

**Response to a Critic**  
Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

I received an email from a reader who took issues with some of the things I had to say in my article on Bernie Siegel. Here are the reader's words (indented with chevrons) and my comments.

\*\*\*\*\*

Your comments have made me consider the wisdom of rewriting the paper in order to update it and acknowledge the way the term 'holistic' is being used in this internet age. My contention is that in its initial stages as an American phenomenon, Holistic Medicine was almost entirely based upon an occult world view. In my research (I will give you a bibliography.) I cannot remember finding any source that was not so based. However, in our ever-increasing marketing-oriented society, the term has been co-opted to sell just about anything from overt occultism to ointments; from religious doctrines to inane gimmicks. Thus, as one scours the internet, one could probably find any religious tradition and "scientific" technique that is marketed as holistic by somebody. It reminds me of what happened with New Age music. In its early stages, all of the New Age artists I ran across in my research were advocates of some New Age religion/occult world view. But it did not take long for the companies to see how marketable such a term was. Soon one began to find the term New Age Music applied to everything from Brahms to modern jazz. Even the music of the evangelical Christian recording artist Phil Keaggy found its way into the New Age Music section of the local record store.

All of this is to say that my original article was written in the early 1990s (over 10 years ago) and unfortunately reflects the use of the term then. Thus, your comments have made me want to add a proviso to my analysis to acknowledge that, in terms of how some people use the expression today, what I have to say may not apply to some of what can be found in certain web sites. Admittedly, I do not have a patent on the meaning of the term, but, likewise, neither does any other particular person. If someone wants to call his color-coordinating service or his utilization of "natural" substance in his "healing" practice or cooking "Holistic" he is certainly entitled. But nothing anyone does in the name of holistic will change the fact there still remains a conspicuous element of the occult in much of what goes by that term, and thus my analysis in my original article stands unrefuted. In fact, as I hope to make it even more clear, almost all of what I have to say in terms of my description of this occult world view and its informing of holistic medicine is from the mouths of those very persons who practice it. For the most part, the fact that holistic medicine was predicated upon an occult world view was not what was in dispute between holistic practitioners and their detractors. What was in dispute was whether this was a good thing or not; whether it was efficacious or not. As I said in my article, its efficaciousness was not interesting to me for the purposes of the article itself. Rather, what was interesting to me was its underlying belief system. I was interested in informing my readers that the world view that served as the foundation of much of went on under the name of holistic medicine was in fact occultism. So, bottom line, I was saying very little in my article in defining holistic health with which that those holistic practitioners of the time would quarrel. Let me proceed now to the specifics of your comments.

- > I have before me your writing titled "Holistic Medicine, Dr. Bernie
- > Siegel and New Age Occultism." It seems to me that you have made
- > a superficial study of the broad field of holistic medicine and defined
- > it by only one branch of its practitioners and especially by one person,
- > Dr. Siegel.

You are right in as much as I have confined my analysis in the article largely to one person. But I allege that what one finds in Dr. Siegel's work is not eccentric as far as holistic medicine was concerned then. As I have conveyed above, I want to add the proviso in the article that, since just about anything now days can be marketed as holistic that bears little resemblance to the views of Dr. Siegel, one has to understand that my comments do not apply to just anyone simply because he uses the term 'holistic' to describe what he is selling. To the extent that I have not kept up with the marketing use of the term on the internet, your criticism is well-taken that I have a "superficial study of the broad field." In my defense, however, I have done extensive study for years on the topic of holistic medicine, the New Age Movement, and the occult in the days when these terms (or at least the term 'holistic') were not so watered down as to apply to almost anything.

