

THE ROAD BROADLY TRAVELED

PART II

*A Critique of Further Along the Road Less Traveled,
People of the Lie, Different, and A World Waiting to be Born,
by M. Scott Peck, M.D.*

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FURTHER ALONG THE ROAD BROADLY TRAVELED

A Critique of
Further Along the Road Less Traveled,
Different Drum,
A World Waiting to be Born, and
People of the Lie
by M. Scott Peck, M.D.

Scott Peck's best selling book, *The Road Less Traveled*, has remained extremely popular among both unbelievers and Christians. The author, meanwhile, has produced several new books: *People of the Lie* (1983), subtitled "the hope for healing human evil," *Different Drum* (1987) and *A World Waiting to be Born* (1993), both concerning Peck's view of building "community" in order to achieve global peace, and finally, *Further Along the Road Less Traveled* (1993), "the unending journey toward spiritual growth." Despite Peck's claim to be a Christian after writing *The Road Less Traveled*, the contents of these books demonstrate that his highly unorthodox theology has little resemblance to the historic Christian faith. The purpose of this critique is to provide a detailed, well documented examination of Peck's theology and his continued commitment to New Age concepts. We will review his beliefs concerning God, man, Scripture, evil, eschatology, death, along with psychotherapy and science. In doing so, believers should be adequately warned about an author who is highly influential but radically removed from the core doctrines of Christianity.

The abbreviations used in this paper are as follows:

<i>Further Along the Road Less Traveled</i>	FL
<i>People of the Lie</i>	PL
<i>Different Drum</i>	DD
<i>A World Waiting to be Born</i>	WW

Peck's "Road"

Only God can determine the ultimate eternal destiny of any individual. We can seriously question whether Peck, at this time, is truly a Christian, in view of his heretical teachings. His views are deviant enough to be rightly considered "another gospel," one that does not lead to eternal salvation. The urgency of this warning can hardly be underestimated.

To begin our "journey" through Peck's writings, it is helpful to consider his own "road." He admits to being a Zen Buddhist when writing *The Road Less Traveled*, but now claims a Christian faith:

"I came to God through Zen Buddhism, but that was just the first stretch of the road. The road I have chosen for myself, after twenty years of dabbling with Zen, is Christianity. But I doubt that I could have made that choice without Zen. To accept Christianity one must be prepared to accept paradox, and Zen Buddhism--which a lot of people say shouldn't even be considered a religion but a philosophy--is the ideal training school for paradox. Without that training, I don't think there is any way I could have been prepared to swallow the literally God-awful paradoxes of Christian doctrine."
(p. 156, FL)

"I became a Christian several years after *The Road Less Traveled* was published--and remember, the very first sentence in that book is the great Buddhist truth 'Life is difficult'--although subconsciously I had been tending in that direction for quite some time, and *The Road Less Traveled* is full of Christian concepts." (p. 156, FL)

We will discuss "paradox" more fully in a later section. However, the Buddhist notion is *not* equivalent to the Christian concept of *mystery*, which exists because our finite human minds cannot *comprehensively* know the mind of God. Peck's "Christianity" is polluted, not enhanced, by his years of Zen Buddhism. He has not discarded these pagan, anti-biblical ideas at all. His first book, as demonstrated in Part I, is not "full of Christian concepts," but on contrary, it is full of New Age theological concepts. Peck recollects that a man congratulated his cleverness in "disguising" his Christianity in that book, but he honestly admitted: "Well, I didn't disguise my Christianity. I wasn't a Christian" (p. 157).

One key factor in Peck's "conversion" is that he "came to believe that Christian doctrine has the most correct understanding of the nature of sin," which he defines as "simply missing the mark" (p. 157, FL). He notes rightly that we are all sinners. However, the biblical view of sin is much more serious. "Missing the mark" before a holy, righteous God is not so "simple" as Peck imagines, but required the sacrifice of God's own Son, Jesus Christ. *Nowhere does Peck accurately relate the gospel!*

Peck claims to be tuned out by both "Stage Two Christians" (fundamentalist, orthodox believers), along with New Agers who consider him too conservative (p. 168, FL). Nevertheless, he notes his own popularity in the "Bible Belt" among persons who do not "share the fundamentalist mentality" (p. 176, FL). Concerning his style of "Christianity" he says:

"It's a path of tension. An important doctrine of Buddhism is called the Middle Path, which stands for the embracing of opposites." (p. 168, FL)

Clearly, Peck is far more concerned about the "doctrines" of Buddhism than the sound doctrines of God's Word. He praises Carl Jung, occult psychoanalyst, for providing "a perfect marriage

between psychology and spirituality, between religion and science," describing *The Road Less Traveled* as "Jung translated for the masses" (p. 175, FL). It is extremely significant that, despite his "conversion," Peck continues to support his first book, loaded though it is with highly anti-Christian, New Age theology.

The Nature of Truth

One of the most fundamental errors in Peck's theology is his failure to acknowledge any absolute standard for truth. Calling himself an "evangelist" bringing both good and bad news (FL, p. 17), he states:

"I don't know anything. It might seem odd that an evangelist, a 'bringer of truth,' would confess so readily that he doesn't know anything. But the real truth of the matter is that you don't know anything either. None of us does. We dwell in a profoundly mysterious universe." (p. 18, FL)

This same book, his most recent writing, begins with relativity concerning truth: "The right road for one is the wrong road for another," thus "life is complex" (p. 13, FL).

Peck's deceptive claim to "know nothing" is contradicted in numerous places. Even within the covers of the same book, he admits to a little bit of knowledge:

"Thus it has been through the experiences of my life--my experiences of grace--that I have come to what little knowledge I have about God." (p. 174, FL)

Which is it? No knowledge at all, or a little?

Christian Doctrine. Don't be deceived by Peck's apparent tolerance for all "roads" or "truths." He is opposed to the biblical claim of inerrant, eternal truth, considering "the great sin of the Christian church" to be "that particular brand of arrogance, or narcissism" of "those who think that they've got the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and that those other poor slobs who believe differently are necessarily not saved" (p. 166, FL). Notwithstanding Peck's disdain for those who claim the absolute, eternal standards of God's Word to be truth, we will continue our examination.

Spiritual Fuzziness. Peck equates the "poor in spirit" with being "confused," stating that "confusion leads to a search for clarification and with that search comes a great deal of learning" (p. 80, FL). He contends that "somehow," "in God's name," we survive and are protected (p. 81, FL). Elsewhere he quotes Ghandi's statement that "Truth is God and God is Truth," further stating that "science is submitted to a higher power--truth" (p. 36, FL). The spiritually mature person, he says, does not cling to any "dogma" but is merely an "explorer" (p. 79, FL). He sees no possibility for a "complete faith" (p. 79, FL). As for those who

claim to "know the score," Peck views them as motivated by laziness and fear (p. 75, FL). He claims that there is "no formula" for knowing whether you are doing the right thing (p. 218, DD). All of this leads to extreme uncertainty, reminiscent of those "tossed to and fro by and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14). While acknowledging the bare possibility that "truth" might exist, Peck offers little hope for attaining it.

Mythology. It is not surprising at this point to note that Peck defines truth in terms of *myth*:

"A myth is a myth precisely because it is true. Myths are stories that are found in every culture." (p. 100, FL)

This definition has been borrowed from two unbelievers, Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell. It hardly serves as the basis for truth, but Peck praises the idea of myths because they "embody some great truth" and thus "have much to teach us about human nature" and understanding of ourselves (p. 100, FL). He even supposes that two or three different meanings can be packed into one myth (p. 108), FL). Thus mythology is a fertile source of "truth" for Peck.

Myths are distinguished from legends, "tales of the past which may or may not be true" (p. 103, FL), as well as fairy tales:

"Because myths are paradoxical and multidimensional, you cannot get into trouble believing in them. However, ordinary fairy tales tend to be one-dimensional and simplistic." (p. 104, FL)

Several examples are provided concerning myths and their meanings (see p. 104-106, FL). For example, Peck believes that dragons accurately represent human beings because "they are snakes with wings" and "worms that can fly" (p. 104, FL; 1, 172, DD). In the Book of Revelation, however, the dragon represents the *devil*. Beware!

Applications and Implications. Peck's lack of absolute standards leads to serious conflict with biblical truth in areas that are important to believers.

Abortion. Peck states that a "simplistic, one-dimensional answer like, 'Thou shall not abort' simply isn't going to cut it" because "responsibility is missing" and such a law is "without compassion and integrity" (p. 182, FL). Certainly this issue must be addressed by more than *merely* laws against abortion. Christians need to be involved in providing evangelism, biblical counsel, and practical help. However, God's standards are very clear concerning the *murder* of unborn children.

Sexual immorality. Peck flagrantly ignores biblical standards here:

"It is possible for premarital or extramarital sex to be quite chaste. And conversely...it is possible for marital sex to be profoundly unchaste." (p. 227, FL)

Peck clearly has *some* standard for judging what is or is not "chaste," but that standard is *not* the Word of God.

Marriage. Peck considers marriage "too large to submit to any single, adequate definition," in view of polygamy, homosexual unions, common law marriages, and legally married couples who no longer sleep together (p. 95, WW). He believes each marriage to be "an organization of unique partners," and emphatically states that "there are no stereotypical good marriages" (WW, p. 96). But again appealing to his own extrabiblical standard, Peck holds out "civility--or the lack thereof" as the factor that determines whether a marriage is good or bad (p. 96, WW--"civility" to be defined in a later section).

These few examples are sufficient evidence to demonstrate Peck's departure from biblical standards, and his invention of other standards to replace them. His teachings concerning the nature of truth in general have a profound and devastating impact on his understanding of the Scriptures.

The Nature of Scripture

Myth. Peck's view of Scripture is extremely subjective, denying the Bible's inerrancy and historical accuracy. He considers it a "collection of paradoxes" to be understood primarily as *mythology*:

"It is a mixture of legend, some of which is true and some of which is not true. It is a mixture of very accurate history and not so accurate history. It is a mixture of outdated rules and some pretty good rules. It is a mixture of myth and metaphor." (p. 107, FL)

But who is to determine what is or is not accurate? What is true and what is false? What rules are "outdated" and what ones still relevant? In embracing this type of understanding, Peck is setting up his own judgment as more ultimate than God's authority. This is a theologically fatal error, leading to horrendous conclusions.

Inerrancy and Interpretation. The Scriptures are breathed out by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17), written under the control of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21), and eternal (1 Peter 1:24-25). Peck reveals his misunderstanding and rejection of the Bible's claim to be the inerrant Word of God:

"How are we to interpret the Bible? Although they place such importance on it, the fundamentalists, in my experience, strangely misuse the Bible. Actually, the term 'fundamentalists' is a misnomer. The more proper term is 'inerrantists,' those who believe that the Bible is not only the divine inspired word of God but the actual transcribed, unaltered word of God, and that it is subject to only one kind of literal interpretation, namely theirs. Such thinking, to my mind, only impoverishes the Bible." (p. 107, FL)

Peck grossly misunderstands the concept of inerrancy here. While God controlled the writing of Scripture and assured its inerrancy, the words were not "transcribed" as a secretary would take dictation. God shaped and used the individual personalities of the biblical writers, and being sovereign as He is, made it possible for fallible men to write infallible words. The human element in Scripture does not compromise its accuracy, as God retains control over His revelation.

Concerning literal interpretation, Peck notes the metaphor Jesus used about plucking out the eye that offends and says:

"So the Bible is not always meant to be interpreted literally. A great deal of it is metaphor and myth, subject to a variety of complex, and often paradoxical, interpretations."
(p. 108, FL)

Peck even claims that "we have a choice of how to interpret its stories" (p. 112, FL).

There is indeed some figurative language used in Scripture. There are several different literary styles, including many poetic passages, parables, and the apocalyptic language of Revelation. However, it is not so complex as Peck imagines. Much of the Bible is represented clearly as accurate historical narrative, and there is no "choice" left to the imaginations of fallen man. Peck's "pick and choose" approach is wrong. Where poetic or other figurative language is used, it is often clear from the context that a literal interpretation is not intended. Often, God explains the meaning in the same passage. Furthermore, the use of figurative speech does not in any sense make the Scriptures mythological or compromise its absolute inerrancy.

Miracle. Like so many of our twentieth century theologians, Peck is unable to grasp and accept the concept of God's supernatural intervention in history. He considers his concept of "community" to be a "miracle," claiming that "perhaps miracles simply obey laws that we humans generally and currently do not understand" (DD, p. 83). This comment fails to acknowledge that it is the sovereign Lord who designed and created the laws of nature, and therefore He can supernaturally intervene in the pages of history. Peck's "community" is no miracle in the biblical sense of the word, but a man-made concept built on the cracked foundations of psychotherapy.

The Fifth Commandment. Peck's faulty methods of interpretation lead to an arrogant claim that man can judge and even rewrite a portion of Scripture:

"A third reason for the idolatry of family is the fifth of the Ten Commandments: 'Honor your father and mother that your days may be long upon the land.' From the standpoint of psychiatry, it is probably the only thing in the entire Bible that needs rewriting. Radical rewriting. For the most part, children naturally want to honor their parents. The problem comes when their parents are, in reality, dishonorable people.

All manner of self-destructive mind control--self-lying--has been practiced by children through the generations in the attempt to respect reprehensible parental behavior in the name of such biblically misdirected 'civility.' Untold neuroses have resulted. I do not think it an oversimplification to state that twice as many psychotherapeutic hours are spent attempting to deal with the ill effects of the Fifth Commandment as are spent on any other psychological problem." (p. 175, WW)

A lengthy critique could be made of the contents of this quote, but that is beyond the scope of this paper. The point being made here is that Peck's method of interpreting Scripture leads to placing man in the position of judging God. Peck exalts his own judgment, and that of psychotherapy in general, above God's Word. It is unthinkable heresy to assert that man can rewrite what was written by the very finger of God!

Adam and Eve. Peck holds a radically unorthodox view of the creation and fall of man which permeates all of his writings. He considers the account of Adam and Eve to be a *myth*, thus denying their historicity. Earlier we noted his equation of human nature with the dragon. Elaborating a little further he says:

"As a mythic symbol--and all myths are about human nature, one way or another--dragons are relatively simple. But as in dreams, many meanings can be condensed into a single myth. Take the wonderful story of Adam and Eve, the Garden, the apple, and the snake (dragons have slipped in, even here). Is it a story of our fall from grace and alienation from our environment? Or is it a story of our evolution into self-consciousness (and hence that shyness that is so essentially human)? Or both? It is also a story of human greed and fear and arrogance and laziness and disobedience in response to the call to be the best we can be. And it tells us that we can no longer go back to that unself-conscious state of oneness with the world (the way is blocked by a flaming sword) but can find our salvation only by going forward through the rigors of the desert into ever deeper levels of consciousness." (p. 172, DD)

This type of interpretation, noting "oneness with the world," for example, has much more in common with New Age theology than orthodox biblical principles. Peck has not moved far from the orientation of *The Road Less Traveled*.

Later books affirm and expand Peck's unbiblical view of the first man and woman. He claims that the Bible supports evolution, an idea diametrically opposed to the biblical truth of God's creation:

"The first three chapters of Genesis, along with their other insights, constitute a surprisingly accurate account of evolution." (p. 15, WW)

"Although the fundamentalists--the inerrantists and creationists--may not like it, one of the things that the Eden myth teaches us about is evolution." (p. 108, FL)

Genesis 3, Peck asserts, is a "myth" about the evolution of human beings into consciousness, an "awareness of ourselves as entities separate from the rest of nature" (p. 15-6, WW; p. 18, FL). He considers the "consequences of this evolution" to be:

"...our shyness, our self-consciousness, our sense of separation from nature, and our need to continue evolving into ever greater consciousness" including the "awareness of good and evil." (p. 109, FL)

Notice that *nothing* is said here about man's separation from God due to his sinful disobedience. Thus the devastating fall of man into sin is minimized and obscured. Peck's faulty interpretative principles lead to false conclusions that inevitably destroy the heart of the gospel message within his system. As we will see in the section on "community building," Peck substitutes his own salvation message, *another gospel*.

We must note, too, that it is crucial to the true gospel account to acknowledge the historicity of the Genesis account. Adam is no mythological character, but a real man. Christ is referred to in numerous places as the "second Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45 and elsewhere), and many critical parallels are drawn between the first Adam, representing the entire human race, and Christ the "second Adam," representing all believers (Romans 5:12-21). Adam's disobedience brought death, not evolution into "consciousness" or some higher state. Christ's obedience and righteousness assures eternal life to those who place their faith in Him. *To deny the historicity of the first Adam leads to a denial of the historicity of the second Adam, Jesus Christ.* Nothing could be more destructive to the glorious good news of the gospel!

The Nature of God

The "god" of Scott Peck bears little resemblance to the living, eternal, sovereign, self-existent God who created the heavens and the earth, and who works all things according to the counsel of His own will.

Force or "Higher Power." Peck's concept of God is as indefinite and misleading as his concept of truth. Again, he has no absolutes:

"We can ask help of the force in our lives that we recognize to be greater than we are. A force that we all see differently, but of whose presence most of us are aware."
(p. 14, FL)

New Age theology conceives "god" as an impersonal force, but the

Bible does not.

Peck says he is cautious about using "religious words," preferring "spirituality rather than religiosity" and "higher power instead of God," because, he claims, "organized religion...has tended to corrupt some very holy words" through hypocrisy (p. 153, FL). He further defends "higher power" terminology by what appears to be religious tolerance:

"If I used God, it would imply one would have to be a believer in order to be a civil person. This is not the case."
(p. 47, WW)

"Anyone deeply dedicated to love, light, and truth will be civil indeed, no matter what her formal belief system or lack of it is." (p. 48, WW)

"I do not pretend to know the true name of God," says Peck, who "sees enormous virtue in the wording of the third step of AA" except that he would say, "'God as we understand Him or Her.'" (p. 234, FL)

Peck places his own self-defined standards, such as "civility," above the biblical standards of godliness. This type of religious inclusiveness, and disdain for sound doctrine, is typical of New Age proclamations, but radically opposed to Scripture.

Peck is even willing to leave God out of the picture in teaching godly values to children. He believes that public schools ought to teach such values, but "God need not even be mentioned by name" (p. 51, WW). Elsewhere, he opens the "higher power" concept to just about anything at all:

"If we allow that reality can have an existence independent of our own will and fantasies, then even reality can be a Higher Power." (p. 112, WW)

The true God is not an anonymous author who fails to sign His name, nor can He dare be confused with His creation in this manner.

Recognizing all of this fuzziness and "openness" about the nature of God, one must not be deceived by Peck's deceptive claim to worship the God of Christian theism:

"Through the rest of the book, whenever theology is relevant, I will usually not be talking about a Higher Power but about God--and specifically the God of my Christian orientation. It is not my desire to exclude anybody of a different religious orientation." (p. 51, WW)

Peck's motive, supposedly, is to be inclusive and tolerant of all religious faiths. There is more about this issue later. Meanwhile, be careful to note the similarity to New Age pantheism and "unity." Nowhere does Peck clearly or biblically define the "God of (his) Christian orientation."

Transcendence/Immanence. The God of Scripture is transcendent in His sovereignty and glory, clearly distinct from His creation. Yet He is also immanent, involved and in control of every detail of our lives. Confusion about these two aspects of God leads to all sorts of theological error. Peck makes a faulty attempt to acknowledge both:

"God resides both inside of us in His or Her still, small voice and, simultaneously, outside of us in all of His or Her transcendent, magnificent otherness." (p. 207, FL)

There is a failure here to recognize that *God does not reside in the unbeliever, but only dwells in the Christian.* Again, the idea of a "divine spark" in every person is a New Age concept, not a biblical truth.

