

# Transcendental Meditation Also Called Science of Creative Intelligence

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Today's religious mood has been characterized as "supermarket religion." According to fancy, you go down the aisle and pick out items from the different shelves: this radio preacher today, that evangelist-healer tomorrow, this pentecostal movement now, and that charismatic crusade later. The attractiveness lies as much in the sensory excitement of the package and its promises of immediate gratification as it does in any of the sampled contents.

This is religion as you like it! Does it make me feel good, better, or best? And it does so with instant gratification. That seems to be the test for religion today. Religious needs are centered around individual fulfillment.

Our post-industrial society, as the sociologists call it, is evidencing a return to the form of religion characteristic of pre-industrial primitive society, where spirit permeates everything. The primitive peoples, alone in a hostile and arbitrary world, acknowledged their powerlessness by attempting to propitiate every possible divinity which might inhabit each form of creation. Contemporary humanity, no less powerless in the face of systems, forms, orders, and numbers just as hostile and arbitrary, also attempts to blunt the capriciousness of an unfeeling universe.

Today some scholars estimate there are as high as 8,000 programs which promise self-realization through introspective manipulations. These are religions, whether they take the form of Transcendental Meditation (TM) or another. All of them for validity depend on certain assumptions about the human condition that are contrary to the biblical faith we profess. Their most obvious claims are that people supposedly are innately good and that progress is inevitable.

A new Gallup poll reveals that about 12% of American adults are engaged in nontraditional religious movements such as yoga, meditation, and charismatic renewal. Transcendental Meditation was found to be the most popular, supported by 4% of the persons surveyed or an estimated 6 million people.

Transcendental Meditation is the system of yoga taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The doctrinal aspect of the system, which does not use physical exercises but the repetition of a mantra, is called Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI). Because few understand Sanskrit and because Maharishi and his teachers keep insisting that TM and/or SCI have nothing to do with religion, most meditators are ignorant of the full significance of the technique which they are practicing. By persistently denying the religious significance of TM, Maharishi has succeeded in expanding the movement rapidly in the United States, where he has had his greatest success, and around the world. The world-wide outreach of Maharishi's missionary Hinduism is called simply the "World Plan." It has seven substantive goals. Among them are these:

“5. To solve the problems of crime, drug abuse, and all behavior that brings unhappiness to the family of man.

6. To bring fulfillment to the economic aspirations of individuals and society.

7. To achieve the spiritual goals of mankind in this generation.”

We dare not underestimate the attractiveness of such goals to those educated in a milieu dominated by humanism.

Convinced meditators hold important positions in government, the academic world, the public schools, big business, psychiatry, medicine, the communication media, entertainment, sports, and religion. Their numbers are still relatively small, but many of them are willing to use their influence to promote TM because they believe that it has benefited them personally and that it provides answers to social and political problems. Statements favorable to TM have been entered into the *Congressional Record*. Ten U.S. senators and congressmen reportedly practice TM. TM or SCI has been introduced as a course for regular credit at a number of public school systems for both students and teachers.

Maharishi has had extremely favorable media treatment. Feature articles favorable to TM have appeared in many magazines ranging from *Mademoiselle* to *Time*. Academic, scientific, and business journals have also published favorable reports on TM/SCI. A foundation was formed to take the TM/SCI message to business corporations. The claim is made that TM increases efficiency and job satisfaction among employees. It is supposed to be even more helpful in relieving the tensions of managers. Corporations like AT&T and General Foods have been convinced to offer the TM course to their employees and managers. The newspapers could stand to do some investigative reporting on the entire TM/SCI scene. Critical scrutiny would be in order.

Commercial television has provided the scene for Maharishi on at least two occasions. He has been the guest on talk shows together with guest meditators such as actresses Ellen Corby (Grandma Walton) and Mary Tyler Moore, actor Clint Eastwood, California state senator Arlen Gregorio and Minnesota congressman Richard N. Nolan, and psychiatrists Harold Bloomfield and Bernard Glueck. More recently TM has been presented on educational TV on both coasts of the United States.

