

The Gospel According to Oprah & Her Friends

The video plays and the announcer asks, "Have you heard about the largest church in the world?...What do they teach? Who you are requires no belief. Heaven is not a location but refers to the inner realm of consciousness. The man on the cross is an archetypal image. He is every man and every woman. My mind is part of God's. I am very holy. My holiness is my salvation. My salvation comes from me. Let me remember that there is no sin. Do not make the pathetic error of 'clinging to the old rugged cross.' The only message of the crucifixion is that you can overcome the cross." ¹

So, who is this "teacher" of the "largest church in the world"? Oprah Winfrey.

Oprah Winfrey Rising Star

Oprah Winfrey has been a television icon for over twenty years, but her beginnings were more humble than the affluent lifestyle that she lives today.

Oprah Gail Winfrey was born on January 29, 1959 in rural Mississippi to a poor single teenage mother. She was later raised in the inner-city of Milwaukee and spent her teen years in Tennessee with her biological father, Vernon Winfrey.

While in Nashville, she landed a news broadcasting job and then was hired as a news reporter and anchor at a local television station before moving to Baltimore in 1976 to co-anchor a news show there.

In 1978, after two years as a news reporter, Oprah was given a new assignment to co-host a local talk show called *People Are Talking*.

In 1983, Oprah moved to Chicago to host *AM Chicago* and within a short period of time, after doing very well in the ratings, the thirty-minute show

was expanded to one-hour and renamed to *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. The show started being broadcast nationally beginning September 8, 1986.²

Time magazine wrote, "Few people would have bet on Oprah Winfrey's swift rise to host of the most popular talk show on TV."³

Newsday's Les Payne observed, "Oprah Winfrey is sharper than Donahue, wittier, more genuine, and far better attuned to her audience, if not the world."⁴

There can be no doubt that Oprah Winfrey is a cultural icon of television and an inspiration to women everywhere.

She grew up poor and by hard work and endurance, she was able to completely turn her life around and become one of the most influential women in the world today.

"Winfrey was called 'arguably the world's most powerful woman' by *CNN* and *Time.com*, 'arguably the most influential woman in the world' by the *American Spectator*, 'one of the 100 people who most influenced the 20th Century' and 'one of the most influential people' of 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 by *Time*."⁵

Vanity Fair wrote that "Oprah Winfrey arguably has more influence on the culture than any university president, politician, or religious leader, except perhaps the Pope."⁶

Bill O'Reilly stated that "this is a woman that came from nothing to rise up to be the most powerful woman, I think, in the world. I think Oprah Winfrey is the most powerful woman in the world, not just in America. That's — anybody who goes on her program immediately benefits through the roof. I mean, she has a loyal following; she has credibility; she has talent; and she's done it on her own to become fabulously wealthy and fabulously powerful."⁷

The fact is, Oprah Winfrey has more pull with Americans and increasingly the world, and is more influential than all the talk show hosts combined. In 1996, Oprah created a segment on her show called *Oprah's Book Club*. "The book club became such a powerful force that whenever Winfrey introduced a new book as her book-club selection, it instantly became a best-seller (known as the Oprah Effect)...Being recognized by Winfrey often means a million additional book sales for an author."⁸

Christianity Today stated in a 2002 article called *The Church of O* that "With a congregation of 22 million viewers, Oprah Winfrey has become one of the most influential spiritual leaders in America."⁹

The article then goes on to say "Since 1994, when she abandoned traditional talk-show fare for more edifying content, and 1998, when she began 'Change Your Life TV,' Oprah's most significant role has become that of spiritual leader. To her audience of more than 22 million mostly female viewers, she has become a postmodern priestess—an icon of church-free spirituality."¹⁰

USA Today wrote in 2006 that Oprah has "Over the past year...emerged as a spiritual leader for the new millennium, a moral voice of authority for the nation."¹¹

A recent article in *Newsweek* stated that "forty million people tune in to watch [*The Oprah Winfrey Show*] each week. *O* magazine, which features her picture on every cover, sells more than 2 million copies each month... [Oprah] has made a deal to launch her own cable television channel that will reach 70 million homes."¹²

Arguably, Oprah Winfrey is one of the greatest personalities that have ever lived and no one doubts her kindness and generosity when it comes to giving millions of dollars to charities and philanthropic causes as well as personal appearances, lectures and her time to help the less fortunate.

Richard Abanes, Christian author and lecturer points out that Oprah “was presented in 1988 with the Humanitarian Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Then, in 2002, she received the Bob Hope Humanitarian Award. And in 2007 the Elie Wiesel Foundation gave Oprah their Humanitarian Award for ‘outstanding individuals who dedicate their time to fighting indifference, intolerance and injustice.’”¹³

Oprah is indeed highly respected, admired and a media force to be reckoned with but the question arises, how did the “Queen of the Talk Shows” become “Queen of the New Age Gurus”? How did Oprah become America’s spiritual leader?

Spiritual Leader or Cult of Personality?

So here we have one of the most influential women in America that is touted as a “postmodern priestess—an icon of church-free spirituality” and watched very closely by literally tens of millions of adoring fans – should we not test her teachings to see exactly what they are?

When Oprah recommends a book, it shoots up the charts, when Oprah recommends a product, stores quickly sell out and when she touts a person like Dr. Phil McGraw, soon after he has his own show and when she applauds a spiritual teacher or teaching like those of Eckhart Tolle or Rhonda Byrne, their ideas are quickly picked up upon and embraced by her audience.