Sovereignty

Even though Peck claims that "everything that happens to us has been designed for our spiritual growth" (p. 24, FL), he rejects the biblical view of God's sovereignty. This is particularly glaring when he deals with the problems of Satan and evil in *People of the Lie*. Having abandoned the standards of Scripture, as well as the eschatological hope of Scripture, Peck limits God and also makes some statements that contradict each other. He limits God's ability to destroy:

"Perhaps the greatest problem of theodicy is the question why God, having created Satan in the first place, simply didn't wipe it out after its rebellion. The question presupposes that God would wipe anything out. It assumes that God can punish and kill. Perhaps the answer is that God gave Satan free will and that God cannot destroy; He can only create. The point is that God does not punish." (p. 204, PL)

This is biblical nonsense. God *can* and *does* destroy, as He once did in the flood during Noah's time. He also *can* and *does* punish evil; He is just. The closing book of the Bible, Revelation, clearly states God's intention to consummate history and punish His enemies, both demonic and human, in eternity. However, Peck rejects the historical accuracy and inerrancy of Scripture.

On the same page, Peck hedges somewhat, claiming that God *chooses* not to use His power for destruction:

"Yet to give us free will God had to forswear the use of force against us." (p. 204, PL)

It is "not necessarily that God lacks the power to destroy us...He has painfully and terribly chosen never to use it.... Having forsworn the use of power *against* us, if we refuse His help, He has no recourse but, weeping, to watch us punish

ourselves." (p. 204, PL)

"Having forsaken force, God is impotent to prevent the atrocities that we commit upon one another." (p. 205, PL)

No, the God of Scripture is not impotent. For reasons that are not fully comprehensible to the finite mind of man, God, though not the author of evil, sovereignly uses the evil acts of man to accomplish His purposes. He used the stubborn defiance of the Egyptian Pharaoh to demonstrate His power and glory to the ancient Israelites. He used the atrocious act of Joseph's brother to place Joseph in Egypt at a specific time for His own purposes. God is never, never impotent. He is the one who works all things according to the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11). Human "free will" is not so "free" as man might like to imagine. Man is responsible before God for his sin, and he has some legitimate choices, but that freedom is not ultimate. God retains His control.

Interestingly, Peck claims that "God in His weakness will win the battle against evil...Christ impotently nailed upon the cross is God's ultimate weapon...through it the defeat of evil is utterly assured" (p. 205, PL). Christ was not "impotent" in His crucifixion, but obediently and willingly gave His life as the sacrifice for the sins of His own people. Yes, God's final victory over evil is assured, and the powers of darkness were soundly defeated at the cross. These comments are closer to truth than most of what Peck teaches.

Process Theology. Peck claims that "the cutting edge in theology these days is called 'process theology'" (p. 359, WW). He notes the writings of Alfred North Whitehead in launching this movement, but appeals to Mormonism as well:

"Long before Whitehead the Mormons had a statement of pure process theology: 'As man is, God was; as God is, man will become.'" (p. 359, WW)

Here is how Peck applies the idea of "process" to God, dragging Him down to a fleshly level:

"Maybe God puts on five pounds...and then he has to taken them off. Only he doesn't make a big deal out of it, which is perhaps why he's God. That is how I stumbled onto process theology." (p. 360, WW)

This is ludicrous, reducing God to a not-so-glorified man! Also, unless we are speaking specifically of Christ during His time on earth, God does not have a physical body to add five pounds onto!

Despite his abandonment of biblical inerrancy, Peck appeals to Scripture for support of his "process theology," claiming that when something is alive, "it grows, it decays, it gets reborn...it changes...all life is in process" (p. 361, WW). Therefore, he concludes:

"And since I choose to have a living God, I believe that my God is also in process, learning and growing and perhaps even laughing and dancing." (p. 361, WW)

Peck fails to make a clear distinction between *Creator* and *creation*. He also ignores the fact that man, along with the world, is *fallen*. The decay he observes is a consequence of sin. At the resurrection, believers are guaranteed new, heavenly bodies that will no longer wear out, decay, grow, or change.

Applying his theology further, Peck states that "Utopia will not be stable or static...it will be evolving" (p. 361, WW). However, his "Utopia" will be impossible "if we hold on to our traditional vision of perfection" (p. 362, WW). He thus warns that utopian organization must be introduced to society with much caution (p. 363, WW). Note, however, that his "utopia" is remarkably like the New Age concept of global peace and unity, ushered in by the efforts of man. This illusory "utopia" has nothing to do with the eternal new heaven and earth that *God* has promised to create (Revelation 21-22).

Process theology is a twentieth century heresy distorting the nature of God beyond recognition. The Creator/creation distinction is destroyed, and God is demoted to the level of fallen man. God's power and sovereignty, along with His foreknowledge, are wiped out. This is not the "cutting edge." It is more like standing on the edge of a steep cliff and leaping off to certain destruction.

Sexuality and Inclusive Language

There is an alarming trend toward eliminating masculine language from the Bible, hymns, and other writings. It began by changing the generic pronoun "he" to "he/she" or "they." Now, Peck takes this latest fashion one fatal step further, describing *God* as "He or She," or simply "She" at times. In the earlier books, *Different Drum* and *People of the Lie*, Peck retained traditional masculine pronouns for God. However, he departs radically in *A World Waiting to be Born* and *Further Along the Road Less Traveled*. You have no doubt noticed this practice in many of the quotations.

This is more than a concession to feminists. First, noting that "sex is a problem for everyone," Peck claims that:

"Of all the obstacles that God designed for our learning, I think the one that He or She most fiendishly designed is sex." (p. 226, FL)

He carries this to further extremes by stating that "God is in fact a sexual being" (p. 230, FL) whose relationship to man is sexual:

"Shocking as it may seem, I think there is a genuine sexual element in the relationship between human beings and God." (p. 229, FL)

Shocking it is--but in view of Peck's other heresies, perhaps not. Peck does not understand the Creator/creation distinction. God, for him, is more an exalted man than the sovereign Lord:

"He represents humanity at its best, which has something to do with what is meant by God creating us in His own image."
(p. 230, FL)

Bear in mind that Peck has rejected creation in favor of evolution. God is not "humanity at its best." "Humanist at its best" can never compare to the holy, righteous, sinless God of Scripture. Our own righteous acts are considered *filthy rags* in the sight of God (Isaiah 64:6). So much for "humanity at its best."

Peck further explains his sexually laden ideas of God, viewing Him as *seductive*:

"I myself have experienced God as a seducer. Substitute another word in your mind, like 'lover,' or 'wooer,' if you will." (p. 230, FL)

"This notion of God not only as a sexual being but as a particularly seductive one is perhaps somewhat supportive of our traditional masculine image of Him...not that He is male, not that She is female--He/She is both and more" but "He intends to have us, no matter how fast and far we flee."
(p. 231, FL)

This represents a massive confusion about the relationship of God and man. Both male and female are created in the image of God. Still, Scripture reveals God as masculine--God the *Father*, not God the "Mother," God the *Son*, never God the "Daughter." Some clarification is gained when we note certain analogies. In the Old Testament, God frequently referred to Himself as the "husband" of Israel. A good study of the book of Hosea is extremely valuable here. In the New Testament, the church is the bride of Christ. The marital relationship of male/female is intended by God to be analogous to the relationship of God/man. The analogy is mutilated by referring to God in feminine terms, or the confusing masculine/feminine terminology that Peck uses.

Jesus Christ

Peck's view of Christ compromises His deity. At times, he sounds almost orthodox. At these points, however, his comments must be placed within the context of his general exaltation of man, and his blurring of the Creator/creation distinction.

At age 40, Peck read the Gospels for the first time. He was writing *The Road Less Traveled*, and wanted to check out the references he was making to Jesus in the book (p. 159, FL). In this reading, he "discovered a man so incredibly real that no one could have made Him up" (p. 160, FL). While affirming here that

Jesus is real and not a mythological character (as he views Adam), Peck goes on to say:

"I don't want to imply that the Gospels are totally accurate. What does survive, however, shows Jesus to be really human, and a divine genius." (p. 161, FL)

Note, again, Peck's low view of Scripture. He appears to affirm both the humanity and deity of Christ at times:

"We must return to the understanding (still on the doctrinal books) that Jesus was and is *fully* human as well as divine." (p. 298, DD)

"Jesus was paradoxically both human and divine--not fifty percent one and fifty percent the other but, as the doctrine states, 'fully human and fully divine.'" (p. 206, FL)

Elsewhere, however, he says that Jesus had "two parts to his mind: a divine part and a human part" (p. 218, DD). This sort of division is inconsistent with the doctrine that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. Note, carefully, how Peck uses the word "divine" rather than *God*. Considering Peck's high view of man, we must question whether he truly sees a distinction between Jesus Christ, who is *God* as well as man, and other men. His stress seems always to be more on the *humanity* of the Lord. This is seen, for example, in his conclusion, from that humanity, that "we in fact can suffer all that he suffered" (p. 298, DD). No, we cannot! Christians have been martyred, even crucified in a manner similar to that of the Lord. However, being mere humans we *cannot* take on the sins of the world as He did.

Peck's compromises become more clear in other places. When he discusses his four "stages" of spirituality, he describes the Stage II Christian as believing "Jesus is my Savior...fairy godmother who can rescue me," but the Stage IV believer says: "Jesus, through His life and death, taught me the way that I myself must follow for my salvation" (p. 126, FL). The Bible teaches that Jesus gave Himself up as the sacrifice for our sins. Salvation is through faith alone in Christ alone. Jesus did not merely show "the way that I myself must follow for my salvation." This is pure liberalism, which should not be confused with the historic Christian faith, despite its use of similar terms. Liberalism has been a most destructive and deceptive influence in this century in Christian churches. *It is another gospel.* (For further reading, see *Christianity and Liberalism*, by J. Gresham Machen.)

One example should suffice to show that Peck has brought Jesus Christ down to the level of man, just as he has done with God the Father. In describing Christ's forty days in the wilderness, he says that "it is clear that Jesus went into the desert to wrestle with the problem of authority" (p. 249, WW). Peck speculates that He probably thought to Himself:

"Me, the Messiah?...where do I come off being the Messiah?
I'd better go off alone and think this one over."
(p. 249, WW)

Here is how Peck concludes the account:

"And then, having rejected these temptations, having *emptied* himself of all ambition, he immediately came out of that empty place to preach *full of godly authority*." (p. 249, WW)

Scripture does not support Peck's exegesis. Jesus knew, years prior to the wilderness experience, that He was the Son of God. Peck's interpretation pictures Christ as *any other man*. Yes, He faced human limitations, suffering, and trials. Yes, He humbled Himself. However, *He knew He was God in the flesh*, and thus it is presumptuous for Peck to attribute to Him statements like the one above.

Further discussion of this passage leads to Peck's statement that Jesus would have been "the most humane king that ever was" had he given in to the temptation to seek power and glory, but "what would have happened when he died?" (p. 260, WW). This clearly brings God down to man's level. Peck does not even acknowledge the resurrection here, or fact that Christ is now at the right hand of the Father reigning in glory and power.

The Nature of Evil

In *People of the Lie*, Peck discloses his encounters with the reality of evil, including two exorcisms. Much of the book is devoted to case histories of "evil" people, as he defines them. From this particular writing we can extract Peck's theology concerning evil in general and the devil in particular. In the section concerning the nature of man, we will reference this book to examine Peck's definition of evil people.

It is helpful to note at the outset that Peck reverses the order of sin's entrance into the world:

"If we seriously think about it, it probably makes more sense to assume this is a naturally evil world that has somehow been mysteriously 'contaminated' by goodness, rather than the other way around. The mystery of goodness is even greater than the mystery of evil." (p. 41, PL)

The Bible teaches that when God created the heavens, and the earth, and all of its creatures including man, *He saw that it was good!* Man was originally created good and upright. The fall into sin, causing death, decay, and disease to enter the world, came *after* this original creation. But Peck rejects the biblical account of creation, as we have already noted.

Evil - General Definitions

Peck considers evil to be "that which opposes the life force" (p. 42, PL). More fully, it is:

"...that force, residing either inside or outside of human beings, that seeks to kill life or liveliness. And goodness is its opposite. Goodness is that which promotes life and liveliness." (p. 43, PL)

On a human level, Peck sees good and evil on a continuum, explaining that "as individuals we can move ourselves one way or another along the continuum" (p. 81, PL).

The Bible does contrast life and death, both physical and spiritual. It is man's sin that brought death into the world (Romans 5:12). However, note how subtly Peck escapes the biblical concept of *sin* by focusing all of his attention on *evil*. Yes, evil is a reality, but nowhere does Peck acknowledge *sin* as the violation of God's holy, righteous standards. Those standards do not allow for the "continuum" proposed by Peck. Despite Peck's heavy emphasis on human freedom and choices, he does not recognize man's responsibility *before God* for willful disobedience to *His* commands. Thus, Peck cleverly holds down the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:21).

Theological Models of Evil

In a lengthy footnote, Peck briefly describes "three major, different, 'living' theological models of evil," one of which he claims to be consistent with Christianity (p. 46, PL).

Nondualism - Eastern Religions and New Age Theology. In this model, evil is seen as "the other side of the coin," an illusion. The radical distinction between good and evil is blurred. Growth, decay, destruction, and death are seen as necessary for life. Certain New Age religions, such as Christian Science, Hinduism, and Buddhism, plus other similar teachings, such as the popular "Course in Miracles," adhere to this model.

Peck's personal encounters with evil appears to have drawn him away from this perspective. *This is the one major area where he no longer fully accepts New Age theology.* However, it is difficult to see how this model differs significantly from the "process theology" that Peck embraces in his most recent book.

"Integrated Dualism" - Martin Buber. This model claims that evil is necessary, like a "yeast in the dough," for the human soul to rise. Good and evil are considered distinct. God had to permit evil as part of His creation in order to give humans free will.

Diabolic Dualism. In this final model, which Peck equates with traditional Christianity, evil is a "cancer" in God's creation *which is beyond His control.*

Peck claims that only this model "deals adequately with the issue of murder and the murderer." However logical it appears to

him, and others, it is not consistent with Christian theology. *God is sovereign*. As finite human beings, we cannot tie up everything in a neat theological package. We are not able to know the mind of God *comprehensively*. However, His Word informs us of His absolute sovereignty, His control over whatsoever comes to pass. Biblical accounts, such as those of Joseph, Job, Judas, and the Egyptian Pharaoh, teach us that God sometimes *intends* the evil acts of men to serve His purposes. At the same time, Scripture clearly teaches human responsibility for sin. We must bow to an element of mystery here, trusting in the sovereign Lord. But we must not compromise any of the teachings of God's inerrant Word.

Evil as "Mental Illness"

True to his psychological colors, Peck places evil in the category of disease, a "specific variant of the narcissistic personality disorder" (p. 128, PL):

"It is a thesis of this book that evil can be defined as a specific form of mental illness and should be subject to at least the same intensity of scientific investigation that we would devote to some other major psychiatric disease." (p. 67, PL)

"Disease," broadly defined by Peck, is "any defect in the structure of our bodies or our personalities that prevents us from fulfilling our potential as human beings" (p. 125, PL). This "human potential," he claims, is to be "truly human" and "almost to touch on the divine" (p. 125, PL). Such an overly optimistic doctrine of man is clearly refuted in many Scriptures.

Anticipating objections to his view, Peck attempts to answer them.

Sympathies. Noting that we normally experience sympathy toward those who are ill, but not toward evil, Peck says:

"But the fact that we are not likely to feel a shred of sympathy for those who are evil speaks only of our own emotional response and not of the reality of whether evil is or is not an illness." (p. 121, PL)

He concludes that "the designation of evil as a disease...obligates us to approach the evil with compassion" (p. 127, PL).

Biblically, our lack of sympathy can be explained by man's consciousness of God's laws, present to a limited degree even in the unregenerate (Romans 2:14-15). In addition, man attempts to escape God's judgment by his own judgment of others (Romans 2:1ff). The believer's "sympathy," or humble response, to the sin of others must be grounded in the knowledge that he has been saved by God's grace rather than his own merits.

Denial and Suffering. Consistent with others who embrace the false teachings of psychology, Peck has bought the Freudian concept

of denial:

"Their inability to define themselves as ill in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary is actually a part of the illness itself.... The denial of suffering is, in fact, a better definition of illness than its acceptance."
(p.123, PL)

This is illogical and unbiblical. "Denial," to psychologists, seems always to be evidence of guilt. Innocence can never be proven under this system. If you are innocent of the psychologist's charges and truthfully say so, you are presumed, by your "denial," to be guilty.

Victim Status. Normally, we consider a sick person to be a victim, rather than a responsible participant. (No wonder the whole idea of "mental illness" has replaced sin.) Peck sees no conflict here:

"An individual's evil can almost always be traced to some extent to his or her childhood circumstances, the sins of the parents and the nature of their heredity. Yet evil is always also a choice one has made---indeed, a whole series of choices." (p. 126, FL)

While Peck does acknowledge responsibility here, he clouds the issue. It would be much more helpful to simply recognize the biblical view of sin and responsibility, rather than confusing matters by mixing in ideas of victimization and illness. The medical model promoted here is typical of psychotherapists, enabling them to wrongfully usurp the roles of both the pastor and the church.

"Treatment." Peck says first that "evil is a seemingly untreatable condition" (p. 126, PL):

"It is true that we do not currently possess any generally feasible or effective form of treatment to heal the thoroughly evil of their hatred and destructiveness." (p. 127, PL)

However, Peck believes that the "disease" label "implies that the disorder is not inevitable," that "healing should be possible," and "that it should be studied scientifically" (p. 127, PL).

This perspective is terribly destructive of hope, and postpones repentance and obedience to God's Word. The Christian, however, need not despair. He knows that Jesus Christ died and rose again, breaking the power of sin (Romans 6:1-14), along with its eternal penalty!

The Devil

As a psychiatrist, Peck originally rejected the biblical concept of Satan's reality, but personal experience convinced him

otherwise:

"In common with 99 percent of psychiatrists and the majority of clergy, I did not think the devil existed." (p. 182, PL)

"Conversion to a belief in God generally requires some kind of actual encounter--a personal experience--with the living God. Conversion to a belief in Satan is no different."
(p. 184, PL)

Actually, it is very different. All men innately know of the existence of the true God, despite efforts to suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18-23), but conversion to *saving faith* requires the divine intervention of the Holy Spirit. Note, too, how Peck exalts *experience*, rather than God's *revelation*, as the basis for "conversion" from unbelief to belief.

Neuter Pronouns. Peck has decided to use "it" rather than "he" for the devil. This blurs the fact that the devil is *personal* in nature, not merely an evil "force."

Common to all religions? Peck is open to the reality of the devil in all religions, not merely Christianity:

"Would that same spirit be identifiable--under a different name--in the exorcisms of Hindus or Hottentots? Is Satan merely a demon that attacks Judeo-Christians or is it a cross-cultural, universal enemy?" (p. 201, PL)

What Peck fails to recognize is that Satan, with his associates, is the driving force behind the false religions, which worship "gods" other than the living God of Christian theism.

Satan's Origins and Fall. Peck claims that "Satan was God's second-in-command," created to "enhance the spiritual growth of human beings through the use of testing and temptation," to be "primarily a teacher of mankind, which is why it was called Lucifer, 'the lighter bearer'" (p. 203, PL). Later, God determined that "what was required was both an example of His love and an example to live by...so He sent His only son to live and die as one of us" (p. 203, PL). Satan fell because of pride, when "it refused to submit to God's judgment of the precedence of Christ" (p. 203, PL). Now, instead of existing to "spiritually uplift mankind," it exists "to spiritually destroy us" (p. 204, PL).

