 84:

How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth--yea, even fainteth--for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the Living God. Yes, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young: even Thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God! Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee. Selah. Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee, in whose heart are the ways of them; who, passing through the Valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength. Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. O Lord God of Hosts, hear my prayer. Give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. Behold, O God, our Shield, and look upon the face of Thine Anointed. For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord is a Sun and Shield. The Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee!

These are Thy words, Heavenly Father. Sanctify us through Thy Truth. Thy Word is everlasting Truth!

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

This is a joyful day indeed, and we are happy that so many of our friends could come and share this joy with us. It is a happy day, for what we are dedicating today is the fruit of much labor, many prayers, and many, many hopes and dreams of all of our members.

In constructing this house of worship, we have put our best into it. We have given of our time and of our talents, each of us doing what he could do best and what he was able to do, because we realized that we were doing this for our Lord, and as a testimony of God's grace in our lives. So we've put our best into it, and many people have told us that this is a beautiful house of worship.

Let's never forget, though, wherein the true beauty of this house lies--wherein the true beauty of ANY earthly temple dedicated to the True God lies. It does not lie in externals. It does not lie in outward beauty and grandeur, in ceremonies, in pageantry, or anything like that. And these things must never detract from the real beauty of God's house. This has indeed been a common mistake of many churches of the past. In the Middle Ages people put their lives into building cathedrals to the glory of their Lord and Savior, and that was wonderful. These cathedrals still stand as a testimony to God's grace. But then, all too often, the beauty of the building itself became the primary thing. In Luther's day, in order to build what was to be the most beautiful house of worship in all Christendom, a Church-wide indulgence was instituted to finance the project. In planning and building this magnificent basilica in Rome, much stress was placed on the beauty of its art, and the priceless treasures within it.

And so these became the primary things, and they lost sight of the real beauty of God's house.

These are not the Church's proper attraction. And when such things are emphasized, then there is a danger that the real purpose of God's house may be forgotten--and that would be to our hurt. It would bring about superficial worship, and no real lasting comfort. Many people come to church for a few Sundays, and then they get kind of tired. Sometimes they use excuses like: The church down the road has more elaborate furnishings; the church down the road is much bigger, has a more uplifting atmosphere, or maybe has a better choir or a better organ--and they forget about the real reason why they are going to church. And when people concentrate on these things, they soon tire of hearing God's Word, to their own hurt.

What, then, is the true Beauty of God's house--of any house of God? Friends, the True Beauty of God's house is GOD HIMSELF: The beautiful God That He is, and the Word of grace which so reveals Him. I say, the Beauty of God. Obviously, we're not talking about physical beauty here. God is, by nature, a Spirit. He does not have a physical side. He does not have a body for us to look at and say, "Yes, this is a beautiful Person on the outside." True, He did become a man in the Person of Jesus Christ, and Jesus does have an outward, human body. But we are told, even in Old Testament prophecy of Him: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." So, you see, God's Beauty is not in any physical appearance. GOD'S BEAUTY IS IN HIS GRACE! God's Glory is in His grace! The Thing that glorifies God most, when God is in His glory the most, is when He is being gracious to His children; when He is redeeming them so that they can be His

children; when He is redeeming His very enemies so that they can turn to Him and have Life in Him. And when the Psalmist here says, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, my soul longeth--yea, even fainteth--for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out," he says they cry out "For the Living God." That was the Beauty of God's temple. That's why David said, "I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord,'" because he knew that there he was going to meet THE LORD--the Lord Who was His God of Grace.

He is called in our text "The Lord of Hosts": The Lord of armies, the powerful God Who rules heaven and earth. And He is also called, in the second verse of our text, "The Living God." Now, the "Living God" makes Him the opposite of every other god that was ever worshipped, because every idol that was ever worshipped is not a "Living God." Isaiah, for instance, criticizes the heathen for their vain idols. They cut down a tree. Part of the wood is used to make a fire, to bake bread and prepare their meals, and to keep them warm. Then they take the rest of this dead piece of wood and make themselves an idol. They worship it and say, "Deliver me, for thou art my help." That idol isn't the help of anybody. A man puts it on the mantle over his fireplace and prays for rain. If it rains, the idol stays there, if it doesn't rain the idol goes into the fireplace, and the man makes himself another idol.

Our God is different. Our God is the Living God. Our God is the God Who can act. Our God is the God Who can save. He helps. He redeems. He delivers. And in order to save this sinful world --His arch-enemies, the race of men--He actually came down into our world in the Person of Jesus Christ, and became a Man. As our Champion, He

kept the Law of God, and as our Substitute He suffered and died for our sins, paid for them once and for all, and redeemed us. He died, but He is alive again. The miracle of the Resurrection is that He raised Himself. Early in His earthly ministry, when some doubters challenged His divine authority and asked for a sign, He said: "Destroy this temple (--and He made it clear that He was talking about the Temple of His body--) Destroy this temple and in three days [--who?--] I WILL RAISE IT UP." He also said, "I have power to lay down My life and have power to take it up again." Have you ever heard of another dead man, by his own doing, raising himself back to life? Jesus did, because He is the Living God. "And behold," He says, "I am alive forevermore"--alive to keep on helping us; alive to hear our prayers and know our needs; alive to do something about those needs, because He is the Living God, Who can accomplish whatever He pleases.

He knows and loves the sparrow. "Yea," says the Psalmist, "the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even Thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God!" They too are welcome at God's altar and are His beloved creatures. But if God so loves the sparrows, how much more does He love and welcome His dear children, you and me! Yes, He loves us, and He is the Living God, Who is able to strengthen us, bless us, and keep us. That's why we can pass through a desert like the Valley of Baca in Israel. We can pass through a desert and He will make it a well for our refreshment. He will give us abundance when there doesn't seem to be abundance. We go from strength to strength as we live in Him, because He is the God Who leads us from strength to strength and gives us His strength along the way.

And where is that strength? In His Word. And so, finally, He is the God Who gives us--and has given us in this house--His Word. His Word, again, is His Power. It too is a LIVING Word, and it is described that way in the Scriptures. The Word of God is living and powerful. It is living enough and powerful enough to crush the hardest heart. But it is also powerful enough to lead the soul that has been crushed by the Law of the Cross, and there by the Word of the Gospel to quicken in him the saving faith in the One True God. And then it is powerful enough to keep us in that faith through all the temptations which we will face along the way, and to keep us safe in the hands of our faithful Living God.

No enemy is ever going to conquer that Living God. And no enemy is going to conquer us, as we live in His care. And That is the God who reveals Himself to you, in service after service, in this, His house. Compared to others it may be a humble structure, but it is truly beautiful. It is beautiful because of the Lord of Beauty Who is in it--the Lord of Beauty Who comes to you time after time, strengthens you with His Word, keeps you in the Covenant He made with you in your Baptism, and feeds you with the Body and Blood of Christ in the precious Sacrament.

In Luther's day people were, as I said before, looking to other beauties of the Church, and other Church treasures. And so, in one of the most beautiful of his 95 Theses, Luther pointed to the real Treasure of the Christian Church. It is Thesis Number 62, and it says: "The true Treasure of the Church is the Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God." That indeed is the True Treasure of the Church, because it brings to the Church the Ultimate True Treasure: JESUS CHRIST, in all

of His beauty, in all of His grace, in all of His saving power. And so, friends, the true Treasure of this building is the Gospel which is preached in it, and the forms of the Gospel found in the Sacraments that are administered in it, because that is how the Living God brings us eternal Life and eternal happiness in Christ.

So, friends, let this building be your home, where God speaks to you, comforts you, strengthens you, and leads you to HIS eternal home in heaven.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

October 27, 1991

SOLI DEO GLORIA!

-- Pastor Harold R. Vetter

TESTING THE SPIRIT OF THE NEW AGE

by

Marcus P. Manthey

A Biblical Assessment of the New Age Movement and
Its Impact on American Education.

*The Force is what gives the Jedi his
power, Luke. It is an energy field created
by all living things. It surrounds us and
penetrates us; it binds the galaxy together.*

-- Obi-wan Kenobi to Luke Skywalker
Star Wars, 1983

*The search for the Holy Grail is the search
for the divine in all of us. If you want
facts, Indi, I have none to give you. At my
age, I am prepared to take that much on faith.*

-- Marcus Brody to Indiana Jones
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, 1990

*I am proud of you, my sons. Tonight you
have learned the final and greatest truth of
all... that ultimate mastery comes not of the
body but of the mind. Together, there is
nothing that your four minds can not accomplish.*

-- Master Splinter to the four Ninja Turtles
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, 1990

The three quotes above share three common characteristics. First, each comes from a blockbuster motion picture, one of the leading movie money-makers of all time. Second, each is spoken either by or to movie characters who have become cultural icons, transcending the films that introduced them to become stock characters of 20th century American art and fantasy role models for 20th century American youth.

The third and most significant characteristic of these three quotes is that each proclaims a fundamental belief of a world view that has come to be called *the New Age Movement (NAM)*.

Now, while it may be true that the spiritual significance of the statements above might easily escape the notice of an average viewer, the same can not be said of each intrusion of the New Age (NA) into popular media. A case in point was the second-most-watched mini-series to appear on network television in 1989. *Out on a Limb*, actress Shirley MacLaine's biographical account of her own journey of spiritual discovery, offered what was in effect a primer on New Age philosophy and technique, culminating with a scene of MacLaine walking barefoot down the beach announcing to the sky, *I am God! I am God! I am God!*

If, as has often been said, art is merely a reflection of life, then the artistic expressions cited above would suggest that something very strange has been going on in American life over the past few years. In point of fact, that is very true and the strangeness we observe is the result of the insidious influence of the spirit of the New Age. A spirit that has succeeded in insinuating itself into fields as diverse as medicine, athletics, science, entertainment, politics, and education. A spirit that challenges our most

basic understandings about who God is, who we are, and how we are connected. A spirit that has undoubtedly touched our lives and those of our students, and that may, in fact, be altering some of our attitudes. But a spirit that is as far removed from the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of God, as east is removed from west.

In the first episode of John, the Spirit of truth urges us: *Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [1 Jn 4:1]* As educators, we are no strangers to the process of *testing*. In this case, however, we seek to test not merely for knowledge but for *truth* and so our standard of assessment must be that which only God can provide. The goal of this paper will be to subject the spirit of the New Age Movement to such a test, allowing God's truth to illuminate the lie, and God's power to overthrow the liar.

Along the way, we will seek to address those specific areas of concern that have been identified by your convention's program committee, namely, that we consider a brief history of the New Age movement and that we examine "the movement's impact (subtle as well as obvious) on our schools and their philosophy."

To achieve these objectives we will need to spend a good deal of time listening to what New Agers have to say about their beliefs. Before doing so, however, we are wise to begin by listening to what God has to say, particularly about those fundamental questions we identified above: Who is God? Who is Man? How are we connected?

While all of Holy Scripture addresses itself to God's relationship with man, no single section speaks to that issue more completely or concisely than does Paul's letter to the Christians at Rome. In this short course in Christian doctrine, Paul begins by touching upon the very questions we have asked. His writing (by the Spirit's inspiration) offers us a valuable review of these fundamental truths.

After opening greetings and a general statement of purpose, Paul begins the body of his letter by treating the basic reality of God's existence, a truth that can not be escaped even by the godless and the wicked. In fact, Paul begins...

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godliness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities -- his eternal power and divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. [Ro 1:18-20]

The first message of Paul's opening words is that God *can be known*.

The true God is not a vague force or an abstract concept; He is a *personal* Being who experiences personal emotions, sustains personal relationships, works to carry out a personal will. The true God is not all that is. He has chosen to bring into existence a creation that is other than Himself. In doing so God remains a *unique* and *exclusive* Being: the Infinite One as separate from all finite others; the Creator as distinct from all

creation; the One who reveals Himself as apart from all who witness that revelation. Yet, though apart, the true God is not aloof or inaccessible to man. Rather than laboring to keep Himself separate from His creation, God takes a lively interest and plays an active role in the lives of His creatures.

Indeed, since creation, God's activity has continuously involved making Himself known to all people -- believer and unbeliever alike. As Paul declares in the next verse, even the wicked *know* God. An awareness of His divine existence is a knowledge that God permits every person to possess from birth. Then, to that natural knowledge, God adds the testimony of creation itself, the wonders of which require an all-powerful and all-knowing Creator.

Admittedly, the testimony of nature and of man's natural heart will not reveal all that may be known about God. They do, however, declare *God's eternal power and divine nature*. They do make the fact of God's existence *plain*. Only by deliberate effort can man avoid an awareness of the truth that God *is*.