Oprah did come from a Christian background and even today claims to be a Christian.

Oprah grew up in the church and her grandmother taught her to read before the age of three and took her to the local church, where she was nicknamed “The Preacher” for her ability to recite Bible verses.¹⁴

Oprah also credits her father, a strict disciplinarian and active church member for helping her turn her life around and remaining involved in the church.¹⁵

So what happened? What would change the mind of an active church member who grew up in the church and had mentors and family members who helped her?

Oprah's former Pastor, Jeremiah Wright of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago stated that Oprah "has broken with the [traditional faith],...She now has this sort of 'God is everywhere, God is in me, I don't need to go to church, I don't need to be a part of a body of believers, I can meditate, I can do positive thinking' spirituality. It's a strange gospel. It has nothing to do with the church Jesus Christ founded."¹⁶

The bottom line is that people who are looked up to and admired, whether in business, industry, technology, sports and entertainment all have a responsibility and an obligation to not peddle in false teachings, false religion and ideas and thoughts that are detrimental to those who look to them for "advice".

As Christians, should we not discern and test teachings in light of Scripture to see if they stand or fall by God's Word?

Let's Meet Oprah's Friends

Eckhart Tolle is a German spiritual teacher whose rise to fame came as a result of Oprah recommending his books.

The Power of Now, a New York Times bestseller, teaches on living in the moment and being aware of the *now* and not living in or thinking about the past or future.

The author's preface says that "after the book received a number of favorable reviews...its growth accelerated and finally became explosive when Oprah Winfrey, *who had been deeply effected by the book*, proceeded to tell the world about it."¹⁷ (emphasis mine)

A New Earth, another New York Times Bestseller and one of Oprah's Book Club picks, expands on the teachings of *The Power of Now* by showing how "transcending our ego-based state of consciousness is not only essential to personal happiness, but also the key to ending conflict and suffering throughout the world."¹⁸

Beginning Monday, March 3, 2008 for ten weeks, Oprah and Eckhart held a worldwide web event in which they went through Eckhart's book *A New Earth*, promoting their *New Age* teachings with a quote from Oprah on the band around the book stating "Get ready to be awakened."

Ronda Byrne is an Australian reality-TV producer whose rise to fame was a direct result of Oprah, Larry King and Ellen Degeneres dedicating shows to the teachings contained in her book, *The Secret*.

The Secret, a New York Times Bestseller with over six million copies in print teaches how to live a self-centered life, pantheism, ethical relativism and that by the Law of Attraction (i.e. your thoughts become things), you can have "unlimited joy, health, money, relationships, love, youth: everything you have ever wanted."¹⁹

Its website touts "This is the secret to prosperity, health, relationships and happiness. This is the secret to life."²⁰

Marianne Williamson is a spiritual activist, author, lecturer and minister in the Unity Church. She contributes to a weekly radio talk show on XM Satellite Radio called *Oprah & Friends* and has written several books.

A Return to Love – Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles, a New York Times Bestseller has sold over three million copies and was one of the first books endorsed by Oprah Winfrey on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

In fact, Oprah bought one thousand copies of *A Return to Love*.²¹

First published in 1992, it spent 39 weeks on the New York Times best sellers list and a decade later was credited as being one of the two books that helped bring New Age perspectives to the American mainstream.²²

Helen Schucman (1909-1981) was a psychologist, author and professor who although was never a guest on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, still has a place in the teachings of the guests (i.e. Marianne Williamson) Oprah invites on her show.

A Course in Miracles (ACIM) is a book transcribed from a channeled "inner voice" claiming to be Jesus Christ that uses Christian terminology but is clearly New Age in content.

From the ACIM website:

"...on the evening of October 21, 1965, when the now familiar voice of Jesus said to Helen: '**This is a course in miracles, please take notes.**' ...which is how the scribing of **A Course in Miracles** began."²³

The New Age

At the heart of these teachers and their books is what is called the *New Age*, *Cosmic Humanism* or the *New Spirituality* as it's increasingly being called.

The New Age Movement (NAM) is a conglomeration or smorgasbord of teachings of the spiritual philosophies of Eastern Religions like Hinduism and Buddhism, the Mind Sciences, occultism, mysticism, theosophy, gnosticism, the Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism) as well as other teachings.

At its core it teaches Pantheistic Monism or "God is all and all is God" and "everything is one", this of course includes humans who are "Gods."

Christian author Richard Abanes explains this line of NAM thinking, when he writes, "according to New Age beliefs, people only *think* a rock is in a field.

The reality is that the rock *is* the field; the field *is* the rock. Similarly, people only *think* they are entities separate from others. The reality is that we *are* each other..There is no individual spirit within us. There is no 'you-me' distinction. There is only the universal 'I.' This 'I' is defined as 'God.' Hence everything is 'God.' We are 'God.' There is no external 'God.' Everything is just a visible manifestation of the reality existing beneath each outer form. The only *truth* is a single metaphysical, underlying essence-often called the Source." ²⁴ (emphasis in original)

Other teachings include the belief that everything is merely an illusion, there is no sin but only shortcomings in our lives, salvation means getting in touch with your divinity, Jesus the man is separate from the Christ Consciousness, (which we can all attain), we must evolve into this way of thinking, i.e. global unity or we will die as a people, the Age of Aquarius must be ushered in, reincarnation, yoga, crystals, gurus, etc.

