What is it?
Applied kinesiology is a practice often taught in chiropractic schools. It is a system of diagnosis and treatment claimed as being more concerned with health than illness. The alleged goal is to prevent serious disease and the practitioner of applied kinesiology embraces the 'holistic' approach. According to an applied kinesiology handbook, the applied kinesiology practitioner claims to evaluate five bodily systems - nervous; lymphatic; vascular; cerebrospinal and 'meridian'. It claims 'that all five systems are so intricately interwoven, each with the other, that it is impossible to separate them.' (1) The primary diagnostic procedure for the applied kinesiology practitioner is the muscle test. Please note that modern New Age muscle testing must be distinguished from the scientific discipline of kinesiology proper. (2) Applied kinesiology claims it can diagnose the condition of the body by testing various muscles and assessing their relative strength or weakness. The most popular muscles tested in applied kinesiology are the deltoids (on the outside of the shoulders) and the finger muscles. Whilst the practitioner pushes or pulls, the patient resists. The practitioner then feels the 'resistance', and is then able to diagnose the condition of the 'chi' energy flow. Supposedly, the 'chi' energy flow can then be connected or readjusted by passing the hand along so-called meridian lines, or touching acupuncture pressure points, or other methods. Thus the muscles are strengthened and so is the related organ, and subsequently the organ is automatically and magically healed. (3)
The medical claims for applied kinesiology are all-embracing - 'a competent applied kinesiology practitioner may, indeed, perform vital health services unmatched in the healing arts' (4); 'it can help the physician determine the major cause of a patient's health problem' (5); and it claims that it can evaluate the structural, chemical/nutritional and left/right brain organization of the body. (6)

Origin
Applied kinesiology was developed by a chiropractor George Goodheart in the 1960s. It seems that he took standard muscle testing techniques and combined them with Chinese concepts of energy flow. (7) He combines the concept of 'innate intelligence' with the Eastern religious concept of energy, and describes the innate intelligence as a spiritual intelligence that runs through the body and is connected to the universal intelligence through the nervous system. (8)
It has been suggested that the elaborate charts which George Goodheart produced were the result of his psychic powers. (9)

Touch for Health
Goodheart developed applied kinesiology for health practitioners, but he and a Californian chiropractor, John Thie, developed a less technical and more popular approach for laymen, and called it: "Touch for Health". Thie's book consists primarily of diagrams of muscle tests and treatments and claims that certain muscles have special relationships with various internal organs. The same claim is made for 'the innate intelligence that runs through the body is connected to universal intelligence that runs the world', so each person is plugged into the universal intelligence through the system.(10)
Practitioners of applied kinesiology require no real training.

Scientific Evaluation
Donald O’Mathuna and Walt Larimore, in their excellent USA Christian Medical Association resource book, Alternative Medicine - The Christian Handbook (Zondervan, 2001) state: ‘In our opinion, there is no compelling scientific evidence that applied kinesiology works for diagnosing or treating health problems…this is not true science…While applied kinesiology may cause little harm, it could lead someone to postpone pursuing more conventional and effective diagnosis and treatment.’ (p.151)

John Ankerberg and John Weldon in their book "Can You Trust Your Doctor?" question the basis of applied kinesiology on two basic errors:
1. that body language is infallible; and
2. that the body is so sensitive that at extremely fine energy levels it can actually detect and respond to the toxicity and efficacy of various substances.(11)

The latter relates to the practice of ‘therapy localization’, when a particular food object is ‘placed on the hand or sometimes the mouth’, and the muscles are used to determine whether the substance is good or bad for you. This method is also used to allegedly test allergies. Ankerberg and Weldon ("Can You Trust Your Doctor?") believe that the ‘positive response’ which is found by this method is explained largely by people’s suggestibility. The defense of some applied kinesiology practitioners when challenged by traditional medical doctors is that even eminent medical doctors are ‘pretty much guessing’. (12)

Universal Energy
Applied kinesiology is quite blatant in its use of the concept of the universal energy. In this sense it is ‘a clear example of New Age philosophy in the form of alternative health care’(14), and it has much in common with other New Age health alternatives. In applied kinesiology, the universal life energy is the Chinese chi - the energy ‘which pervades everything in the universe, unites each individual to the cosmos, and is the doorway to untapped human potential’. (15) Doctors David and Sharon Sneed state quite emphatically that a ‘belief in a powerful universal energy in and through all things is at the heart of many Eastern religions as well as in all the practices which seek to manipulate this energy.’ (16)

Occultic Potential
It is suggested that the incorporation of mystical and Eastern concepts can also open the door to the occult. This stems from the point of view that once the concept of manipulating invisible energies is accepted, then the outcome of this can be to employ other psychic methods such as occult pendulums and that muscle testing can be used for occultic purposes.(17)

Conclusion
The belief in the flow of ‘universal energy’ through each individual, each plant and each animal, through the earth and the cosmos, ultimately connecting each living person with the entire universe is critical to many New Age healing practices and to applied kinesiology in particular. Since it is thought that this energy can attain God-like proportions, God is reduced to an impersonal force. Reducing God ‘from Almighty Creator to a mere part of the great universe is a radical departure from the Christian concept of a personal God, the loving, caring Creator of all things’. (18) The Doctors Sneed warn that ‘manipulation of universal energy is nothing but esoteric occultism no matter how nice the practitioner is.’ (19)

John Ankerberg and John Weldon state - ‘applied kinesiology is not a practice that should be trusted or utilized. Those who claim it is a valuable adjunct to health concerns are simply wrong.’ (20)

Applied kinesiology has a spiritual dimension which is not Christian and, as suggested, it
could involve a patient in far more than a path to good health. ‘See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.’ (Colossians 2:8).

Notes
(2) Ankerberg, John and Weldon, John, "Can You Trust Your Doctor?", p.155
(4) Ankerberg and Weldon, p.29
(5) Ibid., p.135
(6) Ibid., p.103
(8) Ibid., p.152
(9) Ankerberg and Weldon, p.157
(10) Sneed and Sneed, p.152
(11) Ankerberg and Weldon, p.160
(12) Ibid., p.165
(13) Ibid., p.65
(14) Sneed and Sneed, p.153
(15) Reisser, Paul and Reisser Teri; Weldon, John, "New Age Medicine - A Christian Perspective on Holistic Health", p.34
(16) Sneed and Sneed, p.7
(17) Ankerberg and Weldon, p.167
(18) Sneed and Sneed, p.48
(19) Ibid., p.154
(20) Ankerberg and Weldon, p.167

Some References
Sneed, Dr. David and Sneed, Dr. Sharon, "The Hidden Agenda: A Critical View of Alternative Therapies" (Thomas Nelson Publishers)
Reisser, Paul C., and Reisser, Teri K., Weldon, John, "New Age Medicine - A Christian Perspective on Holistic Health" (Intervarsity Press)