



STATEMENT DM-700

WITNESSING TIPS

Addressing the "Positive Gospel" of the Metaphysical Movement

by Dean C. Halverson

Before we can accept Jesus Christ as our Savior we must first acknowledge our need to be saved. When we do so, we are saying that we have become aware of our enslaving sinful nature, of the alienation that our sin has caused in our relationship with God, of God's impending wrath on that sin, and of our total inability to save ourselves. Try telling someone in the Metaphysical movement (Religious Science, Unity, *A Course in Miracles*, etc.) about the wages of sin, though, and they will look at you as though you are an anachronism — a throwback to a less-enlightened age. The ideas of an enslaving sinful nature, of being alienated from God, and of God's wrath are, to them, extremely offensive.

If there is one word that best characterizes the Metaphysical movement, it is *optimism*. In a sense their approach could be *nothing but* optimistic, because the Metaphysical belief system declares all that is negative (e.g., sin, disease, poverty, disharmony, and death) to be unreal. They are unreal, says the Metaphysician, because such things are not found in God, who is the First Cause and the Source of all that is real. The source of all that is negative is therefore our *own* negative attitudes and false beliefs. We falsely believe we are sinful and separated from God, when, in fact, we eternally emanate from the impersonal Mind of God. The God of the Metaphysical movement, who is the very Principle of Goodness in all things, is not at all interested in judging us, but only in providing for us all that is good. We can realize that goodness when we recognize that we are one with God in our true nature. One Religious Science minister wrote in a brochure, "Once you realize your own true nature, you will find that health, prosperity, love and peace are all fundamental parts of you."

So, how does one share the gospel of Jesus Christ with someone in the Metaphysical movement when their beliefs appear to be so positive, and when the prerequisites for accepting the Christian gospel appear to be so negative? I suggest you point out how the Metaphysical way of salvation differs from the Christian way. While the Metaphysical gospel begins with good news, it ends with bad news.

When considering how the Metaphysical movement denies all that is negative, it may be surprising to hear that the Metaphysical gospel has bad news in it. There is indeed bad news in the Metaphysical gospel, though, and that bad news can be found in the very words that Metaphysicians use to describe their way of salvation. When witnessing, it is best to let the Metaphysicians state these words themselves. The way to elicit these words is to ask them to talk about their understanding of the way of salvation or the path to enlightenment. As they talk, listen for key words that speak of salvation as being based on *human effort*, as being accomplished through *a gradual process*, and as being dependent on *manifesting a standard of perfection*.

Concerning human effort, when Metaphysicians talk about the path to enlightenment they will use words like *achieve*, *attain*, *obtain*, *manifest*, *demonstrate*, *prove*, *earn*, and *embody*. Charles Fillmore, co-founder of the Unity School of Christianity, said, "The real object to existence is to bring forth the perfect man and *attain* eternal life. Eternal life must be *earned*." (*Dynamics for Living* [Lee's Summit, MO: Unity, 1967], 326; emphases added.) Often Metaphysicians will use the analogy of God being like a mountain where all paths lead to the top. Notice, though, where this analogy places the emphasis: on human effort. The spiritual seeker must climb that mountain to reach God.

With respect to the path to enlightenment being a gradual process, listen for key words like *reincarnation*, *path*, *journey*, *goal*, *step*, *progression*, and *program*. *A Course in Miracles* states that all people are given "*a slowly-evolving training program*, in which as many previous mistakes as possible are corrected." (*Manual for Teachers*, vol. 3 of *A Course in Miracles* [Tiburon, CA:

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Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

Foundation for Inner Peace, 1975, 25; emphasis added.) What is meant by "slowly -evolving" is not merely a few years, but numerous lifetimes. Shirley MacLaine writes that "reincarnation is like show business. You keep doing it until you get it right." (*Out on a Limb* [New York: Bantam, 1986], 233.)

The final characteristic of the Metaphysical way of salvation is that it is dependent on *manifesting* some standard of perfection. Metaphysicians assume that humanity is already inherently perfect. What this means for their concept of salvation is that before they can say they have attained salvation they must *first* manifest their inner perfection. External imperfections — whether physical, emotional, or relational — reveal inner imperfections (i.e., lack of enlightenment) that must be dealt with. This requirement of proving one's perfection may be stated in various ways, such as *manifesting the Christ within, taking total control of one's life, demonstrating unconditional love and forgiveness, manifesting perfect health, or bringing about global peace.*

After the Metaphysicians have finished talking about their path to enlightenment, then help them become aware of the kinds of words they have used: words of human effort, of a gradual process, and of salvation being dependent on manifesting perfection. Explain that while the Metaphysical gospel began with what may have appeared to be good news, it ends with the bad news that salvation must be earned by incomprehensible striving over myriads of lifetimes to manifest one's supposed inner perfection. Experience should teach us that this goal is not just difficult to attain — it is impossible.

The Christian gospel, on the other hand, begins with the bad news that humanity is sinful and that the wages of sin is eternal death, but it ends with the incredibly good news that salvation (including forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and the ultimate realization of a perfect nature) is a free gift. Salvation, according to the Bible, is not based on human effort or on our ability to manifest perfection, but it is based on God's grace alone (Eph. 2:3b-5, 8-9). Neither is the Christian's salvation a gradual process, but it is a gift that can be received immediately through faith in the completed work of Jesus Christ. Finally, Jesus Christ met the standard of perfection on our behalf. When we place our faith in Him, His righteousness is transferred to our account (2 Cor. 5:21).

In the end, the difference between the Metaphysical gospel and the Christian gospel is like the difference between earning a wage and receiving a gift. Paul writes, "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Rom. 4:4-5). The way of salvation that is the best news is clear.