Twenty years ago in 1987, Oprah introduced her audience to the *New Age Movement* by starting her program by introducing her guests saying, "They call themselves members of the New Age movement, and they say that our hope for survival as a planet comes from learning about our own individual power and our own divinity..."²⁵

Those guests included a NAM author, a trancechanneler, a gemologist who works with doctors who use crystals for healing and a Unity minister.

At one point in the show while talking to one of the guests, Oprah states that "one of the **most important books**, I think I've read, **in my life was a book by Eric Butterfield**...called *Discover the Power Within You*. And what Eric Butterworth said in that book is that Jesus did not come to teach how divine he was, but came to teach us that there is **divinity within us**. So that is essentially what we are talking about."²⁶

Tonight we're going to look at five areas where the teachers of the *New Spirituality* reinterpret Biblical Christianity by looking at the following:

- 1. Reinvents God**
- 2. Recasts Jesus Christ**

- 3. Redefines Sin and Salvation
- 4. Recreates Man as Deity
- 5. Reinterprets Scripture

1.Reinvents God

The two basic ideas behind the god of the NAM are called monism and pantheism.

Monism is the belief that all things are made of basically the same ultimate spiritual substance and that at some point all merge with the oneness of the "All" with no individual parts.

Pantheism [Greek: *pan* = all and *theos* = God] is the concept that "God is all and all is God". This refers to the idea that all is God and that there are certain levels of this divinity but ultimately, everything that exists is God.

Dr. Erwin Lutzer, Senior pastor at Moody Church in Chicago points out that the NAM teaches that "the lowest level of matter; then comes from the vegetable kingdom, followed by the animal kingdom, and finally mankind. But everything is God. Nature is God; you are God; I am God. God is all that there is."²⁷

Oprah and her friends teach these concepts in their books as we will see.

A Course in Miracles teaches the monistic and pantheistic concepts of God: ²⁸

- "God is in everything I see...God is in this coat hanger... magazine... finger... lamp... body... door... waste basket."
- "The recognition of God is the recognition of yourself. There is no separation of God and His creation."

The Secret teaches that we are God or the One Universal Mind: ²⁹

- "all that exists is the One Universal Mind, and there is nowhere that the One Mind is not. It exists in everything. The One Mind is all intelligence, all wisdom, and all perfection, and it is everything and everywhere at the same time."
- "So we are the creators...we are the creators of Universal destiny. We are creators of the Universe."
- "If everything is the One Universal Mind, and the whole of it exists everywhere, then it is all in You!"

Eckhart Tolle teaches a Monistic and Pantheistic God in the following:

- "God...is formless consciousness and the essence of who you are."³⁰
- "...you are one with all that *is*."³¹
- "Everything that exists has Being, has God-essence, has some degree of consciousness...Everything is alive. The sun, the earth, plants, animals, humans..."³²

Marianne Williamson teaches the Monistic concept that we are "the same being":³³

- "The concept of a divine, or 'Christ' mind, is the idea that, at our core, we are not just identical, *but we are actually the same being*. 'There is only one begotten Son' doesn't mean that someone else was it, and we're not. *It means we're all it. There's only one of us here.*" (emphasis added)
- "Asking God for help doesn't seem so comforting if we think of Him as *something outside ourselves...*" (emphasis added)

Oprah Winfrey has even stated:

- "One of the biggest mistakes humans make is to believe there is only one way. Actually, there are many diverse paths leading to what you call God."³⁴

Biblical Teaching

The concepts of Pantheism and Monism that Oprah and her friends propagate are not Biblical.

If God is "all in all", then the totality of all things, including God, must include evil, and the Bible makes it perfectly clear, that's impossible.

God is not evil:

- 1 John 1:5 says that "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." Scripture reveals "God is light" representing the truth of God as well as the virtue, moral character and holiness of God.

God is not "all in all" in a pantheistic sense, but separate from His creation:

- There is a distinction between the Creator and the created: Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent."

Psalm 102:25-27 says, "Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them...But You are the same, and Your years will have no end."

See also Eccl. 5:2; Isaiah 31:3; 40:22-26; Romans 1:20-25.

God created all things out of nothing:

- Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Nehemiah 9:6 says, "You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all."

Psalm 33:9 says, "For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast."

See also Psalm 89:11; John 1:3; Acts 17:24; Col. 1:16-17.

Creation was a freewill act on the part of God:

- In Job 38:4-11, God quizzes Job on the creation of the earth.

In these verses, we see that God uses irony to show Job's ignorance of God's creation and control over astronomy, cosmology, meteorology, and oceanography with probing remarks like "Tell me," in verses 4, 18 and "Surely you know!" in verses 5, 21.

In Psalm 33:1-9, we're told to rejoice in the LORD because "by the word of the LORD the heavens were made and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."

Psalm 121:2 says, "My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth."

See also Zechariah 12:1; Hebrews 11:3.

Only One God

Let's look at what the Bible has to say about the "one true God" (John 17:3) and the possibility of any other gods or that "everything is God."