The second message of these words from Paul indicates, however, that man has labored to do exactly that. *By their wickedness*, he tells us, men have sought to *suppress the truth* about who God is. In doing so, they reveal a good deal about who man is.

All creation bears witness to the goodness and generosity of God, who made this world for man. For all that He has given *to* man, all that God desires *from* man is the glory and praise that is rightfully His as the unique Creator and sovereign Lord of all. *I am the Lord; that is my name,*

God declares. *I will not give my glory to another, or my praise to idols. [Is 43:8]*

What God desires, however, man has denied Him. Paul continues:

Although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like man and birds and animals and reptiles. [Ro 1:21-23]

Man, as Paul describes him, is a rebel. God created humankind with perfect knowledge of His glory and in perfect harmony with His will. Man chose, however, to resist God's will and rob God of His rightful glory by placing man ahead of his Maker, the creature above his Creator. Already in Eden, Eve coveted the knowledge, the power, the godlikeness that Satan's temptation offered [Ge 3:5] and she deliberately set God's will aside in order to pursue her own.

As a result, the light of God's image in man was replaced with a dark shadow of sin that fell across man's heart. Instead of enjoying perfect knowledge and harmony with God, man's thinking became futile and foolish.

And that same futility and foolishness have come to characterize man's entire relationship with God. For natural man, the pure fire of God's perfect image has been extinguished. But in man's heart God permits there to remain a smoking ember that is the awareness of God's existence and a smoldering coal that is the natural knowledge of God's law. Paul explains:

When Gentiles [ie, the godless], who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witnesses... [Ro 2:14-15]

Despite the separation from God brought about by man's sin, God still has a will for man's life. Man begins to discover this will in God's law. It is a discovery that no one can escape since even the most godless person possesses an inborn awareness of God's will.

In the imperfect light of that inborn law, however, man can not see all that God has in mind for him; all man can see is the futility of his existence. For man can not be what God's will requires. He can not do what God's law demands. God says; *Be perfect [Mt 5:48]* and man, in his sin, is damned before he begins.

As if this were not enough, the futility of man's condition is further complicated by the foolishness of man's sinful state. In his foolishness, man may begin to imagine the impossible--that he can accomplish what God expects, that he can keep the law as God requires. There were those among the Jews of Paul's day, also in the congregation at Rome, who believed they had a special advantage in this regard since they were the children of Israel, God's chosen people.

But Paul points out clearly in Romans 3:2 that the only advantage the Jews possessed was their proximity to the Word of God, for that Word is God's powerful means to bring man to that point he can not reach on his own, that is, to a full

knowledge of the truth that man, in his sinfulness, has labored to suppress. And the first step on the way to that truth comes in the realization that no sinner can do anything that meets God's righteous expectations or that satisfies God's perfect will. Quoting *Psalm 53*, Paul declares:

We have made the charge already that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.' [Ro 3:9-12]

Recognizing the truth of this accusation in God's Word, each person must acknowledge the accuracy of Paul's pronouncement: *Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in [God's] sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.* [Ro 3:9-12] And that, for man, is the ultimate dead end. If we were forced to respond to our opening questions at this point, our answers would have to be that *God is a righteous judge, man is a worthless sinner, and their relationship is one of eternal separation that man would experience as eternal damnation.*

But what Paul writes of man's sin and of God's just judgment is only part of what God would have us know about Him and His relationship with man. For behind God's hatred of sin there always stands His love for souls. Hence, at the dead end of man's damning sinfulness God opens the passageway of His saving grace. Paul announces:

But now a righteousness from God apart from the law has been made known, to which

the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood. [Ro 3:20-25a]

What man could never achieve, God has deigned to give. He graciously sent His Son who, since He embodied both God and man in One, could offer one worthy and acceptable *sacrifice of atonement* for all sin. Now, through faith, the rightness of the Savior becomes the rightness of the sinner so that God may look upon man's guilt and declare him guiltless, for Jesus' sake.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ...And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has give us. [Ro 5:1,2,5]

The rift between Creator and creature brought about by man's sin is closed by God's gift of grace in the person of Jesus Christ. As a result of that free gift, man's entire relationship with God has been redefined. Where there once was only futility there now is hope, eternal hope for all humankind.

And where there once was only foolishness there now, through faith, may be knowledge, a newer and truer knowledge of God. In following Paul's

presentation we can not fail to notice how, as God's grace moves man from unbelief to faith and from spiritual death to spiritual life, man's perception of who God is changed dramatically. The godless man is aware in his heart that God exists. (*Only the fool says in his heart, 'There is no god.'* -Ps 14:1). He can find confirmation of God's existence in nature. (*[God's] lightening lights up the world. ...The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples see his glory.* Ps 96:4+6) Man's natural knowledge of the law tells him that the "God" he senses has a will for his life, and man's conscience informs him of his failure to live by that will. But that is as much of God as the godless man can know, so he is left to view God through eyes of ignorance and guilt and fear and death.

But God's Word, like a perfect light, shines through such darkness. It opens in man the eyes of faith. And faith sees God not only as omnipotent Creator and omniscient Judge, but as He reveals Himself in the verses from Romans 5 above-- as Preserving Father, Redeeming Savior, Sanctifying Spirit, three Persons in one God, Trinity in divinity and divinity in unity, each and all personally present in man's daily life, and each and all personally active toward the goal of man's eternal salvation.

Of course, neither St. Paul nor we would presume to imagine that even faith-illumined eyes are sufficient to see all that is God. The fullness of God's revelation of Himself -- in man's heart, in nature, above all in the Word -- is *full* not in the sense that it reveals all God is and does, but in the sense that it allows us to know all that we need to know in order for God to accomplish His will for us -- namely, our salvation.

Beyond that point, much of God simply remains outside our comprehension. This is not a weakness of God's revelation, but rather a testimony to God's all-surpassing greatness. In his essay on *The Hidden God*, the sainted professor John Schaller explains:

Even if the impossible were to become a reality, even if some theologian were, by sheer effort, to reach a perfect understanding of God's revelation, he still would not have gone beyond the limitations of human understanding. God's hiddenness remains an objective fact; God remains a hidden God whether we understand much or little of His self-revelation. ...St. Paul makes this clear when he writes: 'We all with unveiled face behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord' (2 Co 3:18). Although the veil of Moses has been removed for us so that we can see the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, we still can view the Lord only as in a mirror. Now when one looks at the image of a person in a mirror, he cannot view the person from all sides, but only from the side facing the mirror. The rest of the person remains hidden to the viewer. ...In the Scripture we see a clear picture of God; there we have an abundant revelation of His essence and of his will; there He gives us satisfying information concerning many problems whose solution has evaded the best efforts of natural man. But in spite of this there is much that remains a riddle, much that remains dark; we can see only what God wants us to see -- an image in a mirror! [Schaller, 188]

Recognizing this humbling truth, the Biblical believer and especially the Biblical teacher is impelled toward two concurrent courses of action: first, to praise God for all that, in Christ Jesus,

He reveals to us about Himself in His holy Word; and, second, to resolve to teach and confess all, but no more than, that which can be known of God from His holy Word.

Faithfulness to that resolve is the surest safeguard for ourselves and our students against the influences of the spirit of the New Age. For that spirit is chiefly characterized by the desire to know God in ways entirely apart from how God makes Himself known and to comprehend God in a manner far beyond man's comprehension. To rightly discern such a spirit of falsehood, our best defense lies in the truth.

Just what, then, is the New Age Movement? What is the nature of the "spirit" against which we wish to steel ourselves?

It is fair to say that Time magazine was on target, already in 1987, in describing the New Age as "a combination of spirituality and superstition, fad and farce, about which the only thing certain is that it is not new." [Time, 62] Footprints of the beliefs most commonly espoused by those in the NAM can be followed back in time to the most ancient civilizations -- the Chinese, the Egyptians, the Sumerians, the Mayans. The common denominator is a spirituality borne of *mysticism*, that is, the effort to achieve an experience of spiritual union with or link to God (or to "Ultimate Reality").

In fact, if we follow the mystic footprints to the end of the path we arrive at the foot of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden. For the lure that the Serpent used to entice Eve to eat of that tree was to invite her to pursue the same sort of mystic union.

When you eat... , Satan told her, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God... [Ge 3:5]
Humanity's quest for divinity, an ambition as old as sin itself, still empowers the New Age Movement today and ensures its ability to continue receiving sinners and destroying souls.

What is most startling about the NAM, however, and what contributes to a sense of its "newness" is the prominence its ancient ideas have won for themselves in late twentieth century American culture. How ironic it is that a generation as scientifically and technologically advanced as this one, with greater access to information and education than at any previous time in history, should find so many of its number drawn to the beliefs of long-gone ages and to the writings and teachings of shamans, gurus, and mystic priests.

It would be inaccurate to view even this aspect of the NAM as "new," sudden or unexpected, however. It is actually the result of forces that have been at work in American society for nearly as long as our nation has existed. Rather than try to trace the full course of the NAM's history, we will instead briefly focus on four distinct points in time, each of which has been of paramount importance in the development of American New Age thought.

* * *

In the fall of 1836, following the bicentennial celebration at their alma mater, Harvard University, a small group of American intellectuals convened in the parlor of the Fuller Hotel in Boston. Their conversation uncovered a mutual excitement about recent developments in both philosophy and academia, and led to the formation of what is now known as the American Transcendentalist movement.

The transcendentalists, led by the likes of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, sought a means to revitalize American intellectualism and found their answer in the search for inner truth. Drawing from influences as diverse as the Hindu *Bagavad Gita* and the Quaker concept of the Inner Light, they found release from what they saw as Christianity's oppression of the human spirit, and appeal in the Oriental concept of oneness with nature. They ventured on a mystic "journey inward," seeking in human intuition a means to perceive reality that "transcends" reason. In their exaltation of the inner Self they discovered an approach to the spiritual that meshed well with their beliefs in self-determination and individual autonomy. Wrote Emerson in Nature:

Standing on the bare ground--my head bathed in the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space--all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. [Emerson, 76]

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of the transcendentalists in preparing America for the New Age ideas that are surfacing today. It was their thought, and even more the power of their art, that brought about the first significant step in turning the average American's image of himself from a Christian to a mystic ideal.

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At the very moment that the transcendentalists were enjoying tea and conversation in the Fuller Hotel, the *H.M.S. Beagle*, a Royal Navy ship of the line, was completing the final leg of a five-year

journey of exploration. Below her decks, fighting off the uncomfortable effects of Chagas' disease, was a young naturalist named Charles Darwin. It would be more than twenty years before Darwin would publish the first edition of On the Origin of Species. Its eventual appearance, however, had the effect of a bomb, exploding the unassailed security of man's belief about himself and the world in which he lived.

What is true of many human achievements, however, has also been true of Darwin's work--his theory quickly came to be understood and exploited in ways far removed from its original intent. Christian writer, C. S. Lewis, comments insightfully on what he calls the "Great Myth" of evolution:

In science, Evolution is a theory about *changes*; in the Myth it is a fact about *improvements*. ...For the scientist, Evolution is purely a biological theorem. ...It makes no cosmic statements, no metaphysical statements, no eschatological statements. ...But the Myth knows none of these reticences. Having first turned what was a theory of change into a theory of improvement, it then makes this a *cosmic* theory. Not merely terrestrial organisms, but *everything* is moving 'onwards and upwards.' Reason has 'evolved' out of instinct, virtue out of complexes, poetry out of erotic howls and grunts, civilization out of savagery, the organic out of the inorganic, the solar system out of some sidereal soup or traffic jam. And, conversely, reason, virtue, art, and civilization as we now know them are only the crude or embryonic beginnings of far better things--perhaps Deity itself. ...To those brought up on this Myth, nothing seems

more normal, more natural, more plausible, than that chaos should turn into order, death into life, ignorance into knowledge, man into God. [Lewis, 85+86]

Cultists and other religious fringe-dwellers jumped at the opportunity to bend Darwin's theory to serve themselves. "Before the ink was dry on Darwin's The Origin of the Species, occult circles had appropriated the theory for their own ends. Evolutionary theory resonated perfectly--seeming to put the authority of science behind what they had always believed. For if humanity had become human by passing through apehood, it seemed plausible enough that it was headed toward godhood." [Hoyt, 23]

Thus the theory that Darwin intended as a means to "naturalize" nature became a pretext for the deification of man. And through the efforts of cult founders like Helena Blavatsky (Theosophy), Margaret Fox (Spiritualism), and Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science), science and mysticism were mated in a manner that would produce as its offspring the spirit of the New Age.