It is accurate that Satan fell because of pride. However, nowhere does Scripture attribute to him a positive role in the "spiritual growth" of mankind. The devil fell *prior to the creation of man*. His temptation of man was evil in nature and intent on his part, contrary to Peck's teaching. God did allow that temptation to occur as a test of man's obedience to Him, but the devil's purposes were purely evil. It is rather strange that Peck considers the Genesis account to be mythological, yet acknowledges the reality of the devil's temptations.

Some of this may sound similar to Mormonism, if you are familiar with their teachings about Christ and Lucifer being

"brothers." Indeed, Peck acknowledges Mormon sources for what he says:

"The overcontrollingness of evil is well expressed through the Mormon myth in which Christ and Satan were each required to present God with his own plan for dealing with the infant human race. Satan's plan was simple...God had armies of angels at His command; just assign an angel with punitive power to each human, and He would have no trouble keeping them in line. Christ's plan was radically different and more imaginative...'Let them have free will and go their own way...but allow me to live and die as one of them, both as an example of how to live and of how much You care for them.' God, of course, chose Christ's plan as the more creative, and Satan rebelled at the choice." (p. 78, PL)

This is not the biblical view! Jesus Christ is eternal and equal to God the Father. Never, never was Satan on equal standing with our Lord. God's redemptive plan from all eternity was for the Son to go to earth to die and rise from the dead as a sacrifice for the sins of His people--not merely as an "example" of how to live, although He did provide an example and He did demonstrate God's love. Clearly, we must reject Peck's unbiblical, Mormonized view concerning the origins and purposes of Satan.

Satan's Nature. Peck views Satan as a spirit, specifically "a spirit of mental illness" or "a real spirit of unreality" (p. 206-7, PL). He does evil, accordingly to Peck, only "through human belief in its lies" (p. 206, PL), using "any human sin or weakness" but primarily fear (p. 207, PL). He deceives often by "concealing its own reality from the human mind," and therefore, "the paradoxical reality of this spirit must be recognized" (p. 207-8, PL). Nevertheless, Satan often does reveal himself because of his extreme arrogance, "its pride overcomes its intelligence" (p. 208, PL). Satan has no understanding at all of either love or science, says Peck, but "assumes a profound human tendency to self-deception" (p. 208, PL).

This is not so far off as some of the other bizarre teachings concerning the devil, although he is not a "spirit of mental illness" or merely "unreality." He is nonetheless a spirit, and he does operate through lies, deception, appeal to sin, and concealing of his existence. Peck would be advised, however, to consider more fully the biblical view of his purposes to devour and draw people away into hell.

Satan's End. Here is where Peck departs most radically from God's revelation:

"In Christian eschatology...there are two scenarios for Satan. In one all human souls, having been converted to light and love, reach out to the spirit of hate and falsehood in friendship. Finally realizing itself to be totally defeated, with no human body left to possess, with all immune to its power, our of utter loneliness it breaks down and accepts the

offer of friendship, and thereby in the end even Satan is converted. That is the scenario I pray for. But, as I have said, free will takes precedence over healing. In the other scenario, refusing ever to lose, Satan forever rejects the 'humiliating' hands of friendship and suffers its icy solitariness until the end of time." (p. 209, PL)

None of this imaginative account is *Christian* eschatology! The fate of Satan, and his demons, is forever sealed. There is absolutely no biblical possibility for the redemption of Satan or his associates. His demons have been reserved for *eternal judgment* (Jude 6). The enemy of our souls is assured of everlasting torment:

"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."
Revelation 20:10

The Nature of Man

Peck's view of man is distorted by his evolutionary presuppositions and excessive emphasis on free will. He considers humans distinct from other creatures by their lack of instincts and capacity for change:

"What distinguishes us humans most from other creatures...is our dramatic relative lack of instincts or preformed, preset inherited patterns of behavior, which give other creatures a much more fixed nature than we have." (p. 116-7, FL; see also p. 179, DD)

"...this capacity for ongoing change and transformation is the most salient feature of our human nature" and "is reflected in our human spirituality." (p. 119, FL)

People, Peck claims, are "profoundly different," yet have the "capacity to be molded by culture" (p. 178, DD). Nevertheless, he cautions, we tend to become fixed in our ways and resistant to change (p. 118, FL; p. 184, DD).

Peck also believes that human nature is highly complex, requiring "myths" for explanation:

"Our nature is so multifaceted and paradoxical that it cannot be captured in words that represent single, simple categories. Myths are required to contain and embrace the richness of human nature." (p. 172, DD)

He envisions *no absolute standard* for what human nature *should* be:

"What is considered 'normal' in one culture could be judged

distinctly abnormal in another, and even conceptions of good and evil are to a considerable extent culturally determined." (p. 176, DD)

He attacks the "illusion" which "postulates that all human beings are essentially alike" and "assumes that they *should* be" (p. 177-8, DD). He claims that we often assume the need to change human nature in order to achieve "community," yet we are not and cannot all be the same (p. 169-70, DD).

He also observes, from his mythological interpretation of Genesis, that "we immediately became self-conscious" and thus "it is human to be shy" (p. 18, FL).

Despite the apparent lack of standards, however, Peck invents many standards of his own throughout his writings. For example, at the highest stage of his "stages of spirituality," the person is "comfortable with ambiguity," able to think in terms of "both/and" rather than "either/or" (p. 220, DD). Peck exalts this quality as essential to peacemaking. He also praises creativity, equating it with God's statement in Genesis, where He "saw that it was good" (p. 109, FL). By contrast, he says, "the impulse to do evil is destructive rather than constructive" (p. 109, FL). Furthermore, he identifies heroism with learning "how to use both our femininity and masculinity--our left brain and our right brain" (p. 111, FL). Other standards include "civility," "community," and inclusiveness.

Unlike Peck, Scripture speaks clearly concerning the nature of man, his fundamental problem, how he can change, and what specific changes ought to be made. Man was created in the image of God for the specific purpose of glorifying God. He exchanged that glorious role as image-bearer to seek his own glory. He failed to obey God, and thus separated himself from his Creator. God's plan of redemption is unfolded in Scripture, and the believer is a new creation, being conformed to the image of Christ. There is no ambiguity here, but a clear view of who man is and what he ought to become. We will look more specifically at various aspects concerning Peck's view of man.

Evolution

We noted earlier that Peck interprets Genesis 1-3, not as an accurate historical record, but a "myth" supporting evolution. He says that Genesis 1 "has something to say about evolution" because "it is the same sequence as that suggested by geology and paleontology" (p. 109, FL). (The logical here is not apparent!) He also claims that the centers in the brain controlling emotional responses, such as anger and euphoria, "have been built into the human brain through millions of years of evolution" (p. 30, FL). All of this is destructive to the view that man was created directly by God, in His image, to live in covenantal fellowship with Him.

Peck's view is destructive enough when he looks *back* into human history. It is even worse when he attempts to look into the

future:

"It is our task--our essential, central, crucial task--to transform ourselves from mere social creatures into community creatures. It is the only way that human *evolution* will be able to proceed." (p. 165, DD, emphasis added)

He claims that human nature is making spiritual progress, according to his standards:

"The number of people entering the mystical stage of development and transcending ordinary culture seems to have increased a thousandfold in the course of a mere generation or two." (p. 205, DD--claims about one in twenty people!)

From this he concludes:

"One wonders if the explosion in their numbers might represent a giant leap forward in the evolution of the human race, a leap toward not only mystical but global consciousness and world community." (p. 206, DD)

A footnote comment says that "perhaps the greatest prophet of this leap was Teilhard de Chardin" (p. 206, DD).

It is a very serious theological error to obliterate God's image in man by postulating an evolutionary process. It is perhaps even more serious to carry the evolutionary faith into the future and propose such overly optimistic, radical changes in the basic nature of man. The Bible does not support these conclusions. Man's nature is fundamentally sinful, and it has been since Adam. Some are regenerated and will one day be glorified, no longer able to sin. God will bring history to a close, pour out His judgment on the ungodly, and His own saints will live with Him forever. This leap into a "mystical" stage is not an advancement, evolutionary or otherwise, but a typical New Age fall into pagan religion. Teilhard de Chardin is a dangerous source to quote. He is a "prophet" of New Age spiritual lies.

Free Will

Peck's concept of free will is closely tied to his evolutionary presuppositions:

"There are those who believe that our freedom, our ability to exercise control over our behavior and our environment are gifts of God. Others believe that they are the end result of eons of human evolution. Perhaps they are both."
(p. 180, DD)

No! All persons are responsible *before God* for their deeds and motives, and *God* gives certain legitimate choices, while at the

same time retaining His sovereignty and *limiting* human freedom. The view proposed here throws us into a universe where Chance, not the God of Scripture, reigns supreme.

Peck views the "lack of instincts" in human beings as "the most significant aspect of human nature" (p. 244, FL; see also p. 117, FL). "Human free will is basic" (p. 197, PL), he claims, so that "even God cannot heal a person who does not want to be healed" (p. 197, PL). Evil is said to be the inevitable consequence of free will, "the price we pay for our unique human power of choice" (p. 244, FL; see also p. 109, FL). Ignoring God's sovereignty, Peck concludes that "in the last analysis, every single human act is ultimately the result of an individual choice" (p. 215, PL).

To Christians, all of this may come as a breath of fresh air amidst today's victim mentality. However, what Peck promotes is a sinful *autonomy*, a freedom that exalts man and declares independence from God, rather than a human will that is *responsible to God* for choices made. Additionally, he has compromised God's sovereignty. Peck has taken human freedom and carried it to an unbiblical extreme not warranted by Scripture!

Man's Fundamental Problem

A bright red theological flag is raised when we note Peck's view of the fall:

"I do not believe it bad that we have been kicked out of the womb of Eden. That thrusting forth is *evolutionary*."
(p. 21, WW)

God's judgment on sin is thus attributed to evolution and viewed as a blessing rather than a curse!

Peck no longer expects man to merge with God, achieving "godhood," as he did in *The Road Less Traveled*. However, he continues to hold a view of man that is far too high. After describing the manipulative behavior of an advertising executive, he states:

"It seems we may live in a society that has almost forgotten the *glory of what it means to be human*. We are in need of healing." (p. 6, WW, emphasis added)

Man's fundamental problem is wrongly defined here. Man was created to bear God's image and to *reflect his glory*, but he exchanged that role to *seek his own glory* instead (Romans 1:18-23). Man did not "forget" his glory, but willfully rebelled against God and attempted to assert his own autonomy. Man does not need "healing" but redemption.

The problem is reiterated when Peck calls humans "sacred creatures" because of being created in God's image (p. 46, WW), going on to say that:

"Our exalted nature is but one side of a paradox; the other side is our 'fallen,' sinful nature.... But since God, despite our sin, considers each of us worthy of his/her unconditional love, it is incumbent upon us to afford each other in our organizational lives at least some faintly corresponding measure of dignity." (p. 47, WW)

There is only a faint correspondence here to biblical truth, mixed with error. Humans are not "sacred" creatures. Such a designation blurs the critical Creator/creature distinction. Scripture describes man's fall into sin as *total*. There is no "exalted nature" remaining. Man is never considered "worthy" of God's love. God loves because He is rich in mercy, not due to *any* human merit. The Christian is a new creation, in the glorious process of being conformed to the image of Christ. The glory and credit *all* goes to God for this amazing transformation.

New Age Pantheism. Man's fundamental problem is described in terms that only superficially (if at all) resemble biblical truth. At one point, New Age theology dominates the definition of that problem:

"We lost that sense of oneness with nature, with the rest of the universe.... We can never get back to Eden.... A great deal of human psychopathology...arises out of the attempt to get back to Eden." (p. 19, FL)

Man never had any "oneness with nature," but has from the time of creation been clearly distinct from the other creative works of God. For the Christian, a "return to Eden" is possible in the eschatological sense that he will one day live in God's new creation and eat of the tree of life.

Narcissism. There is some superficial similarity here to the Bible's teaching of man's natural self-centeredness. Referencing Martin Buber, Peck suggests that narcissists are only able to use others, engaging in "I-It relationships" rather than "I-Thou relationships" (p. 106, WW). He remains uncertain as to whether narcissists *cannot* or *will not* consider the needs of others (p. 111, WW). He believes, tentatively, that we are probably *born* narcissistic, and that all of us have "significant narcissistic tendencies" (p. 108, WW). However, he sees narcissism rooted in *ignorance* rather than *disobedience*, and believes that most undergo a natural transition out of this condition:

"I believe we are innately stupid about the rights and needs of others and relatively unconscious of the organizations to which we belong. But I also stated that when the circumstances of our life are reasonably decent, we can and do routinely grow out of narcissism." (p. 111, WW)

The Bible is much more clear. Man is innately self-focused, sinful at birth, loving himself and putting himself ahead of God and others. His self-centered orientation is rooted in disobedience,

not ignorance. The solution is not a "natural" process, but a *supernatural* process, the regeneration that is empowered only by the Holy Spirit. Peck does not have a clear perspective on man's need to be *born again* by the power of God.

Suffering and Guilt. Peck distinguishes between "neurotic suffering" and "existential suffering," the latter being "constructive," something "you ought to bear and work through" (p. 21, FL). He then claims that "we need a certain amount of (existential) guilt," but "too much guilt, rather than enhancing our existence, impedes it" (p. 21, FL). "Existential" guilt is seen as a "tool that helps us not feel good about ourselves when a self-correction is necessary" (p. 89, FL). However, he cautions that you must love and value self even during "moments of breaking...when we come to realize that we are not okay" (p. 94, FL).

This is not a biblical view of either suffering or guilt. God does use suffering to discipline His children. Some suffering results from our own sin, while other suffering is endured for the cause of Christ. There is no biblical distinction between "neurotic" and "existential" suffering, but rather between just and unjust suffering. Guilt is neither "existential" nor a "tool," but rather is defined in terms of the violation of God's commandments.

Man's fundamental problem is *sin*. His need is to be delivered from the wrath of God. God has fully provided redemption from the power and eternal consequences of sin, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peck does not acknowledge this simple, but glorious, biblical truth about man.

"Evil" People. Despite Peck's apparent lack of absolute standards for truth, he creates numerous value-laden standards of his own. One of these is his evaluation of people who are "evil," primarily disclosed in *People of the Lie*. He considers evil to be a psychiatric disorder, noting that Erich Fromm was "the first and only scientist to clearly identify an evil personality type" (p. 46, PL). (For recommended further reading, see the critique of Fromm in Discernment's "Exposing the Roots" series. Fromm was an atheist who made an elaborate attempt to reinterpret Scripture and its truth about God and man!)

"Evil" people, claims Peck, are "most intensely resistant to psychiatric treatment," so psychotherapy is likely to fail (p. 63, PL). Therapists are often repelled by "evil" persons, but Peck considers this a "diagnostic tool par excellence" because it helps to identify the individual as "evil" (p. 65, PL). Another common response is confusion in their presence:

"Lies confuse. The evil are 'people of the lie,' deceiving others as they also build layer upon layer of self-deception." (p. 66, PL)

Peck also claims a distinction between "evil" people and "ordinary sin," defining the former as characterized by "subtlety and persistence and consistency of their sins" along with "the refusal to acknowledge it" (p. 69, PL). Another distinction he

makes is between "evil as a personality characteristic" and "evil deeds," which supposedly do not make a person evil (p. 70, PL).

"Evil" people use "scapegoating," sacrificing others for the sake of their own perfection and self-image (p. 73, PL). They are hypocritically dedicated to the maintenance of their own outwardly righteous and even loving image, living on a level of pretense that attempts the deception of others as well as self (p. 75, 106 PL). They hate "the light of goodness" that would expose the truth (p. 77, PL). They are simultaneously "aware of their evil and desperately trying to avoid the awareness" (p. 76, PL). Elsewhere, Peck describes evil as "militant ignorance" or "militant unconsciousness" (p. 26, FL).

"Evil" individuals are extremely determined and willful (p. 78, PL), with a "lust for power" (p. 177, PL), refusing to submit to any power higher than self, which "reigns supreme" (p. 162, PL). Peck sees this as a consequence of evolution:

"When humans evolved from the apes...they largely evolved out from under such instinctual controls and hence into free will." (p. 79, PL)

Citing Erich Fromm (again) for support, Peck claims that evil is a "developmental process" arising out of a long series of choices (p. 82, PL).

The victims of "evil" people are typically their own children, because of the weakness and vulnerability of children (p. 107, PL). Adults, however, "do not become partners to evil by accident" yet "to be the victims of evil, they too must be powerless to escape" (p. 118-9, PL).

Despite the outward appearance of love, "evil" persons lack the capacity for empathy and "ignore the humanity of their victims" (p. 136, PL), often engaging in a "symbiotic relationships" which are "mutually parasitic and destructive" (p. 137, PL).

Oddly enough, those who are "evil," whether humans or demonic entities, are "surprisingly obedient to authority" (p. 180, PL). They also "live their lives in sheer terror" although appearing fearless on the surface (p. 181, PL).

Finally, Peck sees "evil" people in terms of demonic possession. Such possession is not accidental, but "appears to be a gradual process in which the possessed person repeatedly sells out" (p. 190, PL). Peck distinguishes possession from "multiple personality disorder," where "the 'core personality' is virtually always unaware of the existence of the secondary personalities" (p. 192). In possession, there is "a distinct and alien personality" (p. 193, PL). Peck believes that "evil" persons may have a "potential holiness" which threatens Satan and contributes to their being possessed (p. 205, PL). In addition, he speculates that "evil" individuals probably "recruit themselves" rather than being actively recruited by Satan to perform his evil work (p. 211, PL).

The picture painted here is surely one of evil, or more specifically, human *sin*. However, there are glaring biblical deficiencies. First, evil cannot be reduced to a "psychiatric

disorder." This destroys man's responsibility *before God*, despite Peck's emphasis on "choices" and "free will" leading to the condition. Additionally, the Bible makes no distinction between "ordinary sin" and "evil." Sin is sin in the sight of God, who is absolutely righteous and holy. There is *no distinction*, because all have sinned, and since Adam, all are born in a sinful condition. Peck blurs the concept of original sin with his reference to evil as a "developmental process," although sin does increasingly enslave, deceive, and harden the heart with continued practice. Lies, deceit, lust for power, fear (of man, not God), resistance to correction or change, lack of love, and refusal to submit to authority are indeed characteristics of the sinful nature of man. But again, these are not distinct from "ordinary sin."

Demonic possession is an issue treated in Scripture. An unbeliever may be possessed. Peck makes no distinction between the unbeliever and the believer. The latter *cannot* be possessed because he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Peck places too much emphasis on "possession" in that not all sinners are actually possessed by demons. The "obedience to authority" noted is characteristic of demons in Scripture, who recognize God and tremble before Him yet have no *saving* knowledge. This is not necessarily true of *human sinners*, who rebelliously hold down the truth about God in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18-23).

Group Evil. In *People of the Lie*, Peck devotes significant space to a discussion of the dynamics of group evil, using an atrocious Viet Nam war incident for purposes of illustration.

Peck claims that groups behave in "much the same ways as human individuals," although "more primitive and immature" (p. 216, PL). He describes a fragmentation of conscience that takes place due to the specialization of roles, encouraging the tendency to shift responsibility (p. 218, PL). There is often dependence on the group's leader, which is a "matter of laziness" because it is "much easier to be a follower than a leader" (p. 223, PL). In the setting of war, Peck claims, many did not confess their crimes because of ignorance, along with the "psychic numbing" that occurs when "emotional feelings are overwhelmingly painful or unpleasant" (p. 219-221, PL). He also cites "group cohesive forces" including "narcissism," and says that "the best way to cement group cohesiveness is to ferment the group's hatred of an external enemy" (p. 225, PL).