- Isaiah 43:10 says, "'You are my witnesses,' says the LORD... 'before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me.'"
- Isaiah 44:6 says, "'Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the LORD of hosts; *I am the First, and I am the Last*; besides me there is no God.'" (emphasis added)
- Isaiah 44:8 says, "'Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; *I know not one*.'" (emphasis added)
- See also Isaiah 44:24; 45:5, 6, 21; 46:9; John 5:44; 17:3; Romans 3:29, 30; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 3:20; James 2:19.

God is personal and distinct, not just a pantheistic mish-mash of “all in all” with your dog being god as well as the rock, tree and lawn chair in your back yard.

- Matthew 3:17 says, “And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”
- John 17:1-3 says, “Jesus spoke these words... ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You...And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.’”

We can also demonstrate Gods personhood when we find that He is referred to in Scripture with personal pronouns such as “He,” “His,” and “Him.”

- Matthew 5:45 says, “that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for *He* makes *His* sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (emphasis added)

While we are not and never will be a god, the reverse is also true in that “God is not a man” according to Numbers 23:19.

2. Recasts Jesus Christ

Jesus to the NAM is differentiated from Christ. That is to say, Jesus was the man but Christ is something we can all attain to become.

They often refer to this as the *Christ Consciousness* and it’s the New Age term for one’s inner divinity; one’s *real* self, which is “God” (i.e., the universal essence, or life energy). It’s also called the *Christ Within, Inner Christ, or Christ Self*.³⁵

The idea is that certain individuals, great teachers, over history have realized the “divine presence” within them and let go of the ego or “the illusory self.”³⁶

According to Tolle, "That illusory self then becomes the basis for all interpretations, or rather misrepresentations of reality; all thought processes, interactions, and relationships."³⁷

These individuals, including Buddha, Confucius, Krishna, Jesus, Muhammad, Gandhi, Lao-tze, Zoroaster, etc. recognized the *Christ Consciousness* within them and became enlightened masters and way-showers to the rest us.

According to the NAM, Jesus was just one of many teachers of divine truth. He exemplified the *Christ Consciousness* probably better than anyone else. Christ is a consciousness, a form of the higher self. It is possessed by all because everyone is divine.³⁸

A Course in Miracles recasts Jesus Christ by blurring the lines between Him and us: ³⁹

- "I am the light of the world...This, then, is merely a statement of the truth about yourself."
- "You need but tell yourself: I am the holy Son of God Himself."

Eckhart Tolle talks about this *Christ presence* within us: ⁴⁰

- "Don't get attached to any one word. You can substitute 'Christ' for presence, if that is more meaningful to you. Christ is your God-essence or the Self, as it is sometimes called in the East. The only difference between Christ and presence is that Christ refers to your indwelling divinity regardless of whether you are conscious of it or not, whereas presence means your awakened divinity or God-essence."

The Secret doesn't speak much about Jesus other than to rip His words out of context and say that He was a prosperity teacher and a millionaire. But, it does continue on with the teaching that God is in everything: ⁴¹

- "Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Jesus were not only prosperity teachers, but also millionaires themselves, with more

affluent lifestyles than many present-day millionaires could conceive of.”

- “all that exists is the One Universal Mind, and there is nowhere that the One Mind is not. It exists in everything. The One Mind is all intelligence, all wisdom, and all perfection, and it is everything and everywhere at the same time.”

Marianne Williamson says that:⁴²

- “We are all one, we are love itself. ‘Accepting the Christ’ is merely a shift in self-perception...accept that the power of the universe is within us.”
- “‘I accept the Christ within’ means, ‘I accept the beauty within me as who I really am.’”
- “Jesus and other enlightened masters...So it is with other masters: Jesus, Buddha, or any other enlightened being.”

Oprah Winfrey stated the following to a caller during one of their web cast classes:

- “...what I believe is that Jesus came to show us Christ consciousness... Jesus came to show us the way of the heart...to show us the higher consciousness that we’re all talking about here...”⁴³

Biblical Teaching

Let’s just start and quickly dispel any beliefs that Jesus was a rich man before moving on to Biblically disproving that the Jesus and the kind of *Christ Consciousness* the NAM teaches is invalid.

It would have been the height of hypocrisy for Jesus to have been a very wealthy man and then tell people the following:

- Jesus says in Matthew 6:19-21, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in or steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

This one verse alone refutes *The Secrets* claim that Jesus was a rich man since it would have been the height of hypocrisy for Jesus to have taught this while hoarding His riches.

As for the NAM teaching that Jesus and "the Christ" are separate, the Bible does not draw any distinction between the person Jesus and some kind of Christ realization. In other words, Jesus did not "realize" His inner Christ or become "enlightened" at some point in His earthly life.

The term Christ [Greek: *Christos*] is a title and the Greek form of the Hebrew word *Messiah* meaning *anointed one*.

This Messiah was who the Jews had long expected to come and there are many Old Testament passages that refer to this individual who was to be Israel's deliverer and monarch. (See Genesis 3:15; 12:2,3; 22:18; Deuteronomy 18:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 9:6,7; Isaiah 53; Jeremiah 23:5,6; Daniel 9:24-27; Micah 5:2; plus about 450 more references.)

The point is that the bible depicts Jesus and the Christ as one in the same person. It draws no difference between the two:

- Matthew 1:1 says, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham"
- Luke 2:11 says, "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who *is* Christ the Lord." (emphasis added)

This verse does not say "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who realized the inner *Christ Consciousness* in Him and He is the Lord."