* * *

Philosopher Karl Popper referred to the improper application of scientific theory, such as has occurred with Darwin's theory, according to what he terms "the law of unintended consequence." [Groothuis, 104] The same law certainly applies to the third point in history that we must consider.

In 1905 the prestigious *Annalen der Physik* of Germany published four papers by a single author. This fact alone was remarkable. Even more remarkable was the fact that the author was only an assistance clerk in the patent office in Bern,

Switzerland. Most remarkable of all, however, was the content of the papers, particularly the one that dealt with a new theory of special relativity. It was that work that first brought its author, Albert Einstein, to prominence.

As influential as Einstein's work in relativity has been in the field of theoretical physics, his greatest influence, arguably, has resulted from another application of the law of unintended consequence. As Douglas Groothuis explains, "(Einstein's) theory concerned our understanding of space and time, not morality. It did not apply to ethics, a point about which Einstein himself was vehement. Nevertheless, relativity was confused with *relativism*." [Groothuis, 104] And hence Einstein, unjustly but perhaps inevitably, has been convicted of the murder of absolute truth.

If one contends that *all things* are relative (a contention Einstein never made), then it follows that there is no good or evil, no right or wrong, no truth or falsehood except that which is good and right and true in one's own mind. That sort of ambiguous moral reasoning is not only comfortable for the sinful nature that exists in man, but also fits perfectly into the scheme of the mystic thinker who rejects all dualities and distinctions, assuming instead that all things are one in a single cosmic consciousness. And, of course, in an environment of rational relativism, no logical argument can be mounted against any emerging spiritual or philosophical viewpoint. Each is equally false. And true.

* * *

In less than a century of American cultural history, then, transcendentalism has created a revival in mystic thought, evolutionism had lent that thought intellectual credibility, and

relativism had removed any substantive opposition. All that was lacking was a social upheaval that would draw these beliefs into the proper mainstream and present them as a viable alternative to traditional American spirituality.

That upheaval came in the aftermath of war. Already in the late 1940s and 1950s, the post-World War era in America brought with it a nagging sense of disillusion. Beneath the *Happy Days* patina so often associated with the Eisenhower years, there lurked a substratum of disenchantment with the traditional set of values that had resulted in two consecutive global conflicts and had conceived the means for global holocaust.

Americans were seeking alternatives, and not a few in that "beat generation" found what they were looking for in the East and Zen Buddhism.

Zen was sassy; it was cynical; it was simple with a simplicity that verged on the simpleminded: "Eat when hungry; sleep when tired." That admonition captures the Zen spirit that cut through the complexities of the contemporary world, the hype and hustle of modern life, recapturing the exhilaration of living fully for the moment. For the disenfranchised beats of the fifties who looked at the past with dismay and the future with despair, the ecstasy of the movement was a seductive philosophy indeed. [Hoyt, 27]

The conflict that brought ultimate cataclysm, however, was not that against Germany or Japan but against the tiny nation of Viet Nam. That tragic war asked a generation of American youth to lay down its life for a cause it could not understand, to kill and to die for a government it no longer trusted. Right or wrong, Viet Nam created a crisis of confidence in American young

people that extended far beyond the political and military issues involved. The sons and daughters of the sixties saw Viet Nam as their parents' war, their parents' problem. And in rejecting it, they often rejected with it the set of values they saw as a contributing cause.

In the moral, ethical, and spiritual vacuum of that decade, almost any set of beliefs had hope of gaining acceptance. But the spirit of the New Age already had a substantial head start. Building upon the mystical foundation we've already discussed, it could quickly move to fill the social and spiritual void.

That is exactly what as happened. Experimentation with Zen and other Eastern disciplines in the '50s prepared the way for mysticism's popular explosion in the '60s and '70s. It cushioned the shock when the Beatles returned from India with their own personal guru in tow, dulled the surprise when orange-robed Hare Krishnas with shaved heads began seeking hand-outs in airport lobbies. It informed the moment when Timothy Leary, a licenced psychologist, advocated the use of psychedelic drugs to expand and alter consciousness. It piqued a curious hunger for "hidden wisdom," resulting in a renewed interest in the occult: tarot, I Ching, ESP, astrology, even Satanism.

Above all, the mystic search of the '50s, '60s, and '70s cast a mantle of intellectual respectability about the shoulders of subjects long left out in the cold by "serious" scholars. The fact became increasingly evident in the '80s and "old" sources were tapped for new knowledge.

Ancient Hinduism, for example, supplied the inspiration for the newest trend in psychological inquiry -- *transpersonal psychology* -- which

espouses the notion that "human consciousness links humanity with the fundamental realities of the universe." [Hoyt, 30] Native American shamanism, long written off as superstitious mumbo-jumbo, came under serious scrutiny at no less an institution than Johns-Hopkins University. ESP and clairvoyance became the objects of tax-funded research by governmental agencies seeking possible military and strategic application.

As we enter the '90s, even the hard shell of the scientific community is beginning to show cracks. More and more researchers are allowing that the ice-cold rationalism of Newtonian physics and Cartesian math may need to melt a bit to allow for their apparent inconsistencies with new discoveries in quantum theory.

Ironically, while America's secular realms have been rediscovering the spiritual, our country's spiritual centers -- its churches -- have been busying themselves with becoming secular. Main-line religions have grown increasingly political, social, institutional, and even blatantly materialistic, and in the process they have sent confused members stampeding out the back door in droves.

The search is on for spiritual alternatives, and good ol' American ingenuity is only too happy to oblige. Beliefs come and go, but with the rise (and fall) of each new prophet, from Schuller to Hubbard, from the Baghwan to the Moon, another block is set into a foundation of acceptability upon which those that follow may build.

America's religious freedom provides a fertile medium for alternative beliefs. The very presence of a dizzying variety of religious claims makes each claim more

socially acceptable and, at the same time, makes each less comprehensibly credible; that is, the belief in absolute truth is being replaced by one's "religious preference." Although preference is not the same as certainty, if more and more of the myriad options of pluralism converge at the feet of the One (i.e., NAM thought), that "religious preference" will sociologically solidify into a majority's certainty. [Groothuis, 1986, 44]

What irony, that it appears that the devil has found an ally where he ought to be facing his fiercest opposition. Rather than equipping people to discern the spirit of the New Age and combat it, America's religious muddle is actually serving to aid and abet the New Age effort.

In tracing the background and surroundings in which the NAM has developed, we can see that it is the course, not of a single thread of thought that weaves its way through time, but of many threads that have been twisted into a complex skein of belief. The time has come for us to cut through that skein and expose the fundamental teachings of the NAM to our examination.

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 the three, pantheism has been humankind's major pre-occupation throughout history. [Burrows, 17] As C. S. Lewis wrote in Miracles:

Pantheism is congenial in our minds, not because it is the final stage in a slow process of enlightenment but because it is

almost as old as we are... Far from being the final religious refinement, pantheism is in fact the permanent natural bent of the human mind. ...the attitude into which the human mind automatically falls when left to itself. [Lewis, 82]

Although an almost infinite diversity of beliefs beneath the broad umbrella of NA thinking, at the core crouches this same age-old deception. Central to all NA thought are beliefs that spring from ancient monistic and pantheistic traditions.

Because the NA world view exalts change and evolution, those involved in the movement often shift their perspectives, making their ideas difficult to pin down. Nevertheless, the following broad assumptions are characteristic of most NA thinking:

1. All is One: A monistic world view -- the belief that all that is, is one -- is fundamental to the NA experience. In this view, all things are interrelated, interdependent, interpenetrating (see Obi-wan's description of the Force). "Ultimately, there is no difference between God, a person, a carrot, or a rock. They are all part of one continuous reality... Any perceived differences between separate entities -- between Joe and Judy or between Joe and a tree or between Judy and God -- are only apparent and not real." [Groothuis, 1986, 18]

A popular presentation of this belief can be found in the children's movie, *The Dark Crystal* (created by Jim Henson of *Muppets* fame). It is basically a fairy tale of monism. The story introduces two sets of creatures -- the gentle, lovable Mystics and the hideous, evil Skecsees. It appears

to be a classic conflict of good vs. evil, but all is not so simple.

We find that a gimling has discovered a lost shard from a magic crystal. After a series of perilous adventures he returns the shard; with the unity of the crystal restored, a major transformation occurs. The Mystics and the Skecsees are fused into one harmonious group of beings. We are told in no uncertain terms that good does not overcome evil, but that good and evil are really one and the same. The Skecsees weren't evil, but only the "dark side" of the Mystics (again, cp. the Force). The Mystics weren't really good; they needed to be reunited with the Skecsees to be complete. All is one; ultimate reality transcends good and evil.

This monistic presupposition lies at the heart of all NA beliefs.

2. All is God: When "all is one" it is only a short step to admitting that "all is god," all that exists shares equally in a common divinity. This is classic pantheism. In such universal oneness, personality dissolves. NA believers abandon a personal God in favor of an impersonal and infinite consciousness, energy, or force, often called *the One*. The One is all that is; hence, whatever is not one with the One is illusion.

3. Man is God: Here lies the NAM's most beguiling invitation. From the ancient Hindu's "Atman is Brahman" (The individual self is really the universal Self) to the human potential movement's claims that all knowledge, power, and truth lie within us, waiting to be tapped, the fulcrum upon which NA influence bases its leverage is the proclamation

to every individual: You are god! This is the gospel of the New Age.

For New Agers with a Christian bent, this understanding of man also explains their concept of Jesus Christ. Essentially, NA thought adopts an ancient heresy in drawing a distinction between the man, Jesus, and "the Christ." To Jesus is ascribed the roll of *avatar*, or supreme prophet, an incarnate ideal of human perfection. Buddha, Mohammed, Ghandi, and others are granted equal status.

"The Christ," however, is a term often applied to the enabling spiritual power that lies behind the development of individual human consciousness. In her popular book Creative Visualization, Shakti Gawain writes, "If you call for Christ to work in you and through you, you are summoning in a very powerful way your own qualities of love, compassion, forgiveness, and healing ability." [Gawain, 79]

4. Humanity's crisis arises out of ignorance, not sin: Where evil is an illusion, there can be no sin. The human tragedy, rather, consists in man's failure to recognize his oneness with all reality. "Man is separated from the divine," the New Ager explains, "only within his own consciousness. He is a victim of a false sense of separate identity which binds him to his essential unity with God, and this is the cause of all his troubles." [Miller, 17]

In such a scheme, man's fundamental problem is one of ignorance, not iniquity. His fundamental need is for enlightenment, not redemption. And his way of salvation lies in altering, or *transforming*, his consciousness to bring about an inner awareness of his divinity and oneness with all things (also

called *attunement* or *at-one-ment*). Such transformation, both individual and global, stands as the ultimate of all NA activity.

5. Intuition and experience are the avenues to transformation: The NAM has no formal "scriptures." While it acknowledges the sacred writings of any and all world religions to be possible means for expanding consciousness, it accepts no writings of any kind as confessional or binding since what is valid and true in each individual consciousness can only be that which has been discovered intuitively or experienced personally.

Likewise, NA belief views human reason as of little help in bringing about the desired transformation of human consciousness, since reason reacts to hard, empirical evidence -- which to the New Ager is all only illusion. In the words of deposed (and now deceased) guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, "It is not that the intellect sometimes errs; it is that the intellect is the error. It always errs." [Rajneesh, 18]

Instead, the NAM explains that each person must go through a gradual growth process, often called *self-realization*. The purpose is to altar a person's consciousness so that he may experience his oneness with the divine and thus become creator of his own reality.

To assist in this transformation, the NAM encourages initiates to avail themselves of a host of consciousness-altering technologies. A list of these includes (but is not limited to) biofeedback, sensory deprivation or overload, hypnosis, psychodrama, group seminars (e.g., egt/Forum, Silva Mind Control, etc.), rebirthing, diet manipulation, drugs, acupuncture, sleep deprivation, firewalking,

pyramidology, use of crystals, astrology, and spirit channeling. Almost anything is acceptable that will trigger a mystic or psychic experience powerful enough to cause a person to reject his former perception of reality [Lochhaas, 8], and accept as real that which he wishes or believes to be real. It is worth noting that a common factor in nearly all these techniques is that each begins by instructing the participant to empty his mind, to set aside all previously held values or standards, to ignore all doubts, suspend all judgments, and to simply "let the experience happen." In other words, any ability or inclination a participant might have to recognize these activities as inappropriate or even harmful is ruled inadmissible from the outset.

