

BOOK REVIEW:
CONVERSATIONS WITH WHICH GOD?
LOOKING AT NEALE DONALD WALSCH'S
CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD, BOOK 1
by Marcia Montenegro

The title of this best-selling book means what it says: the author has recorded in words conversations held between him and a being he calls God. I first heard of this book in 1997 while discussing spiritual beliefs with a woman working in a New Age bookstore. She kept quoting from this book, as though it were a sacred source of truth, finally telling me that I should read it. Since it seemed to have had such a strong influence on her world view, I purchased and read it. It covers a wide range of topics which cannot all be presented here, so only the most striking points will be addressed

In 1992, Walsch, unhappy and full of angry questions about why his life seemed to be a failure, wrote a letter to God with his questions. As he finished writing the last question, Walsch claims the pen moved on its own and he found himself writing words as though taking dictation. Walsch claims he knew this was God dictating the responses, although he does not explain how he knew this. It is only natural, then, that we examine this book to see what God has to say and what kind of God he is. There is no obligation on the reader's part to take Walsch's word that this is God, especially since Walsch offers absolutely no evidence for it. He just asserts it as though the reader should accept it.

Words Are Not Truth

The very first point this God makes is that he communicates with everyone, but not by words alone. In fact, his main form of communication is through feeling.¹ Interestingly, God (for the sake of convenience, I will call Walsch's God "God," though I am not agreeing that this is the one true living God of the universe) immediately attacks words: "Words are really the least effective communicator . . . merely utterances: noises that stand for feelings, thoughts, and experience . . . They are not Truth. They are not the real thing."² If this is true, then this statement, which is made with words, cannot be true which would mean that maybe then words are truth. This statement defeats its own assertion.

Also, why is God using a book of words to communicate to us through Walsch? Why should we believe anything in this book if words are so useless and mere "noises?" If one wanted to be rigidly logical, one could say that this statement renders the book meaningless and therefore there

¹ Neale Donald Walsch, *Conversations with God: An Uncommon Dialogue, Vol. 1* (New York: Putnam, 1996), 3.

² *Ibid.*, 3, 4.

is no reason to read it. God, who should be more clever than this, is using words to say words mean nothing. This is the first clue that this might not be God who is speaking.

In addition to this, God later totally contradicts his attack on words. This is done further in the book, when the reader might have forgotten what God initially says about words. God explains the process of creation as operating through three levels: thought, word, and action. Words are described here as “thought expressed” which “sends forth creative energy into the universe.”³ This idea is repeated where words are described as a vehicle for bringing thought into concrete reality.⁴ God also advises the author to re-program his thinking by “reading and re-reading this book. Over and over again, read it. Until you understand every passage.”⁵ What happened to words being noises?

The purpose behind the attack on words so early in the book soon becomes apparent. God tells the author (and us) that we have placed too much importance on “the Word of God and so little on the experience” and that we should put experience over words.⁶ A few pages later, God blatantly states that the Bible is not an authoritative source (neither are ministers, rabbis, or priests).⁷

Walsch, surprised by this, then asks God what should be considered an authoritative source. God responds, “Listen to your feelings. Listen to your Highest Thoughts. . . . Words are the least reliable purveyor of Truth.”⁸ Once again, if words are such an unreliable “purveyor of Truth,” then why should we believe this statement, since it is made with words? This sentence invalidates its own statement and the whole book.

God Does Not Care What We Do Because Of Why We Are Here

Walsch’s God acknowledges himself as the creator of life, but then adds that he created us in his image so that we could be creators as well.⁹ God has no special will for us: “. . . your will for you is God’s will for you . . . I have no preference in the matter . . . I do not care what you do . . .”¹⁰

God continues on, saying that we are not here to learn lessons, but only “To remember, and re-create, Who You Are.”¹¹ This came about because God, who originally was all that existed, longed “to know what it felt like to be so magnificent” and was not satisfied unless there was a

³ Ibid., 74.

⁴ Ibid., 164.

⁵ Ibid., 120.

⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁷ Ibid., 8.

⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰ Ibid., 13.

¹¹ Ibid., 21, 28, 203.

reference point through which God could know his magnificence.¹² This reference point had to be within God, because there was no outside reference point. God calls this point the “Is-Not Is,” sort of an opposite to All That Is, which is God. To use this reference point within, God divided “Itself” and became “this” and “that,” thus enabling him to know himself “experientially.”¹³ God’s purpose in creating us was “for Me to know Myself as God . . . through you . . . My purpose for you is that you should know yourself as Me.”¹⁴ However, an infinite entity, the All That Is, cannot divide itself, for then it is no longer infinite and never was.

This explanation is really just another way to try to explain monism (all is one and one is all) and pantheism (all is God and God is all). According to this God, we are the same stuff as God, and this is what being made in the image of God means.¹⁵ God tells Walsch that in the act of dividing himself, God created relativity and polarity.¹⁶ Through this polarity, humans are able to conceive of opposites such as love and fear. Therefore, humans created mythologies around fear, such as “the rebellion of Satan” and our desire to personify fear as the devil.¹⁷ We need this polarity for our “gross relationships,” but in our “sublime relationships,” there is no opposite, for “All Is One.”¹⁸ Basically, what is being said is that opposites are illusions, created for us to experience certain things we otherwise could not experience.

Quoting The Bible Way Out Of Context

Many phrases and quotes from the Bible are mixed in with statements made by Walsch’s God, usually without any quotation marks and never with any Biblical references--with one exception.

Speaking of Christ, God says that Christ was crucified to show man what man could do. God then uses these words: “And know that these things, and more, shall you also do. For have I not said, ye are gods?”¹⁹ Jesus’ statement to the Jews getting ready to stone him in Jn. 10:34 (“Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are gods?’”) is a rebuke because Jesus is quoting Ps. 82:6 where God has reprimanded the judges on earth who did not dispense God’s justice. The judges, called gods, were to be God’s representatives on earth, but had become corrupted. After a stinging rebuke to these judges/gods in verses 2-5, God tells them that they were gods, i.e., God’s representatives, but “you will die like mere men; you will fall like every other ruler.” Neither Walsch nor his God are aware that this quote is an insult, not a compliment, another clue that this is not the true God talking to Walsch.

¹² Ibid., 22.

¹³ Ibid., 23, 25.

¹⁴ Ibid., 26, 65.

¹⁵ Ibid., 26.

¹⁶ Ibid., 24.

¹⁷ Ibid., 24-25.

¹⁸ Ibid., 31.

¹⁹ Ibid., 52.

After reprimanding humanity for its onslaught against the ecosystem and for having wars, God tells us, “I will do nothing for you that you will not do for your Self. That is the law and the prophets.”²⁰ This would come as a surprise to Jesus, who said, quoting God in Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind . . . Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matt. 22:47)

God’s words to Moses in Exodus, “I AM THAT I AM,” are repeated frequently by Walsch’s God to signify that God is supposedly all that is and so are we. At one point, God follows this statement with “YOU ARE THAT YOU ARE. You cannot not be” to indicate humanity’s supposed equality with God.²¹

This phrase, “I am that I am,” is frequently used in New Age teachings. In New Age spirituality classes taken by this writer prior to salvation in Christ, this phrase was used to teach the idea that we are all one with God. We were also advised to meditate using this phrase as a mantra.

Perhaps the most blatant misuse of the Bible is the recasting of the Ten Commandments into the Ten Commitments. These Commitments include the idea that taking God’s name in vain means that we don’t understand the power of words. We are to honor the Mother/Father God and “all life forms”; and that coveting your neighbor’s spouse makes no sense because we know that “all others are your spouse.” God adds benevolently that these are ten freedoms, because he does not order us around. He just tells us that these commitments are “signs” indicating we have found God.²²

There are several more examples of Biblical phrases and quotes taken out of context and misused, but only a few have been addressed here.

Anti-body

If we are all one and we are really God, and our separateness is a temporary illusion, then it follows that our bodies are part of the illusion or just temporary containers for our soul. This classic New Age and Gnostic thinking is promoted by Walsch.