Nor does this verse does not say "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who realized the *Christ Within* and He is the Lord."

- In Matthew 16:15, Peter proclaims "You *are* the Christ, the Son of the living God." (emphasis added)
- Matthew 16:20 then says, "Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ."

This verse does not say "...tell no one that He was Jesus who realized His *Christ Consciousness*."

In fact, nowhere in the Bible will you find any kind of teaching that Jesus and Christ are two separate individuals or entities where Jesus was the human aspect and the *Christ Within* is something to be realized.

The fact is that Oprah and her NAM friends have a completely different Jesus than what the Bible teaches. Jesus *is* the Messiah. Jesus *is* the Christ. Jesus is God who took on human form in the incarnation and dwelt among us (John 1:14). He didn't just one day realize His inner Christ Consciousness and became enlightened as the NAM and the Eastern religions teach.

3.Redefines Sin and Salvation

To the NAM and its propagators, *sin* is an illusion and ultimately does not exist.

In fact, the position of the NAM is that "ultimately, sin does not exist, and each person is perfectly guiltless and innocent. No one is sinful in any way."⁴⁴

Tolle for example believes that it's our ego that ultimately brings us what he calls the *pain-body* and that we need to rise to a *new consciousness, awaking or transformation*. To Tolle, this is the good news "of the possibility of a radical transformation of human consciousness. In Hindu teachings, this is called *enlightenment*. In the teachings of Jesus, it is *salvation*, and in

Buddhism, it is *the end of suffering*. *Liberation* and *awakening* are other terms used to describe this transformation."⁴⁵

According to Tolle, humans are basically good since good is already inside of us and we just need to let it emerge.

Since Tolle considers himself "a spiritual teacher", he continuously rails against the *ego* (Tolle's definition of your false self) and *forms* (Tolle's definition of evil).

Salvation, according to Oprah's teachers is attained through one's own power since according to *A Course in Miracles*, "My salvation comes from me."

As mentioned earlier the NAM definition of sin means shortcomings in our lives and salvation means getting in touch with your divinity. So, if there is no real sin and it's illusory, then logically it follows that there is no need for salvation or a Savior.

Now, although several NAM teachers get the definition correct when they state that *sin* means to "miss the mark", they pour a whole new meaning into what that means.

A Course in Miracles teaches that we're sinless and salvation is attained through me:⁴⁶

- "My sinlessness protects me from all harm...You Who created me sinless...I was mistaken when I thought I sinned."
- "My salvation comes from me. It cannot come from anywhere else."

Eckhart Tolle demonstrates his redefinitions of sin and salvation as follows:⁴⁷

- "...to sin means to *miss the point* of human existence. It means to live unskillfully, blindly, and thus to suffer and cause suffering."

- “The deeper interconnectedness of all things and events implies that the mental beliefs of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are ultimately illusory. They always imply a limited perspective and so are true only relatively and temporarily.”
- “True salvation is fulfillment, peace, life in all its fullness...a state of freedom-from fear, from suffering, from a perceived state of lack and insufficiency...You find God the moment you realize that you don’t need to seek God. So there is no *only* way to salvation...”

The Secret

There is no mention of sin in *The Secret* as Dr. Erwin Lutzer correctly summarizes that there’s “no need to mention sin since the Universe, and all of us, are already ‘perfect.’ The cause of all the problems in the world is merely bad thinking, especially the failure to recognize and appropriately use ‘the law of attraction.’ Therefore the solution to what we call our problems lies within us. The only ‘savior’ we need is ourselves.”⁴⁸

Marianne Williamson teaches that since we are all part of God, our true nature is perfect and sinless and all else is illusion:⁴⁹

- “The perfect you is the love within you. Your job is to allow the Holy Spirit to remove the fearful thinking that surrounds your perfect self... remember that you are part of God...God is totally approving and accepting of you, exactly as you are...You were not created in sin; you were created in love.”
- “In Course terminology, our entire network of fearful perceptions, all stemming from *that false belief in our separation from God* and one another, is called ego.” (emphasis added)
- “...praying to God to ‘save’ our lives, means praying for Him to save us from our own negative thoughts...Since only God exists, and everything else is an illusion...The word sin means loveless perception...So God isn’t angry at our sins because they’re not really happening. He doesn’t see sins, but only errors in perception.”

Oprah Winfrey stated that "one of the most important books, I think I've read, in my life was a book by Eric Butterworth...Called *Discover the Power Within*."⁵⁰

So what does Mr. Butterworth teach in this book regarding sin? ⁵¹

- "The great sin of mankind is not to know the divinity that lies unexpressed within every individual."
- "There is this kind of hopelessness in Christianity's attitude toward man. It is as if we were taught that man is a sinner.."

Oprah herself has stated that "one of the biggest mistakes humans make is to believe there is only one way. Actually, there are many diverse paths leading to what you call God...There couldn't possible be only one way...Does God care about your heart or weather you called His Son Jesus?"

Here we see that there are many ways to salvation according to Oprah.

Biblical Teaching Regarding Sin

The doctrine of *original sin* can be defined as "the sinful state and condition in which men are born." It is so designated because: ⁵²

1. It is derived from the original root of the human race (Adam).
2. It is present in the life of the individual from the time of birth.
3. It is the inward root of all the actual sins that defile the life of man.