One serious concern in this section is Peck's statement concerning communism. He claims that there is:

"...a wealth of evidence to indicate that communism was not (if, in fact, it had ever been) a force that was either monolithic or necessarily evil" (p. 239, PL).

Considering the persecution endured by Christians, and the atheist foundations of communism, one must wonder what Peck is thinking here--and how he can possibly make a claim to Christianity!

Another grave concern arises when Peck laments the "human narcissistic propensity to think only in terms of our own species,"

since, after all, the "human race itself is but one of the enormous number of different life forms of the planet" (p. 243). This conclusion is rooted in Peck's evolutionary assumptions, failing to consider man's creation in God's image, or the dominion God gave man over the rest of creation.

As for the general idea of group evil, we must look to Scripture for a biblical view. God sometimes deals with whole groups of people, as He so often did with ancient Israel, holding the group responsible for the actions of an individual member. In the New Testament, too, there are some overlapping responsibilities. However, Scripture also makes it clear that each and every *individual* is responsible before God. Peck brings us a distorted view of that truth when he says that the "effort to prevent group evil" must be "directed toward the individual" because "the individual is sacred" (p. 252, PL). His view is well summarized when he recommends teaching children that laziness and narcissism are at the root of evil, and that each individual must purify himself:

"Such personal purification is required not only for the salvation of their individual soul but also for the salvation of their world." (p. 253, PL)

Again we have a horribly unscriptural view of salvation. No individual can "purify himself" in this manner. Only the blood of Christ shed on the cross can provide the necessary purification from sin, and salvation depends wholly on *Him*, not the man-made efforts promoted here by Peck.

Anger and Blame. Anger and shifting of blame are intimately related to man's fundamental sin problem. Peck has an unscriptural view in this area. He notes that "we go through life blaming others for our pain," and says that "blame always begins with anger" (p. 29, FL). However, he considers the "anger center" in the human brain to be a "territorial mechanism" that is basically similar to animals:

"We are no different from a dog fighting another dog that wanders into its territory, except that for us human beings, our definitions of territory are much more complex."
(p. 30, FL)

Man indeed shifts blame for his sin. However, this statement reflects Peck's fundamental commitment to evolution, and it undermines the biblical truth that man, unlike any other creature, is created in the image of God.

In terms of human responses to anger, Peck remains unbiblical. He proposes "at least five different ways to respond when our anger center fires off," claiming that "sometimes it might even be necessary to get angry immediately and blast that person right on the spot" (p. 32). This unrighteous response is radically opposed to every biblical teaching concerning anger. God commands the Christian to be *slow* to anger (James 1:19-20), and teaches that a

gentle word turns away wrath (Proverbs 15:1).

Peck mixes in a little biblical truth when he notes the teaching of Jesus to judge oneself before judging that someone else has sinned against you (p. 32-3, FL). It is true that we must sometimes make the evaluation that someone else has sinned. However, Peck does not acknowledge the absolute standards of Scripture as the basis for such evaluations, saying that you can never know whether or not you have made an appropriate judgment (p. 34-5, FL).

"Inappropriate blaming," according to Peck is caused by "the combination of a strong will with the lack of submission to a higher power" (p. 36, FL). He claims that it is desirable to have a strong will, but it must be "harnessed to a power higher than yourself" (p. 37). This skirts the biblical view that man shifts responsibility for his sin, often with a strong will that rebels against God. However, Peck's "higher power" terminology obscures the identity of the living God of the Bible, to whom man specifically must submit.

Finally, Peck claims that blaming, anger, and hatred may be "fun," to some people, and thus habit-forming like any other pleasurable activity (p. 38, FL). This dimly reflects the scriptural truth that sin is progressively enslaving.

"Addiction." Peck praises both the medical and 12-step models. He considers "addiction" to be "multidimensional," encompassing the psychological, spiritual, biological, and sociological dimensions of life (p. 135, FL). He briefly intersects the Bible when he calls addictions "forms of idolatry" (p. 136, FL), but quickly reverts to New Age thinking when he describes "addicts" as:

"...people who want...to reach Paradise, reach Heaven...desperate to regain that lost warm, fuzzy sense of oneness with the rest of nature we used to have in the Garden of Eden" (p. 136, FL).

Peck certainly acknowledges the spiritual nature of "addictive" behaviors, along with the *religious* nature of the 12 steps. He takes this to extremes, calling "the twelve steps of AA...the only existing program for religious conversion" (p. 139, FL). This is a defiant dismissal of Bible believing churches which faithfully preach the gospel! Similar is his statement that "AA might be looked upon as the most successful 'church' in this country today" (p. 140, FL). The "proverbs" of AA teach people "how to go forward through the desert," and thus AA is also a "psychological program" (p. 141, FL). Note the outright replacement of both the church and the Scripture inherent in these statements. Many people fail to recognize the *religious* nature of the 12 steps, or the fact that these programs are a type of church to those who attend.

Many psychiatrists, according to Peck's recollection, once believed that AA worked because it satisfied "oral needs" through talk, cigarettes, and coffee (p. 139, FL). Peck now disagrees and

offers other compelling reasons. First, he claims that while "addiction" is "regressive" in the desire for "oneness" (noted earlier), it is also "potentially progressive" because:

"Addicts are people who have a more powerful calling than most to the spirit, to God, but they simply have the directions of the journey mixed up" (p. 137, FL).

He attempts to support his view by noting the influence of Carl Jung on the beginnings of AA. Jung (who rejected the gospel) said that:

"...it was perhaps no accident that we traditionally referred to alcoholic drinks as spirits...perhaps alcoholism was a spiritual disorder." (p. 137, FL)

All of this diametrically opposes the view of Scripture, where drunkenness and idolatry are quite clearly portrayed as *sin*. However, the worst of all this is Peck's view that "alcoholism" leads to "community" which leads to "salvation:"

Jesus said, "'the Kingdom is among (not within) you.' And I believe that the best way we find the Kingdom is among us in community.... That is the other reason why I think of addiction as the sacred disease. When my AA friends and I get together, we often come to conclude that, very probably, God deliberately created the disorder of alcoholism in order to create alcoholics, in order that these alcoholics might create AA, and thereby spearhead the community movement which is going to be the salvation not only of alcoholics and addicts but of us all." (p. 150, FL)

More later about Peck's unbiblical "salvation." For now, note how he ignores the true salvation provided by the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ! And note how he has called *sin* something "sacred!"

Self-Love and Self-Esteem

Unlike many modern psychologists, Peck distinguishes between self-love and self-esteem, considering the former a good thing but the latter questionable (p. 87, FL). Not only is self-love desirable, Peck says it is so terribly important that he "even would like to be biblical about it" (p. 96, FL). Scripture, however, offers no support for his views.

Examining a study where successful people were asked to describe their top priorities, Peck notes that *all* of them gave exactly the same answer for number one: "myself" (p. 88, FL). He also comments on the remarkable progress of a counselee after her discovery "that what was most important was the development of her own soul" (p. 95-6, FL). Note how he views the love of self:

"Self-love implies the care, respect, and responsibilities for and the knowledge of the self. Without loving one's self one cannot love others. But do not confuse self-love with self-centeredness." (p. 88, FL)

Peck suspects that most Christians are unaware of the importance of self-love (p. 96, FL). Actually, they ought to *oppose* Peck's viewpoint. The Bible teaches that we inherently love, nourish, and cherish self (Ephesians 5:29). No biblical distinction is made between self-love and self-centeredness, as Peck imagines. Scripture places no requirement on man to love self as a prerequisite for love of God and others. Self-knowledge and self-examination, however, based on God's standards, are stressed in the Bible.

Contrary to the stream of popular thought, Peck considers "evil" people to be those who place their self-esteem first:

"Their self-esteem *is* the single most important thing in their lives. They will do anything to preserve and maintain their self-esteem at all times and at all costs," to the point that they "exterminate the evidence" to the contrary.
(p. 89, FL)

Peck considers humility to be "a true knowledge of oneself as one is" (p. 87, FL) and recommends setting a relatively low priority on self-esteem:

"In order to be good, healthy people, we have to pay the price of setting aside our self-esteem once in awhile, and so not always feel good about ourselves. But we should always love ourselves and value ourselves, even if we shouldn't always esteem ourselves." (p. 89, FL)

Scripture promotes neither self-love nor self-esteem. On the contrary, man was created for the purpose of loving, esteeming, and glorifying *God*, and God alone.

Sexuality and Spirituality

Peck proposes an integral relationship between sexuality and spirituality, despite the fact that it may shock many people. He rejects the "particular brand of religion" which "identifies sex and sexuality with the devil, who supposedly tempts us with lust and the sinful pleasures of the flesh" (p. 219, FL). Instead, he considers any conflicts between sexuality and spirituality to be "more in the nature of a lovers' quarrel" (p. 219, FL).

It is true that sexuality is not inherently evil. God, not the devil, created it. However, the weakness in Peck's view is his rejection of biblical standards. This becomes painfully clear when he claims that a person may be "called" to homosexuality, because "God loves variety" (p. 77, WW). It is equally clear when he

relates his own futile attempts to "make sex happen," noting that:

"Some of the most glorious sexual experiences I ever had, however, were the ones that not only seemed just to happen but also seemed to be orchestrated by angels off in the wings--specifically, not by me." (p. 227, FL)

The context of this remark leaves the impression that the experiences are most likely not within the bounds of marriage, as Scripture prescribes, though perhaps some of them were.

Peck's unbiblical bias is exposed once more when he says that:

"Anyone who believes that permanent romance in a relationship is a perpetual possibility is doomed to perpetual disappointment." (p. 224, FL)

Even though he comments that such expectations reveal a desire that the spouse or lover be a "god" (p. 224, FL), and that is clearly idolatry, Peck fails to acknowledge the biblical view that marriage is a covenantal commitment for *life*.

Peck also blames the sexuality-spirituality connection for "the stories about ministers who become involved with female parishioners" (p. 226, FL). Such an explanation diverts attention from the reality of *sin*.

More seriously, Peck considers sex to be "the closest that many people ever come to a spiritual experience" (p. 220, FL), connecting it with mythology and becoming *godlike*:

"One of the basic themes in mythology is fear on the part of the gods that human beings are becoming like them, and the myth of sexuality is a variant of this same theme. This myth tells us that, at the beginning, human beings were androgynous, unified creatures. But as such, they were rapidly gaining in power and were about to encroach upon the gods. So the gods split human beings into halves--male and female. And as half creatures, we were no longer capable of competing with the gods. Yet we were also left feeling incomplete, yearning for our lost wholeness, forever searching for our other half, hoping that in the moment of sexual union with our other half we might reexperience the lost bliss of our near godlike totality. So, at least according to the myth, our sexuality arises out of a sense of incompleteness and is manifested by an urge toward wholeness and a yearning for the godhead." (p. 220, FL)

Peck places great faith in the truth of this myth! Similarly, he cites Maslow's study claiming that healthy people "routinely experienced orgasm as a spiritual, even mystical event" wherein "once we reach those heights we actually lose the awareness of our partner" (p. 221, FL). Peck believes that both orgasm and a "mystical union between human beings and God" are characterized by such a forgetting of self (p. 223, FL). Scripture considers sexual

union between husband and wife to be a "one flesh," God-ordained experience, but nowhere does God's Word teach a "mystical union" between man and God. Peck's view is a distortion of biblical teachings wherein the relationship between God and man is seen to be *analogous* to that of husband and wife.

Peck also notes, and wonders why, people who love God passionately often choose celibacy or chastity. He answers his own question by stating that "sex can screw up relationships" (p. 223, FL). Sometimes it does--if the sexual union takes place *outside of marriage*. Peck fails to distinguish between sexual immorality and sex that is approved by God. Despite all of this, however, he does not advocate celibacy but "celebrates" spirituality (p. 225, FL).

Clearly, the Christian must reject Peck's mixture of New Age theology and anti-biblical standards of sexual morality.

Salvation and Forgiveness

Biblically, salvation and forgiveness (of sins) are intimately related. Peck uses both terms, but redefines them so radically that the results bear no resemblance to the truth of Scripture.

Salvation. Peck equates salvation with increasing, ever-deeper levels of consciousness, as well as "healing," or becoming whole (p. 16, 24-5, FL; p. 19, DD). After man's expulsion from Eden, he claims:

"Consciousness then became for us both the cause of our pain and the cause of our salvation, which is a word synonymous with healing." (p. 24, FL)

He credits atheist Freud with stating that the purpose of psychotherapy, or "healing of the psyche," is to "make the unconscious conscious" (p. 25, FL; p. 19, DD). He additionally credits occult psychologist Jung without helping to further our understanding of the unconscious, "ascribing evil to our refusal to meet our shadow...not to the shadow itself but to the *refusal* to meet this shadow" (p. 25, FL). Elsewhere, Peck says that "consciousness and pain are inextricably interwoven," and he describes "defense mechanisms" used to avoid pain (p. 17, WW).

These definitions, rooted and grounded in the imaginations of atheists who rejected the gospel, have *nothing whatsoever* to do with the salvation offered by God through the death of Christ for our sins. In fact, Peck specifically denies that salvation is the result of God's grace, and not the works of man:

"The reality is that salvation is the effect of both grace and good works in a paradoxical mixture that is sufficiently mysterious to defy any mathematical formulation."
(p. 243, DD; see similar statement on p. 208, FL)

Peck's view of repentance (although he doesn't use the word) is a distorted works-righteousness based on feeling bad:

"If you confess or acknowledge your sin with contrition, then it is wiped out...what is required is feeling bad, suffering over what you have done.... Once our sins are confessed with contrition, they are forgotten: they no longer exist in the mind of God." (p. 158-9, FL, emphasis added)

This is a burdensome twisting of the godly sorrow described in Scripture. Salvation has *nothing* to do with "feeling bad," or man's own works, but is based purely on God's grace, mercifully granted on the basis of the completed work of Jesus Christ.

Peck offers yet another unbiblical description of "salvation" as "becoming the most that we can be" (p. 12). He recommends here that we:

"...learn to apply the principles of mental health" in order for "our lives to heal, to make us whole, to save our souls, individually and collectively" (p. 12, WW).

Note how the "principles of mental health" replace Scripture as the standard for salvation!

Conversion is similarly mutilated. Peck considers it not a one-time event, but a "continuing process" (p. 128, FL). *It can even be a "conversion" from Peck's "Stage II" Christianity to his "Stage III" skepticism/atheism!* This is so radically removed from the Bible that it hardly requires comment.

"Community" as Salvation. Peck goes a step further off the biblical deep end when he promotes his own concept of "community" (discussed) as the *salvation of the whole world:*

"In and through community lies the salvation of the world. Nothing is more important." (p. 17, DD)

"The purpose of this book (*Different Drum*) is to teach these rules (of community) and encourage you to follow them. The hope of the book is that we will learn them first in our personal lives, then apply them universally. *For that is how the world will be saved.*" (p. 21, DD, emphasis and parenthetical clarifications added)

He adds to this the statement that we must "grow out of narcissism" for our "collective survival" (p. 112, WW).

Scripture clearly does not support Peck's concept of a possible universal "salvation" encompassing *all religious faiths*. God promises that the world as we know it will be consummated, and believers can expect to live with Him eternally in the new heaven and new earth that He will one day create.

Forgiveness. Do not be deceived by Peck's use of this *Christian* term. He fails to make the connection between *God's* forgiveness of sin and eternal salvation, and he promotes selfish motivations for forgiving others. A few comments *seem* to be superficially equivalent to biblical truth, but Peck's position on forgiveness is too seriously deviant to be accepted by believers.

Forgiveness, Peck says, is "stopping the blame game" (p. 40, FL). He departs from the view of New Age religions, which seduce people into believing that forgiveness is easy, by denying the reality of evil (p. 40, FL). He distinguishes between forgiveness and affirmation, which "is a way to avoid looking at evil" (p. 41, FL). Forgiveness acknowledges wrong: "Only after a guilty verdict can there be a pardon" (p. 42, FL). In addition, forgiveness is not defined by forgetting. In fact, Peck says, "we cannot forget," although we can "invent false memories...through the psychological mechanism known as repression" (p. 45, FL).

Yes, sin (not merely "evil") must be acknowledged for forgiveness, and yes, forgiveness is not a lapse of memory. However, where in all this is God's forgiveness? Peck claims that forgiveness is hard, but he fails to realize that it is impossible apart from first receiving God's forgiveness for one's own sin. That is the essence of salvation, biblically, but Peck redefines all of these concepts to his own liking.

One of the most serious deficiencies in Peck's concept of forgiveness is his insistence on selfish motivations:

"The process of forgiveness--indeed, the chief reason for forgiveness--is selfish. The reason to forgive others is not for their sake. They are not likely to know that they need to be forgiven. They're not likely to remember their offense. They are likely to say, 'You just made it up.' They may even be dead. The reason to forgive is for our own sake. For our own health. Because beyond that point needed for healing, if we hold on to our anger, we stop growing and our souls begin to shrivel." (p. 46, FL)

Let us close with the pure Word of God on these eternally crucial issues:

"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

The Four Stages of Spirituality

Peck places great emphasis on his uniquely defined four "stages" of human spiritual development. An understanding of these stages is a key to unraveling his general concept of the nature of man. The definition of these stages developed from Peck's practice of psychotherapy, where he observed religious people becoming skeptics, and atheists or agnostics becoming more spiritual (p. 120, FL). His theory developed in response to this observed pattern and attempts to explain it.

Incredible statements are made about the validity of these

developmental stages. Peck claims that "it is not possible for us to skip over any of the stages" (p. 130, FL), although it is "quite possible to get stuck" in one of them (p. 131, FL). Some people, he claims, may "superficially appear to be in one stage when, in fact, they are someplace else entirely" (p. 128, FL). In addition, he believes all of the stages to be applicable at all times:

"All of us retain vestiges of earlier stages." (p. 133, FL)

"We all also contain within us traces--the lurking potential--of the more advanced stages." (p. 133, FL)

Peck asserts that "this progression of spiritual development holds true in all cultures and for all religions" (p. 196, DD). He considers them to be not merely spiritual, but also "a paradigm for healthy psychological development" (p. 197, DD). He also believes them to be analogous to both the stages invented by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, and his own stages of "community development" (p. 222, DD). These are sweeping claims. Let us look specifically at the characteristics of each stage.

Stage I: "Chaotic/antisocial." This stage encompasses "people of the lie," who are "absent spiritually," "unprincipled," "self-serving," and governed only by their own wills (p. 121, FL). Also included are children up to approximately age five (p. 130, FL).

Stage II: "Formal/institutional." Conversions from the first to the second spiritual stage are, according to Peck, often sudden and usually unconscious (p. 122, FL). The person at this stage is highly dependent on an institution, perhaps a prison, the military, or a business corporation, but usually a church (p. 122, FL). There is much value attached to established ritual, and the person is upset when those patterns are changed (p. 123, FL; p. 190, DD).

God is envisioned as strictly an external being, with "little understanding of that half of God which lives inside of us...the dwelling divinity within the human spirit" (p. 123, FL). He is considered as both masculine and punitive (p. 123, FL), a "Cop in the Sky" (p. 190, DD). Religion is legalistic (p. 190, DD).

Peck describes Stage II persons as being threatened by all of the other stages. Those in Stage One are seen as "sinners...fertile ground for their ministrations" (p. 126, FL). As for the "higher" stages, Stage II individuals:

"...tend to be threatened by the skeptic individualists of Stage Three, and more than anything, by the Stage Four people, who seem to believe in the same things they believe in and yet believe them with a kind of freedom they find absolutely terrifying." (p. 127, FL)

Children, ages 5 through about 12, "tend to be Stage Two creatures" (p. 131, FL). According to Peck, children of Stage II parents tend to absorb the religions of their parents (whatever faith it might be), but generally "convert" to skepticism in later years (p. 191,

DD), which is our next stage.