- >My dictionary defines 'holistic' as dealing with whole systems,
- >rather than analysis of parts. Holistic medicine does not necessarily
- >deal with spiritual or metaphysical systems. I direct you to two websites in
- > which organizations of holistic practitioners define their own field:
- > [www.holisticmed.com/whatis/html](http://www.holisticmed.com/whatis/html) [www.phys-](http://www.phys-)
- > [advisor.com/holistic\\_medicine.htm](http://advisor.com/holistic_medicine.htm)

I hope I do not have to point out to you the precariousness of trying to define the use of a term merely by an appeal to a dictionary. You give me no indication of what dictionary you used. *My* dictionary says that holistic health "often draws on principles of oriental medicine, for example acupuncture, shiatsu, and meditation." If you follow the links within the same dictionary regarding acupuncture it says that it is the practice of inserting needles along "twelve lines known as meridians [meridians being defined in the same dictionary as "the channels which carry ch'i or life energy to different parts of the body"]. Six of these lines are yang (positive) and yin (negative) ... It is along these meridians that the life-force, ch'i, passes through the body ..." Neither time nor space will allow me to demonstrate the spiritual, metaphysical, and occult elements of things like ch'i, yang, and yin. If you will not take my word for it perhaps you will take the words of a supporter who is himself an occult researcher. Nevil Drury says

Many people accept, for example, that meditation is ideal for treating stress-related forms of illness, and yet most of the available meditation techniques derive from non-Christian religions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism. There is also broad-based public support for alternative medicine and some of the major therapies are regarded as acceptable adjuncts to modern, orthodox treatment. Yet such approaches as these usually have a distinctly metaphysical base. Acupuncture theory for example, is based on the traditional Chinese concept of the flow of *yin* and *yang*. And while some acupuncturists now interpret the

technique as a way of stimulating an endorphin (pain-killing) response from the brain, there is no doubt that most Chinese practitioners still find the metaphysical explanation more complete.<sup>1</sup>

If one cannot see the occult underpinnings of these things, then that is the one whose research is superficial. (I am not necessarily saying this about you.) All I can suggest for that one is to take my bibliography and do one's own research. The dictionary to which I appealed is also by Nevil Drury.<sup>2</sup> While I am on the subject of authorities (and in the mind set of defending myself) I am puzzled as to why you would dispute such an authority as Michael Harner whom I quoted in my article who said

The burgeoning field of holistic medicine shows a tremendous amount of experimentation involving the reinvention of many techniques long practices in shamanism, such as visualization, altered state of consciousness, aspects of psychoanalysis, hypnotherapy, meditation, positive attitude, stress-reduction, and mental and emotional expression of personal will for health and healing.<sup>3</sup>

Shamanism more definitely involves spiritual and metaphysical systems. Michael Harner, at the time of the writing of his book taught anthropology in the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research in New York, and was currently co-chairman of the Anthropology Section of the New York Academy of Sciences. He has been a visiting professor at Columbia, Yale, and the University of California, Berkeley, where he received his Ph.D. If you read his book, you see that he is an enthusiast for these shamanistic practices. Yet he is the one who acknowledges its occult roots. Again, this is not in dispute. If one comes back and says that there are many things that go by the name holistic that are not shamanistic, then the point is well taken. But to me this only illustrates the unfortunate trend of how technical terms eventually become so popularized that they begin to lose their usefulness.

I should like to point out some startling comments Harner makes in his introduction. He says, "Try to suspend any critical prejudgments as you first practice shamanic methods. Simply enjoy the adventure of the shamanic approach."<sup>4</sup> This to me is outrageous. Suppose someone offered such counsel regarding jumping off a cliff? Should one suspend any judgments one has about cliffs prior to jumping and simply enjoy the journey down? Further, Harner says, "When I speak of 'spirits,' it is because that is the way shamans talk within the system. To practice shamanism, it is unnecessary and even distracting to be preoccupied with achieving a scientific understanding of what 'spirits'

---

<sup>1</sup> Nevil Drury, *The Occult Experience: Magic in the New Age* (Garden City Park, NY: Avery Publishing Group, 1989), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Nevil Drury, *Dictionary of Mysticism and the Occult* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), s.v., "Holistic Health," p. 119 and "Acupuncture," p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Harner, *The Way of the Shaman* (New York: Bantam New Age Books, 1980): 175.

<sup>4</sup> Harner, *Way*, p. xxi.

may really represent and why shamanism works."<sup>5</sup> Again, such counsel seems potentially hazardous. Such a pragmatic criterion of action is akin to saying to a child not to worry about who it is that is offering you the candy. That is distracting. Only enjoy the sweet taste the candy has to offer. But of course, it could very well be a child molester who is offering the candy. One should never suspend such critical thinking. Now I want to re-acknowledge two things. First, there may be things that go by the name of holistic health that are not only harmless but may even be helpful. Second, my evaluation of the matter is predicated upon my own Christian world view, the truth of which I have not in this present context tried to defend.