Although Williamson teaches that "You were not created in sin" King David, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit penned the following:

- Psalm 51:5 says, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."

The *New Living Translation* says, "For I was born a sinner-- yes, from the moment my mother conceived me."

- Psalm 58:3 says, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies."
The *New Living Translation* says, "These wicked people are born sinners; even from birth they have lied and gone their own way."

So regardless of what Marianne Williamson teaches regarding NAM theology, the Bible says, "Yes, you are created in sin."

As we've seen, we're born into sin and the New Testament then backs up what David voiced in the Old Testament:

- Romans 3:23 says "all have sinned and are deprived [fall short] of the glory of God."
- Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to *all* men, because *all* sinned" (emphasis added)

Because of this sin nature that all humans have, we are separated from an infinitely Holy God. But there is good news...

Biblical Teaching Regarding Salvation

John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The Bible teaches that salvation is found only in the person of Jesus Christ:

- John 3:15 tells us that "whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

In case we missed it, Jesus says it again in John 3:16, "whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

- John 5:24 says, "Most assuredly, I say to you, *he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life*, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." (emphasis added)
- In John 11:25 Jesus says, "I am the resurrection, and the life; *whoever believes in Me*, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives *and believes in Me* will never die." (emphasis added)
- John 12:46 says, "I came into the world as light, so that *everyone who believes in Me might not remain in darkness*." (emphasis added)

Salvation is not enlightenment, realizing the Christ Consciousness or your divinity within you, but it is the objective righteousness of Jesus Christ that is credited to us by faith and trust in what He accomplished on the cross when He atoned for the sins of mankind.

It's a righteousness not of our own but a foreign righteousness imputed to us, the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

- Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."
- Titus 3:5 says, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,"
- Romans 3:20 tells us that "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified [declared righteous before God] in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

The salvation of the NAM is a man-made concept. Scripture twisting is often utilized to make their teachings fit into a mold, that was foreign to the Jewish people and those writing the New Testament.

4.Recreates Man as Deity

As with the NAM teachings that God is pantheistic or “all in all” and the monistic belief that all things are made of basically the same ultimate spiritual substance, this of course translates into their belief that “therefore, we must be gods or divine as well.”

To put it concisely, if God is “all in all” and man is part of the all, it reasons that man is God or at least has the potential if we rise to the level and realize the *Christ Consciousness* within us.

It wouldn't be a decent NAM teaching without an obligatory Shirley Maclaine quote or two so, here goes:⁵³

- “I know that I exist, therefore I AM, I know that the God-source exists. Therefore IT IS. Since I am part of that force, then I AM that I AM.”
- “Just remember that you are God, and act accordingly.”

These quotes by Ms. Maclaine embody the NAM belief that “I am god” and Oprah and her friends *New Spirituality* beliefs adhere faithfully to this same concept.

A Course in Miracles teaches that we are all God:⁵⁴

- “God's Name is holy, but no holier than yours. To call upon His Name is but to all upon your own...Repeat the Name of God, and call upon your Self.”
- “My mind is part of God's. I am very holy.”

The Secret teaches that we are God and can create our own reality:⁵⁵

- "You are God in a physical body...You are Eternal Life expressing itself in You...You are all power. You are all wisdom. You are all intelligence, You are perfection...You are the creator, and you are creating the creation of You on this planet."

Eckhart Tolle teaches that we have the *God-essence* within us:

- "Christ is *your* God-essence or the Self...The only difference between Christ and presence is that Christ refers to *your indwelling divinity* regardless of whether you are conscious of it or not...whereas presence means *your awakened divinity or God-essence*."⁵⁶
- You are "the underlying I Am."⁵⁷
- "God...is formless consciousness and the essence of who you are."⁵⁸

Marianne Williamson states the following regarding man's inner deity:

- "if you go deeply enough into your mind, and deeply enough into mine, we have the *same mind*. The concept of a divine, or "Christ" mind, is the idea that, at our core, we are not just identical, but actually the same being. 'There is only one begotten Son' doesn't mean that someone else was it, and we're not. It means we're all it. There's only one of us here."⁵⁹
- "God's one begotten son is *who we are*." ⁶⁰ (emphasis in original)

Oprah Winfrey remember stated "one of the most important books, I think I've read, in my life was a book by Eric Butterworth...Called *Discover the Power Within*" and on Mr. Butterworth's website are quotes from Oprah regarding the divinity of man:⁶¹

- "This book changed my perspective on life and religion. Eric Butterworth teaches that God isn't 'up there.' He exists inside each one of us, and it's up to us to seek the divine within."
- "But the greatest mistake is in believing that we are 'only human...' We are human in expression but divine in creation and limitless in potentiality."

Biblical Teaching

The Bible makes it perfectly clear that you and I are not god, have never been god and will never be god.

The Bible's clear that mankind is...

- Deceitful and wicked - Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful [incurably sick] above all things, and desperately wicked."
- Full of evil - Jesus said in Mark 7:21-23, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."
- Ungodly - Romans 5:6 says, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."
- Sinful - Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

While we are not and never will be a god, the reverse is also true in that "God is not a man" according to Numbers 23:19.

Remember that man fell in the garden because of his desire to be a god (Genesis 3:5) and Lucifer fell from heaven because of his desire to be a god (Isaiah 14:12-15).