Stage III: "Skeptic/Individual." Having "internalized" the parental faith (Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, or whatever), the child eventually begins to question, doubt, and fall away from childhood faith (p. 124, FL). This is claimed to be typical of adolescent years (p. 131, FL). The Stage III person is "not religious" yet "not the least bit antisocial" (p. 124, FL). They are "truth seekers" who "do begin to find what they are looking for" (p. 124-5, FL; p. 192, DD). They are highly autonomous:

"They make up their own minds about things and are no more likely to believe everything they read in the papers than to believe it is necessary for someone to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior (as opposed to Buddha or Mao or Socrates) in order to be saved." (p. 191, DD).

Note the undermining of the gospel here! Peck recognizes the psychological profession as being permeated by such anti-Christian individuals, but applauds them as serving a useful purpose:

"Psychiatrists and psychologists in this country--primarily a Stage III group--have generally served their culture well as guides for those making the journey out of a dependent Stage II mentality." (p. 195-6, DD)

Stage IV: "Mystical/communal." This final, "highest" stage cannot begin "until adolescence has been worked through" (p.131, FL). The Stage IV person is one who "loves mystery" and has "seen a kind of cohesion beneath the surface of things," including men, women, and *other creatures* (p. 125, FL; p. 192-3, DD). Note carefully Peck's claim that the principles of Stage IV spirituality "characterize all of the world's great religions" (p. 125, FL).

Peck relates this stage to his "community" concept, wherein "the members have learned how to behave in a Stage IV manner in relation to one another" (p. 201, DD).

Peck considers the individual's progression through these four stages as a "conversion" in each instance (p. 198, DD), *including* the step from Stage II faith into Stage III skepticism! He clearly upholds Stage IV as the *goal* of spiritual growth, one which he believes the church ought to promote:

"One of the greatest challenges...facing the Church is how to facilitate the conversion of its members from Stage II to Stage IV without them having to spend a whole adult lifetime in Stage III." (p. 199, DD)

In order to meet this "challenge," Peck claims that *doubt* must be considered a "Christian virtue" or even a "Christian responsibility" (p. 200, DD, emphasis added). This is in radical defiance to the words of Scripture:

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to

all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, *without doubting*, for he who *doubts* is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. Let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." James 1:5-8, emphasis added

So much for Christian virtue or responsibility!

Biblical Critique. There is no biblical evidence that any person must, or ought to, pass through any such "stages" as Peck imagines. These are purely his own highly biased invention. The Bible distinguishes between the regenerate and the unregenerate. Stages I and III are clearly unregenerate stages. Stage II is where Peck would undoubtedly place most orthodox believers, although his view is certainly a distorted one. Stage IV, so highly prized by Peck, is a New Age, pantheistic spirituality which ought to be vigorously avoided by the Christian!

Matters of Life and Death

Through the course of his books, Peck reveals to the reader his theological bias on matters such as heaven, hell, resurrection, death, and eschatology. The views expressed clash radically with the Scriptures!

Resurrection, Heaven, and Hell

Resurrection. Peck adamantly rejects the biblical hope of bodily resurrection:

"I find distasteful the traditional idea of Christianity which preaches the resurrection of the body...I prefer to believe that souls can exist independently from bodies." (p. 169, FL)

The entire fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is devoted by the apostle Paul to the doctrine of the resurrection. This is the glorious future hope of the believer, a hope that Peck holds in contempt. Note in particular Paul's words about the new body of the believer:

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living soul,' the last Adam became a life-giving spirit." 1 Corinthians 15:42-45

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,

at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" 1 Corinthians 15:51-54

The "road" Peck is currently traveling is a dangerous one!

Purgatory. While rejecting the resurrection, Peck embraces purgatory:

"Although purgatory is primarily a Roman Catholic notion, the psychiatrist in me takes to it with ease. I imagine purgatory as a very elegant, well-appointed psychiatric hospital with the most modern and highly developed techniques for making learnings as gentle and painless as possible under divine supervision." (p. 169, FL)

Purgatory finds absolutely no support whatsoever in the Scriptures, not a verse. These ludicrous ideas arise purely from the imaginations of Scott Peck's mind, and clearly undermine the completed victory of Christ on the cross.

Heaven. Calling himself a "lay theologian," Peck says:

"One thing that real theologians are now universally agreed upon is that God loves variety. In variety, She/He delights." (p. 173, FL)

His conclusion is that heaven will contain people from many religions! But what does he mean by a "real" theologian? And where does he get the information that there is "universal" agreement on this point? Competent biblical scholars do not agree with Peck. This idea, and the gospel of salvation through Christ only, are mutually exclusive. Peck is *wrong!* He is highly deceived.

Hell. Peck admits that "my view of Hell is also not so traditionally Christian" (p. 170, FL). Indeed it is not:

"The gates of Hell are wide open. People can walk right out of Hell, and the reason they are in Hell is that they choose not to. I know that is not traditionally Christian, but there are many ways that I deviate from traditional Christianity. I simply cannot accept the view of Hell in which God punishes people without hope and destroys souls without a chance for redemption. He/She wouldn't go to the trouble of creating souls, with all their complexity, just to fry them in the end." (p. 171, FL)

Similarly in *People of the Lie*:

"God does not punish us; we punish ourselves. Those who are

in hell are there by their own choice. Indeed, they could walk right out of it if they so chose, except that their values are such as to make the path out of hell appear overwhelmingly dangerous, frighteningly painful, and impossibly difficult." (p. 67, PL)

These quotations expose the depths of Peck's delusions. The Scripture teaches that Hell, described in Revelation as the "lake of fire" is a place of eternal torment, eternal separation from God (Revelation 20:10-15), not a temporary holding place from which one may walk out freely at any time!

Eschatology. Peck's teachings point to the concept of a universal salvation, contrary to the Bible. We have already noted his belief that even the devil will have a "second chance" for conversion!

Only once does Peck make any reference to the second coming of Christ, preferring to envision a global "salvation" ushered in by the efforts of man to achieve "community," according to his definitions. He does at one point state that it "sometimes seems that a virtual Second Coming is required," not, however "a bodily second coming" but "the resurrection of Christ's spirit, which would occur in the Church if Christians took him seriously" (p. 296, DD). It is tragic that Christians that Peck so seriously, in view of his blatant denial of so much Scripture, including our glorious hope of the return of Christ:

"Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13

Peck must ignore huge portions of Scripture to deny the believer's hope of the Lord's return!

Death. Many more unbiblical ideas emerge when we examine Peck's view of death.

The inevitability of death, he says, "fills many of us with a sense of meaninglessness," yet death is "a giver of meaning" (p. 48-9, FL). Peck even considers death exciting due to its mystery (p. 49, FL). He stresses the need to have a vital purpose in life:

"We cannot live with courage and confidence until we can have a relationship with our own death. Indeed, we cannot live fully unless there is something that we are willing to die for." (p. 50, FL)

Death gives no "meaning" whatsoever to the unbeliever. Only the Christian has reason to face death with confidence and assurance. Only the Christian has a purpose that is truly worth dying for: the gospel!

Peck considers our culture to be "cowardly" and "death-denying" (p. 52, FL). Even in the church, he claims, "most Christian denominations "have taken Jesus off the cross," stressing the resurrection (p. 66, FL). Attempting to delve into motives, he says that he:

"...can't help but wonder if they simply don't want to see all that blood and gore and the reality of that death in front of them to remind them of their own." (p. 66, FL)

This is highly speculative, but consistent with Peck's contempt for the Christian concept of resurrection.

Attempting to push God from His throne, Peck believes that "most of us will, in fact, *choose* when, where, or how we die" (p. 53, FL). Death is not an accident beyond our control, as commonly supposed (p. 52, FL). Peck stress the *will* to live, which "can significantly prolong life and enhance its quality" (p. 56, FL). He believes there is an important relationship between body and mind, and claims that you could be playing a role in your own illnesses (p. 59, FL). Although one's attitude and habits may hasten the decay of the physical body, the mind/body relationship is not always so strong as teachers like Peck presume. Above all, God remains in sovereign control of the timing of one's death.

Peck sees struggle with the mystery of death as a strictly solitary experience along one's "spiritual journey" (p. 66, FL). For the Christian, however, the trip is not such a lonely one. He has the assurance of eternal life with Christ.

Life, says Peck, is an "ideal learning environment...celestial boot camp" (p. 63, FL). The *purpose of Life*, in his thinking, is to learn, "and nothing helps us to learn more than death" (p. 62, FL). He connects this thought with reincarnation, where we continue to die and be reborn "until we have learned what it is we are on earth to learn" (p. 65, FL). In this system, "the whole reward, the whole goal is death" (p. 65, FL). Peck notes that death is more welcome in Eastern cultures, permeated with Hinduism and Buddhism, where reincarnation is a key doctrine (p. 65, FL).

Peck's perspective may indeed be consistent with Hinduism, Buddhism, and New Age theology, but it defies Scripture. Man's purpose is to glorify God. Yes, we do learn while on this earth. However, the believer is promised that he will be glorified in eternity, thoroughly sanctified, no longer in need of learning (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Romans 8:18). Reincarnation is a deadly doctrine that deceives people into believing they have another chance, where in reality man is appointed *once* to die, and then to face God's judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

Once again, Peck attempts to tie all religious faiths together:

"This is the central message of all the great religions: Learn how to die." (p. 68, FL)

"Buddhists and Hindus speak of this in terms of the necessity for self-detachment...Jesus spoke of it in similar terms: 'Whosoever will save his life (that is, whosoever will hold on to his narcissism) will lose it. And whosoever will lose his life for my sake will find it.'" (p. 68, FL)

Peck overlooks some key words in what Jesus said: "*for my sake.*"

The Lord's teaching has nothing at all to do with Buddhist or Hindu "detachment." Not all religions teach their adherents how to die! Only the Christian faith prepares the believer to spend eternity in fellowship with God, rather than in everlasting torment separated from Him.

The unbiblical teachings and grief stages model of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross are thoroughly embraced by Peck, who notes that many people become more "spiritual" after near-death experiences where:

"...they are confronted by a light, which is perceived as God or sometimes as Jesus...and this being of light requires that they review their lives." (p. 61, FL)

Such accounts are terribly deceiving, leaving the impression that salvation does not depend fully on faith in Jesus Christ. Remember that Satan and his associates disguise themselves as "angels of light!" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

Finally, Peck asks why people are so fearful of death. Here is his answer:

"Nothing threatens our narcissistic attachment to ourselves and our self-conceit more than our impending obliteration. So it is utterly natural that we should fear death." (p. 67, FL)

Love of self may certainly be a factor in the fear of death, but for the Christian, the basis for fear is destroyed:

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14-15

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." Isaiah 61:1

"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:55-57

Peck deceives his followers with his teachings on these crucial life-and-death matters, rejecting the glorious hope that is the believer's eternal inheritance.

Religious Unity and New Age Connections

Peck makes the claim to have rejected New Age teachings in certain specific areas. However, his many statements about the unity and consistency of all religious faiths make it clear that he remains well within the broad spectrum of New Age theology.

Religious Unity

Repeatedly, Peck persists in equating all religious faiths, despite his claim to Christianity. His Christian faith is certainly not exclusive:

"Christian doctrine approaches the reality of God and reality in general more closely than the other great religions."
(p. 166, FL)

Christian doctrine does not merely *approach* reality, and it is not merely *closer* to reality than other religions. Christianity *alone* is the truth, according to Scripture.

In discussing Stage II and Stage IV religious faith, Peck sees a "translation" taking place: "Jesus is my Savior" translates into "Jesus...taught me the way that I myself must follow for my salvation" (p. 126, FL). But Peck envisions this "translation" as occurring in other religions as well:

"This quality of dual translation holds true not just for Christianity and Judaism but also for Islam, Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Indeed, I think it is what makes them great religions." (p. 126, FL)

Peck opposes the "discrimination" he sees in organized religion. He recommends that you may need to "forgive your church," because "many of us have been harmed by religion" (p. 153). While it is true that individual persons may *misrepresent* the faith, sinfully so, it is these *persons* who need forgiveness, not the church in general. Furthermore, the behavior of a few individuals does not determine the truth of the faith.

Peck, however, believes that the same "basic truth" is taught by "founders of every major religion" (p. 154, FL), and that "God, unlike some organized religions, does not discriminate" (p. 155, FL). This may sound inclusive, tolerant, and loving, but it is false. Jesus Christ did not teach the *same* "basic truth" as other religions, particularly concerning the one way of salvation through faith in Him.

Despite his supposed "conversion," Peck continues his Buddhist commitment:

"I highly recommend Zen Buddhism...since accepting the many paradoxes of life is essential to mental health."
(p. 195, FL)

Peck's two books regarding "community" are equally deceptive in the manner that they encompass all religions as equal. *Different Drum* is admitted to be *spiritual but not specifically Christian* (p. 19, DD). Community, he says, "includes all faiths and all cultures without obliterating them," making it, in his estimation, "the cure for 'the core of our greatest contemporary trouble'" (p. 20, DD). Peck believes it essential that we learn how to "celebrate individual cultural and religious differences," learning how to "live with reconciliation in a pluralistic world" (p. 20, DD). Community workshops include persons of all races and religions, and they are claimed to have "dramatically diminished barriers between the invited authorities of these different faiths" (p. 346, WW). The "spirit of peace and love" in these workshops is experienced even by atheists (p. 74, DD). In fact, the very presence of Jesus Christ is claimed:

"Any group of people (no matter what their religious persuasion or whether the word 'Jesus' is spoken) who are willing to practice the love, discipline, and sacrifice that are required for the spirit of community, that Jesus extolled and exemplified, will be gathered together in his name and he will be there." (p. 75, DD)

This destroys the deity and specific earthly mission of Christ, who does not bless this type of inter-faith union.

It is misleading when Peck lumps *religious* differences along with *cultural* and *racial* differences. The latter two have nothing to do with eternal salvation and should not be the basis for separation or exclusiveness.

Also deceptive is Peck's emphasis on tolerance. As Christians seeking to evangelize and contend for the faith, we must be gentle and respectful toward all:

"And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will." 2 Timothy 2:24-26

It is sad to note that not all believers have been faithful to this admonition, but that is no call to equate the Christian faith with Buddhism, Hinduism, and other false religions. The truth remains the truth.

Israel. Peck has decided to use (or abuse) the term *Israel* to include all of humanity, which is biblical nonsense:

"Israel also includes those people once broken and once blessed, the Stage II Hindus and Muslims and Jews and Christians and Buddhists the world over. Israel also includes those twice broken and twice blessed, the atheists and agnostics and skeptics, whether in Russia or England or

Argentina or in this country, who question and thereby continue on with the great struggle. And finally it includes the thrice broken and thrice blessed mystics from all the cultures of the earth who have even come to seek future breakings for the blessings they now know will follow. Israel includes the entirety of our struggling infant humanity. It is the whole potential community on the planet. We are all Israel." (p. 208, DD)

It is not possible here to fully explore the biblical perspective on the nation of Israel, or the view of the Christian church as a spiritual Israel. There are some disagreements even among believers concerning the role of that nation in the end times. However, orthodox believers would all agree that Israel does not represent "the entirety of our struggling infant humanity," but is a select group belonging to God. Peck has grossly distorted the biblical teaching that God will purify for Himself a people composed of individuals from all the nations of the world.

Peck's dangerous inclusiveness can also be observed in his view of evil:

"A psychology of evil must be a religious psychology. By this I do not mean it must embrace a specific theology. I do mean, however, that it must not only embrace valid insights from all religious traditions but must also recognize the reality of the 'supernatural.' And, as I have said, it must be a science in submission to love and the sacredness of life. It cannot be a purely secular psychology." (p. 45, PL)

Spiritual warfare is to be fought by putting on the whole armor of God, climaxing with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (see Ephesians 6:10-17). It cannot embrace all theologies, but must specifically be grounded in Christian theism. Peck, however, would include even the irreligious if he personally conducted an exorcism:

"Were I to conduct an exorcism, I would not exclude from the team any mature Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Jew, atheist, or agnostic who was a genuinely loving presence." (p. 201, PL)

The devil must love this opportunity for deception!

New Age Connections

If you are familiar with the tenets of the New Age movement, you have surely realized that Peck is well within its boundaries. He has made certain specific departures from New Age theology since writing *The Road Less Traveled* and encountering the reality of evil, but his agreements are more numerous than these deviations. Remember, New Age theology is not a well organized system of doctrine, but contains all sorts of variations.

Peck seems to depart from the New Age when he notes that the "secular mentality" sees self as center of the universe, while the "sacred mentality" centers the universe "elsewhere and other" (p. 46, WW). He goes on to say that:

"More specifically than in the Eastern religions, the Western religions designate the Other or God to be Creator."
(p. 46, WW)

Therefore, he concludes, human beings are special or "sacred creatures" because God created them (p. 46, WW).

Monism. However, a few pages earlier Peck claims that "all religions in all ages" believe in the "consciousness of an invisible interconnectedness beneath the surface of things," and that "each of their teachings...de-emphasized the separation between self and other" (p. 20, WW). Specifically, Hindus and Buddhists consider "the entire concept of self...a total illusion" (p. 20, WW). In a similar manner they deny the distinction between good and evil (p. 20, WW). Although Peck says they carry things too far, he insists that:

"Jesus was an example of the Western mystic. He integrated himself with God.... He blurred the distinction between himself and others.... In common with Jewish mystics before him and Jewish, Christian, and Muslim mystics thereafter, Jesus never said there was no self. Rather, he urged us to cease clinging to our lesser selves in order that we might find our greater true selves." (p. 21, WW)

This is not at all what Jesus said! (Earlier, it was noted that Peck interprets these same words of Christ in terms of "holding on to our narcissism." He seems to use Scripture to his own advantage, depending on the subject.) Peck does not understand the Trinity or the deity of Christ. Also, there is no "lesser self" and "greater true self" in the Scripture, but the "old man" prior to receiving Christ, and the "new man" being conformed to His image. Peck's views on the "interconnectedness" of all things is not substantially different from basic New Age teachings.

New Age Movement as Reaction. Peck devotes significant space to speculating about the reasons for the growth of New Age religion. He claims that:

"Many people have found themselves needing 'religion,' but unable to stomach what much of 'organized religion' passes off as religion." (p. 194, FL)

He blames the supposed intolerance of "organized religion:"

"Because organized religion has been very intolerant of beliefs other than its own, the New Age movement has tended to incorporate an extraordinary hodge-podge of ideas."
(p. 197, FL)

He notes, however, the appearance of many equally intolerant "New Age fundamentalists," along with their opposite, "tolerance in the extreme, which can result in a kind of inappropriate individualism" (p. 201, FL). Note here the lack of standards for absolute truth, and lack of concern for the truth.

He also blames hypocritical behavior:

"The sin of Christianity has not been the sin of doctrine. It has been the sin of practice--a failure to integrate its behavior with its theology." (p. 200, FL)

Again, the behavior of some individuals within the faith does not determine what is or is not true, although believers ought to represent their Lord with kindness, humility, and love.

Generally, Peck describes the New Age movement as a "reaction formation" going to the opposite extreme (p. 197, FL), "a reaction against the institutional sins of Western civilization" such as sexism, "the emptiness of spirit and the arrogance, narcissism, and blasphemy of the Christian church," the "technological inhumanity" resulting from science, Western medicine, capitalism, imperialism, and exploitation of the environment (p. 196-7, FL). Peck agrees that these "are very real sins" which "should be reacted against" (p. 216, FL). (Note how rarely Peck uses the word "sin," and when he does, it is applied to the Christian church in general!)