Last, let me point out to you that your comments above are contradicted by one of the very web pages you suggested I read. It defines holistic as "the art and science of healing that addresses the whole person-body, mind and spirit" yet you claim that "Holistic medicine does not necessarily deal with spiritual or metaphysical systems." By your own authorities it does necessarily deal with spiritual systems in as much as it tries to address one's health concerns in such a way as to include the spirit. But what is spirit? It is of course a religious/metaphysical term. The question then remains as to what religion or metaphysical system is it. In the original, growing, and developed stages of holistic medicine it was overwhelmingly occult. No doubt Christianity utilizes the notion of spirit (as do other religions) and in a very real sense, Christianity can be seen as 'holistic.' Indeed, I would submit that *only* Christianity can heal holistically, but this would take another article to defend. In fact, I had expanded on this latter point in another article that I wrote at the same time and will add that article as a postscript to the article on the web site to distinguish more clearly how I see the differences between holistic in the Christian sense and holistic in the occult sense. I would very much like your opinion on that postscript once I post it.

- > I am sure you are aware of the fallacy 'post hoc, ergo propter hoc'
- > and also of 'guilt by association.'

Yes, I am aware of these fallacies and I do want to be careful not to commit them. It is interesting to me however that you mention the "guilt by association" fallacy as if a world view being occult or New Age is something of which one would be guilty. As is clear from all of the primary sources I have consulted, the practitioners of holistic health with whom I am familiar are quite candid in admitting that this is their world view. Indeed, it is something they celebrate. I have encountered only two situations where people are reticent about accepting such a label as occult. First, there are those who do not necessarily profess any religion who may be practicing certain health care methods who insist that what they are doing is not part of that aspect of holistic health that is occult (whether or not they admit there is even such a thing as occultism). Second, there are those (usually Christians, nominal or otherwise) who desire to continue their utilization of holistic health methods who would like to think that any religious aspect of holistic health that there is, is consistent with their own Christian religion. Often these people try to argue that there is the common core of spirituality that all religions share (including Christianity) and that it is this common core that holistic health is drawing

---

<sup>5</sup> Harner, *Way*, p. xxi.

upon. As far as the first group is concerned, I concede that it is possible that one may be doing something that goes by the name of holistic health that is not part of this occult world view of which I am critical. These would have to be argued on a case by case basis. Concerning the second group, I would take great exception to such a view that there is this common core as it is popularly conceived, even if I have not argued for my views in this context. Let it suffice to say that my position is that there is not this common core that many think and that the spirituality associated with holistic health is incompatible with biblical Christianity. Let me quickly add, however, that I do believe that there is some type of commonality that many religions and philosophies share, but it is something altogether different that what I have encountered in people's thinking with they talk about a common core. They are usually talking about some basic doctrines that unify all religions that serve as the *sine qua non* or essence of any given religion. They go on to say that the differences between religions lie in the peripheral doctrines. In contrast, I would assert that for the most part the major religions of the world are radically different at their core doctrines and are more alike in their peripheral doctrines—just the opposite of the popular notion.

- > A large number of new-old ideas arose around the same
- > time, including organic gardening and farming, experimentation
- > with renewable energy sources, natural childbirth and child-rearing
- > practices such as breast-feeding, conservation of resources through
- > recycling, emphasis on preventive medicine as well as herbalism,
- > homeopathy, and acupuncture, reaction to and withdrawal from
- > materialistic and consumerist culture, and many other ideas which
- > have been loosely associated with the New Age Movement because
- > they arose around the same time and attracted some of the same people.
- > None of the above-mentioned are in any way occult, however.