In addition to the structured avenues to spiritual transformation noted above, New Agers also often share an adherence to ancient Hindu doctrines of reincarnation and karma as means toward progressive enlightenment. According to the law of karma, whatever a person does in life -- good or bad -- will return to him in equal proportion. "Since most people are unable to experience all the 'bad karma' that they have accumulated in one lifetime, they are compelled to return in new incarnations until all of their bad karma has been balanced with good karma." [Miller, 17-18]

It isn't difficult to detect the work-righteous attitudes that lie within these beliefs, and the appeal they will inevitably have for the sinful pride that inhabits every human heart.

6. Humanity is on the verge of an evolutionary leap forward: The beating heart within the NA bosom is the conviction that humanity is poised two ages. The Old Order, characterized by

Newtonian rationalism and Judeo-Christian dualism, will soon give way, it is believed, to a New Age that acknowledges the intuitive perfection of man's consciousness and the holistic unity of all existence. This transition will be sudden, not gradual. As soon as a sufficient "critical mass" of humankind has its consciousness raised to the level of mystic awareness, the scales of world society will tip, and humanity will experience a rapid harmonizing of human consciousness that will dramatically accelerate the process of human evolution.

This buoyant spirit of evolutionary optimism that sees godhood as man's goal supplies one of the NAM's most seductive characteristics. A glaring failure of the secular humanism that has so dominated American thought in recent decades is its inability to assist men in dealing with the nagging of his own conscience. While reveling in the inclinations of the Self, man has been unable to escape the notion that, by the resulting natural, moral, and spiritual pollution, he has been contributing to his own eventual extinction.

What could be more reassuring, then, than the explanation that all this is natural and inevitable, just necessary steps to humanity's progression toward divinity.

Is it any wonder that, to the spiritually immature or inattentive, the NAM holds alluring charm. Like moths drawn to the brightness of a flame, however, they do not sense the imminence of danger, even of destruction.

In our circles, of course, people may fail to recognize any personal menace in the beliefs we've been exploring. Far easier, we might say, to write it all off as a passing fad, or as the

curious ditherings of a lunatic fringe. We do not see for ourselves any impending threat of being singed by the New Age flame. But, as a closer look will reveal, the heat may be nearer than we think.

In seeking to measure the impact that the NAM may be having "on our schools and their philosophy," we must begin by recognizing the impact that the movement is having on the society in which we live. Unfortunately, on that level the signs of the NAM will not often be over or immediately evident. As Marilyn Ferguson explains:

You will look in vain for [NAM] affiliations in traditional forms: Political parties, ideological groups, clubs, or fraternal organizations. You find instead little clusters and loose networks. ...Wherever people share experiences, they connect sooner or later with each other and eventually with larger circles. Each day their number grows. [Ferguson, 25]

Deliberately shunning system, structure, and hierarchy, adherents of the NAM prefer to rely on the serendipitous *networking* of like-minded individuals and groups. These informal connections may be established through periodicals or computer "bulletin boards" or in the aftermath of presentations at community centers or on college campuses. The key factor, however, is that New Agers confidently believe that such networks exist and will continue to expand, whether or not they can be seen.

One element that bolsters such faith is that American society appears ripe and receptive to the New Age message. Over the past decade our nation has experienced what might almost be called a

renaissance of spirituality. Ironically, however, organized religion has reaped few tangible benefits from this trend. Most of America's revived attention to things of the spirit has been aimed at those pursuits that fall within the pale of the NAM.

Just how widespread is NA influence in American life. Consider:

In a public poll conducted by Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, 80 percent of the respondents expressed strong interest in "an inner search for meaning." ...A 1976 Roper poll found that 53 percent believed in the reality of PSI (i.e., psychic phenomenon - mpm), with stronger belief correlated to higher income and education. A Gallup poll released in February of 1978 reported that ten million Americans were engaged in some aspect of Eastern religious practice, nine million in spiritual healing. [Ferguson, 364]

Since 1973, Andrew Greeley, priest, professor of sociology, and popular author, has been studying American's spiritual experiences with his colleagues at the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Council. ...The surveys that Greeley and his colleagues did in 1973 and then repeated in the mid-1980s shows that the incidence and variety of "paranormal" experiences ranging from *deja vu* to contact with the dead have risen sharply. For example, in the 1980s nearly one-third of us reported having visions, up from 8 percent in 1973. Half of American adults now believe that they have been in contact with a dead loved one, up from about a quarter of the population in 1973. Two thirds of adults report having experienced ESP, up from 58 percent in the earlier survey. One of the questions posed to his random sample of Americans

was: Have you ever had a mystical experience, feeling "very close to a powerful, spiritual force that seems to lift you out of yourself?" An amazing 35 percent of people had... [Gorysenko, 119]

It is always prudent, of course, to take such studies with a large grain of salt. The attention given by the media to occult and NA subjects in recent years may have convinced some people to reinterpret their everyday experiences in "spiritual" terms. No doubt, the results of such surveys also reflect a certain degree of the "placebo" effect (i.e., experience that is a direct result of an intense desire for the experience).

A growing trend toward toleration and acceptance of NA attitudes and beliefs is apparent, however. To a lesser degree, we may even be able to identify these influences in ourselves. If you find words like *consciousness* and *holistic* creeping into your conversations more frequently, if you catch yourself referring to our planet as *Spaceship Earth*, if you are likely to blame a student's difficulties on a poor *Self-image*, if you've heard that *visualizing* success is a route to achieving it, then you may be demonstrating the effects of living in a society tainted by the spirit of the New Age. Even our president's speech writers are not immune. Phrases like *new world order* and *a thousand points of light* come straight from the NA lexicon.

Let it be clearly understood, of course, that signs of NA influence are not the same as symptoms of NA involvement. Our language is very malleable; words may hold very different meanings for different people. We need to scratch below the surface to hear what people are really saying and understand what they really mean.

When we scratch the NAM, what we will find most often is meaning that appeals in some fashion to the "divine spark" that New Agers believe exists in everyone. The personal transformation that every New Ager seeks is the expansion of a conscious awareness of one's own godhood. Hence, all of life becomes a seeking after that goal.

It is no accident that Indiana Jones' *Last Crusade* took him on a search of the Holy Grail. The movie's director, George Lucas, a devout New Ager, well understands the mythical significance of that image. The late Joseph Campbell, author of The Power of Myth, explains the symbolism:

[The Grail is] that which is attained by people who have lived their own lives. The Grail represents the fulfillment of the highest spiritual potentialities of the human consciousness. ...It becomes symbolic of an authentic life that is lived in terms of its own volition, in terms of its own impulse system, that carries itself *between* the pairs of opposites of good and bad, light and dark, yin and yang. [Campbell, 197]

...or, as George Lucas's scriptwriter phrases it, *The search for the Holy Grail is the search for the divine in all of us.*

The search for that *divine is-ness*, the appeal to that *divine spark* in man, then, often supplies the tell-tale sign of genuine NA involvement. In field after field and format after format, we can uncover evidence of this same sort of subtle but menacing internal idolatry. For example:

Business In NA techniques for developing a worker's *unlimited inner potential* the business world clearly sees a means to boost its profit margin. And the trend, apparently, is on the rise. In the July 24, 1987 issue of the New York Times, Peter Waldman reported:

Abuzz with buzz words, corporate America has launched one of the most concerted efforts ever to change the attitudes and values of its workers. Dozens of major U.S. companies -- including Ford, Proctor & Gamble, TRW, Poloroid, and Pacific Telesis Group -- are spending millions of dollars on so-called New Age workshops. [Brooke, 9]

Two years later, the same paper ran the story:

Business after business is putting its managers into 'New Age' seminars... all promise 'consciousness-raising' and non-religious conversion resulting in a 'changed person.' These programs use their own technology -- a mixture of computer jargon and the 'self-realization' of the flower children of the '60s. [Brooke, 8]

In addition to private businesses, groups as diverse as the U.N., the I.R.S., and the U. S. Pentagon are employing (or have recently employed) NA methods and technologies in their employee training and motivation programs. [Groothuis, 1986, 72]

Employee protests against these programs as an invasion of privacy and a violation of their civil rights has led the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission to enact restrictions against mandatory participation, or discrimination against

non-participants. In spite of the restrictions, however, NA firms like Werner Erhard's Transformational Technologies, Inc., continue to stake their claim to the \$30 billion that corporate America spends each year on training employees. [Rabey, 71]

Health & Medicine Our society exhibits a growing distrust in conventional medicine, an attitude that feeds on rising costs, multiplying malpractice, and deteriorating bedside manners. In such an environment, *holistic* medicine would seem to offer a bright alternative. Who could argue with an approach that seeks to treat not just the illness but the whole person, body, mind, and spirit. Certainly, one's entire lifestyle will contribute to one's health.

Nonetheless, as Douglas Groothuis observes, the holism of much of holistic medicine is less than holy.

While many involved in holistic health may not follow the idea that *all is one* and *all is god*, this is most often what is meant by "holistic." The emphasis on *universal energy* betrays the world view. Although not all in the profession would agree, one chiropractor makes his views crystal clear: 'The chiropractor believes that the innate intelligence that runs the body is connected to the universal intelligence that runs the world, so each person is plugged into the universal intelligence through the central nervous system. [Groothuis, 1986, 66]

A blanket condemnation of all holistic health practices is certainly unwarranted since, in many cases, the method may be separated from the message.

An awareness of the NA world view that informs holistic attitudes does offer further evidence, however, of the ever-widening circles of NA influence.

Science One of the most surprising developments is the rise of a NA presence in the realm of scientific inquiry. Long seen as the bastion of objectivity and cold, hard fact, the scientific world has been shaken in recent decades by discoveries that throw many of those revered facts into question.

It started with Einstein. His theories implied that Newton's Laws of Physics, long thought to be applicable to the entire cosmos, might not be so unbreakable after all. Subsequent studies, particularly in the realm of quantum mechanics (the study of the infinitely small), confirm the vulnerability of Newton's clockwork view of the universe. In the subatomic world, no such careful order exists. In fact, on that level matter and energy seem to possess characteristics formerly thought to be mutually exclusive.

The traditional, analytical approach to scientific study, that of dissecting a problem and examining its constituent parts, simply will not work in such cases. The only way to proceed, physicists conclude, is to study the entire phenomenon in its entirety... in other words, to approach the problem *holistically*.

The implications, for the NA thinker, are obvious. In that microcosm of subatomic particles he sees the paradigm for the entire cosmos. Here is evidence that all of life, all of existence ought to be viewed in the same way, not mechanistically (as conventional science, philosophy, and

religion always have), but holistically. As one. Of course, claims the NA enthusiast, that makes perfect sense because *all is one*. "This," writes NA physicist Fritjof Capra, "is how physics reveals the basic oneness of the universe." [Capra, 1975, 81]

Respected scientists in all disciplines raise solid objections to this line of interpretation, but little of that has impact on the NAM.

Although New Agers do not generally repudiate normal reasoning processes, they do believe that they have experienced something that transcends them. Thus it is very difficult for rational arguments to penetrate their mindset; they simply assume that the one challenging the experience has not had it -- or he also would "know." [Miller, 1985, 10]

Politics Philosophically, New Agers tend to spurn conventional political channels as a means to achieve their ends. The NA newspaper, Pathways, explains:

The world public has become disenchanted with both the political and financial leadership. ...All the individuals of humanity are looking for the answer to what the little individual can do that can't be done by great nations and great enterprises. ...What better than for the 'little individual' to join together in the dynamic process of personal and social transformation! [Blow, 26]

In its efforts to adjust individual attitudes and gain individual converts, however, the NAM

has made some inroads into the American political structure. According to Marilyn Ferguson, those sympathetic to the NA social and political agenda occupy positions of influence "...in state and federal agencies, on city councils, and on the White House staff, in state legislatures -- in virtually all arenas of policy-making in the country." [Ferguson, 23]

The institution most directly involved in furthering NA aims is the United Nations. NA enthusiasts view the U.N. both as a source of international attention and as a symbol of the anticipated "new world order" they hope to achieve. Significantly, Robert Muller, a thirty-year veteran of U.N. service and its recently retired assistant secretary-general, is an avid NAM activist. On the lecture circuit he has found audiences widely receptive to his vision of "an impending 'cosmic age' wherein we will become the 'planet of God'" and of "humankind on a universal scale, seeking no less than its reunion with the 'divine,' its transcendence into ever higher forms of life." [Groothuis, 1986, 120]

The U.N. Plaza in New York is also headquarters for an assortment of NA-oriented organizations and political lobbies. Among them are *Planetary Citizens*, founded by U.N. consultant Donald Keyes, and *World Goodwill*, the modern-day social arm of Theosophy in America. Styling themselves as agents for world peace and order, these organizations employ personal and professional relationships to gain a wider audience for NA thought, linking it to popular issues that are consistent with the *all is one, all is god* philosophy (for example: ecology, conservation, feminism, nuclear disarmament, and ultimately, global unification and a one-world government).