According to this book, the soul knows that its purpose is “evolution,” and there is no trauma about leaving the body. As God says, “In many ways, the tragedy is being in the body.”²³ The body is merely a “tool” of the soul²⁴, and the physical body is a lower vibration of the “ethereal body²⁵.” As we reincarnate, our soul and ethereal (non-physical) body slow down

²⁰ Ibid., 50.

²¹ Ibid., 200.

²² Ibid., 96-97.

²³ Ibid., 82.

²⁴ Ibid., 172.

²⁵ Ibid., 181-82.

their vibrations into the denser matter of a physical body being formed according to how the mind is creating it.²⁶

Why this denigration of the body? Believing that the material body is an illusion or a temporary tool allows one to minimize death. If we are really just a soul, then dying is merely shedding an illusion or a tool; we are not really leaving anything behind. In fact, release from the body is spiritual freedom and is a goal, according to many New Age teachings. This idea can be used to support euthanasia, suicide and even murder, such as abortion. If release from the body is good and the soul is all that matters, then can killing be really bad?

Another result of this view is the debasing of the body. Contrary to the Biblical promise of the physical resurrection of our bodies, Walsch's God and his New Age principles view the body as a "lower" vibration, a temporary form with less value than the non-material soul. This view could justify sexual perversion or self-mutilation, since there is no New Age teaching to honor God (or the Universe, the Oneness, or whoever) with the body. Indeed, in several places throughout the book, God inexplicably chides us for our taboos and restraints on sexuality, as though society is shy in this area.

The implications of this anti-body bias should not be underestimated.

Self Above All

If we are really God, then what could be more important than ourselves? Talking about relationships, God says that each person should not worry about the other one, "but only, only, only about Self."²⁷ There is only one purpose for relationships, and that is for us to "be and decide Who You Really Are."²⁸

After the author has asked about family responsibilities versus his spiritual needs, God advises him that he has a right to his joy, "children or no children; spouse or no spouse. . . . And if they aren't joyful, and they get up and leave you, then release them with love to seek their joy." The brutal truth here is that seeking your joy is the priority, and if it results in a broken family, then so be it. It is justified by believing that they and you will be happier apart, even if the price is destruction of the marriage and family.

In case the point is missed, it is repeated more blatantly in other places, such as these words: "God suggests -- recommends -- that you put yourself first."²⁹ Advising the author to stop focusing on the other person in the relationship, God tells him that, "The most loving person is the person who is Self-centered."³⁰

²⁶ Ibid., 181-82.

²⁷ Ibid., 124.

²⁸ Ibid., 122.

²⁹ Ibid., 132.

³⁰ Ibid., 124.

The self is always the emphasis and focus in a philosophy that teaches we are all part of God and are evolving back to that state. It can be no other way, since in this view we are equal to God. Naturally, a totally self-centered belief system will destroy relationships, or at least cause great pain in them, since relationships are based on mutual respect and responsibilities.

Jesus the Sorcerer

Jesus is held out as a “Master,” an example of one who understood the universal laws of manipulating matter and energy.³¹ He also practiced the science of affirmations, which Walsch’s God explains as a way to manipulate energy so that you will bring into existence what you want. The best affirmation is one of gratitude, and God tells us that before each miracle, Jesus “thanked Me in advance for its deliverance” because he was practicing confidence in the results of his thinking.³²

God explains the principle of mastering energy this way: “Now, whatever follows the word ‘I’ (which calls forth the Great I Am) tends to manifest in physical reality.”³³ Reality is created by the “Holy Trinity” of energies, thought, word and action.³⁴ This process brings into concrete reality the non-material thought.³⁵

This principle is actually a basis of sorcery and ritual magic, and these abilities of Jesus are described as the powers of a sorcerer. As sorcerer Donald Tyson says, “The underlying premise of magical ritual is that if you represent a circumstance, or act out an event in your mind, it will come to pass in the world.”³⁶

In *The Magician’s Companion*, author Bill Whitcomb gives as one of the axioms of the magical world view, the Law of Words (Symbols) of Power, and states that, “There are words (symbols) that are able to change the inner and/or outer realities of those using/perceiving them.”³⁷ Walsch’s God says that whatever we think or say after the words, “I am,” will set into motion what we have thought or said. Since the words “I am” are “the strongest creative statement in the universe,” these words will call forth what we want. “The universe responds to ‘I am’ as would a genie in a bottle.”³⁸

In fact, many of the magical axioms listed by Whitcomb line up nicely with the principles taught by Walsch’s God: we are separate in the perceived world by one in reality (axiom one); we create our own world (axiom two); truth is relative (axiom four); what works is true (axiom five);

³¹ Ibid., 55.