I was with you in your list until you got to homeopathy and acupuncture. There is no question at all that acupuncture in its basic world view has everything to do with the occult. This is not disputed by any reputable occult scholar with whom I am familiar. But I will quickly add that it is quite possible for someone to utilize acupuncture without basing it on that world view. Studies have shown that the success of certain acupuncture techniques can be accounted for by the modern model of the nervous system. I have no problem with this and nothing in my article indicates that I do. But to give an example of a health care professional who utilizes acupuncture apart from the world view of the occult does not negate the fact that in its origin and in its practice among some, it has this conspicuous occult element. As far as homeopathy goes, I know of no scientific accounting for the claims of homeopathy. I do know that there are claims of such findings, but having read the responses to such claims as to the quality of the research and other factors, it seem clear to me that homeopathy is fraudulent. Check out the article at <http://www.quackwatch.org/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/homeo.html> for a critical look. Further, the system utilizes the notions of the "life force" and "balance/imbalance." These concepts are very familiar with anyone who has researched occult philosophy.

Now, there are two potential areas of confusion when it comes to some of these issues. First, there is potential that one could confuse an actual practice with the world view that might inform that practice. For example, when it comes to conservation of

resources through recycling (about which I have no problem) one can advocate recycling because one sees such action as an act of worship of Mother Earth or the Spirit Gaia (as I heard invoked at a New Age conference which I attended) or one can advocate recycling because one sees such action as an act of stewardship of the creation given by the Creator. In addition, one could practice recycling for no spiritual or religious reason at all. These are examples at various places along the spectrum. Thus, I would not be critical of the action of recycling itself, but only of the motivation if I thought the motivation was predicated upon a false view of the nature of reality.

The second potential area of confusion is whether a particular practice itself is spiritually unhealthy (as I would deem 'spiritually unhealthy' coming from my own evangelical Christian perspective). An example here would be Siegel's communication with his dead patients. Now someone may disagree with me about the propriety of such a practice and the argument at this point would need to follow along the lines of whether or not the Christian view I hold is true and whether or not the practice I am criticizing is consistent with that Christian view.

Regarding some of the things you mention, I agree that some of them are not occult. But neither are they "holistic" in the sense in which the practitioners defined it back in the mid nineties when I wrote the article. This again just points to the confusion of terms because of the marketing of 'holistic' and shows the need on my part to add the proviso I mentioned earlier.

- > I believe the following statement by you exhibits both the
- > post hoc fallacy and guilt by association: "The recent surge
- > of popularity of the holistic health movement is due largely to the revival of
- > occultism in Western society called the New Age Movement.
- > [What proof do you have of this cause/effect relationship?]

I will change my wording in the article and eliminate the qualification "recent" since the movement is now decades old. But as far as the cause/effect relationship goes (bearing in mind the specific aspect of the movement that my analysis is designed to address) I need look no further than the very pioneers and enthusiasts of the movement itself. Besides the comment in my article from Harner which I repeated above, consider what New Age enthusiast Marilyn Ferguson had to say:

Something remarkable is underway. It is moving with almost dizzying speed, but it has no name and eludes description. As *Mind/Brain Bulletin* reports on new organizations - groups focusing on new approaches to health, humanistic education, new politics, and management - we have been struck with the indefinable quality of the *Zeitgeist*. The spirit of our age is fraught with paradox. It is at the same time pragmatic and transcendental. It values both enlightenment and mystery . . . power and humility . . . interdependence and individuality. It is simultaneously political and apolitical. Its movers and shakers include individuals who are impeccably Establishment allied with one-time sign-carrying radicals. Within recent history "it" has infected medicine, education, social sciences, hard sciences, even government with its implications. It is characterized by fluid organizations reluctant to create hierarchical structures, averse to dogma. It operates on the principle that change can only be facilitated, not decreed. It is

short on manifestos. It seems to speak to something very old. And perhaps, by integrating magic and science, art and technology, it will succeed where all the king's horses and all the king's men have failed.<sup>6</sup>

I submit that it is impossible to read Ferguson's book and not understand that this movement, this *Zeitgeist* that she celebrates, is a revival of occult philosophy. Consider this description by another New Age enthusiast, Dr. Mark Woodhouse of Georgia State University (whom I have debated twice) given at one of our debates:

