

New Thought—Part 4

by Dr. John Ankerberg, Dr. John Weldon

Theology (continued)

Salvation

“I am wonderful, fantastic, beautiful and good. I am the Christ.”¹ So declares a typical New Thought “affirmation.” If we are Christ, and God, then obviously we need no salvation in the biblical sense. For New Thought, the only “salvation” required is a release from ignorance concerning the oneness that we already have with God. Further, our lack of spiritual knowledge (New Thought) keeps us believing that pain, illness and death are real when everything is actually perfect. Thus, heaven on earth is ours for the asking. Incredibly, New Thought teaches, “You do not have to die, grow old, be ill, suffer lack or experience anything negative.”²

To “follow Christ” is to follow our higher divine self.

- Dr. Donald Curtis declares: “Making your decision for Christ today means making your decision to follow the Light of your own being.”³
- Regarding New Thought philosophy, Dr. Joseph Murphy declares, “This is the Gospel, the good tidings.”⁴ Indeed, Dr. Murphy stumbles all over himself in affirming the “good news” of his own deity: “The real Self of man is God.... God is my higher self.... The Self of me is God. I honor, trust and give all my allegiance to the real Self of me, which is God.”⁵
- William Warch states: “The real you is your personal awareness of yourself as God.”⁶ “You are the Christ.... You are made of the same energy intelligence that holds the planets in orbit and breathes life into infants.”⁷

This is the New Thought “gospel,” and what it lacks in humility it makes up for in presumption. In its rejection of Christ and its denial of true salvation, it stands condemned by Scripture. “Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:28-29).

New Thought views salvation as the acceptance of what is (Perfection), not as the escape from God’s judgment on sin. Hence New Thought salvation is merely a daily experiencing of the positive blessings “resulting” from applying New Thought teachings.

Being “saved” then, means being *born anew* [in consciousness]. It is the acceptance of an idea or truth principle that will help us to return to the main stream of life and living.... Salvation is a here and now experience where and when Truth is consciously known. “Judgment Day” is every day we take time to review our thoughts and actions, recognize any slippage, and decide to do something about it.⁸

Further, if we do not have “Christ consciousness,” we will suffer the unreal appearances.

There is one primary cause of your suffering and that is that you have lost sight of your divinity.... If you have forgotten that you are the living expression of God, there is nothing to carry you through negative appearances.⁹

Indeed, visiting cancer wards, hospices and caring for the mentally ill, or sending missionaries to the poverty-stricken regions of the world, or working in drug rehabilitation centers or with AIDS patients, would be seen as “negative” environments threatening personal divinity.

An important point in all this is that it is New Thought’s frequent use of familiar biblical terms for “salvation” that influence people to think of New Thought as Christian. This also confuses uninformed people as to the biblical meaning of the terms. For example, in *The New Thought Christian*, New Thought redefines the terms “grace” and “born again.” “Grace is the upliftment from bondage through greater awareness. If you have made a mistake, you do not have to pay for it. Through Grace (greater awareness) you are free of the limited thinking that caused you to make the mistake in the first place.”¹⁰ And being “born again” is a step by step renewal in consciousness that “has nothing to do with Jesus”:

But to the New Thought Christian there is an entirely different meaning to being born again. With each new awakening you are born into a new level of consciousness. In other words, you are constantly being born again as you develop in your awareness of the Christ within. This has nothing to do with Jesus other than the fact that he too entered a constant state of renewal. As you let go of old [e.g., Christian] concepts and beliefs, you release who you were in the past and accept a new understanding of yourself. New ideas about yourself and God are constantly being born in you as your Christ nature reveals itself to you.¹¹

Similarly, in his *Immortal Man*, “Neville” gives us the “proper” meaning of salvation, rebirth and forgiveness, because we are assured that *Immortal Man* was “taken from the author’s lectures during his spiritually mature years” (front cover).