Two best-selling books promoting TM have appeared. More are on the way. I want to share with you some clergy testimonials about TM from *The TM Book* by Denise Denniston and Peter McWilliams. These letters deserve special scrutiny because of their potential to mislead Christians.

One of these letters was written by a Lutheran clergyman and professor of theology at Valparaiso University. Karl E. Lutze is probably known to at least some of you. He wrote, "I had some initial reservations about TM from a religious and theological standpoint. It was not without careful and serious study and reflection that I attempted to learn whether or not this art...from the traditions of the far East might be compatible or in conflict with my Christian faith...I do not find Transcendental Meditation an alternative to Christian faith; I practice it within the context of my Christian faith...I regard meditation as another of God's good gifts to me."

The other letter was written by a Roman Catholic priest, Leo McAllister, who is pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Sacramento, California. He wrote,

"I am writing this letter to allay any fears, anxieties, or misconceptions which Catholics may have concerning the practice of Transcendental Meditation...It is not a religion or a religious practice. It in no way conflicts with a person's belief in God or in his church...A person's relationship to God and the practice of one's faith should be enhanced, rather than diminished, by the use of Transcendental Meditation...I am happy to say that I can recommend it highly."

The failure of these clergymen and others to discern the anti-Christian character of the practice of TM may have come from an acceptance of the Maharishi's non-religious claim at face value. But let's examine that claim a bit more closely. To enroll in TM will cost you

\$125.00, the present going rate. The initiate is given a meditation word called a “mantra.” A “mantra” is a Hindu prayer word, which the TM candidate is to repeat over and over again to induce the state of meditation. In his book Maharishi Mahesh Yogi answers the question, “Is this meditation prayer?” His answer is, “A very good form of prayer is this meditation which leads us to the field of the Creator, to the source of Creation, to the field of God.” Is TM a religion? I think you know the answer already.

The hymn chanted in Sanskrit by the teacher during the initiation into TM identifies the ceremony as a traditional Hindu “puja” or worship. It is also apparent from the hymn text (a portion of the translation will follow) that the particular Hindu tradition expounded is that of Shankara, a ninth-century philosopher-reformer whose non-dualist doctrine of the unity of all being (monism) is the most widely held view of reality in modern Hinduism. The primary focus of worship is not Shankara but his acknowledged successor, the late Brahmananda Saraswati or Guru Dev. Now a portion of the hymn:

“To Lord Narayana, to lotus-born Brahma, the Creator...I bow down.

To the personified glory of the Lord, to Shankara...I bow down.

Offering the invocation to the lotus feet of Shri Guru Dev...I bow down.

Offering cloth...

Offering a flower...

Offering incense...

Offering fruit...

Guru in the glory of Brahma, Guru in the glory of Vishnu, Guru in the glory of the great Lord Shiva, Guru in the glory of the personified transcendental fullness of Brahman, to Him, to Shri Guru Dev adorned with glory, I bow down.”

Under the form of Guru Dev, whose picture is on the altar during the ceremony, the Hindu Trimurti of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are worshiped as manifestations of the formless absolute, Brahman. Guru Dev is the dead master of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, whose Transcendental Meditation is made available to meditators only if they bring, in addition to the stated fee, the flowers, fruit, and cloth (a handkerchief) offered to Guru Dev in the initiation ceremony. Normally they are expected to join the teacher in kneeling before the image of Guru Dev in order to receive their “mantra,” the Sanskrit prayer word by means of which they are to meditate twice daily for twenty minutes.

What Scripture designates as “other gods” (Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva) are worshiped in this ceremony of initiation. The worshiper also bows down to an image representing deity in the form of man, the picture of Guru Dev. This means that initiation into TM requires formal involvement in violations of the First Commandment. The God of TM is not the God of the Bible Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Even when Maharishi speaks of God as personal, he is not referring to Him who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Therefore any Christian who attempts to practice TM with any understanding of its objective becomes unfaithful to the Bible's transcendent, tri-personal Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier (Comforter).