The New Age is both a world view that weaves together **leading edge science** and **perennial spiritual wisdom**, and **an expanding grass roots movement** that draws to itself individuals from every profession, political and religious background, and walk of life. Like emerging cultures and paradigm shifts from the past, this historic turning point is born of **the interlocking failures of traditional institutions and beliefs** to accommodate both our deepest aspirations for evolutionary growth and the radically shifting circumstances of our environment. The New Age stands in pointed, if precarious, contrast to many guiding assumptions of Western culture by virtue of its affirmation of **wholeness**, balance, integration, and mutually empowering cooperation, in preference to **fragmentation, hierarchy, competition, and fear**. This emerging mind set, through whatever labels it may attract, both contributes to and is nourished by an expanded vision of **human potential**, the quest for **world peace, gender equality**, animal liberation, **ecological sanity**, the development of **alternative health care systems, accelerated interdimensional penetration, new scientific discoveries**, the coming **inversion of corporate and economic realities**, and the genre of visionary art and music that awakens **ancient memories** and inspires **the journey home**. Above all, the New Age holds out limitless possibilities of joy, health, **appropriate abundance**, and wisdom for those who accept responsibility for **consciously creating reality** and to grow and to [word unclear] of unconditional love for others, for themselves, the planet, and for the **divine source in which we live and move and have our being**.<sup>7</sup>

The bold print words and phrases are buzz words for the occult/New Age world view. That the holistic health movement was not merely a coincident development is indisputable. The resources are just too numerous to list that make this claim in so many words. I have included a bibliography of primary sources in the occult for you to consider.

> Thus, it is fair to say that the beliefs and practices which characterize holistic > medicine are occult. [It is not fair, and it is a huge leap of logic.]"

---

<sup>6</sup> "Mind/Brain Bulletin" editorial, January, 1976, as quoted in Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s* (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1980), 18, emphasis in original.

<sup>7</sup> From the debate recording.

I hope you can begin to see by now (or will begin to see if you research the subject) that not only is it not a huge leap of logic, but it is overwhelmingly confirmed. But perhaps one impediment to it being obvious to you is that you do not understand what the definition of the occult is. I have found that many people who may be familiar with the term 'occult' nevertheless have very little understanding of what exactly comprises the occult world view. I should like to send to you two magazines for which I wrote the cover story, if you amenable to such a proposal. I could mail them to you if you like. One article is titled "Witchcraft: It May not Be What You Think" and the other is "Satanism: A Taste for the Dark Side." While neither of these articles deals directly with the holistic health movement as such, they do touch on the subject of the occult world view in as much it also underlies both Witchcraft and Satanism. But please do not misunderstand me here. I am not suggesting that Holistic Health is exactly the same as witchcraft or that anyone who dabbles in holistic methods of health care is a clandestine Satanist. But there are broad philosophical elements that are shared by all of them. That these broad philosophical themes are common to all occult religions and world views is virtually undisputed by the very people who advocate such world views. As you will see in the articles, I have gone to the primary sources themselves. What are in dispute are two things: whether such a view of the world is compatible with the Christian view of the world and whether such a view of the world is true. I have included a bibliography of evangelical Christian books on the subject of the New Age Movement which includes some works dealing with holistic medicine.

- > Dr. Siegel represents one branch of holistic medicine. You
- > may or may not be aware that the field also includes those who
- > use prayer for healing. So there is a diversity of approaches,
- > techniques, and world views.

Dr. Siegel represents the mainstream of holistic medicine as it exploded in the 1970s and beyond. He was in no way eccentric in his views, broadly speaking. But you are correct in that there is a diversity of approaches and that some of these approaches may not be grounded upon the occult world view as traditional holistic medicine has been. One weakness of my article (due to the fact that I posted it virtually unchanged from when I first wrote it in 1995), which I will correct, is that it fails to acknowledge the degree to which the term 'holistic' has come to be applied to so many procedures that it has almost lost its usefulness as a label. I would argue that this is largely due to marketing trends. So many things today are being touted as holistic when a few decades ago they would have never been seen as such. For example, praying for healing is millennia old. You have incidences of prayer for healing to the God of the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. But it is confusing the issue to imply that prayer for healing as such is 'holistic.' All this does is to take what has heretofore been a religious practice and given it a new label. Some perhaps do so in order to try to gain scientific respectability. I noticed one of the web sites you recommended focuses largely on the extent to which holistic medicine is recognized by the professional health care organizations. For some reason, some health care practitioners who pray for their patients want some board to "officially" approve this as a viable health care practice. I would be second to none in defending the legitimacy of prayer for healing. But at the same time, it does not matter to me at all that an approval board somehow recognizes prayer as some "official" medical procedure.



