



A Closer Look

AT New Age Channeling: An Overview

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ABOUT THE WRITER

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DEFINITION OF CHANNELING

Channeling, which is also called spiritualism or spiritism, is communication with a so-called intelligent being who promotes spiritual teachings and philosophical discussions.¹ Channeling may occur under hypnosis² and includes the processes of imagination, intuition, claims of inspiration, and premonition. It is seen as the single most important and definitive aspect of the New Age movement.³ The majority of those who channel profess being the vocal conduit of a spiritual entity to which they have access. The channeler is temporarily inhabited by the entity and functions as the entity's mouthpiece.

The use of the body and, in particular, the voice of the channeler is the unique feature distinguishing channeling from spiritism—which is communication with human or extra-human intelligences through scrying (gazing into mirrors, crystals, lamps, cauldrons, etc.), visions, and dreams. Channeling also differs from ordinary mediumship—which is the practice of communicating with the spirits of the dead on behalf of their living relatives.⁴ Mediums operate through clairvoyance (seeing the departed souls in the afterlife)⁵ and through rappings, movement of objects, automatic writing (writing directed by a spirit), and other

phenomena. Usually only one entity is channeled on a regular basis⁶ and the message is commonly a lecture or sermon. While not all the entities in contact with mediums and spiritists are males, New Age author Raymond Buckland says that all the entities channeled thus far have manifested themselves as males.⁷

SYNONYMS FOR CHANNELERS

The most common label for one acting as mouthpiece for an entity is channeler. They are also frequently referred to as channels and spiritualists. Other terms used include medium, wizard, witch, prophet, sensitive, and contactee. However, these terms are technically incorrect if the entity is using the host as a voice conduit.

SOURCES FOR CHANNELERS

Generally speaking, most sources are thought to be deceased human beings who have either completed the cycle of incarnations or are waiting between reincarnations. These people are said to be developing in higher realities and, from their exalted perspective, are able to help and advise those who lack spiritual understanding.⁸ However, some channelers claim that their source comes from another planet or dimension and is not human.

Sources have a myriad of names, but are often called familiar spirits, highly evolved entities, spiritual masters, communicating guides, angels, the collective unconscious of humankind, inner voices, the christ, aliens, extraterrestrials, controls, bodyguards, doorkeepers, enlightened beings or bodhisattvas, discarnate entities, teachers, spirit associates, and the higher power of the universe.⁹ Whether human or non-human, most are regarded as still evolving in cosmic perspective. They work through selected human hosts by temporarily assuming control of them—during which the host submits to a trance-like state.

TYPES OF CHANNELING

There are two types of channeling: spontaneous and induced. Both are adequately described by their names. Induced channeling is achieved through meditation, prayer, self-hypnosis, fasting, chanting, dancing, sleep deprivation, breathing techniques, smoking herbs, taking hallucinogenic drugs, or yoga.

STYLES OF CHANNELING

There are three styles of channeling: the deep, full-body, incarnational trance;¹⁰ the light trance, wherein the channel is at least partially conscious;¹¹ and voluntary possession.¹²

GOAL AND PRIMARY MESSAGE OF CHANNELING

The goal of channeling is to facilitate the transformation of the channeler's clients.¹³ The primary message is threefold: the universe is multidimensional, mankind creates his own reality, and love conquers all.¹⁴

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR CHANNELING

While channeling claims both divine revelation and inspiration, it is clearly only a counterfeit and presents great danger to Christianity. Attempts to explain channeling have resulted in three propositions: mental dysfunction, intentional fraud, and demonic activity. These propositions suggest that channeling is the product of unstable minds, unethical conduct, or ungodly spirits.

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS AS TO WHY CHANNELING AROSE

The motivations for contacting a spirit are generally disillusionment with man's worldview, a curiosity about the supernatural,¹⁵ disenchantment with organized religion,¹⁶ and a desire to know about life after death.

INTENDED NEED SATISFACTION OF CHANNELING

People often channel to reverse feelings of low self-esteem, powerlessness, and guilt.¹⁷ Through messages emphasizing the creative potential of humans, the existence of more than the material world,¹⁸ and the assertion that each person is a god worthy of self-love and respect—people develop the belief that they are powerful beings with nothing to feel guilty about. These messages cater to an innate desire for redemption.¹⁹ Additionally, channeling springs from an aspiration to make the earth a better place to live by encouraging the collective well-being.²⁰ The most popular reasons, however, for the popularity of channeling are an insatiable yearning for prophecy, healing, divination, advice,²¹ and proof of the continuity of life after death.²²

KEY CLAIMS OF CHANNELING AND WITNESSING IN RESPONSE TO THEM

Those who channel maintain that direct revelation and inspiration from a deity have not ceased.²³ When

responding to this claim, emphasize that the primary function of the Bible is to reveal the character, identity, and redemptive plan of the one true God. Revelation climaxes in the incarnation and return (not reincarnation) of Jesus Christ. Explain that Jude 3 affirms that the genuine faith has been delivered once and for all, and that any message contradicting God's biblical revelation is an abomination (see Gal. 1:8).

Channelers also assert that Jesus was merely a channel or body God used,²⁴ and that He now exists on the other side with his soulmate, Mary Magdalene.²⁵ They believe He was the great master,²⁶ a messenger,²⁷ and a high teacher,²⁸ but not the thoroughly human and entirely divine son of God.