Unbelief is never excused by such motivations, however logical they may seem from a purely human standpoint. God has clearly revealed Himself, leaving man without excuse (Romans 1:20).

Evil. Here is Peck's most obvious departure from New Age theology. He rightly recognizes: "Christian doctrine holds that evil is real" (p. 201, FL). But the New Age movement considers evil to not be real. Peck *partially* agrees, because "by thinking of evil we can create it" (p. 202, FL). He comments on "A Course in Miracles," which "purports to be Christian" but "distorts Christian doctrine" (p. 202, FL):

"It is a very good book, filled with a lot of first-rate psychiatric wisdom. But 'A Course in Miracles' also denies the reality of evil, saying that evil is unreal, a kind of figment of our imagination. This is not all that far from the truth, because evil does have a great deal to do with unreality." (p. 202, FL)

Note clearly the *partial* agreement with New Age teachings. In addition, this "Course" mutilates Christian doctrine in many other ways which Peck does not acknowledge.

Science. Peck also notes that the New Age movement "has tended to throw out scientific rigor" (p. 203, FL). Wanting to scientifically research *everything*, he cannot agree with them here.

Conclusions. Even where Peck claims to have abandoned his New Age faith, he has not *entirely* left it behind. There is more agreement than disagreement, particularly in terms of his monism and his merging of all faiths. He says in general concerning the

New Age faith:

"Is it going to be a revolution or a reformation? If it swings to the side of revolution, I think it is going to fail and be dangerous. If, on the other hand, it can keep to a path of reformation, then I think it will become a very holy thing, because we are in great need of reform." (p. 217, FL)

There is some hedging here, but Peck's alliance with the New Age must be noted with caution. In addition, it is important to examine his actual teachings, as we are doing in this paper, and not merely accept his own statements as to whether or not he supports this anti-Christian theological movement.

MORE ABOUT TRUTH: PRAYER, PARADOX, HERESY, AND BLASPHEMY

In spite of Peck's blatant rejection of absolute standards of truth, he makes some very definite statements concerning the nature of truth, its source, and how it can be distorted. He redefines the Christian concepts of prayer, heresy, and blasphemy, and he adds his Buddhist understanding of paradox.

THE SOURCE OF TRUTH: PRAYER AND MEDITATION

Peck departs radically from Scripture in his understanding of the nature and purpose of prayer and meditation.

Meditation. The Scripture instructs the believer to meditate on the Word of God (Psalm 1:1-3). Such Christian meditation has specific content. Peck, however, embraces the New Age version, wherein meditation has no content whatsoever, and certainly no connection with Scripture:

"Meditation can probably best be defined as the process by which we can empty our minds. Indeed, perhaps the most sophisticated variety of meditation is what Zen Buddhists call No Mind." (p. 210, DD)

In this unbiblical practice, it is not even necessary to believe in God (p. 211, DD). Peck specifically recommends Transcendental Meditation and yoga as "meditation aids" to empty the mind and make room for something new (p. 87, WW). These practices are rooted in pantheism, and the yoking of oneself with Hindu deities. Thus they should never be engaged in by Christians.

Prayer. Peck claims that prayer has never been adequately defined because it is "too large, too deep, too multidimensional and paradoxical" (p. 82, WW). He uses the definition of New Age proponent Matthew Fox, who calls prayer "a radical response to the

mysteries of life" (p. 85, WW). In making these claims he ignores huge portions of Scripture wherein God defines prayer and instructs His people about how to pray.

Describing his own "alone" times of solitude, or "prayer" time, Peck says that he spends only about five to ten percent of it talking to God. The rest of the time he is meditating, listening to God, but mostly he is simply thinking (p. 81, WW). He recommends paying attention to inner voices which may be revelations, but, he cautions, beware of "instant revelations" (p. 84, WW). Note the lack of a clear, objective, absolute standard here. Peck sees the source of truth as ultimately within oneself, specifically, the unconscious:

"The unconscious is always one step ahead of the conscious mind in the right direction or the wrong direction. It is therefore impossible ever to know that what you are doing is right, since knowing is a function of consciousness."
(p. 91, WW)

However, Peck equates the *unconscious* with the leading of the Holy Spirit when it happens to be in the right direction!

"Contemplative prayer" is what Peck considers a life-style dedicated to maximum awareness (p. 83, WW). Through prayer, we must not only think deeply but also translate our thinking into action (p. 85, WW). The believer does need to act as well as pray. However, Peck's unbiblical view of meditation and prayer seeks truth within man, rather than God's revelation. Clearly, his views in this crucial area cannot be adopted by believers.

THE NATURE OF TRUTH: PARADOX

Faithful to his Buddhist training, Peck places a high premium on paradox as the most crucial standard of truth:

"At the root of things, virtually all truth is paradoxical. Buddhist literature is generally more penetrating in this regard than Christian writing." (p. 238, DD)

"If a concept is paradoxical, that itself should suggest that it smacks of integrity, that it gives off the ring of truth."
(p. 238, DD)

Though admitting the Buddhist source of his ideas, Peck supposes that paradox is equally applicable to Christianity:

"At the heart of Christian doctrine...resides paradox. Jesus is neither simply totally divine nor totally human but both. Paradoxically, he who was the Son of Man was also the Son of God. And not simply 50 percent one and 50 percent the other."
(p. 242, DD)

Peck applies his concept of paradox in his discussions of "community," stating that when God enters into an organization, "nothing changes and everything changes" (p. 349, WW). Such language, he notes, is the "mystical response of Zen Buddhism" (p. 349, WW).

When we look into Scripture, we do not find paradox to be the primary standard which determines truth. What we do encounter is the idea of *mystery*. God has revealed Himself in creation, in the Scripture, and certainly in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has given us true revelation, but not *comprehensive* revelation. We do not know everything that God knows. His ways are higher than our ways, His knowledge higher than our knowledge. There are biblical concepts, such as the Trinity, the deity and humanity of Christ, and divine sovereignty versus human responsibility, which are not *fully* comprehensible to the finite human mind. Some mysteries, such as God's plan for redemption, have been revealed over a long period of time. Much biblical teaching, however, is straightforward and clear. Paradox is not held up as the ultimate test of truth.

DISTORTION OF TRUTH: HERESY

It seems odd that a writer like Peck, so seemingly tolerant of all religions, and so lacking in absolute truth, would even discuss or define a term like heresy. Yet he does, and he considers the issue quite important:

"World views are religions, and all wars are 'holy wars.' If we are to move away from war, therefore, we must begin to develop intellectual standards that distinguish between true religions and false religions, true prophets and false prophets, between integrated and unintegrated world views." (p. 240, DD)

Having defined truth in terms of the apparent contradiction inherent in paradox, it is not surprising to note Peck's definition of heresy as being characterized by claims to exclusive truth:

"Truth in religion is characterized by inclusivity and paradox. Falsity in religion can be detected by its one-sidedness and failure to integrate the whole." (p. 240, DD)

"Most heresy, Christian or otherwise, arises when we fail to embrace both sides of the paradox." (p. 242, DD)

Some early Christian heresies concerning the nature of Christ, as fully God and fully man, are noted by Peck. These are truly heresies, but not simply because of a claim to one-sidedness. In view of his fundamental commitments in this area, Peck might well

define Christianity's claim to the one true gospel as a heresy. Furthermore, he does not confine heresy to the Christian faith, but claims that all religions have heresies, some of them shared between religions (p. 244, DD).

In spite of all this, Peck is rather tolerant of heresy, which he claims to be destructive only when it dictates behavior (p. 245, DD). He advocates that while all forms of thinking should be tolerated, some forms of behavior should not be (p. 245, DD). Thus in the "community" he envisions, no truth is excluded:

"There is no such thing as a belief or theology--no matter how false, incomplete, or heretical--that cannot be accepted in the inclusiveness of community." (p. 245, DD)

"There is yet another paradox: the persecution of heresy is itself heresy." (p. 245, DD)

However, Peck's community is quite intolerant of the preaching of the gospel, as we will note in the section concerning this concept.

Heresy is defined much differently by the Christian faith. Here, heresy is a distortion of the truth of the Scriptures such that another gospel is preached, one that results in eternal damnation. That is, in fact, an excellent description of Peck's teachings.

FURTHER DISTORTIONS OF TRUTH: BLASPHEMY

In the Bible, blasphemy may mean the attempt to equate oneself with God. It was the Lord's statement of His deity that formed the basis for His crucifixion, and the Pharisees called that blasphemy (although in His case it was not). Blasphemy may also indicate contemptuous, disrespectful speech, toward either God or man.

Peck confuses *blasphemy* with *hypocrisy*, and he ignores the seriousness of contemptuous speech directed toward God:

"In my imagination, He is quite tolerant of us even when we are cursing Him or blaming Him for our misfortunes...I suspect God is big enough not to be terribly bothered if we damn Him now and then (and swearing is seldom that significant). What really infuriates Him, however, is to be used. And that is what is meant by blasphemy: the using of the Name of God when you are not in relationship with Him for the purpose of pretending that you are." (p. 248, DD)

This is indeed Peck's imagination, not the truth of Scripture! God is not at all so tolerant of men cursing and damning Him. The behavior Peck calls blasphemy, or the "lie of lies," is the "failure to integrate one's behavior with one's theology" (p. 211, FL; p. 249, DD). This is truly wrong, but it is better termed *hypocrisy*.

COMMUNITY

Peck holds out his uniquely conceived concept of "community" as the hope for the salvation of mankind. Both *Different Drum* and *A World Waiting to be Born* are devoted to this topic. In December 1984, Peck founded a nonprofit organization, the Foundation for Community Encouragement, in order to:

"...encourage the development of community wherever it does not exist, and to assist existing communities, whether secular or religious, to strengthen themselves and their relationships with other communities, ultimately thereby fostering the movement toward world understanding" (p. 331, DD).

The purpose is further described as teaching the "principles of community--that is, the rules for healthy and civil communication in groups" (p. 277, WW).

FCE is not allied with a specific religious faith, but Peck claims that its success is partially rooted in the fact that it "takes God into mind" (p. 349, WW). During the first several years, the organization "struggled to develop some sort of marketing language that would not have to use such words as 'God' or 'love,'" but eventually gave up and began to use those terms (p. 349, WW). However, the religious or spiritual terminology of FCE, as we will see, must not be confused with the terms of the Christian faith.

Beware, however, because Peck confuses the matter in his attempt to equate community with the *kingdom of God*. He claims that Jesus had a problem getting people into community:

"He had stumbled on this thing He called the Kingdom, and got very excited about it. But when He tried to describe it to people, their eyelids drooped and they would yawn.... He said 'the Kingdom is among (not within) you.' And I believe that the best way we find the Kingdom is among us in community." (p. 149, FL)

Jesus did not "stumble" onto the Kingdom of God. This type of remark denies His unique deity. His statement about the Kingdom being "among you" references His own arrival--King of Kings. The kingdom of God, ruled by the sovereign Lord and inhabited in eternity by believers only, has no correspondence whatsoever to the worldly utopian "community" Peck advocates, which includes all religious faiths.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY

A number of distinct "community" characteristics emerge from Peck's two books on the subject. Generally, people in "community" are those who:

"...have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to 'rejoice together, mourn together,' and to 'delight in each other, to make others conditions our own'" (p. 59, DD).

Inclusiveness. Community is inclusive, requiring commitment and an appreciation of differences, and going beyond democracy to "consensus" (p. 61-3, DD). Peck considers exclusivity to be the enemy of "community" (p. 61, DD). This includes any sort of religious exclusivity. In discussing prayer, song, and liturgy, Peck says that:

"...requiring nonbelievers to pray is inappropriate," and "to sing 'What a Friend I Have in Jesus' would be highly exclusive of some members in a group containing agnostics, atheists, Jews, or those of other religions." (p. 134, DD)

The inclusiveness of Peck's "community" is one which fails to properly distinguish between biblical truth and spiritually fatal errors. Real Christian love does not compromise the truth of the gospel.

Safe Place. Closely related to inclusiveness is the idea that community encourages people to:

"...examine their motives, feelings, judgments, and reactions, and hence...expand the consciousness of self."
(p. 294, WW)

Community provides a "safe place" where this can occur, and where:

"...old wounds are healed, old resentments forgiven, old resistances overcome. Fear is replaced by hope."
(p. 68, DD)

This atmosphere of safety, Peck claims, is one in which "there is a natural tendency for us to heal and convert ourselves" (p. 68, DD):

"Community is a safe place precisely because no one is attempting to heal or convert you, to fix you, to change you. Instead, the members accept you as you are. You are free to be you. And being so free, you are free to discard the defenses, masks, disguises; free to seek your own

defenses, masks, disguises; free to seek your own psychological and spiritual health; free to become your whole and holy self." (p. 68, DD)

This is a blatant denial of the sinful nature of man, as well as man's fundamental need to be converted to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The "safety" of community is an illusion, because it denies these eternal significant truths of Scripture.

Confession. Community requires the "confession of brokenness" (p. 69, DD). Peck comments: "How strange that we should ordinarily feel compelled to hide our wounds when we are all wounded!" (p. 69, DD). Such "confession," however, must not be confused with the biblical view concerning confession of *sin*. Peck, along with so many others, is more concerned with confession of "wounds" resulting from the sins of others. This is a counterfeit "confession."

Conflict Resolution. Because there are "no sides" in community, Peck claims that "conflict can be resolved without physical or emotional bloodshed and with wisdom as well as grace" (p. 71, DD). In contrast to this atmosphere, our civilization has procedures such as litigation, negotiation, and democracy, "adversarial machinery," developed in order "to resolve conflict without bloodshed" (p. 300, WW). Normally, when such procedures are utilized, blame is first assigned to an individual or organization for the origin of the conflict (p. 301, WW). Peck believes that almost all of the time, the use of such procedures is "unconscious, uncivil, and unnecessary," resulting from a "rushed judgment" (p. 301 and 306, WW). Other times, however, the very opposite of adversarialism, "pseudoconsensus," takes place, wherein "conflict is glossed over, submerged, denied" and no ethical debate is tolerated (p. 307, WW).

Neither of these methods results in the peaceful resolution of conflict. Peck advocates the communication that takes place in community, for the purpose of reconciliation, removing barriers of misunderstanding that separate people from one another (p. 257, DD). He also believes that when confusion exists over an organization's "vision, mission, myths, norms, and patterns of communication," then organizational "chaos" should occur, producing "overt conflict among its members" which can be resolved in the atmosphere of community (p. 359, WW).

The peaceful resolution of conflict is a valid biblical goal, and the believer is exhorted to live at peace with others, in so far as it depends on him. Reconciliation is also an important biblical goal. However, Peck rejects the absolute standards of Scripture. The Bible does not promote the type of New Age "unity" proposed by Peck, which compromises God's truth. Without biblical principles to guide the resolution of conflict, we have here a counterfeit of biblical reconciliation.

Lack of Leadership. Community is described as a "leaderless group" or perhaps a "group of all leaders" (p. 72, DD). The designated leader needs to refuse the exercise of leadership,

be confronted privately (p. 119-124, DD). Peck claims that "excessive organization is antithetical to community" (p. 78, DD). Community maintenance necessitates "a very low degree of authority" and "insistence on consensual decision making" (p. 148, DD).

This type of teaching conflicts with the scriptural model of authority and leadership. Of course, believers are equal in Christ and each individual is responsible to study Scripture and test what he hears from others. However, God ordains certain authority in the home, the church, and the government. Such authority is specifically limited by Scripture, and ought not to be sinfully abused, but it nevertheless does exist. The authorities designated by God are responsible *before Him* for loving, biblical exercise of their duties. The concept of a "leaderless group" finds no support in the Scriptures.

The Four Stages. Peck defines four "stages" in the development of community, just as he has done for the "spiritual journey" of the individual.

1. *Pseudocommunity* is "a stage of pretense" where members pretend to already be in community, but are actually "polite, inauthentic, boring, sterile, and unproductive" (p. 274, WW). Denying individual differences and speaking in generalities (p. 89, DD), people unconsciously withhold truth about themselves and their feelings, attempting to avoid conflict even though they want to be loving (p. 88, DD).

2. *Chaos* is characterized by "well-intentioned but misguided attempts to heal and convert" (p. 90, DD), not motivated by love but rather by the desire to win (p. 91, DD). People become "irritable and irritating" in their attempts to eliminate individual differences (p. 275, WW). The group may self-destruct at this stage.

3. *Emptiness* is the "most crucial stage" because it is the "bridge between chaos and community" (p. 95, DD). At this time, the group must relinquish the following:

"...prejudices, snap judgments, fixed expectations, the desire to convert, heal, or fix, the urge to win, the fear of looking like a fool, the need to control...hidden griefs, hatreds, or terrors that must be confessed, made public" (p. 275, WW).

Attempts to mold others into one's own expectations must be given up (p. 95, DD). Significantly, Peck says:

"It is not only...ideological and theological rigidities that we need to discard, it is any idea that assumes the status of 'the one and only right way.'" (p. 96, DD)

Peck explains that attempts to heal and convert are "not only naive and ineffective but quite self-centered and self-serving," providing "further proof of the rectitude of my beliefs and casting me in the role of savior to boot" (p. 99, DD). Instead, the

effective leader must give up control, "doing nothing, waiting, letting it happen" (p. 99, DD).

4. *Community*, when finally achieved:

"...is a group whose members have made a commitment to communicate with one another on an ever more deep and authentic level" (p. 276, WW).

"At this point a member will speak of something particularly poignant and authentic. Instead of retreating from it, the group now sits in silence, absorbing it." (p. 275, WW)

After this "birth" of community, there is a "spirit of peace" where many may "actually sense the presence of God in the room" (p. 275, WW).

The most serious objection to all of this is the abandonment of absolute truth. The statements about "emptiness," in particular, display a hostility toward any presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the one way of salvation, which it is. The believer cannot, in good faith, participate in a group where the gospel is stifled from the outset.

Vulnerability. Community is a place of "openness...the ability, even the willingness, to be wounded" (p. 226, DD). Peck says that vulnerability requires a risk, but it is essential to community. Community, in turn, is claimed to be equally crucial to peace and ultimately life itself (p. 233, DD).

Peck claims to draw support from Jesus, who preferred the company of society's outcasts:

"If Jesus, the healer, taught us anything, he taught us that the way to salvation lies through vulnerability." (p. 227, DD)

"It is only among the overtly imperfect that we can find community and only among the overtly imperfect nations of the world that we can find peace." (p. 231, DD)

This may sound good on the surface, in view of man's inherent pride and self-protectiveness. However, this vulnerability occurs without any necessity for biblical *repentance*, without becoming vulnerable before a holy God, asking for mercy on the basis of the completed work of Christ.

Integration. Peck is quite concerned about the concept of integration, as contrasted with *compartmentalization*:

"The word *integrity* comes from the same root as *integrate*. It means to achieve wholeness, which is the opposite of compartmentalize." (p. 181, FL)

The "Sunday morning Christian" is an example Peck gives of compartmentalization on an individual level, but it may also occur within organizations:

"Erik Erikson also labeled the final stage of individual psychosocial development 'integrity.' Just as it characterizes the highest mystical, wholistic form of individual functioning, so the integrity of community characterizes the highest form of group functioning."
(p. 234, DD)

Here again is an idea with superficial appeal. The believer's faith in Christ, for example, ought to be an integral part of every day and every aspect of his life. However, beware. Remember that Peck wants to "integrate" all religious faiths, and he wants to achieve "oneness" with all of nature. He has wrongly applied what might otherwise be a valid concept.