What is interesting is that the whole approach of trying to marry religion and science is replete throughout the New Age Movement. One only has to go back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century with figures like Mary Baker Eddy, Ernest Holmes, and others to see how the New Thought movement then tried to marry science and religion—or perhaps a better way to say it is they were trying to make religion into a science.

- > Are you familiar with the tradition of Christian mystics such
- > as St. Theresa? The mystical experience as described by Christian
- > mystics resembles statements by Siegel that you describe as
- > unbiblical and unChristian. When you speak of "the Christian
- > view of reality" are you certain that there is only one? Siegel says
- > that disciplined meditation "can lead to breathtaking
- > experiences of cosmic at-oneness and enlightenment." I have
- > heard this experience described as "Christ-consciousness."

Yes, I am somewhat familiar with Christian mysticism, but perhaps not as familiar with it as you are. There are two issues here. First, there is the issue of whether the mysticism within the Christian tradition is the same as the world view as conveyed by Dr. Siegel. Second, there is the issue of whether one, both, or neither of these views of reality are true. To answer your question directly, yes I am certain that there is only one Christian view of reality even if there are Christians who have different views of reality. What would need to happen is an examination of the evidence. But the evidence is not necessarily easily come by and much of it is philosophical in nature. Whether this applies to you or not, I cannot say, but my experience has been that very few people are used to dealing with such issues at a philosophical level and are quite unfamiliar with categories or methods of philosophical analysis. I am no means the last word on the subject, but I do have an opinion and I am willing to discuss the issue. In examining these matters one would have to deal with issues such as the criteria of truth and knowledge and the nature of reality. One would deal with questions such as "What does it mean to say that a statement is true?" "Do our senses convey everything there is to know about reality?" "Do the laws of logic apply to reality?" "What role can or should religious experience play in formulating our understanding about reality?" "Is there a God?" "What is God like?" "Can or has God communicated with us?" "Can we understand that communication?" and others. I tried to be candid in my article about where I was coming from as an evangelical Christian. I realize that not everyone who reads my article would grant me that world view, but the article itself was not so much a defense of the biblical evangelical Christian world view as it was an exposé of the underlying assumptions that comprise Dr. Siegel's holistic health.

The topic of mysticism is interesting. Generally, one can distinguish two types of mysticism. First, there is the mysticism that is an experience of something wholly other, the *mysterium tremendum* of Rudolf Otto.<sup>8</sup> Second, there is the notion of mysticism whereby one seeks to become ontologically one with or ontologically united to ultimate reality. This latter is what you would find in some of the eastern religions such as Upanishadic Hinduism. It is this latter sense of mysticism that I believe is incompatible

---

<sup>8</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 12-30.

with Christianity. In Christianity, the goal is not to become God; it is not to somehow become ontologically merged with the ultimate however it is conceived. Rather, Christianity says that the problem with humans is that we are morally estranged from God because of our sins and that we need a Savior to reconcile us to God. The two mysticisms are very different indeed. The former I celebrate. The later I condemn.

- > Is it in fact possible that some Christians may have religious experiences
- > that are not circumscribed by your rulebook? I believe that you
- > should not set yourself up as the arbiter of what is the Christian view
- > of reality, especially since it would leave out persons known historically
- > as Christian mystics.

I do not mean to make a cheap debater's point here, but what if I said in response to you that I believe that you should not set yourself up as the arbiter of what I should set myself up as an arbiter of? In other words, for you to tell me what I should or should not claim is the Christian view of reality is you being an arbiter of who should and should not make such claims and is no different in principle than me making my claim in the first place. But the issue of whether or not I or anyone else should be an arbiter is irrelevant. What matters is whether my claim is true or not. I hope my discussion above shows that my view would not necessarily leave out persons known historically as Christian mystics. This is because they are mystics in a different sense of the term than the mystics one finds in the occult tradition. Even so, the criteria is not whether a particular view leaves out or includes just anyone that is "known historically" as something. The criterion is whether the view is true. There are many today that call themselves Christians that I have absolutely no qualms about claiming that their beliefs are not Christian at all. Generally, when it comes to the attenuated discussion about whether a particular doctrine is Christian or not, this involves something more than just the philosophical analysis I talked about above. It involves the role of biblical authority and the methods of proper biblical interpretation. That too, is a discussion that I am usually happy to have.