The inescapable fact is that NA thinking has successfully infiltrated virtually every area of American society. At work or at play, on the job or in the home, on the local, state, national, and international level, the NAM has established a formidable presence that is expanding at an impressive rate. That seen, it comes as little surprise to discover the growing influence that the NAM is bringing to bear in the field of education.

As educators, this is a field in which we have a personal interest. So, as it happens, does the NAM... but for a different reason. New Ager are quick to recognize the strategic importance of our educational system for the dissemination of their beliefs. Brooks Alexander, co-founder of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project, explains: "In the ideological contest for cultural supremacy, public education is the prime target; it influences the most people in the most persuasive way at the most impressionable age. No other social institution has anything close to the same potential for mass indoctrination." [Alexander, 4]

According to New Age chronicler, Marilyn Ferguson, author of The Aquarian Conspiracy:

Of the Aquarian Conspirators surveyed, more were involved in education than in any other single category of work. They were teachers, administrators, policy-makers, educational psychologists. ...They are, as one expressed it, "in peaceful struggle" within the system. There are heroes in education, just as there have always been heroes, trying to transcend the limits of the old structure; but their efforts are too often thwarted by peers, administrators,

parents, mario Fantini, former consultant on education in the Ford administration, said bluntly, "The psychology of becoming has to be *smuggled* into the schools." [Ferguson, 281 - *emphasis mine*]

It is important to remember that Fantini was making his comment more than fifteen years ago; already at that time there were those who recognized the need to employ education as a means to inculcate NA values. It was in the mid-'70's that the late Beverly Galyean introduced to the Los Angeles, California, public school system her theory of "confluent education" that encouraged students to accept that "they are intelligent, magnificent; and that they contain all the wisdom of the universe within themselves." [Groothuis, 1986, 15] Galyean herself explained:

Once we begin to see that we are all God, that we will all have the attributes of God, then I think the whole purpose of human life is to reown the Godlikeness within us; the perfect love, the perfect wisdom, the perfect intelligence, and when we do that, we create back to the old, that essential oneness which is consciousness. [Adeny, 28]

Galyean's comments offer us another reminder of the fundamental mindset that drives the NA vision -- the belief that man is *part or parcel of God*. From that perspective, it follows that anything ought to be possible for man if we can tap into a consciousness of his own godhood. As we look at the areas of NA impact in education, we will find that belief to be the unifying element.

The NA philosophy of education, though labeled in a variety of ways, is most often called

transpersonal education. Based on the work of NA psychologist Abraham Maslow, the approach makes *self-actualization* the primary goal of human existence and so the primary responsibility of education. Self-actualization refers to the individual's discovery and development of the unlimited inner potential that he possesses in a way that ultimately leads to a state of *transcendence*; that is, "the level of interconnectedness, the state of oneness with the universe that would include and use all of human functioning at its highest actualization." [Clark, 404]

To empower such a transformation, transpersonal education makes enthusiastic use of a variety of methods and technologies aimed at bridging the gap between the student's intellectual and spiritual consciousness. Such methods may include:

Meditation This practice, in its various forms, seeks to create in the student a state of mental suspended animation that removes any thoughts, ideas, values, that may distract the student from making contact with his/her true inner self. "...the mind is focused on a single stimulus like a candle flame, a word, a prayer, a picture, the breath, or anything that creates a single-minded focus. ...an attempt is made to fix the mind in the Self and then to observe the ever-changing flow of thoughts, emotions, sensations and perceptions." [Borysenko, 100] The practice is used as a consciousness-expanding process, a relaxation technique, or as a stimulus to creativity.

It is worth noting that in the early '70s *transcendental meditation* was ruled by the U.S.

Supreme Court to be a religious practice and was banned from public schools. New Agers continue to find ways to smuggle the technique into classrooms, however. NA educators Jack Canfield and Paula Klimek advise: "'Centering' can also be extended into work with meditation in the classroom. (Advice: if you're teaching in a public school, don't call it meditation, call it 'centering.' Every school wants children to be relaxed, attentive, and creative, and that is what they will get.)" [Groothuis, 1986, 142]

Yoga This technique, actually an ancient Hindu ritual of spiritual enlightenment, frequently is incorporated into physical education or health and hygiene classes. The word *yoga*, from the Sanskrit word *yug*, means "union." Though often presented as a means to improve breath control and muscle tone, yoga is actually meant to be a means toward achieving a state of union with Universal Consciousness, a way to personally experience the oneness of all that is.

"Yoga, in short, is ...a way of life, aimed at developing a perfect balance between the body and the mind and between the individual self and the cosmos. ... then the mind becomes illuminated, ready to pursue its goal of union with the divine or the *atman* which it is believed is here, within each human being. The Yogi then has achieved his final goal: the realization of the Self which is one with all creation. [Dalal, 11]

Creative Visualization Also called *guided imaging*, this process should not be confused with the simple

encouragement to students to "use your imagination." Rather, it is a deliberate consciousness-altering technique aimed at enhancing student creativity by putting the student in contact with his/her Higher Self. Klimek and Canfield describe a typical visualization session:

On the day of the session they ask the kids to get into a comfortable position with their spines straight, either sitting up or lying down. Then they ask them to close their eyes and become relaxed, being aware of the rhythm of their inhalation and exhalation. To begin the fantasy, they say: *We are about to review your life. You will begin to experience yourself going backwards in time. Begin thinking about this day. What have you done all day? ...Now look back at the past week... the past month... Allow your life to pass by as if you were watching a movie. ...Now go back to the time you entered school ...To being a young child ...A baby ...To the time of your birth and the time you were in your mother's womb ...And now go back to the time before your conception.*

You are about to meet a special guide, your own special spirit guide. A guide to whom you may ask what the purpose of your life is. ...Meet your guide and pose your question. Feel your guide's unconditional love and strength and beauty. ...Let whatever happens happen. ...Communicate with your guide in whatever way you wish. Listen to your guide's response. Notice what you are experiencing. ...Now ask your guide for a gift to represent your purpose, your essence, your unique genius. ...Now you

must begin your journey back. Say good-by to your guide, knowing you may visit your guide at any time you wish. ...Begin your journey back, bringing with you your life purpose and your gift from your experience. Make your journey through time and finally to the present moment. When you are ready, open your eyes, remain silent, and draw and write about your experience.

[Hollander, 241-242]

It isn't difficult to recognize that this is much more than a method to stimulate creativity. The NA *all is god* attitude that informs the process helps us to understand the sort of life-purpose students will be led to expect from such an experience. While impressionable young people are enjoying the freedom and adventure of such *self*-indulgent fantasizing, they are becoming set in a technique that prepares them to accept the sometimes outrageous claims that its proponents make for the process. Shakti Gawain, author of Creative Visualization, does not blush in proclaiming: "The new world is being built as we open to the higher power of the universe within us and consciously allow that creative energy to move through us. As each of us connects with our inner spiritual awareness, we learn... that *we can create our own reality* and take responsibility for doing so." [Gawain, 28 - *emphasis mine*]

In many cases, of course, the spiritual and mystical nature of the visualization technique is less obvious. Its underlying philosophy, however -- that man, as god, can achieve whatever he can conceive -- remains essentially the same.

As we observe this aspect of the spirit of

the New Age, we must recall the words we read in Genesis 6:5 - *The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart ('the imagination' -KJV) was only evil all the time.* While we acknowledge the possible usefulness of active imagination and creativity in the learning process, we recognize what the NAM can not see -- that man's imagination, like man himself, is sinful and must be controlled. The NA teacher, on the contrary, seeks not to take control of the imagination but to give it control.

In addition to its influences in the development of teaching/learning strategies such as those mentioned above, the NAM also makes its presence felt in education in the formation of basic values.

One example of this is an over-emphasis on the importance of the student's *Self-image*. The NAM is preoccupied with self -- Higher Self, True Self, Inner Self, and so on. With their presupposition of the *god within*, New Agers tend to view any sort of negative self-image or self-talk as tantamount to blasphemy. And since the *god-source* within each person offers the *power*, the *energy*, the *unlimited potential* for all achievement and success, it is natural that the New Age teacher will want to build in his students the most positive Self-image possible.

As a result, positive affirmations abound as NA teachers strive to convince their students that they are "great," they are "brilliant," they "possess the power to accomplish whatever they desire." Rejected the concepts of sin and guilt, the New Ager sees nothing in the students except that which may be praised and extolled.

Another NAM value-orientation that has crept into numerous school systems is commonly known as *values clarification*. According to its developers, the goal of values clarification is "to involve students in practical experiences, making them aware of *their own* feelings, *their own* ideas, *their own* beliefs, so that the choices and decisions they make are conscious and deliberate, based on *their own* value systems." [Simon et al, 114 - *emphasis mine*] Widely held to be a legitimate approach to values training in a pluralistic society, the strategy is really nothing more than an indoctrination into moral relativism. Douglas Groothuis rightly observes:

The term 'values clarification' is itself instructive. The word *values* -- rather than *ethics* or *morals* -- carries with it the assumption that right and wrong are something we can choose, as we would choose what clothes to wear. The purpose of the process is not to discover an objective value system, but to create a subjective set of values to clarify our value options -- in other words, what is right and wrong for me. The clarification of our 'sense of values' replaces the quest for true goodness; feeling replaces right; preference replaces virtue. The only thing prohibited by the Values Clarification method is a recognition of and respect for the objective, universal and absolute moral law of God. [Groothuis, 1988, 132]

The incursion of the NAM into education may not always appear in ways that affect an entire system of education or even an entire school. Often it will appear first through the efforts of individual teachers who are personally committed to a NA world view. Or it may creep in through a limited program within a school.

A common egress of NA thinking and methodology is through programs designed for gifted and talented students. One of the most popular authorities in this field is Barbara Clark. Her 1983 best-seller, Growing Up Gifted: Developing the Potential of Children at Home and at School, is still considered to be one of the most influential works on the subject. And Clark is an enthusiastic proponent of NA thought and method. In her vision of the future of education she states:

As transpersonal psychology seeks a more inclusive vision of human reality, including areas of human experience not yet explored, integrative education (Clark's term for *transpersonal* education - mpm) attempts to translate this vision into the realization of more and more aspects of human potential. ...As integrative education becomes more accepted and practiced, we will find more curricula that include relaxation and development of integrative abilities. Guided fantasies and dreams, recognition and the use of altered states of consciousness, and centering activities will develop more of our intuitive abilities. ...All this and more lie ahead as we seek to bring all of our knowledge, feelings, talents, and creativity into the classroom in the service of actualizing and transcending. [Clark, 405]

While Clark's work certainly may offer a wealth of useful information from which the teacher of gifted and talented students may benefit, an awareness of her NA sympathies should call for an extra measure of caution in assessing her ideas. When we are warned in advance that the spirit of the New Age is present, we would be unwise to ignore its potential dangers.

A further area of the educational experience where the NAM can sometimes slip in unnoticed is athletics. While a blanket condemnation of all the motivational programs and techniques currently existing in the field of sports is uncalled for, a level of caution is well warranted. More than a few of those programs are built upon a subtle appeal to the *god-source* thought to exist in the athlete.

Good examples of this are the *Yes I can* sports camps conducted by Stan Kellner and his associates. The camps claim to offer a means to help athletes consistently achieve their *peak performances* through a process Kellner calls *Living the Miracle*. The program combines guided imagery, strong positive affirmations (*I am invincible. There is no limit to my strength, power, and quickness. I trust in the power of my subconscious. When I see it, I can do it. Yes I can!*), and subliminal motivation -- messages recorded "underneath" the sounds of pleasant, upbeat music that are intended to build up the athlete's Self-image and strengthen the athlete's consciousness so that he/she can activate the unlimited potential inside.

Because the program looks innocent enough on the surface (and, perhaps, because too few of our own people are aware of the ways in which NA ideas show themselves), it isn't surprising to find that Kellner's camps have been used even at some of our WELS schools. Upon careful examination, however, we must recognize that methods that exalt the Self, that rely on altered consciousness, and that purport the power of the individual to create reality out of an imagined visualization are not appropriate for an athletic program that seeks to teach its athletes

that their abilities come from a gracious God and are to be used to his glory.