Crisis. Community involves the facing of crisis. Peck notes that "AA starts with people in crisis," and "recovery is never complete" (p. 78, DD). He advocates the facing of crisis early:

"Contrary to what many might believe, the healthy life is hardly one marked by an absence of crises. In fact, an individual's psychological health is distinguished by how early he or she can meet crisis." (p. 79, DD)

Applied at the "community" level:

"We can continue refusing to face the crisis until the day when we individually and collectively destroy ourselves and our planet." (p. 80, DD)

Once again, something potentially valid is distorted. The believer ought to face his sin early, and take biblical steps to correct his behavior or attitude. However, Peck applies the idea wrongly to "community." *He assumes that it is up to man to save himself and the planet on which he lives.* This denies the biblical truth about the second coming of Christ, and the consummation of history to be accomplished by God. Man does have responsibilities to care for God's creation in the meantime, but not to the extent taught by Peck and other New Age proponents.

Reentry. Peck warns about the difficulties of reentering the world after the experience of community:

"After learning how to relate with a group of fellow humans with affection and deep honesty while on a retreat, it can be painful to reenter the 'real world,' where people are customarily inauthentic with each other, where there is a prevailing lack of affection and trust cloaked behind a veneer of superficial politeness." (p. 286, WW)

One most serious problems is the inevitable impact on one's marriage, for example, where "community" is introduced in a business and spouses of employees are not present:

"Once there is a lot of intimacy at work...returning home to little intimacy may be infuriating. The experience of community raises our standards for relationships."
(p. 332, WW)

All of this raises serious concerns for the believer. Considering the biblical "one flesh" of the marital union, it is highly questionable whether such "intimacy" ought to be cultivated in a setting where one's partner is not included. Such intimacy also replaces the unity of the body of Christ, in a group where all faiths are considered equally valid.

Group Collective Consciousness. Peck asks whether perhaps a "collective group consciousness" might exist, "a kind of living organism much greater than the sum of its parts" (p. 296, WW). Noting the admittedly unproven "collective unconscious" theory of Carl Jung, Peck answers yes, proposing even an organizational soul, "a kind of collective mind and spirit that is greater than the average intelligence and vision of its individual members" (p. 298, WW).

This idea is in clear conflict with the unity in the body of Christ, and it also blurs the individual responsibility of every person before God. No "group soul," "group mind," or "group spirit," exists in the Scriptures, even though God sometimes deals with a nation or other group as a whole.

RUGGED VS. "SOFT" INDIVIDUALISM

The fundamental problem of man, sin, is rooted in his attempt at *autonomy*, the achieving of independence even from God. Peck states that he believes in "autonomy and self-determination," that we should be "masters of our destiny" and "captains of our own ships" (p. 55, DD). We should, he claims, become "fully ourselves" and have "the freedom to be our true individual selves" (p. 53, DD). Peck cites Jung's theory of "individuation," saying that most of us never complete the process, that "we are still dictated to by the values and expectations of our mothers and fathers" (p. 54, DD).

However, Peck expresses concern with the full implications of this "rugged" individualism:

"The majority of personal obstacles relate to the familiar ethic of rugged individualism." (p. 279, WW).

Besides being called to autonomy, claims Peck:

"We are also called to come to terms with our own inevitable sin and imperfection, our woundedness and brokenness, our human limits, and our natural interdependence. Consequently, we are programmed from early childhood on to look as if we've got it all together when none of us actually does."
(p. 279, WW)

Because of our separate identities, loneliness is inevitable. However, since "God loves variety," it should be this way (p. 53, DD). Nevertheless, Peck says, "we can never be completely whole in and of ourselves" (p. 55, DD), being "inevitably social creatures" (p. 56, DD).

Peck claims that from the "paradoxical seeds" of individuality plus the need for others, "community can grow" (p. 56, DD). He calls this a "soft individualism," wherein:

"We cannot be truly ourselves until we are able to share freely the things we most have in common: our weakness, our incompleteness, our imperfection, our inadequacy, our sins, our lack of wholeness and self-sufficiency." (p. 57, DD)

In all of this, Peck has substituted a sinful *autonomy* for the biblical view of individual *responsibility before God*. We have already seen the deception in his concept of community, which substitutes for the intimacy of *Christian fellowship*, wherein we do indeed need one another and have mutual responsibilities before God.

GLOBAL PEACE, GLOBAL GOVERNMENT

Peck promotes community as the way "to institute a planetary culture of civility" (p. 347, WW). Community is a place to "experientially discover the rules of peacemaking," and thus can "become the driving force behind the quest for peace on a global scale" (p. 70, DD). Peck does say that we can build "utopia" only "in cooperation with the grace of God," leaving "vast room for divine intervention" (p. 349, WW). However, his plan is based primarily on the efforts of man, denying the biblical truth that total peace will only be ushered in only by the Prince of Peace, when He returns and ushers in the eternal state.

In addition to world peace, Peck promotes world *government*, something that could well set the stage for the anticipated Antichrist. He expresses opposition to excessive national pride, saying that although a certain "healthy pride of identity" is needed, it too easily slips into "a sense of arrogant superiority" (p. 286-7, DD). At this point in history, Peck claims, the "nation-state system" of government is obsolete and we ought to submit to *international government and community*. His proposal is reminiscent of the Tower of Babel, with mans arrogant attempt at "unity" and autonomy.

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In *Different Drum*, Peck spends a chapter discussing the arms race, which he believes must be actively torn down (p. 262, DD). It is maintained, he says, by inertia, resistance, passivity, and a sense of helplessness, both institutional and individual (p. 262-3, DD). Additionally, Peck considers the arms race a psychological game with an unspoken pay-off (p. 276, DD). While there are valid concerns expressed here, we must regretfully acknowledge man's sinful tendencies to wage war, and respond accordingly during this age. The Lord noted the presence of wars, and rumors of wars, until the time of His return.

IMPACT ON EVANGELISM

It is important to emphasize the manner in which Peck's teachings undermine the preaching of the gospel, as commanded by Jesus Christ. While this was noted under community characteristics, it can hardly be stressed sufficiently.

When Peck discusses "transcending culture," something he claims Jesus did, he says that persons in his "Stage II" of spiritual growth are:

"...threatened by anyone who thinks differently from them, and so regard it as their responsibility to convert or save the other 90 or 99 percent of humanity who are not 'true believers.'" (p. 200, DD)

This undermining of Christian evangelism occurs throughout Peck's writings, and it is a grave concern, particularly in view of the fact that Peck professes to be a Christian.

COMMUNITY AND THE CHURCH

Peck notes "an astonishing lack of interest on the part of the church in our community building services and an equally astonishing and burgeoning interest on the part of business" (p. 352, WW). Elsewhere he states that not only the church, but the federal government as well, are either unwilling or unable to "incorporate the principles of community that would facilitate this revolution and save our skins" (p. 292, DD). He explains the church's lack of interest as rooted in its low priority in the lives of most people. In addition, he claims that people desire only "pseudocommunity" in their churches, and that they give time "out of their own leadership needs," to play some "very personal power games" (p. 352, WW). Peck believes that perhaps God has abandoned the church and "gone into business," and therefore, "utopia" will emerge from the world of business (p. 353, WW).

accuses the church of being "inclusive" based on fear and greed rather than love (p. 303, DD). He laments the fact that there is no longer a danger involved in Christianity, no personal risk (p. 295, DD). Furthermore, he believes that the early Christian church did practice community, unlike the church of today (p. 294, DD). He sees a glimmer of hope in the blurring of distinctions between clergy and laity (p. 306, DD).

Certainly, there are real problems in the Christian community today. The early church, faced with danger and persecution, had an intimate fellowship that is infrequent today. Sometimes the church does occupy a low priority in the lives of its members. However, we cannot agree with Peck's answers to these problems. The early church was composed of Christian believers, those who relied solely on Jesus Christ for eternal salvation. It did not include other faiths in its intimate fellowship, but rather evangelized those people. Peck's "community" does not present any danger of persecution such as faced by martyrs through the century, but rather is the fashionable trend in modern psychologized society. Problems do exist in the Christian church today, but Peck offers no viable solutions, but rather a deceptive New Age agenda.

COMMUNITY AND CIVILITY

One of primary values in Peck's system of thought is "civility." Peck places such a premium on it that he holds it out as the standard for determining whether a marriage is good or bad (p. 96, WW). "Civility" is defined as "consciously motivated" behavior that is "ethical in submission to a Higher Power" (p. 47, WW). It is "the path of growth, the road to personal and collective salvation or healing" (p. 54, WW). Peck considers this "submission to a Higher Power" the equivalent of "falling into the hands of the living God" in Hebrews 10:31 (p. 54, WW). Civility is contrasted with "incivility," which "generally arises out of unconsciousness" (p. 26, WW) and "is perhaps reflective of human nature at this point in its evolution" (p. 30, WW). Incivility, particularly in a large, complex organization, results in a lack of responsibility, and is claimed to be the cause of much "psychospiritual disease and suffering" (p. 30 and 33, WW). Peck claims that Jesus referred to unconscious, uncivil behavior when He asked God to forgive those who murdered Him (p. 26, WW). The supposedly "unconscious" nature of incivility is reflected in Peck's comment that:

"Most of the evil in this world--the incivility--is committed by people who are absolutely certain that they know what they're doing" (p. 91, WW).

Civility is not marked by politeness or by any sort of pretense that seeks to avoid conflict (p. 142, WW). Peck illustrates this principle by noting an incident where a woman called him at home

just prior to a speech he was giving. Here is his description of the "civil" way in which he claims *Jesus* would have responded:

"'Lady, where the hell do you think you come off, calling me at home on a Wednesday night, trying to tell me what to lecture about on Friday night? It's the most arrogant, self-centered thing I've ever heard of. Maybe if you were a little less self-centered your husband might be a little more interested in you. Good night!' And then *Jesus* would have hung up the receiver with a certain definiteness to emphasize his point." (p. 75, WW)

There are serious problems in all of this. We must, of course, respond to conflict and not merely avoid it with a facade of being polite. However, Peck does not incorporate the standards of God's Word into his teachings. And despite statements that seem to emphasize responsibility, he actually evades real responsibility *before God* by stressing the "unconscious" nature of incivility. Also, "falling into the hands of the living God" in Hebrews 10:31 (check out the context!) is a much more *eternally serious* matter than merely "submitting to a Higher Power." The sovereign Lord is not just some vague "higher power," but the personal Creator of the universe who gives commands and reigns over all. The erroneous theory of evolution has nothing to do with it. Rather, man is inherently sinful and in need of redemption. He has not evolved in the past from other life forms, nor is he evolving in the future toward divinity. Peck is wrong.

The imaginary phone conversation above does not demonstrate the humble, godly response that a believer ought to give. *Jesus* was very hard on the self-righteous leaders of His day--true. However, remember that He is *God*, King of Kings. He has the right and authority to do so, while we do not. Scripture instructs the believer about godly communication, even when confrontation of sin is necessary (Ephesians 4:29; Galatians 6:2; Colossians 4:6; James 3). Peck degrades *Jesus Christ* by attributing this sort of ungodly speech to Him.

Power. Peck describes two fundamental types of power, *political* and *spiritual*. The first is "the power to influence others through coercion," using money and/or position. It is highly controlling, and temporary (p. 127, WW). Quite different is the *spiritual* power "to influence others through one's own being--by example, by kindness, by humor, by wisdom and love." It is marked by humility rather than excessive control (p. 128, WW). Peck warns against temptations to "spiritual flashiness," flamboyance, power for its own sake, or seduction of others, which "cater to our desire for self-esteem" (p. 258-60, WW). He advocates the willingness to give up one's power at times, even to the point of submitting to another (p. 266, WW). Finally, he says:

"The power belongs to God, and the proper role of the civil leader is merely to be a conduit and to steward that power as God's agent." (p. 268, WW)

This is one of the rare times where Peck's statements, taken at face value, are reasonable. We must bear in mind, however, Peck's rejection of absolute biblical standards, and his unorthodox ideas about the nature of God and man. Scripture represents all power, honor, glory, and authority as belonging to God (Revelation 4:11, 5:13)--not Peck's "god," but the true God of Scripture.

COMMUNITY AND COVENANT

Peck equates "community" with unconditional love, which he sees as an integral aspect of God's *covenant* with man. Although such unconditional love is not natural to man, it is to God (p. 55, WW). Peck cites God's covenant with Noah in Genesis 8-9, where:

"God decides 'in His heart' never again to destroy his creation, *no matter how wicked or uncivil we creatures might be.*" (p. 56, WW)

Peck believes that at this point in time, in the New Covenant, God covenants *only* with individuals, never organizations or other groups:

"I do not believe this covenant is simply with us humans as a species, like God's covenant spoken to Noah. Instead, I believe it is with each of us human beings as *individuals*, that God unconditionally loves you and me and every other single person in the world." (p. 59, WW)

Peck explains this further as meaning that "she/he continues to suffer over each of us *today, tomorrow, and for eternity*" (p. 59, WW).

Furthermore, it is significant to note that Peck does not consider the concept of covenant as being restricted to the Christian faith, or even to any religion at all:

"God covenant with individuals...but it is not necessary to speak of this in religious terms. Secular psychotherapists for decades have been instructing their patients that allegiance to their own personal growth properly supersedes allegiance to family norms." (p. 174, WW)

Peck mutilates the biblical understanding of covenant. This concept has nothing to do with an individual's "allegiance to personal growth." The Noahic covenant was indeed with all of humanity--in fact, all of creation. However, the promise was never again to destroy the creation by *flood*. Scripture specifically

again to destroy the creation by *flood*. Scripture specifically states that one day God will again destroy, by *fire* (2 Peter 3:10-13). The believer recognizes the reality of the final judgment, yet hopefully anticipates the new heavens and new earth. Another error in Peck's analysis is his belief that God *continues to suffer* for eternity over each person. This blatantly denies the finality of Christ's sacrificial death. His suffering and humiliation is completed, accomplishing the redemption that God intended (see the book of Hebrews!).

Peck takes the biblical idea of covenant and rewrites it according to his own imaginations and purposes. He claims that "God's covenantal, ongoing caring for us is the ground of ethical behavior and civility" (p. 59, WW). Yes, the Christian ought to care for others. His behavior ought to be godly and ethical. He knows that he has eternal life, that he and others are created in God's image. He has a solid basis for righteous behavior, but *not* the basis promoted by Peck, who promotes a New Age global community rather than the glorious eternal hope of Scripture.

COMMUNITY AND CALLING

In his vision for a global community, Peck emphasizes the importance of individual vocation or *calling*. Although he claims that a calling comes from the "mouth of God," he also believes it is normally unconscious, something that is simply felt "in our blood" rather than heard in our minds (p. 78, WW).

Calling is not limited, in Peck's view, to people who believe in God:

"God calls us human beings--whether skeptics or believers, whether Christian or not--to certain, often very specific activities." (p. 61, WW)

Lest this be confused with the biblical teaching of God's sovereignty, Peck says that "we are free to refuse to heed God's call" (p. 62, WW).

A calling to "greatness" is something Peck believes may be subjectively "felt" years in advance of actual achievement:

"I have never known a genuinely talented person who achieved 'greatness' without a sense of destiny--who did not, years before such achievement, experience an almost burning sense that she or he was called to grand and glorious achievements." (p. 69, WW, citing Sigmund Freud as example)

Peck uses his understanding of "calling" in a self-serving manner that undermines biblical standards. He believes that God may call someone out of marriage after a number of years (p. 71 and 136, WW). He justifies his own standards of material luxury:

"The still small voice inside me seems to be saying, 'Do not feel reluctant to enjoy fine hotels and resort vacations. Celebrate these gifts. They nurture you in the work you do. Otherwise, live modestly as you communicate with the upper middle class. Don't try to work with the poor. You don't know how to do it, and you're no good at it. Leave it to others who were made for it. You were designed to speak to the well educated who labor under the burdens of their estrangement or self-righteousness.'" (p. 239-40, WW)

The Scriptures speak clearly of the believer's calling and election to eternal life (1 Peter 2:9, 2 Peter 1:10, Ephesians 1:4-6). This is specifically a *Christian* concept. God did not call Sigmund Freud to write his blasphemous attacks on Christianity, although He is in *sovereign control* of all that comes to pass. Peck defies biblical standards for truth and conduct, using the idea of "calling" to justify behavior that is in disobedience to God's commands. The believer must adhere to the Scripture's teaching about his Christian calling, not Peck's distortion.

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY

Peck's most recent book about "community," *A World Waiting to be Born*, devotes significant space to marital and other family relationships. It is beyond the scope of this paper (which is already lengthy) to critique every statement Peck makes in this area. Since he rejects biblical standards, a great deal could be said if space permitted. But we must concentrate on how Peck relates the family to "community."

Earlier, we noted Peck's belief that God covenants only with individuals, not organizations. He concludes from that premise that there is nothing "inherently holy" about marriage, since it is an "organization" of two people (p. 133-4, WW). This is clearly a rejection of the biblical view of marriage, which is indeed viewed as covenantal in nature. Peck considers it rather a commitment "to attempt to maintain the organization" (p. 134-5, WW). However, he sees ambiguity in commitment, with the ideal not always possible (p. 135, WW). Thus, "some gulfs (are) too wide to be bridged and some disagreements so devastating that they should not be tolerated" (p. 144, WW). Peck offers "no formula" for determining whether a difference is or is not acceptable. We commented earlier on his belief that God may call someone out of marriage. Peck's views about marriage are a radical departure from God's Word.

Looking at children, Peck stresses the need for them to separate from parents and achieve "individuation" (p. 170, WW):

"Family togetherness, however nurturant, is not a healthy goal for children. Their ultimate goal is to separate from their family, and whenever they assume significant personal

responsibility for family togetherness, children do damage to themselves." (p. 284, WW)

Peck cites Jesus for support of his position:

"Jesus needed repeatedly to make it clear that one's primary calling is to God, not one's family...he was fighting against the idolatry of family of his day." (p. 174, WW)

In view of all the preceding, Peck claims that "community building" is inappropriate for families (p. 284, WW). "The bedrock of community is commitment," he claims, "but a child's proper commitment is not to its family" (p. 284, WW). Peck sees the abuse of power in families as a common problem (p. 174, WW), and excessive togetherness in marriage as the greatest marital problem (p. 133, WW).

It is true that the believer's primary commitment is to God, rather than to anyone else. The family is not to be an idol. The grown child is to "leave and cleave" to his spouse. But Peck grossly undermines the biblical view of the family. We live in an age where the traditional family, as ordained by God, is under constant attack. Divorce is rampant, along with all sorts of other evil. Peck contributes to the problem, not the solution! God places a high priority on marriage and family.

Most importantly, let us pause to note that Peck has rejected both the church and the family, *institutions ordained by God in Scripture*, as places where intimate "community" is to be built. Instead, his way of "salvation" lies in the hands of business organizations, which are likely to adopt "community" as a standard because of its cost-effectiveness (p. 353, WW). This is a frightening departure from God's standards.

COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS

For Peck, the business organization is the equal of another person:

"Civil people regard their organizations as they would the other person: neither superior nor inferior to themselves." (p. 52, WW)

While he does state that the organization ought not to become one's "higher power," raising it to the level of a human being, *created in the image of God*, is unacceptable. It is particularly unacceptable in view of the fact that it contains both believers and unbelievers, not the fellowship of the body of Christ. Furthermore, Peck notes that "a business is not a family" (p. 196, WW). It does not exist to "nurture" anyone but rather to market and sell a product (p. 197, WW). These descriptions are clearly *impersonal*, although Peck wants to treat the organization as a

person. There is radical contradiction here, and it is alarming that Peck places his faith and hope for the future in something that is so fundamentally impersonal.