When replying to these allegations, it is important to stress both the full humanity and absolute divinity of Christ. His full humanity is plainly demonstrated in that He was tempted to sin (see Matt. 4:1-11), hungered (see Luke 4:2), had a human will (see Luke 22:42), sweated (see Luke 22:44), grew weary (see John 4:6), thirsted (see John 4:7), bled (see John 19:34), identified with man (see Heb. 2:17-18), and died (see Matt. 17:23; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; John 19:33).

Also illustrate that He is wholly divine in that He forgives sin (see Mark 2:10), is self-existent (see John 1:3), is equal with God (see John 5:17-30), is unchangeable (see Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8), is omnipresent (see Matt. 18:19-20; 28:20), is omniscient (see Matt. 9:4; Luke 6:8), is omnipotent (see Matt. 14:25; Mark 1:29-34; Luke 24:31; John 20:14), and nothing came to Him by way of an intermediary source.²⁹ It is important for them to understand that the incarnation of Jesus is the unique and final revelation of God's nature to mankind (see Col. 1:19; Heb. 1:1-4), and that He alone provides salvation (see Acts 4:12). There is only one mediator between God and man, and that is Christ Jesus (see 1 Tim. 2:5). Any belief system that denies Christ must be rejected. It is worth noting that every counterfeit system rejects redemption by the blood of Christ.³⁰

People who practice channeling do so out of a belief that contact with spirits is beneficial.³¹ The Bible affirms that demons (evil spirits) are real (see Matt. 8:28-34) and that evil spirits can inhabit a person. The possessed host may tell fortunes, but his information will be a dangerous mixture of truth and error when under the influence of spirits (see Acts 16:16-19). Highlight the Bible's warnings against all forms of divination (see Lev. 19:26) and its commands that people not turn to mediums or spiritists because of the harmful nature of their messages (see Lev. 19:31). God's people are warned not to imitate the detestable practices of other peoples such as: child sacrifice, divination, witchcraft, omen interpretation, sorcery, and consulting with the dead (see Deut. 18:9-12). This is because God wants people to consult Him, not mediums or spirit guides. In fact, King Saul lost his kingdom and his life after consulting a medium rather than the Lord God (see 1 Chron. 10:13-14).

Spirits are subject to Christians, but that authority over them is nothing to boast about (see Luke 10:20). The spirits are first subject to Christ, and it is He who gives believers this empowerment. The New Testament teaches that the gods of heathen idolatry are actually demons—not helpful souls roaming the afterlife (see 1 Cor. 10:19-20). It is important to realize that departed Christians are in Christ’s presence—neither hovering about nor available for comment (see 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23).³² Unbelievers are confined in a place of great suffering, and are likewise unavailable for communication with the living (see Luke 16:19-31).

Satan masquerades as an angel of light and intentionally deceives whomever he can (see 2 Cor. 11:14). Satan’s ambition was not to become a monster, but rather, to become like God most high.³³ In order to do so he and his fallen angels actively promote heretical doctrines such as spiritism—doctrines claiming to be true and godly which are actually lies (see 1 Tim. 4:1). In the last days more people will believe these falsehoods. Forms of godliness that deny the power of God will appear and practices such as divination and channeling will become commonplace (see 2 Tim. 3:1-5). Demons, working through people, will perform signs—however, their work will be without fruit (see Rev. 16:14). And the unrepentant sorcerers that they use will be included in the roll call of the damned (see Rev. 22:15).

¹John P. Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 154.

²Sylvia Browne and Antoinette May, *Adventures of a Psychic*, rev. (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 1998), xiii.

³Newport, 11.

⁴Ibid., 154.

⁵Raymond Buckland, *Doors to Other Worlds: A Practical Guide to Communicating with Spirits* (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1997), 95.

⁶Ibid., 209.

⁷Ibid., 211.

⁸Browne and May, 23.

⁹Shakti Gawain with Laurel King, *Living in the Light: A Guide to Personal and Planetary Transformation* (1991; reprint, New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 15.

¹⁰Browne and May, 143.

¹¹Sanaya Roman and Duane Packer, *Opening to Channel: How to Contact With Your Guide* (Tiburon, CA: H. J. Kramer, 1987), 29.

¹²Mary T. Browne, *Life After Death: A Renowned Psychic Reveals What Happens to Us When We Die* (New York: Ivy Books division of Ballantine Books, 1994), 36.

¹³Newport, 11.

¹⁴Buckland, 211.

¹⁵Newport, 154.

¹⁶Ibid., 170.

¹⁷Ibid., 190.

¹⁸Ibid., 163.

¹⁹Ibid., 148.

²⁰Ibid., 171.

²¹Ibid., 193.

²²Raymond Moody and Paul Perry, *Reunions: Visionary Encounters with Departed Loved Ones* (New York: Ivy Books division of Ballantine Books, 1993), 101.

²³Newport, 151.

²⁴Ibid., 149.

²⁵Browne and May, 129.

²⁶Mary T. Browne, 174.

²⁷Claire Graham, “Good, Gooder, and Goodest: An Interview with New Age Channeler Claire Graham,” *Areopagus* 6, no. 1 (1993): 24.

²⁸Roman, 21.

²⁹Newport, 149.

³⁰Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Satan: His Motive and Methods*, rev. ed. (1919; reprint, Grand Rapids: Academie Books by Zondervan Publishing House, 1964), 115.

³¹Newport, 182-3.

³²Biblical exceptions include the deceased Samuel informing King Saul of his impending death (see 1 Sam. 28:7-19), and Moses and Elijah appearing on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus (see Matt. 17:3; Mark 9:9-10).

³³Chafer, 67.



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