It can be difficult to accept such a sweeping presence for the spirit of the New Age in education, particularly if we are unaware of any personal contact with it. Until we become more "attuned" to the spirit ourselves, however, we may do well to attend to the awareness of others. Mrs. Betty Lewis is the chairwoman of the Michigan Alliance of Families and an educational researcher with more than two decades of experience. In a personal conversation she shared these observations:

I've been at this for twenty-some years now. I've seen it come and I've watched it grow, not just in Michigan but across the country. What Michigan has is nothing more than what has been done at the federal level. You'll find more or less the same thing in Ohio, Wisconsin, Florida, Washington... anywhere you want to look.

Take the *Michigan Model for Comprehensive Health Education*, for example.

...It starts with relaxation techniques -- "Toes to Nose" -- already in kindergarten.

...By the junior high level, it's got self-hypnosis, guided imaging, and yoga integrated into all class levels. And the *Michigan Model* is nothing more than a clone of *Growing Healthy* that came out of the Center for Disease Control in Washington (D.C.).

...All you have to do is know what you're looking for... you can see it everywhere.

While Mrs. Lewis' experience is primarily in the field of public education, she did not limit

her comments to that arena. Though we had not discussed my religious background, she volunteered the remark:

In the parochial schools, lately especially is what I've seen, [the NA] is definitely there. Absolutely. I've seen and heard about it especially in the Catholic and Lutheran schools... they seem to want to be proving to people that they are progressive, or that they are doing things that the public schools can't. They...don't know, I think, what they've got ahold of.

Even if we allow Mrs. Lewis the luxury of a bit of professional bias, we can not deny that her observations add another thread of thought to the belief that the spirit of the New Age has woven itself into the fabric of American education, and so offers a very genuine threat to our own schools and our own classrooms.

Just to emphasize once more how fundamental the NA threat is to the very reasons we maintain elementary and secondary schools within the framework of our church, we turn to two brief expressions of NA thought drawn from the popular media.

The Road Less Traveled, written in 1978 by M. Scott Peck, was the best-selling "religious" book of the 1980's. It continues to enjoy a broad market, even within the Christian community, in part because many perceive that Peck is writing from a Christian perspective. Nothing could be further from the truth, as he demonstrates with his comment:

No matter how much we may like to pussy foot around it, all of us who postulate a loving God and really think about it

eventually come to a single terrifying idea: God wants us to become Himself (or Herself or Itself). We are growing toward godhood. God is the goal of evolution. It is God who is the source of the evolutionary force and God who is the destination. This is what we mean when we say that He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. [Peck, 269-270]

Peck writes in a popular style for a contemporary audience, but his ideas are as old as Eden after the Fall... and just as godless.

Another eloquent and often misunderstood spokesman for the NAM was Joseph Campbell, author of The Masks of God. Until his recent death, Campbell was himself an educator and his work is most often represented as that of an intellectual and a scholar. In addition, however, Campbell was an evangelist of the NA gospel, and Bill Moyers and public television provided him a bully pulpit from which to proclaim his message:

The mystical theme of the space age is this: the world, as we know it, is coming to an end. The world as the center of the universe, the world divided from the heavens, the world bound by horizons in which love is reserved for members of the in-group -- that is the world that is passing away. ...the exclusivism of there being only one way in which we can be saved... that is the world as we know it that *must* pass away. What is the Kingdom? It lies in our realization of the ubiquity of the divine presence in our neighbors, in our enemies, in all of us. [Campbell, 322]

The very identity of God, the very nature of

man, the very means of his salvation -- these are the truths that are under attack by the subtle but sinister spirit of the New Age.

How, then, shall we respond to the New Age threat? How shall we prepare ourselves and the young people in our classrooms to guard against it?

We must begin, it seems certain, by doing for ourselves what God has called us all to do for others. As teachers in God's Church, we must begin by teaching ourselves... to keep ourselves aware of NA ideas, informed of NA beliefs, and sensitive to NA influences that may come to bear on us or on those in our charge.

Like watchers on the walls of a citadel, we must keep ourselves alert to the spirit of the NA, so that we may sound an alarm about the dangers proffered by the NA presence in many otherwise-unobjectionable areas of life.

In doing so, of course, we will recognize the need to be clear and specific in the warnings we raise about the NAM. As Philip Lochhaas points out:

What *is* New Age and what only *appears to be* New Age (because of similarities in language, etc.) must be carefully distinguished. Broad assumptions and generalizations serve no good purpose. By no means can the "New Age" label be attached to everything that encourages self-improvement, mental discipline, or a global perspective on humanity's problems. Not every person who uses phrases of buzz words favored by the NAM can be

presumed to be a part of it. Hasty conclusions must not be drawn on the basis of language alone; a larger interpretive context is required to positively identify New Age thought. [Lochhaas, 26]

Such a larger context is supplied in the summary of NA beliefs that begins on page 64 of this paper, as well as in other resources provided at the end (Cf, appendices & bibliography). As we educate ourselves in the issues and attitudes that signal the NA world view, we will also be equipping ourselves to assist our students and others to look beyond the superficially attractive aspects of exciting new developments -- whether in science or medicine or entertainment -- in order to discern the spirit of the New Age that informs them.

But ultimately, since we cannot separate ourselves from the NA presence or insulate our students from NA influence, we must be prepared to respond to the NA threat wherever it appears and in whatever form it takes. And our most powerful and effective response to the New Age lie is simply to speak the *truth*. *God's* truth. For this, by grace, we find ourselves better equipped than many.

If ever a spiritual development has demonstrated the vital importance of the whole counsel of God, the NAM is such a development. If ever a societal shift has underscored the importance of imparting to our children that whole counsel of God, then the direction that the NAM is nudging our society is such a shift. Those churches that have busied themselves with demythologizing Scripture and reducing God's Word to its lowest common denominator have, in the process, divested themselves (and their succeeding generations) of the very weapons they need to resist the spirit of

the New Age. In keeping us true to all of His truth, however, God also keeps us well-armed for this fight.

In the battle, then, our first sally must begin with the very first words of Genesis 1: *In the beginning, God created....* Essential in any response to the NAM is a clearly drawn distinction between Creator and creature. The NA world view contends that *all is one*, that creator, creature, all creation share a single and common existence. In stark contrast, however, the Sovereign God most explicitly claims for Himself the uniqueness of deity. Anyone drawn to the *man is god* doctrine of the NA must find an accusing finger pointing his way when he hears God declare in Ezekiel 28: *In the pride of your heart you say, 'I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god in the heart of the seas.' But you are a man and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god. ...And you will be but a man, not a god, in the hands of those who slay you. ...I have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord.* [Ek 28;2,9+10] Those, even among our students, who may be tempted to follow NA paths need to hear the truth of God's displeasure toward those who steal His glory and the reality of God's judgment against those who worship themselves.

In pointing our young people to a Sovereign God, however, we also direct them to a *personal* God... a blessing to which the NA world view deprives them. Someone who understands "god" as energy or consciousness has not discovered the comfort of the confidence of hearing a personal, caring Creator assure him: *Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. ...For I am the Lord,*

your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, 'Do not fear.' [Is 41:10,13]

Every sinner, whether young or old, needs to know that the God who judges him is also the God who loves him. This is knowledge that none of us by nature can know, wisdom that can not be discovered even by the wise. It is revealed solely by the Word of God and in the person of Jesus Christ. In no other way could we learn what the Holy Spirit, through Paul, teaches in Romans 5: *God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him!* [Ro 5:8-9]

When our teaching -- not only in religion classes and Sunday School but in all courses on all levels across all content areas -- serves as a pathway into God's Word, that leads learners toward Christ, then by the power of God's truth and the working of His Spirit we can be confident that we are shepherding our Lord's lambs toward safe pastures. There they will be secure in God's love, for we may be as convinced as was the apostle Paul that *neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* [Ro 8:38-39]

Beyond our role as educators and our calling in the classroom, however, we have another and equally important calling from our Lord -- that is, to be witnesses to His truth and bearers of His Gospel message to all the world. That means not only to distant corners of the globe, but to our own

communities, our own back yards... places where we may well encounter individuals whose lives are shrouded in the spirit of the New Age. We will not want to forget that our gracious God gives us a message for them as well.

The supreme goal of NA belief is *transformation*. Implicit in that goal is the recognition that the world and life in it are not as they ought to be. Even Marilyn Ferguson freely admits that our world is pretty much of a mess. To clean up the mess, she says, a change is needed. [Ferguson, 417]

Of course, that is absolutely right. A change, a transformation is necessary and that change must take place within each individual, personally. But the needed change is not from ignorance to enlightenment, but from sin to repentance, from unbelief to faith, from hope in the Self to hope in the Savior.

The good news we may offer the New Ager is that he need not journey inward to seek out the strength for such changes. He need not sort his way through a maze of consciousness-altering technologies or rely on the uncertainties of his own personal experience. He need not rummage through the closet of his soul in search of something that may help him love himself.

He need only look to the One who loves him already... the Father who loves him enough to call him, the Savior who loves him enough to die for him, the Holy Spirit who loves him enough to dwell within him, to comfort, and to counsel, and to keep him.

To respond to the NAM as Christians, we need only remember that what the New Ager wants, God

has already given us, and what the New Ager needs, we have to give him. If he seeks a new solution to life's cares and problems we may point him to the Savior who invites. *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.* [Mt 11:28] If he desires a new course of strength for living, we may show him how we know that *those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength... will soar on wings like eagles.* [Is 40:13] If he hopes for a new way to oneness, we may show him that the only way to true unity is through the only true Unifier, Jesus Christ, in whom *we, who are many, form one body.* [Ro 12:5] If he longs for a way to cope with the guilt he feels over his misdeeds, we may assure him that not karma but Christ is the answer, for by His sacrifice of love the Savior has removed our transgressions as far from us *as east is from the west.* [Ps 103:12]

If, still, he eagerly anticipates a new age and a new world, we may point him to the one which will surely come. It has been promised by God who blessed St. John with a revelation of *a new heaven and a new earth where the dwelling of God is with men and where there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.* We may point to the glorious God who declares from His heavenly throne, *I will make everything new!* [Rev. 21:1-5]

* * *

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [i Jn 4:1]

What we have seen of the New Age movement offers us compelling incentive to take those loving words of the apostle John to heart, and to put them into practice. In doing so, however, and in recognizing the daunting task that they entail, we need remind ourselves repeatedly of the One who guides our task, and One who empowers our efforts, the One who ensures the outcome. For those of us who, by the Lord's mercy, confront the spirit of the New Age as the Lord's called servants, there could be no more fitting admonition or more precious encouragement than that offered by the apostle Paul:

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ...Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

[1 Thes 5:16-24]

-- Marcus P. Manthey

The Secular Humanist, New

	Secular Humanist
1. Metaphysics	
God and the world	Universe is self-existent, no God
Nature of God	God is a superstition
Nature of world (<i>cosmology</i>)	Matter/energy, atomistic
2. Epistemology (<i>basis for knowledge</i>)	Man is measure of all things, reason and science
3. Ethics	Autonomous and situational (relative)
4. Nature of Humans	Evolved animal
5. Human Problem	Superstition, ignorance
6. Answer to Human Problems	Reason and technology
7. History	Linear but chance
8. Death	End of existence
9. View of Religion	Superstition, some good moral teaching
10. View of Jesus Christ	Moral teacher

* From *Unmasking the New Age*, by Douglas Groothuis, Down

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Extracted from "Combating a Counterfeit of God's
New Age," Moody Monthly, June, 1985, p 64f.
The * indicates my own additions to the Moody
listings.

Age and Christian World Views *

New Age	Christian
God is the world, pantheism	Creator/creation distinction
God is impersonal/amoral	God is personal/moral
All is spirit/consciousness, monistic	Creation of God upheld by God, interconnected but not monistic
Man is all things, truth within	Truth revealed in the Bible
Autonomous and situational (relative)	Based on the revelation of God's will, absolute
Spiritual being, a sleeping God	Made in the Image of God, now fallen
Ignorance of true potential	Sin—rebellion against God and his law
Change of consciousness	Faith in and obedience to Christ
Cyclical	Linear and providential
Illusion, entrance to next life (reincarnation)	Entrance to either eternal heaven or hell
All point to the One (syncretism)	Not all from God, teach different things
One of many avatars (periodic manifestations of God-guru)	The unique God-Man, only Lord and Savior

ers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1985, p.167.

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STATEMENT OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

by Evangelical Ministries to New Religions
March, 1985

The New Age Movement is a spiritual, social, and political movement to transform individuals and society through mystical enlightening, hoping to bring about a utopian era, a "new age" of harmony and progress. While it has no central headquarters or agencies, it includes loosely affiliated individuals, activist groups, businesses, professional groups, and spiritual leaders and their followers. It produces countless books, magazines, and tapes reflecting a shared world view and vision. How that world view is expressed, what implications are drawn, and what applications are made differ from group to group.