Peck believes that organizations have an obligation to be ethical, and that business life is harmed by "our common narcissistic failure to appreciate the separateness, the differentness, of others" (p. 222, WW). He says that we are all obliged to become more conscious, ethical, and spiritually competent (p. 219, WW). While this may *seem right*, bear in mind Peck's rejection of biblical standards, and his aversion to any claim to exclusive, absolute truth.

Shared Lies and Secrets. One of the major obstacles to building "community," according to Peck, is the existence of delusions or myths that are shared, "conscious, deliberate falsifications of reality that do not serve to give the organization an identity" (p. 188, WW). He considers these "myths, mottoes, norms, and often secrets" to be "common...in virtually all businesses" (p. 196, WW). However, a "civil" institution would not consciously promote such falsehoods (p. 238, WW).

Certainly, God requires that we walk in truth. However, Peck rejects God's clear standards of truth. Thus, his statements about avoiding delusions are highly misleading.

Transference. Another stumbling block on the road to "community" is transference, "our profound tendency to confuse business roles with family ones" (p. 197, WW). Peck at least recognizes the atheistic source of this idea:

"Freud discovered the concept of transference, and psychotherapists are the experts on the subject."
(p. 204, WW)

Note the arrogant exaltation of psychotherapy, a profession of secular "priests" grounded in atheistic presuppositions.

As one of these so-called "experts," Peck says that transference is "inherently unconscious and distorting" (p. 216). However, it is not the only type of role confusion (p. 214, WW), and it may be mixed with feelings that are appropriate to the situation and relationship (p. 214, WW). Also, Peck believes an individual may "transfer onto an organization as a whole" (p. 210, WW).

This is a distorted and biblically inappropriate concept that masks personal responsibility for *sin*--note how it is said to be *unconscious*. The believer must handle his relationships according to biblical standards of truth, not the inventions of atheists like Freud.

Politics. One additional obstacle to community, and the most significant to Peck, is "the configuration of personality and power within the organization," often called "politics" (p. 328, WW). "Community" is "virtually the opposite of the hierarchical mode," because "rank is totally set aside and considered irrelevant" (p. 334, WW). In this setting, decisions are made and issues

confronted, "without the pretense of pseudocommunity and the pressures of adversarialism" (p. 316, WW).

There is a *superficial* resemblance here to the equality of believers before the throne of God (Galatians 3:26-28), but without the equal recognition of God-given authority. Also, the business replaces the church in Peck's system of "salvation."

Management: Another Priesthood. With business as the organizational vehicle for "salvation," managers within that system have a status not unlike that of the priest or pastor of a church. Peck calls management "a high spiritual calling" (p. 245, WW) which involves the exercise of "servant leadership" (p. 246, WW), managing primarily *people* rather than *products* (p. 227, WW), empowering others and training successors (p. 261, WW).

Peck sees management as a God-given calling (p. 227, WW). Sometimes, however, managers have a "naked lust for power," and thus their calling is perhaps from the devil rather than God (p. 246, WW). Rather than attribute this to sin, however, Peck offers psychological explanations. This lust for power may be:

"...a compulsion to compensate for some deep impotence, some hidden wounds from their childhood, some terrible deprivation they once suffered" (p. 246, WW).

Others may have a genuine calling but fear arrogance or the exercise of authority. Here Peck's counsel is to "accept your superiority" (p. 246-7, WW).

Peck outlines four different management styles, ranging from authoritarian to consultative to participatory to consensual, each increasingly incorporating subordinates into the decision making process (p. 261-5, WW). The "consensual" is most time-consuming and difficult (p. 265, WW). Peck does not advocate any one style as always the best, but rather claims that it depends on specific circumstances and the importance of the decision to be made (p. 265, WW). As always, there are no absolute biblical standards.

The role of manager is a lonely one, with the temptation to form an alliance within the organization or engage in an adulterous sexual relationship (p. 266, WW). Peck counsels the manager to maintain companionship with a "higher power" and make decisions prayerfully (p. 267, WW), but again he fails to mention biblical standards. One could justify almost any sort of "prayerful" decision within Peck's system.

Scripture spells out the relationships of authority that God ordains in the home, church, government, and business. Peck offers a counterfeit that is based on relative truth. Significantly, he undermines the godly authority of both home and church and concentrates his attention on the business manager instead.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SALVATION

Peck has a fundamental commitment to psychotherapy that emerges throughout his writings. His "gospel" is rooted and grounded in its anti-Christian value system, which replaces Scripture. Even though he makes some piercing criticisms concerning his profession's disregard of spirituality, his basic commitment remains.

Psychotherapy is viewed as an exploration of "inner space," with the therapist as a hired tour guide (p. 77-8, FL). It is also, for Peck, a *spiritual journey* where "hopefully we are searching for the real God" (p. 78, FL). Note the admission here of the religious nature of psychological counseling, with the *therapist replacing the pastor*.

The ultimate issue of death is also the concern of psychotherapy. This matter, claims Peck, is addressed at the termination of therapy:

"The termination of a beloved relationship between a patient and a therapist can sometimes be used to symbolize the whole issue of death and give the patient an opportunity--that most people would never otherwise encounter--to work through death." (p. 63, FL)

Again, psychotherapy replaces the church, addressing a matter where it offers no hope whatsoever, being grounded in atheism. For the Christian, death is the beginning of eternal fellowship with the Lord, not a termination requiring psychotherapy.

Peck recognizes that there exists:

"...an anti-mental health movement in this country consisting of people who are frightened by the influences of secular humanism and psychology movements in our lives" (p. 143, FL).

Despite his focus on spirituality, however, Peck maintains his fundamental commitment to psychology, and to the medical model that psychiatry has wrongly--and increasingly over the past 25 years--applied to human behavior (p. 232, FL). He believes that Freud is rightly a "towering figure" in America, despite the fact that this man's atheism "has further entrenched the secularism of American psychiatry" (p. 241, FL).

Peck notes with deep concern a "denigration of the humanity of psychiatric patients," with many viewed by professionals as chronic lost cases (p. 247). This is a real and grave concern, contrasting with the glorious hope offered by God in His Word. Still, it does not dampen Peck's basic enthusiasm for psychotherapy.

The sponsors of AA are held out by Peck as "lay psychotherapists," and although not "the exact equivalent of paid-for, professional psychotherapists," he considers them a good substitute for those unable to afford therapy (p. 144, FL). Note

again the exaltation of the "experts" of psychotherapy, a system admittedly built on the presupposition of atheism. Again, too, Peck promotes an organization (AA) that substitutes for the Christian church.

PSYCHIATRY, SCIENCE, AND RELIGION

Peck recognizes that religion and science, specifically psychiatry, are inseparable, and that psychiatry cannot be practiced without a system of values. We can agree fully that values must of necessity enter into science, and that counseling cannot possibly be conducted on any neutral basis. The admission of this integral relationship is an important one, and it is a key to understanding why the Christian cannot integrate the theories of psychology with God's Word. First we will consider the relationship between psychiatry, science, and religion--then values specifically.

Looking back into history, Peck notes that:

"Prior to the seventeenth century, the relationship between science and religion was primarily one of integration. That integration was known as philosophy." (p. 235, FL)

Later, however, an "unwritten social contract" developed to separate science from religion (p. 235, FL). After that, "'natural knowledge' was the province of science, 'supernatural knowledge' the province of religion" (p. 236, FL).

We must pause and make two observations. First, it is questionable whether the study of man, created in the image of God, is truly a science in the same sense as other fields of study. Because of the image of God in man, and man's relationship to his Creator, the study of man is inseparable from *theology*. Secondly, even those studies rightly called science are not absolutely neutral. In order to study God's creation, it is necessary to make certain fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality, assumptions rooted in the biblical view that God--the personal, self-existent God revealed in Scripture--created and *designed* His universe. Without that basic presupposition, chance becomes king and the scientist has no basis for proving any laws of nature.

Peck rejects the view that psychiatry can be separated from religion, or "spirituality," as he terms it. He defines "spirituality" by borrowing William James' definition of religion, as the "attempt to be in harmony with an unseen order of things" (p. 233, FL). He goes on to claim that psychiatry must regard humans as spiritual beings, or it will miss the boat (p. 234, FL). He admits to the fact that psychiatry is dominated by an atheist outlook:

"The vast majority of psychiatrists--including those who are training new psychiatrists--are Stage Three people. As such,

on the whole they are more spiritually developed than the majority of churchgoers or those who are identifiably religious. On the other hand, they are less spiritually developed than a minority of the identifiably religious. Ignorance of this reality has profound implications. It predisposes psychiatrists not only to look upon all religion as inferior and pathological, but also to be oblivious to the fact that they themselves may have a spiritual distance to travel." (p. 239, FL)

Much of this is grounded in the acceptance of Peck's "stages" of spiritual development, which we cannot accept. For example, we cannot agree that the atheist is more "spiritually developed" than the devout believer. Nevertheless, this is a key statement in its recognition of the hostility that exists between psychiatry and psychology, grounded in atheism, and the Christian faith, grounded in God's revelation. Christians naively assume that psychiatry is a valid science, when it is filled with godless speculations, and that it can be a useful addition to Scripture. Peck notes the "profound distrust and suspicion of psychiatry by many Stage Two people," who he believes assign it a place with evolution and world government--all claimed to be works of the devil (p. 242, FL). Actually, evolution, world government, and psychological counseling theories are fundamentally hostile to Christianity, and profound distrust is quite appropriate. Unfortunately, the distrust Peck observes is not an accurate description of the way in which most Christians view psychotherapy!

Peck both defends and criticizes his profession. He believes the secularism in psychiatry is rooted in "the large number of patients we have all seen who have been hurt by religion or in the name of religion" (p. 241, FL). When this does happen, it is terribly unfortunate, but remember that Peck fails to distinguish between the truth of Christianity and the false teachings of other religions. He rejects absolute truth.

In his criticisms of psychiatry, Peck claims that its "traditional neglect of the issue of spirituality has led to five broad areas of failure:

1. Occasional, devastating misdiagnosis
 2. Not infrequent mistreatment
 3. An increasingly poor reputation
 4. Inadequate research and theory
 5. A limitation of psychiatrists' own personal development."
- (p. 243, FL)

In addition to these broad areas, the "single most common complaint" that Peck hears about therapists is "that they did not or would not listen to the spiritual aspects of their (patients') lives" (p. 246, FL). He admits, in fact, that many of them "actively degrade" the spiritual lives of those they counsel (p. 247, FL).

Peck believes that secular humanistic values are adequate for many persons in therapy, but that about forty percent of them require something, like AA, which addresses their spiritual needs as well (p. 186, FL). He says:

"I believe that the *judicious* use of religious concepts can ...enhance or speed up psychotherapy in many of the remaining cases that are susceptible to the traditional approach."
(p. 187, FL)

He claims that secular humanism does not address "spiritual needs," yet apparently sees it as *religiously neutral*. He is wrong, because secular humanism is inherently religious and seriously undermines the truth of God's revealed value standards. (See the paper, "Blasphemy From Fromm," offered in the series, "Exposing the Roots.")

Other problems noted include the inability of most psychiatrists "to distinguish between a healthy and unhealthy spirituality" (p. 248, FL). Most psychiatrists, being ignorant of theology, fail "to spot false ideas, false thinking, or, in religious terms, heresies" (p. 248, FL). Because of these failures, Peck claims, the reputation of psychiatry has greatly deteriorated and many avoid it, having heard of its "antipathy to spirituality" (p. 249, FL). We can only wish this last statement were true! However, it is true that psychological counselors in general, even those professing to be Christians, are theologically ignorant. Even those few who have formal training in theology, thus claiming to offer the best of both worlds, are highly influenced by the ungodly theories of psychology, and thus their theology is distorted.

Peck makes vast claims to offering a solution which will salvage his profession. He proposes "five therapeutic measures," which we will summarize (p. 251-3, FL).

1. **Spiritual History.** Peck believes that psychiatric residents ought to be required to take a "spiritual history" of their own lives.

2. **Spiritual Stages.** Peck proposes that psychiatric residents be taught the principles of his "four stages" of spirituality.

3. **Heresy Lecture.** He also advocates "at least one lecture on the nature of heresy, false ideas, and false assumptions" (p. 252, FL).

4. **Diagnostic Categories.** Peck proposes that at least two new categories be added to the DSM III. First would be the people he has labeled "evil." Second would be the "diagnosis of possession, with criteria for distinguishing between it and multiple-personality disorder" (p. 253, FL).

5. **Research.** Peck emphasizes research numerous times in his writing. Here he advises "spiritual research." In *People of the Lie*, he notes that religion has discussed evil for centuries, while science has not (p. 40, PL). In the final chapter of that book (p. 254-69), and elsewhere, he strongly recommends scientific research

about evil, in order to develop a "psychology of evil" (p. 215, PL).

It is important to note here that Peck holds out his own uniquely developed concepts, terms, and standards as the foundation for a reformation of psychiatry. For someone who rejects the absolute standards revealed by God, the sovereign Lord and Creator of the universe, this is arrogance in the extreme.

Peck wonders whether American psychiatry will make the transition he considers so vital, whether it will move from resistance to an open consideration of spiritual matters (p. 254, FL). Perhaps, he says, it will abandon the business of psychotherapy altogether. He doesn't know, or so he claims, whether that would be the right course. He does claim, in the meantime, that the influence of psychiatry is decreasing (p. 254, FL).

The influence of psychiatry is not decreasing. Instead, psychotherapy has become entrenched in our culture as the *religion* of many. Note how Peck's reformatory recommendations serve to establish the psychiatrist as a secular "pastor," psychiatry as a replacement for the church, and psychological theory as "scripture." With his integration of psychiatry and spirituality, the traditional role of religion has been usurped by these intrusive beliefs and practices. That is totally unacceptable to those who hold to the truth of the gospel, the "faith once delivered to the saints!" (Jude 3).

PSYCHIATRY AND VALUES

Peck is aware of the impossibility and inadequacy of attempting to establish psychotherapy as a neutral endeavor:

"When the patient's problem is one of hope and faith--and in many other circumstances--psychiatry fails if it is compartmentalized rather than integrated, or if it does not deal with the question of values." (p. 184, FL)

"The fact of the matter is that there has never been such a thing as value-free psychotherapy."
(p. 185, FL, emphasis added)

He also notes that science "can no longer ignore issues of value" (p. 262, PL), because "the major threats to our survival no longer stem from nature without but from our own human nature" (p. 263, PL).

We must certainly agree as to the impossibility of neutrality in counseling, and to the fact that man's nature is a key issue which is inseparable from a standard of values. The very idea--giving counsel to another person concerning the most crucial issues of life with *no frame of reference and no value system*--is

preposterous. It cannot be done. At this point, however, our agreement with Peck must end.

The value system of secular humanism, notes Peck, is the one normally used in psychotherapy. That system, claimed by him to be "in many ways...a very good value system" affirms loving well, working productively, and thinking. Freud, atheist that he was, promoted these values (p. 185, FL). Peck leads his readers into a theological twilight zone with these statements, as if some general value concerning love could exist above and apart from *God's love defined and revealed in the Scriptures*. Or as if *thinking* were an independent value, regardless of content or intent. Scripture instructs the believer concerning right thinking that honors God, but not just any sort of thinking. "Productive work," too, must be rooted in the desire to glorify God, and grounded in His revealed standards, if it is to be a *Christian* value. Do not be deceived by Peck's appraisal of the system of secular humanism. It is not, under any circumstances, a system that can be integrated with Christianity, but is in every way antithetical to our faith.

Peck notes that historically:

"The separation of science and religion...had a profound effect upon the practice of psychotherapy," which was supposed to have been scientific and "value-free." (p. 236, FL)

In today's psychiatric practice:

"As for religion specifically, the APA has actual guidelines to the effect that a psychiatrist should not inject religion into treatment when it is counter to the patient's belief system, nor should he or she attempt to discredit the patient's belief system." (p. 237, FL)

We must recognize the impossibility of following such standards, plus the fact that the Christian *must not* separate his faith from the counseling of others. Peck admits his profession's hostility to religion, and the imposition of that hostility on those it claims to "treat:"

"But what about the secular humanist psychiatrist who attempts to impose his or her secular humanism upon a religious patient? That imposition is so frequent as to be almost standard." (p. 237, FL)

This is not surprising at all, but a critical admission nonetheless. Since psychiatry has usurped the roles of pastor and church, substituting its own doctrine for that of Scripture, no other result could be expected. Psychiatrists who profess Christianity are highly deceived in their belief that this anti-Christian, anti-religious system of thought can be imposed on and integrated with the Scriptures. Peck makes the superficial observation that both psychotherapy and exorcism combat lies, and

thus the "frames of reference of Christianity and psychoanalysis...need not be mutually exclusive" as some believe (p. 185, PL). But he is wrong, because the very definition of what is truth, and what constitutes a lie, is radically different in these two antithetical systems.

Counseling, to be truly Christian and genuinely biblical, must be grounded in the foundation of God's Word alone. The apostate speculations of godless men have no legitimate place here and must be rejected. Their systems are not scientific, nor are they religiously neutral, but instead they are fundamentally hostile to our faith and must be rejected. (See the Introduction to "Exposing the Roots" for more discussion on this essential matter.)

PASTORAL COUNSELING

Peck is aware of the rapid recent growth in pastoral counseling as a career field (p. 249, FL). He sees it as valuable, but rates it significantly below the services of trained "professional" (and highly paid) counselors:

"Indeed, unless a patient has a severe psychiatric disturbance clearly suggesting pharmacotherapy in addition to psychotherapy, I am probably more likely to refer him or her to a pastoral counselor than to a psychiatrist." (p. 249, FL)

Note the assumption that a "severe psychiatric disturbance" is better treated by a "professional," trained in the apostate "wisdom" of godless men like Freud, than by a man ordained and skilled in the application of *God's Word*. This clearly places man above God, who Peck believes competent to handle only problems that are relatively minor!

Peck notes with alarm, however, "an explosive expansion of Christian fundamentalist programs, on the one hand, and what I choose to call New Age fundamentalist practitioners, on the other" (p. 249, FL). Concerning these he says:

"I have reason to question the healthiness of this kind of competition from the fringes." (p. 249, FL)

Peck is not specific about these "Christian fundamentalist programs," whether they are the integrationist practitioners such as Minirth-Meier, who are *not biblical*, or the nouthetic counseling model of Jay Adams, or something else. He is unclear about sources, yet he lumps "Christian fundamentalists" with "New Age fundamentalists," calling both *competition* and relegating both to the *fringes*. The equation of these two is totally incorrect, and it is distressing to see a man who *calls himself a Christian* speak so contemptuously of persons who hold fast to the fundamentals of the Christian faith in their counseling practices.

CONCLUSIONS

I wish this paper could be one demonstrating Peck's departure from the broad road to destruction that he was clearly traveling when he wrote *The Road Less Traveled*. Sadly, that cannot be. This detailed review, concerning his four major books following that bestseller, shows beyond a doubt that Peck's claim to Christianity is deceitful and misleading. His views concerning truth, Scripture, God, man, heaven, hell, eschatology, heresy, and other theological topics, are in every way radically opposed to the historic Christian faith grounded in God's revealed Word. One final quote concerning his continued New Age commitment is a fateful reminder of Peck's departure from biblical doctrine:

"Throughout the ages the greatest leaders of all religions have taught us that the journey of spiritual growth is the path out of and away from narcissism, toward the mystical consciousness in which our identity merges with that of humanity and divinity." (p. 288, DD)

This merging of God, the Creator, with man, the creature, is the broad road that leads to destruction. It is *another gospel*:

"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8-9)

This is an urgent warning to the church of Jesus Christ. While we continue to pray for the salvation of those who are spiritually dead in sins and trespasses, we must reject their false teachings and instruct other believers in the truth.

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