There are three lies in Genesis 3 that Satan uses that many cults, false religions and false teachers like the NAM, the Word of Faith Movement and Mormonism fall into that we need to be on the lookout for:

1. Questioning and then contradicting God.
2. Scripture twisting.
3. Humans can become gods.

Satan repackages these lies over and over and some groups just keep buying into the lie and just keep right on taking the bait hook, line and sinker.

Genesis 3:1-5 says, "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, '**Has God indeed said**, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, **nor shall you touch it**, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, '**You will not surely die**. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God**, knowing good and evil.'" (emphasis added)

Questioning and then contradicting God

- Notice Satan putting doubt in Eves mind, "Has God indeed said...?"
- Then Satan just flat out contradicts God, "You will *not* surely die."

Scripture Twisting

- Eve *almost* quotes God correctly in Gen. 2:17 – God did not say "nor shall you touch it" but He did say "you shall *surely* die". Eve did two things; she added to Gods word and weakened the penalty of death.
- This is what can happen when we are not familiar enough with Scripture and when we listen to false teachers who teach bad doctrine.

Being Like God

- Satan promised her that she would "be like God" if she disobeyed God. In other words, Satan held out the promise of divinity for Eve to take hold of.

- Satan himself had this same problem (Isaiah 14:12-15) when he desired the position of God and declared five "I wills..." with the last one being, "I will be like the Most High."

The Bible makes it perfectly clear that there is only one God (Deut. 6:4; Is. 43:10; 44:6; 44:8; 44:24; 45:5, 6, 21; 46:9; John 5:44; 17:3; Romans 3:29, 30; 1 Cor. 8:4; Gal. 3:20; James 2:19) and we are not it.

How many times does God have to say a thing before people start to believe it?

5.Reinterprets Scripture

In order for NAM teachers to square what they teach to the Bible, they twist Scripture, rip it out of context, quote only part of a verse and/or misinterpret it to their own advantage, disregarding sound hermeneutic principles.

When poor Biblical hermeneutics are applied and indeed, Dr. James Sire points out that there are at least twenty different kinds of "reading errors"⁶², you can literally make the Bible fit any kind of Worldview you desire.

Regarding Eckhart Tolle's method of Scripture twisting, Warren Nozaki, a research specialist for the Christian Research Institute notes that "the principle method Tolle uses to harmonize the Bible and Christian theology with other religions is an esoteric redefinition of terms based in his subjective experience."⁶³

For example, when Tolle was asked about reading spiritual texts and what realizations he had, he stated, "...first I picked up a copy of the New Testament...and reading the words of Jesus...I knew intuitively with absolute certainty that certain statements attributed to Jesus were added later, because they did not 'emanate' from that place, that state of consciousness, because I knew that place, I know that place."⁶⁴

Here we see a perfect example of Tolle stating, without studying and researching scholars who are experts in Greek and textual criticism, that he “knew intuitively with absolute certainty that certain statements attributed to Jesus were added later..”

Of course we can be sure the words he read did not square with his NAM worldview so instead he attributed it to “certain statements attributed to Jesus were added later..”

Best selling author and talk show host, Brannon Howse, while talking about Eckhart Tolle’s book *A New Earth*, states that “the most quoted book in his book, twenty-one times, is the Bible. But you can better believe that it’s taken out-of-context.”⁶⁵

A Course in Miracles takes Biblical words (atonement, sin, salvation, etc.) and reapplies or pours its *New Age* meaning into them effectively reinterpreting those words to mean what it desires.

- The **atonement** to ACIM is misunderstood by Christians and instead refers to correcting the belief that people are separated from God. **Sin** is seen as an illusion. Likewise, **time**, **space** and **what we see** with our eyes are illusions. If **sin** is an illusion, then **forgiveness** is rendered meaningless.
- **Salvation** is of course not needed since we’re all divine and all we have to do is accept our true identity as being one with God.

The Secret wraps its unbiblical teachings in what’s called *The Law of Attraction*. In a nutshell, this means your thoughts become things and since we are divine, we can speak things into existence. Of course, it quotes the Bible to try to add authentication to it’s teachings as well.

- **Matthew 21:22** and **Mark 11:24** are used as an “Ask, Believe and Receive” cookie cutter approach to push its belief that God is a cosmic “bell-hop” or “Santa Clause” ready to provide you with whatever you can imagine.

- **Matthew 7:7** is taken out of context as it applies the *Law of Attraction* in *The Secret of Relationships* chapter by focusing on “You” because “You attract what you think about” and then stating “Seek and ye shall find!”

Eckhart Tolle rips the Bible out of context by applying *New Age* thinking to the verses as Brannon Howse mentioned above twenty-one times. Here are just a couple: ⁶⁶

- **Revelation 21:1 and Isaiah 65:17** talk about “a new heaven and a new earth” but Eckhart teaches these to mean “the collapse of the existing world order” because “heaven is not a location but refers to the inner realm of consciousness” and “earth...is the outer manifestation in form, which is always a reflection of the inner.”
- **John 14:6** says “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life...’” but Eckhart teaches that “the Truth is inseparable from who you are. Yes, you *are* the Truth. If you look for it elsewhere, you will be deceived every time. The very Being that you are is Truth. Jesus tried to convey that when he said, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life.’ These words uttered by Jesus are one of the most powerful and direct pointers to the Truth, if understood correctly. If misinterpreted, however, they become a great obstacle. Jesus speaks of the innermost I Am, the essence identity of every man and woman, every life-form, in fact. He speaks of the life that you are.”