- > You say that from a biblical perspective there are "obvious
- > problems" with the concepts of meditation and self-healing,
- > among others. Please tell me what is unbiblical about these
- > two concepts, and what is your source in the Bible. If self-healing
- > is wrong, then wouldn't doctor-directed healing be equally wrong?

No, healing is not wrong. Doctor-directed healing is not necessarily wrong. There are two concerns I have here. First, there is the issue of whether or not the world view and doctrines that inform a particular procedure are true or not. Second there is the issue of whether the procedure is safe and effective. For someone to seek healing by praying in the name of Christ to the God of the Bible is not wrong. For some one to talk to his dead patients or to try to manipulate the "life force" or "ch'i" is wrong. I maintain that it is wrong because it is not true. At this point it matters not to me whether it is effective or not. If it inculcates into someone an anti-Christian world view or doctrine, then I believe it is wrong. For someone to seek healing by the proper application of viable medical procedures is not wrong. For someone to seek healing by the application of religious or spiritual or metaphysical procedures that stand in contrast to the biblical model, is wrong

and potentially dangerous. When Bernie Siegel thinks he is talking to his dead patients or to his spirit guide, I have no problem believing that he is talking to something or someone. But I deny that he is talking to some benevolent entity in the spirit realm. I believe that he quite possibly is in contact with demonic beings. (Now it is possible that he is in contact with nothing at all). My argument for this is that it is not a coincidence that these beings communicate to Bernie Siegel the same view of reality that has been communicated for centuries to many other people. These communications are variously described as spirits of the dead, spirit guides, animal spirits, angels, the gods, mother earth, the ch'i, the prana, the Force, one's higher consciousness, the "right brain," extra terrestrials, and others. A survey of the views of reality that come through these "encounters" shows that there is a remarkable commonality. It is no accident that these experiences all mushroomed at about the same time in American culture during the counter-culture revolution and that many who were having these experiences found camaraderie with each other. They discovered that their experiences pointed to a common view of the nature of reality, the nature of human beings, and the nature of our relationship with the universe. It is my contention that this common world view that they share stands in stark contrast to traditional, orthodox, biblical Christianity. Generally speaking, most of them would agree with me in this assessment.

- > I don't see why the statement that "we have within ourselves
- > the potential for our own growth and renewal" is unChristian.
- > If you look at a baby, it clearly has within itself the potential
- > to learn to walk and talk and grow. Our cells and bodily organs
- > are constantly renewing themselves. Do you think that God must
- > be micro-managing His creations minute by minute?

You are certainly right here. I do not want to be misunderstood. There is of course a great deal of potential for our own growth (though I might quibble with the notion of having our own potential for renewal). But you have to understand my criticism in its context. The quote is from Nevil Drury, an occultist. As an occultist, he is not talking about merely growing up from a being a baby to being an adult. He is not talking about realizing one's potential in sports or academics or whatever pursuit one aims at. These obvious things are not significant enough to warrant books. There is something underlying it all. He is talking about realizing one's own divinity or godhood. It is what the practicing witch Margot Adler means when she says "A spiritual path that is not stagnant ultimately leads one to the understanding of one's own divine nature. Thou art Goddess. Thou are God. Divinity is imminent in all Nature. It is as much within you as without."<sup>9</sup> It is with the notion that we have within ourselves all the resources for the solutions to all of life's problems (which is what being a god means in this context) that I take exception. So, while it is true that we have God-given potentials that we can realize throughout our lives, there is still something wrong with us that only God's grace through the cross of Christ can remedy. This is exactly why I quoted 2 Corinthians 3:4-5 which says "And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God."

---

<sup>9</sup> Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today*, Revised and Expanded edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), ix.

I hope this begins to set a greater context in which to understand my original article. I did not want the article to have to deal with all of these topics at once. I hope someday to have my own comprehensive work on the contrasts of the occult view of reality and the Christian view.

Sincerely,

Richard G. Howe