³² Ibid., 180.

³³ Ibid., 178.

³⁴ Ibid., 72-74, 164.

³⁵ Ibid., 179.

³⁶ Donald Tyson, *The Truth About Ritual Magic*, 2nd. ed. (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1994), 29.

³⁷ Bill Whitcomb, *The Magician’s Companion* (St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1994), 15.

³⁸ Ibid., 93.

no one world view is right (axiom six); we are all one (axiom seven); the microcosm is the macrocosm (axiom eight); like attracts like (axiom nine) (expressed by Walsch in the idea that we attract what we fear and must believe we are successful to be successful); every action is an energy exchange (axiom ten); duality exists to understand opposites (axiom twelve); words have power (axiom fifteen).³⁹

The fact that so many of these axioms of sorcery show up as teachings in Walsch's book shows his God to be rather unoriginal. This is yet another clue that either this is not God talking, or it is a clever magician who hypnotized Walsch into thinking he was talking to God.

There is a sneering ridicule of salvation by grace through Christ. God tells Walsch that this doctrine exists because people have been told they were made inherently unworthy by God himself.⁴⁰ These comments conclude with heavy sarcasm. No scriptural references that humanity chooses to sin and rebel against God are mentioned (i.e., Jn. 3:18-20; Rom. 3:23). Then there is a final attack on Jesus delivered with pure derision. God gives Walsch an anti-liquor lecture and Walsch disagrees, bringing up Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding as an endorsement of drinking wine. God replies, "So who said Jesus was perfect?"⁴¹ This God cannot hide for long his deep hostility toward the Bible or Jesus Christ.

No Sin, No Evil, No Hell, No Pain

Walsch's God is very emotional about the concept of sin telling Walsch that the disobedience of Adam and Eve was not sin, but a "first blessing" because in their disobedience, they made it made it possible for humanity to have a choice.⁴² God tells us that we "should thank them from the bottom of [our] hearts."

The devil and hell do not exist.⁴³ Pain "is a result of wrong thought," and "all illness is first created in the mind."⁴⁴ Yet even to say pain comes from wrong thinking is not accurate since "there is no such thing as that which is wrong."⁴⁵

There is no evil, only "objective phenomena and experience."⁴⁶ However, on the next page, God contradicts himself when he says, "The biggest evil would therefore be to declare nothing evil at all."⁴⁷ Even though evil does not exist, God says that we must define it by that which we call good since our life is in the world of relativity.

³⁹ Ibid., 12-15.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 136.

⁴¹ Ibid., 192.

⁴² Ibid., 56.

⁴³ Ibid., 51, 115, 201.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 37, 188.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 133.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 134.

It seems rather complicated that if there is no evil, we must pretend it exists in order to define good; even though all is one, we must have relativity to think we're separate before we remember that we are really one with this God who divided himself into us. And God needs us to remember who we are since he is experiencing himself in us.

Taking away evil, sin, and hell does not make life simpler. It only gives a new twist on reality that puts us at a disadvantage since what we think is reality is not. We are not who we think we are, and though we experience evil, evil is not real. This seems to contradict one of the book's major assertions, that experience is the indicator of truth. Yet if we experience pain, evil or illness, we are to put experience aside based on being told that these experiences do not reflect reality. So, experience is reality except when it isn't!

No Judgment, or Is There?

Though this God constantly states there is no judgment, no right or wrong, and that he does not care what humanity does,⁴⁸ there is judgment in this book. It is masked by other ideas.