No one on the outside is going to save you. God and God alone is going to save you.... [i.e.,] Your own wonderful I Amness, that is the Lord God Jehovah.¹²

You are told “Unless you are born again, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.”... (This means) unless you... live in your own wonderful human imagination.¹³

The glory of Christianity is to conquer by forgiveness.... Christ is my Imagination. Christ is the Son of Man which is my own Wonderful Human Imagination. This is forgiveness. Scripture is all about forgiveness.¹⁴

The Afterlife

New Thought rejects the biblical view of death and reward or judgment. Its view of the after-life is often similar to Eastern and mediumistic perspectives, encompassing postmortem “schooling” prior to the next incarnation, progression to higher and higher planes and final absorption into “God.” Death is not at all negative, but is a glorious Something. Dr. Joseph Murphy declares:

God is life and that is your life now. God cannot die therefore there is no death. So-called death is an entry into the fourth dimension of life, and our journey is from glory to glory, from wisdom to wisdom, every onward upward and Godward for there is no end to the glory which is man. Death, in Biblical language, is ignorance of the truths of God.¹⁵

Warch declares in his *New Thought Christian*, “There is no such thing as death.... You have endless lifetimes.”¹⁶

Satan

The biblical reality of Satan and demons is also discarded. “Since God is the only power, there is no opposite. There is only God.”¹⁷ Disregarding a wealth of evidence, New Thought

writer Dr. Donald Curtis asserts that “demons” only exist as “negative” human problems:

Of course there aren't any real “demons.” The so-called demons are merely a focus upon the worries, the despair, the grief, the greed, the selfishness and the negativities stored up in the human race. There aren't any devils. There is no hell. There is no evil.... There is no personified God, just as there is no personified devil. These are products of literary invention. God is everywhere.¹⁸

And “Neville” informs us that we should reject reason and the testimony of our senses since these are what constitute hell and the devil. “Turn your back upon the doubters, which are your senses, your reason, for that's hell or the devil or satan in this world.”¹⁹

The Occult

In general, any occult power or practice is potentially acceptable and reinterpreted as divine activity. Although New Thought distances itself from certain forms of the occult, even in these cases it is willing to “accept truth wherever it may be found.” The common New Thought teaching that stresses “inner listening” as a means to spiritual guidance is one possible introduction to the psychic realm. Also, some New Thought practitioners have encountered spiritistic inspiration while believing themselves to be a channel for the divine. “The fundamental thing is you must believe that God can positively do anything. Then you must believe in yourself as His channel.”²⁰

As we documented in our *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs*, especially the chapters on intuition, inner work and channeling, concepts like the “inner self,” “Christ self,” higher self, intuition and inner divinity not infrequently become guises for spiritistic inspiration. In their *New Thought: A Practical American Spirituality* (Crossroad), a book highly praised by New Thought leaders, C. Alan Anderson and Deborah G. Whitehouse include chapters on “The Mystical and the Occult or Psychic” and “New Age and the New Thought Movement,” in which they observe many parallels between New Thought religion and the New Age movement. They also point out, “New Thought at its best is much inclined toward mysticism....” Not unexpectedly New Thought in general looks favorably on parapsychology, interpreting psychic abilities as “scientific proof” of one's divine potential.

(to be continued)

Notes:

¹ William A. Warch, *The New Thought Christian* (Anaheim, CA: Christian Living Publishing, 1977), p. 61.

² *New Thought*, Spring 1978, p. 49.

³ *New Thought*, Autumn 1978, p. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Winter 1980, p. 31.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Spring 1978, pp. 4-5.

⁶ Warch, p. 18.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁸ *New Thought*, Spring 1978, p. 49

⁹ Warch, p. 58.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² “Neville,” edited by Marge Broome, *Immortal Man* (Lakemont, GA: CSA Press, 1977), p. 49.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁵ *New Thought*, Spring 1979, p. 18.

¹⁶ Warch, pp. 88-89.

¹⁷ *New Thought*, Winter 1979, p. 38.

¹⁸ “The Path of Discipleship,” *New Thought*, Autumn 1978, p. 12.

¹⁹ Neville, p. 20.

²⁰ *New Thought*, Summer 1979, p. 62.