In the following list, the basic assumptions of New Age philosophy are given in Part A and contrasted with the message of biblical Christianity in Part B.

1. (A) God is an impersonal undifferentiated Oneness, not separate from creation.
(B) God is a personal, transcendent Creator, fundamentally distinct from creation.
2. (A) Humanity, like all creation, is an extension of this divine Oneness [and] shares its essential being. Humanity is divine.
(B) Although created in God's image, humanity is not an extension of God and does not share God's being. Humanity is not God.
3. (A) Humanity's crises stem from a fragmented vision blind to this essential Oneness and to humanity's innate divinity.

- (B) Humanity's crises stem from alienation from God brought about by sinful rebellion.
4. (A) Humanity needs to be transformed -- each individual actualizing his or her divine nature, becoming aware of the One.
- (B) Humanity needs to be transformed through the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which reconciles us to God.
5. (A) Transformation is brought about through a myriad of techniques that can be applied to mind, body, and spirit. Examples of such techniques, used variously by New Age groups, include meditation, yoga, chanting, creative visualization, hypnosis, and submission to a guru.
- (B) Humanity does not acquire God's forgiveness through the application of any technique. It is a gift to be received by faith.
6. (A) Personal transformation is the basis for global transformation and the spiritual evolution of humankind, characterized by mass enlightenment and social unity. This unity will transcend the individual and social self-centeredness that has created the present crises in environment, world hunger, international relations, racism, etc.
- (B) Although personal rebirth through Jesus Christ will result in some transformation of social institutions, permanent global transformation will not occur until after the physical return of Jesus Christ in judgment.

New Age teachers often use a common terminology, and Christians should be alert to vocabulary and idioms abounding in New Age literature. However,

merely using a term popular among New Agers ("consciousness," "transformation," "holistic," "global," or even "New Age") no more indicates acceptance of New Age philosophy than the use of the term "evangelical" indicates acceptance of Christianity. Single buzzwords or phrases are inadequate to determine world view orientation. A larger interpretive context is required.

Likewise, Christians can participate in such causes as hunger relief, environmental protection, human rights, and right distributions of wealth with good biblical support, despite the fact that many New Agers are also involved in these issues.

New Age involvement is not limited to obvious "religious" groups or teachers, but covers a spectrum of interests and modes of propagation. The list below, though not comprehensive, cites key persons, institutions, and practices that lie within the mainstream of New Age expression.

Gurus and Spiritual Teachers

Baba Ram Dass, Da (Bubba Free) John, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, Pir Vilayat Khan, Yogi Bhajan, Trangpa Rinpoche, Darshan Singh, Paranahansa Yogananda*, Swami Muktananda*

Communities

Esalen, Findhorn, The Farm, Stelle Community, Muktananda Ashrams, Naropa Institute, Chinook Learning Center, Lama Foundation, Lucis (Lucifer) Trust*

Conferences

Human Unity Conference, Mind/Body/Spirit Festival, Mandala Conference, Whole Life Expo

Holistic Health Groups

Association for Holistic Health, American Holistic Medical Association
Therapies: Rolfing, Rebirthing, Polarity Therapy, Applied Kinesiology, orgonomy*, iridology*, yoga (esp. kundlini)*, some acupuncture/acupressure*

Psychology

Association for Transpersonal Psychology, psychosynthesis, past life therapies, psychic visualization*, peak experiences*, cosmic awareness*, Abraham Maslow*, Carl Rogers*, Wayne Dyer*, Ken Wilbur*, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross*

Self-Help or Self-Development Seminars

The Forum (est), Lifespring, Insight Seminar Training, the Feldenkrais Method

Educational Methods

Confluent education, Project GOAL, The Institute of Holistic Education, guided imagery*, some whole-brain learning*

Political Organizations

Unity-in-Diversity Council, Planetary Citizens, Creative Initiative Foundation, Global Education Associates, World Goodwill*, New World Alliance*, Congressional Clearinghouse on the Future*

Publications

New Age, New Realities, New Directions, East/West Journal, ReVision, The Movement, Yoga Journal, Whole Life Times

The ministries and persons below welcome questions and requests for additional information about specific New Age groups and issues.

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TESTING THE SPIRIT OF THE NEW AGE

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EVANGELISM AND LITURGY

To what extent should the Confessional Lutheran Church in America accommodate late Twentieth Century American culture in its liturgy for the purpose of reaching the lost?

INTRODUCTION

The Christian Church in the world is always the struggling Church, always the Church militant. Yet, it is nonetheless dismaying when time after time the Christian must join the battle once again. It is far easier to deny the need for battle or to hope that the battle will not cross over into our part of the battlefield. But to expect ease, to anticipate worldly peace within the Church militant, is to fall into the theology of glory and deny the theology of the cross.

Much of what follows in this paper deals with a problem (the replacement of the traditional Lutheran liturgy with some "new and improved" liturgy or lack thereof) which some may say does not directly involve the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Whether or not the E.L.S. currently has this "bacteria" is not the issue. What is the issue is how we may be inoculated against this (or whether we desire to be). Late twentieth century American culture does influence our synod. We are certainly interested in Evangelism. We do use the traditional liturgical service of the Lutheran Church. Therefore this discussion is well worth our consideration as we close in on the 21st century.

DEFINITIONS

Evangelism

Evangelism is used in both a narrow and a broad sense. Narrowly speaking it means the one-on-one encounter between Christian and non-Christian with the Christian expressing the Faith to the non-Christian. It is specifically presenting the Law and the Gospel to one who does not know or believe in Jesus Christ.

Broadly speaking "evangelism" is defined by the familiar words our Lord spoke and recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew 28:19,20: "Go and make disciples of all people by baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and by teaching them to pay close attention to everything I have commanded you." By these words we see that "evangelism" includes the Sacrament of Baptism and the teaching and preaching ministry of the Christian Church; i.e., using the means of grace. Applying this broad definition to various acts within the Christian Church it is clear that there are many ways in which evangelism goes on in the church. Bible Class, Sunday School, the sermon, Adult Instruction, Confirmation Class, pastoral visitations, and other areas are all included in "teaching them to pay close attention to everything I have commanded you," i.e., evangelism in the broad sense. This broad definition of evangelism includes the teaching of the Law and Gospel to BOTH believer and unbeliever.

Liturgy

The working definition of "liturgy" in this paper is this: that order of worship which guides the corporate worship of the true God. In our circles

(confessional Lutheranism) the term "liturgy" or order of worship most commonly refers to the Danish Order as published in the Lutheran Hymnary of 1911 and the Common Order on pages 5 and 15 of The Lutheran Hymnal of 1941. It may also include the Matins and Vespers services, but these will not be discussed since most of the attention given to liturgy right now is dedicated to the chief service. Liturgy is at heart the service of God to man.

Late 20th Century American Culture

Here are a few observations which I believe accurately characterize much of the "culture" of America today. Most would agree that pragmatism pervades our culture. Whether it is business, education, politics or theology, positive, measurable results are demanded. How one gets results is left open. Our culture is also very experientially oriented. The key words are "I feel" not "I think."¹ Consensus, not objectivity or absolutes, determines what is "right." Our culture is one of illiteracy.² We are stimulated by sight and sound, not reasoned thought; e.g., television. People look for excitement and escapism.

DISCUSSION

Two factors face us in our study of this topic. First, the realm of "culture" cannot be ignored. "Culture" is part of the world with which we must deal. The other factor is confessional integrity. Confessional integrity demands that the worship of God follow the theology we confess, there must be no separation of theology and practice.

There are two opposing views within American Lutheranism on the issue of liturgy and evangelism. One view comes from those who to a greater or lesser extent advocate "Church Growth" principles.³

The other view comes from those whom I call confessional Lutherans. Some "Church Growth" advocates may insist that they too are confessional Lutherans. I believe that there is a fundamental theological difference between the approach to liturgy and evangelism from the confessional Lutherans as opposed to the "Church Growth" advocates. The difference is found in the extent to which each allows culture to impact liturgy.

When discussing the impact of culture on liturgy we can distinguish between those things which may properly have bearing on the form of the liturgy and those things which dare not intrude on the Divine Service. However, even those things which may properly bear on the form of the liturgy must be in harmony with the theology of the Confessional Lutheran Church. We are reminded in the Formula of Concord:

Hence yielding or conforming in external things, where Christian agreement in doctrine has not previously been achieved, will support the idolaters in their idolatry, and on the other hand, it will sadden and scandalize true believers and weaken them in their faith.⁴

What then are the reasons for the many changes in the Divine Service that a number of Lutheran congregations are making? I believe the following can be identified: a) a sincere desire to reach out to the lost in their community; b) the apparent "success" (measured by the large numerical growth) of Evangelical (Reformed) churches which use an "upbeat," non-traditional workshop formation in order to attract a large audience; and c) the feeling that the typical liturgical worship is boring and unattractive to prospective members (perhaps even backed up by statistical evidence),

the hymns are too hard to sing, there is too much standing up and sitting down, etc.

Regarding (a). While much of what I have to say about many of the changes in the liturgy is critical, I do not believe that the underlying motivation is at fault. There is a very honest and sincere belief among many Lutheran Christians that more must be done to save the lost. There is a real desire to heed our Lord's command and "Go and make disciples." Still, caution is called for, lest in our rush to "go and get 'em" we lose the very thing we want them to have, the Gospel. And we should be clear from the outset that it is the Gospel which many concerned Lutherans feel is at stake in the discussion about the relationship between evangelism and liturgy.

The attacks on the liturgy spawned by Pietism, Rationalism, and American Evangelicalism are not so much a rejection of an inherited, ordered form of worship as they are a denial of the efficacy of the Word and Sacrament.⁵

The modern assault on liturgical worship is aimed not simply at a few old-fashioned customs or adiaphora, but at the whole liturgical, churchly spirit itself, which necessarily goes with a serious doctrine of the means of grace.⁶

Regarding (b). What is the role of culture in determining the worship form of the church? For the Evangelicals it appears that contemporary culture is quite important. As H. Senkbeil notes,

Evangelicals have shown that they are not only sensitive but also sympathetic to the culture around them. Sensing the needs and moods of society, they have packaged

the Christian gospel in ways that appeal to people faced with the complexities of American life in the closing decades of the twentieth century?⁷

"It would be asked, however, if the Evangelicals' laudable interest in the culture has not already compromised the Gospel."⁸ "Here the real danger is that the medium becomes the message, that the experimental, subjective, packaging of this brand of Evangelicalism has taken over the content of the gospel." (p.46) Virginia Owens, quoted by Senkbeil, describes the negative impact of culture on the Church:

Should the church refuse to be cast in the role of hustler, then the para-ecclesiastical storm troopers stream in to bridge the gap. Media blitzes, advertising campaigns, concert circuits, radio and television networks, clubs, camps, conferences. All aspects of American culture are duplicated and supposedly baptized. One feels securely a part of the mainstream.⁹

Importantly, Senkbeil points out a key historical fact:

...since the time of Constantine, whenever the church has allied itself too closely with the cultural establishment, it has become corrupt and its gospel has been secularized.¹⁰

I believe the above is an accurate description of the state of worship within Evangelicalism today. Unfortunately, it is precisely Evangelical worship which some pastors and Evangelism Committees find so attractive. The extent to which some are willing to go is characterized in the book Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance, by David Luecke. He writes regarding worship:

...looking for audience response can be a matter of looking for the Holy Spirit's movement among those who are gathered. What do the worship leaders hope the Spirit will do? On a specific Sunday, are they looking for Him to heighten feelings of joy, or to stimulate more loving relationships, or to strengthen the resolve of those followers of Christ? It is not inappropriate to look afterward for evidence that God indeed blessed this time together by moving people with the Spirit in ways that had been prayerfully anticipated.¹¹

The implication here is that if the evidence of audience response is not what the pastor wanted then the form of worship should change. But how does one measure the impact of the Gospel upon the hearts of people?