According to this God, we only need to remember Who We Are, but there is no rush since we will all get there.⁴⁹ We are to give up making value judgments.⁵⁰ Yet a standard is held out before the reader in many ways. One way is through God's constant reference to "the Masters," whom he never defines. He states that these Masters have seen that the relative world is not reality, and that they have only chosen love every single moment, even when being murdered.⁵¹ God goes on to tell Walsch that this is hard for him to understand, "much less emulate." But, God says, "this example and this lesson has been laid out so clearly for you . . . over and over . . ." implying that Walsch and by implication, the reader, are being a little slow in catching on. It is as though God is saying, "Come on, people, get with it already! You are so far from the Masters!"

The Masters are used as examples again where God claims that they always come up with the same answer, which is "always the highest choice."⁵² Further chiding the reader, God states that the Master is predictable in this area while "the student is completely unpredictable. One can tell how one is doing on the road to mastery by simply noticing how predictably one makes the highest choice . . ." Of course, God does not tell us how to make the highest choice. Yet it is clear that we should be on this "road to mastery" making the highest choices, and we better get with it.

Similarly, there is reference to a "highest" thought where God states that his thoughts, words, and feelings are always our "Highest Thought . . . Clearest Word . . . Grandest Feeling."⁵³

⁴⁸ Ibid., 8, 38-42, 51, 64, 79, 109, 119-20, 135, 183, 208.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 51.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 79.

⁵¹ Ibid., 57.

⁵² Ibid., 129.

⁵³ Ibid., 4.

The way to discern these, given on the next page, is that the Highest Thought always contains joy, the Clearest Words contain truth, and the Grandest Feeling is what we call love. Once again, this no-judgment, no-value God has just given us values and we know that we are lacking if we do not achieve the highest, clearest, or grandest.

However, Walsch's God is rather sloppy with his terminology. Truth is not defined, and neither is love. If these are the measuring sticks, then anyone's subjective impression of joy, truth and love could define their highest thought, clearest words and grandest feelings. Could not one's highest thought conceivably be to lie, to cheat, or to murder if the person derived joy from this? Nothing in this book refutes this as a highest thought, especially if one is basing messages from God on feelings.

So, Who Is This God?

Walsch offers no evidence that the entity communicating with him is God. Are we to accept these doctrines simply because Walsch claims that it is God answering through his automatic writing? Before debating the ideas in this book with anyone who believes it, one should ask how can it be authenticated that this book is from God.

Would God really write such florid drivel as, "My Truth is in the whisper of the wind, the babble of the brook, the crack of the thunder, the tap of the rain . . . My Truth . . . is as awesome as the night sky, and as simply, incontrovertibly, trustful as a baby's gurgle."⁵⁴ This sounds like a bad greeting card.

Walsch's God says that his teachers have always come with the message that we are as holy as God.⁵⁵ Well, there have been teachers who have said this, notably the Eastern gurus and New Age teachers. One of the earliest foundational New Age bibles is Ram Dass' *Be Here Now*, first published in 1971. This book teaches many of the same views held by Walsch's God: man's innate divinity, reincarnation, serving the self, all is one, all is God, Bible misquotations and misapplications, no final judgment, and the illusion of material reality.

Many of the book's messages do line up consistently and completely with the message of someone we know from Genesis chapter 3, someone who questioned God's word, called God a liar, told Adam and Eve that they could be like God, and that they would not die. This was the serpent, also known as Satan. In fact, the attacks on Christ; on salvation by grace; on marriage and the family; on God's word; on the body; on absolute truth; the denial of heaven, hell, and the devil; and the promotion of sorcery and Gnostic philosophies are a perfect picture of what Satan would say and want us to believe.

If truly dictated by a spiritual being, this book is a thinly veiled attempt by Satan to sound like God, misquoting scripture and twisting everything around. Typical of Satan, the ideas are complicated, contradictory, and open-ended, and answers are often evasive. Preaching love and the "highest" choices and thoughts, it is the angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) sweet-talking us into

⁵⁴ Ibid., 210.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 127.

believing we are God and can do anything we want. But Satan tips his hand too often. His hostility to Christ and his constant attacks on God's word give him away.

Conversations with God? Actually, just the opposite.