Marianne Williamson often uses *A Course in Miracles* when she selects quotes and sometimes those are “quotes” from the Bible. In fact, she sprinkles so many Christian words in her books; you’d think she was a Christian writer.

- **Genesis 2:21** says that “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam...” and Marianne Williamson continues where ACIM left off by stating “In the Bible, it says Adam fell asleep – and nowhere does it say that he woke up...But a great awakening is on the horizon...It’s no accident that enlightened masters are called the ‘awakened ones.’”⁶⁷

What Ms. Williamson is alluding to here is the NAM belief that there needs to be a "shift" away from the mind or the "ego" and awaken to the collective "Christ consciousness."

She says, "We are all one, we are love itself. 'Accepting the Christ' is merely a shift in self-perception."⁶⁸

- **John 3:16** says that "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." but Ms. Williamson says "God's one begotten son is *who we are.*"⁶⁹ (emphasis in original)

Oprah Winfrey could have saved herself and everyone who listens to her NAM teachings a whole lot of trouble if she would have researched the Scripture that led her down the path of questioning her faith in God.

- **Exodus 20:5** says "...For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God..." (See also Deut 4:24). While Oprah heard this in a sermon while sitting in church she said that "something struck me...'God is jealous of me?' And something about that didn't feel right in my spirit because I believe that God is love and that God is in all things. And so that's when the search for something more than doctrine started to stir within me."

Biblical Teaching

The NAM teachers force their worldview onto Scripture or try to force "the square peg of their words into the round hole of Scripture" and of course the only why to do that is to misinterpret or reinterpret the Bible.

To go over all verses and all the ways that these NAM teachers reinterpret Scripture and pour their own meanings into it would take more time than we have here so what we'll do instead is look to the Scriptures as our *Final Court of Appeal* when it comes to teaching correctly.

2 Timothy 2:15 says to "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, *rightly dividing the word of truth.*" (NJKV emphasis added)

Same verse with a different translation:

- "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who *correctly handles the word of truth.*" (NIV emphasis added)
- "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, *accurately handling the word of truth.*" (NASB emphasis added)
- "Work hard so God can approve you. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who *correctly explains the word of truth.*" (NLT emphasis added)

When we look at the words *rightly dividing* [Greek: *orthotomeo*], we see that they mean "to make a straight cut; to hold a straight course; to dissect (expound) correctly and to handle rightly."

Vines Complete Expository Dictionary points out that "what is intended here is not 'dividing' Scripture from Scripture, *but teaching Scripture accurately.*" (emphasis added)⁷⁰

One thing we know for sure is that the concepts and teachings of the NAM were foreign to the writers of the Scriptures as well as the early church fathers.

For example, as mentioned earlier, the NAM teaching that Jesus and "the Christ" are separate, the Bible does not draw any distinction between the person Jesus and some kind of Christ realization. In other words, Jesus did not "realize" His inner Christ or become "enlightened" at some point in His earthly life.

The NAM teachers force their *worldview* on the Bible thus coming up with these ideas that are decidedly unbiblical.

A worldview can be defined as "a set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which we hold (consciously or unconsciously) about the basic make-up of our world" ⁷¹ but what the NAM teachers are guilty of committing is what's referred to as *worldview confusion*.

We see that worldview confusion "occurs whenever a reader of Scripture fails to interpret the Bible within the intellectual and broadly cultural framework of the Bible itself and uses instead a foreign frame of reference. In other words, rather than seeing a statement of Scripture as a part of the whole biblical scheme of things, the reader or interpreter views it from a different standpoint and thus distorts the Bible..."⁷²

Conclusion

When the disciples asked Jesus about the end of the age in Matthew 24:4-5, Jesus replied "'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.'"

It's interesting that today; the *New Spirituality* teaches that the "Christ" is within us. Remember that Marianne Williamson teaches that "'I accept the Christ within' means, 'I accept the beauty within me as who I really am.'"

People are hungry for experience and spirituality and they're accepting of everything except Biblical Christianity. When someone like Oprah comes along with prestige and power and introduces us to people who are basically the same as us and gives the masses something that's winsome, people are open and interested.

One thing that the *New Spirituality* seekers will find, winsome or not, is that ultimately, it's unsatisfying. In other words, ultimately they know there's something else and so they will continually run to the latest fad and the latest best seller and be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.

The Christian worldview is stable and grounded in the objective knowledge of Scripture. And while the *New Spirituality* is not testable, unfounded and ungrounded, the true seeker of spirituality should start with the Christian faith because it is testable.

The Christian worldview is not a smorgasbord of cobbled together religions like the *New Spirituality* but is founded on the truth claims of Jesus Christ.

Millions of people watch Oprah daily and these folks hang on every word she says. As Christians, we may not reach all these millions but we do need to be able to talk to the ones that we come in contact with and be able to communicate and hold a conversation with them letting them know that there is a personal God who desires to have a personal relationship with them.

And finally, *Newsweek* asks, "Is there anything Oprah gets right? In fact, there is. For one, she gives excellent diet and fitness tips."⁷³ But I would add definitely not spiritual advice.

2 Timothy 4:2-4 says, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."

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If you have questions or comments, please feel free to email info@calvaryCO.church.

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