Regarding (c). Is the traditional Lutheran liturgy too boring and unattractive for the prospective member? Well, in order to answer this question it is necessary to understand what (or whom) the Divine Service is for. Is the Divine Service for the believer or for the unbeliever? Answering this question will greatly shape ones answer to the previous question, whether one thinks the Lutheran liturgy too boring and unattractive for prospective members. C. Evanson writes,

the proponents of the Church Growth Movement see evangelization as clearly the priority item under which corporate worship must be subsumed. Worship, accordingly, is for the purpose of gaining new members, and it is to be evaluated positively or negatively in terms of whether and how it advances or retards the Church Growth Imperative.¹²

And Luecke criticizes traditional liturgical worship precisely because of its apparent lack of emphasis on evangelism,

When it comes to evangelism, highly developed liturgical forms suffer from an inherent weakness. This style does not lend itself well to initiating fellowship. To appreciate the experience of God's presence that is offered through those forms, participants need to have extensive prior knowledge and training. The symbols themselves usually have to be experienced over time before they become conveyers of deep spiritual meaning. Unfortunately, a high liturgical emphasis can drive a wedge between the gathering of regulars who know, appreciate, and love this communication, and an audience of uninformed visitors who have to struggle to follow along, let alone to feel included. Watching newcomers struggle with a complicated service book is a sobering reminder that evangelism is at best a secondary concern in this approach.¹³

At this point I believe it may be useful to see a few examples of how the Church Growth approach to the liturgy works its way out in real life. The question to be thought through for each of them is: "is this simply a matter of taste or style, or is there a breakdown of confessional integrity involved?"

Case 1: Easter Sunday morning communion service. Champagne is used for communion. The pastor says "Christ is risen, Alleluia!" The congregation responds "He is risen indeed! Alleluia" POP! goes the champagne cork.¹⁴

Case 2: Some quotations from an article entitled "Entertainment Evangelism." The key to reaching our world with the "good news" of Jesus is entertainment evangelism.... Entertainment is the medium of our dayThe Christian church needs to learn how to use this powerful tool to accomplish Christ's mandate in Matthew 28.... If we are absolutely honest---what most churches do on Sunday morning is not working....However, if what we are doing doesn't work let the Spirit show us new and different ways to reach people.... Entertainment-oriented churches are growing.... When people come to Community Church of Joy on Sunday morning, they have fun....Entertainment evangelism will fill up our churches. Augustine said empty churches do not please God. We are not called simply to build churches. We are called to fill churches....Jesus would become all things to all people to save some. He would use entertainment."15

Case 3: "Last Sunday [the church] began a once-a-month, come-as-you-are, up-beat, fast-paced, multimedia worship service for Mom, Dad, and the kids." "The service -- complete with puppets, drama, contemporary music and singers who don't wear robes and stroll down from their seats in the pews when its time to perform -- is intended to appeal to young families who don't have a church home." "The theologically conservative...church is one of a growing number of congregations throughout the nation that are trying alternative worship experiences to entice those who

do not attend church regularly." "The church's belief in such conservative tenets as the literal truth of the Bible doesn't make puppets and guitar music inappropriate in a service... 'We are trying to reach out with the Gospel. We don't want to be a liberal church by any means, but we don't want to be dead orthodox either.'" "When planning the service, [the pastor] and the worship committee decided immediately that there wouldn't be any organ music and that the usual Lutheran liturgy wouldn't be used." [The pastor] said seeker service participants practiced 4½ hours the day before, mostly to make sure the music, testimony, sermon, and drama flowed smoothly... 'We planned it so there was no down time.'"¹⁶

When does one cross the line into gross, even anti-confessional accommodation of popular culture? Are not each of the above three cases an example of precisely that, gross accommodation, even surrender to late 20th century American culture? Does not each involve a loss of confessional integrity, a catering to the expectations of the unchurched, rather than faithfulness to the Church of Jesus Christ? Each is feelings-oriented, subjective, emotion-centered, anthropocentric.

This brings us back to the question above, what is the purpose of worship, what is the liturgy for? Is the primary reason for the gathering on Sunday mornings a narrowly defined evangelism? And a related question, should the unchurched, the lost, be the lowest common denominator to which the Church's worship is directed? Marquardt states:

'Liturgy,' then is much more than forms and ceremonies, in themselves indifferent.

It is first and foremost a firm theological content, namely the Holy Gospel and sacraments of God. Taken in this non-trivial sense, liturgy cannot be a competition with evangelism. After all, the 'Spirit, the water, and the blood' of the liturgy are the very agents ("witnesses") of world evangelization!¹⁷

Pless writes,

The Divine Service is the liturgy of the baptized. In the liturgy, the baptized are served with God's Word and the body and blood of Christ and are sent back into the world to render priestly service to the neighbor.¹⁸

And

As the Divine Service has to do with "the mysteries of God" (I Co. 4:1), it will not be readily understandable to the unbeliever. Indeed, the unbeliever cannot understand it. The solution is not to do away with "the mysteries of God" by transforming the Divine Service into a recruitment rally. Rather, the unbeliever is to be brought into the congregation through the washing of regeneration.¹⁹

The liturgy is itself part of the broad work of evangelization our Lord commanded us to do, "Go and make disciples of all people by baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and by teaching them to pay close attention to everything I have commanded you." In our services the lost are baptized, that is evangelism. In our services the lost hear the Law and the Gospel each Sunday. These, too, are evangelism. They are the powerful proclamations of God's Word, the very Word which "divides

soul and spirit, joints and marrow. And it can judge the inner thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

Why should we be surprised that the unbeliever is not able to understand or appreciate the worship of God's people? Our Lord reminds us, "What is born of the flesh is flesh, but what is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6) And "But an unspiritual person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. He thinks they are foolish, and he cannot know them because one must have the Spirit to judge them correctly." (1 Corin. 2:14)

The liturgical service and its preoccupation with the sacramental mysteries of absolution, preaching, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and its consequent formal and aesthetic structure are not immediately appealing. Indeed, they cannot be, for their very existence is drawn from the reality of the Incarnation; a reality in which God becomes form and matter for the salvation of fallen form and matter...a doctrine which has never survived because of its popular appeal.²⁰

Does all this mean that we are insensitive to the culture around us? No, of course not. As pastors of congregations filled with people who daily live bombarded by easy-listening or country/western or rock and roll music, and advertising of all sorts, all creating or contributing to a climate at odds with traditional liturgical worship, we must approach our task with humility and genuine pastoral care. We begin by understanding the current situation within any given congregation. It takes patient instruction to bring people to an appreciation of the liturgy.

An important insight is gained by regarding how

the Lutheran Reformers dealt with differences among parishes. The reformers noted the distinction between academic and non-academic parishes. I quote here at length from a paper presented to the E.L.S. Board for Evangelism.

Academic: Parish with parochial school; it was understood that the finest choral music would still be performed. Different musical setting each Sunday and Festival. Mass to be held each Sunday, Wednesday, and Festival Day (and whenever it is requested). Service always included Sermon, recognizable outline of ancient service, congregational singing in both vernacular and Latin. Words of Institution always in vernacular.

Non-academic parish: No trained musicians, with possible exception of parish pastor. No choir. Most of service done in vernacular, however, it was still a highly artistic service with much singing...CONGREGATION FUNCTIONED AS CHOIR!! Highly optimistic and idealistic. Outline of ancient service still recognizable. Chief service held on Sundays and festivals, but since there was no student population and most of the community was involved in work, the regular Wednesday mass was not observed....

In all of the Lutheran books produced to date the 16th century Lutheran understanding of "different parishes, differed needs" is overlooked. Consequently parishes find themselves suffering through a liturgical form prepared for the musical resources of St. Louis or River Forestwith the result that many parishioners and pastors become "low church" liturgical practitioners mechanically going through the service for the sake of the form

in the book OR abandoning the traditional forms entirely and coming up with different services each week, most of which have no basis in ancient forms of the church, and thus become sectarian, entertaining, and egocentric.²¹

General Comments

What is needed is not an abandonment of the traditional Lutheran forms. Evangelism and liturgy are not mutually exclusive. Rather, we must learn to take advantage of the freedom which already is ours within the liturgical service. Also, we must not assume that congregations naturally know how to sing the liturgy or hymns. They must be taught. To this end you may wish to have formal or informal practices before or after the service on Sundays. Do not be afraid to sing a new hymn several Sundays in a row in order to impress the words and music upon the congregations' ears and mouths. If possible find someone who is musically talented to lead or teach others. If such a person cannot be found work with what you have. Take things slowly. Do not expect a new mission congregation to be singing something like the Te Deum or Luther's great hymn "Lord God We Praise Thee" a month after you begin services. Have reasonable expectations. This will lessen the frustration of both yourself and the congregation. Meet with the organist or pianist on a regular basis in order to coordinate your efforts and to lessen the possibility of mistakes on Sunday morning. (In fact, new congregations should consider purchasing a piano before an organ, as it is far easier to find a pianist than an organist.) Also, know your hymnal. There are a number of hymns with more difficult melodies which can be sung to easier melodies. Try not to teach the congregation to

dread the singing of hymns, but give them every opportunity to sing with enthusiasm and energy. This can be done without going to "Amazing Grace," etc. Lutheran hymnody is rich and beautiful, not only musically but, even more importantly, theologically. Few hymns compare in content to those of the Lutheran heritage.

Conclusion

The use of the liturgical service dare not simply be on account of tradition. But rather the use of the traditional liturgical forms stems from the fact that such services are truly evangelical, ecumenical (in the proper sense), and, most importantly, based upon the theological conviction that there God serves man. He serves us with the water of regeneration, with the food of immortality, and with the Word of life.

There is a tremendous challenge to the Lutheran Church which hopes to continue the use of the orthodox liturgical service in America today. The challenge comes from both the apparent strength and success of the Evangelicals (and especially the Church Growth Movement) and also from our own weaknesses and failures. We need not and indeed must not accommodate the culture of late 20th century America. To do so is to surrender a great and wonderful witness to the vitality of the worship of God; namely, the liturgical service. We must remember that "contemporary" does not necessarily mean "more meaningful." We have an obligation not only to the Church of our day but also to the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before. Our liturgical service is not ethno-centric as some would have us believe. It is truly ecumenical, stemming from the Christian Church in North

Africa, Asia Minor, the Middle East, and Europe.²² We therefore should not "willy-nilly" change what we desire while wearing the blinders of late 20th century American culture. I close with these words from Prof. Marquardt:

No one can doubt the Good Shepherd's missionary zeal and compassion for his sheep. Yet he draws them with a quiet dignity that is entirely free of that breathless pestering and pandering which is mere salesmanship. When multitudes turn from him in fickle disenchantment, he does not run after them, shouting: "Wait! Just a moment! You've misunderstood my words about flesh and blood. All this can be put differently, too! Let me make it clear to you in cultural forms you will find more congenial!" None of that. Sadly but serenely he turns to his disciples: "You do not want to leave, too, do you?" Peter replies for them and for the Church of all ages: "Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."
(John 6:67, 68)²³

Soli Deo Gloria!

-- Pastor Thomas L. Rank

END NOTES

- 1 See Sanctification: Christ in Action, Harold L. Senkbeil, pp. 5ff.
- 2 See The Closing of the American Heart.
- 3 "Church Growth" is a term which I use throughout this paper to refer to the principles of evangelism which Fuller Theological Seminary, California, has made popular throughout America. A number of Lutherans have followed these principles while insisting that they remain confessional Lutherans. I do not believe "Church Growth" and confessional Lutheranism are compatible.
- 4 SD, Article X, 16, Tappert edition.
- 5 "Six Theses on Liturgy and Evangelism," by Rev. John Pless, CTQ, January, 1988, p. 46.
- 6 "Liturgy and Evangelism," by Prof. Kurt Marquardt, p. 17.
- 7 Senkbeil, p. 45.
- 8 Senkbeil, p. 45.
- 9 Senkbeil, p. 46.
- 10 Senkbeil, p. 47.
- 11 Evangelical Style and Lutheran Substance, by David Luecke, p. 107.

- 12 "Evangelicalism and the Liturgical Movement and their effects on Lutheran Worship." by Rev. Charles Evanson, p. 9.
- 13 Luecke, p. 109.
- 14 Heard at the panel discussion on Liturgy and Hymnody in the Symposium at Concordia Ft. Wayne, January 1990.
- 15 "Entertainment Evangelism," by Walter P. Kallestad, pastor of Lutheran Community Church of Joy, an ELCA congregation in Glendale, Arizona. Worship attendance at Community this year is expected to reach 3000 each Sunday. "The Lutheran," May 23, 1990, p. 17.
- 16 From a newspaper article entitled, "Pastor hopes seekers will find way to special church service." I believe it was from the Chicago, Illinois area.
- 17 Marquardt, p. 5.
- 18 Pless, pp. 42-3.
- 19 Pless, p. 44.
- 20 Luther Among the Musicians, by Prof. Dennis Marzolf, endnote #2.
- 21 "Liturgy and Evangelism: Some Thoughts from Sixteenth Century Wittenberg," by Prof. Dennis Marzolf, pp. 1-3.
- 22 Evanson, p. 10.
- 23 Marquardt, p. 18.