Some effects of doing TM or any similar meditative technique completely aside from the religious rituals involved are:

1. It alters consciousness in a cumulative way that tends to convince the meditator of the Eastern presuppositions about the nature of reality and of man. (This is simple self-deification, and that is religious.)

2. It desensitizes conscience by masking the real guilt and relieving its symptoms of restlessness and psychosomatic illness. (Call this self-hypnosis, if you will, but again it has religious overtones.)
3. It induces a passive state of mind and body that opens the meditator to the hazard of demonic incursion. (Demonic deception is a religious malady.)

TM is not Christian in its approach to God, human need or the way to meet it, but how do we account for the beneficial experiences of Maharishi's followers? It seems to me that the experiences of which TM writers speak are those of non-redemptive natural religion. Any elements of truth in TM may reflect an awareness through nature of the living God's existence. The Lord of all has disclosed His handiwork (Ps. 19:1). The very existence of the world attests His power (Rom. 1:18-20). Knowledge of God may be suppressed and distorted. While fallen mankind knows the Creator, they worship and serve the creature more (Rom. 1:25). Natural religious consciousness and human feelings refuse to recognize the external authority of biblical revelation. TM experiences are not judged by its followers according to the normative revelation of God in Scripture, but by their own religious experiences. There is nothing redemptive in natural religion. It knows nothing of salvation.

The differences then between Transcendental Meditation and Christianity are not merely verbal or intellectual. Maharishi's teachings conflict with Christianity in the view of God, of man, and of the way to reach God. TM does not acknowledge the personal God and Creator as supreme. By postulating the monist principle that "All is One" it denies the Creator-creature distinction fundamental to the biblical revelation of God. TM views man not as a sinner helpless to save himself from God's judgment, but as an autonomous being capable of experiencing his own divinity. The way to divinity is to take part in a system of works based on the practice of meditation (TM) and devotion, rather than to have faith, through God's grace, in the atoning death of Jesus Christ for the sins of all mankind.

In order that we should avoid such speculations as TM induces, God gave a reliable, written revelation of Himself through inspired authors. The content of that revealed Word, not meaningless "mantras," is the key to religious reality. The gospel of Jesus Christ informs us that God became man, and that eyewitnesses confirmed accounts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The Gospel summons people to believe these facts. The Gospel also informs of God's eternal purposes through Christ's death—to save sinners.

As you study what the Bible says about meditation, you will find that the motivation behind it is not just the desire for what it can do for you, but rather a love for God Himself. It is a believer's purpose also to be pleasing to God in meditation. The prayer of the Psalmist is most fitting as one begins to meditate: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer" (Ps. 19:14). We can be assured that we are thinking proper and God-pleasing thoughts when we meditate upon His statutes, precepts, commandments, testimonies, and promises. Christians guide their meditation with Scripture in many different ways. Here are the nine steps of one method that has been found profitable: 1. Feel the need. 2. Enjoy the quest. 3. Read a Scripture portion. 4. State its meaning. 5. Reflect on its meaning. 6. Apply it personally. 7. Commit yourself to it. 8. Act according to it. 9. Pray about it.

But regardless of the method used, it is the underlying purpose of Christian meditation that is most important. Centuries ago the inspired Apostle said it well, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8a). And here the Christian practice differs most from others. The object of much other meditation is "to raise the level of consciousness where enlightenment

can be found” or “to achieve a state of calmness and serenity of the mind.” In TM it is to achieve what Maharishi calls “pure consciousness.” The teachers of TM like to promise that meditators will find “personal fulfillment and inner peace.” Much of what is called transcendental today is not really transcendental at all in the usual sense of the word. For at no point does it transcend the human level of life. It is rather turned in on, and confined solely to, the self. In contrast Christian meditation is always focused on God.

Some Christians have found that they need a special time and place for their moments of daily meditation. But you can meditate almost anywhere. You don’t need stained glass windows, soft music in the background, or absolute solitude. A man I know meditates on the bus each morning and evening on the way to and from work. Another friend likes to jog and uses that time every day for her daily meditation. The place and time are not important. My advice is to just get started. Surely a meditation break is more important than a coffee break.

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