

NEW AGE

a brief introduction



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01

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

The New Age Movement is the fastest growing social phenomena in the world today. Its principles go back many centuries and can be traced in many ancient occult traditions and mystical religions. The present movement became popular during the 1960s, when many people became attracted to the idea of a new age where cultural, religious and political differences would be replaced by universal unity and love.

The New Age highlights well the emptiness of rationalism and materialism and stresses compassion, love, unity, and the importance of experience and spirituality. But it goes much further than this. It is based on an astrological theory that each star age lasts 2,000 years. It claims that we are moving from the futile and failing Age of Pisces to the Age of Aquarius, that began around the year 2000, when humanity will eventually achieve “holistic health.”

The Age of Pisces, which means fish, the symbol some have given to Christianity, is said to be the age of the assertive and the rational, whereas the Age of Aquarius, symbolized by a rainbow, is said to be the age of the intuitive and the spiritual.

The New Age also proclaims itself to be a bridge to the future and the only hope of humanity. Its aim is to totally reconstruct civilization into a one world federation, in which geographical, ethnic and cultural boundaries will be destroyed and humanity realizes its own divinity.

It believes that we are making evolutionary progress towards utopia, that this materialistic, assertive and rational Age of Pisces is coming to an end and humanity is progressing into a time of greater spirituality and world harmony.

Many in the movement believe we will shortly see, and indeed are working towards, the establishment of a new world order, a new world religion and a new world government, which will be ushered in by a world teacher who will bring economic and religious unity for mankind.

The New Age movement has no leader, structure or central organization. It embraces elements of all religions and movements and has therefore a limitless variety of beliefs, philosophies, and practices; including paganism, monism, pantheism, reincarnation, mythology, astrology, spiritism, witchcraft, occultism, yoga, transcendental meditation, karma, zen, levitation, fire-walking, isolation tanks, hypnosis, shiatsu, magic, mysticism, massage, numerology, horoscopes, channelling, fortune telling, tarot cards, clairvoyance, and consulting the dead.

Many New Age followers also use “Music, self-hypnosis, chanting, New Age deep relaxation exercises, psychedelic drugs, guided creative visualization and crystal power techniques for inducing altered states of consciousness in order to contact and interact with higher forces and energies.”

While some of these practices are quite harmless in themselves, many others are of the occult and are strictly forbidden in Scripture. Before entering the Promised Land, Moses warned the Israelites against engaging in such practices:

When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you must not learn to imitate the abhorrent practices of those nations. No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or who seeks oracles from the dead. For whoever does these things is abhorrent to the Lord.

(Deuteronomy 18:9-13)

Pantheism – *All Is God*

Although the New Age Movement is very disparate, we can summarize its beliefs in the following three statements: *All is God*, *All is One*, and *All is Well*. The first of these sayings, all is God, is generally known as *pantheism*, from the Greek *pan* (all) and *theos* (God). To put it simply, the idea of pantheism is that God is in everything and everything is God; and all that has existed, exists now and will exist in the future is God.

This teaching goes all the way back to the ancient Greeks. The philosopher Plotinus (A.D. 205-270) reshuffled the idea of Plato and others, added a good dose of mysticism and formulated the philosophical system that became known as Neo-Platonism.

His solution to the Greeks' problem of trying to reconcile what they called "the one and many" was to say that ultimate reality is the one from which all existence flows and to which it strives to return. These "flowings" are in the form of a kind of descending or widening stream – first ideas, then soul, and then matter. This system later became known as the *Great Chain of Being*.

In this idea there is no essential distinction between the Creator and His Creation. Although the divine image becomes fainter as one moves *down-stream*, everything that exists has divinity in it, or it could not exist at all. It also means that there is no true beginning and no ending, neither of the cosmos or of individuals.

Mixing Well with Man-Centred Ideas

Although pantheism is one of the earliest philosophical theories known to man, it mixes well with our modern man-centred religious concepts, especially because it excludes a personal God to whom we are morally answerable to in this life and the life to come. Pantheism has also remained one of the world's most pervasive

philosophies; Buddhism, Hinduism, Theosophy and the New Age religion are all basically pantheistic in nature.

Another pantheistic religion, also embraced by the New Age Movement, is the so-called Gaia Hypothesis, that was first proposed by the British scientist James Lovelock and has become increasingly popular among environmentalists today. This says that the Earth is one single living organism, with the entire biosphere as a self-regulating system which controls and maintains the conditions of life.

The Gaia Hypothesis has attracted massive support and its ideas has led many to personify *Mother Nature*, or *Mother Earth*, and others to speak of the Earth as God's body. This form of thinking is a modern mixture of animism and pantheism which goes far beyond the respect we should have for the natural world, and the individual and corporate responsibility we have to take care of it.

To encourage and educate the conservation and development of the Earth's resources has a logic behind it, but treating nature as a divine entity, which calls for our worship, has none. It is no coincidence that in Greek mythology Gaia was the name of the Earth goddess.

Bowing to Oneself

As in New Age teaching there is no God outside His Creation, the One, True, Personal God of the Bible is de-personified; He is an impersonal energy, a creative force that runs through all Creation. The trees, animals, rocks, stars planets and even human beings are all divine.

As the prominent New Age advocate Shirley Maclaine puts it, "Everyone is God, everyone." She claims the way to find God is to look within – hence the title of one of her books, *Going Within*. Another New Age advocate, Swami Muktananda, says: "Kneel to

your own self. Honour and worship your own being. God dwells within you as you.”

In *Inside the New Age Nightmare*, former New Age spokesman Randall Baer underlined the pantheistic element in New Age thinking with these words: “In a neo-paganistic revival, New Agers bow to the god they think is contained in every aspect of Creation. Stars are god, trees are god, planet Earth is god, dolphins are god, everything is god.”

New Age author Benjamin Creme confirms this statement: “In a sense there is no such thing as God. And in another sense, there is nothing else but God – only God exists. All is God. And because all is God, there is no God.” This statement makes it easy to see why pantheism can properly be called a form of atheism, because if God is everything in general, then He is nothing in particular.

Awkward Questions for Pantheism

In spite of its attractive appeal to concepts of unity, harmony, and love, the New Age pantheism, a form of monism, not only has serious negative implications; it is also faced with some difficult questions. One is forced to ask where the basis for objective truth is, if there is no distinction between God and the world, between God and self, and between self and the world.

And where do people get their individuality and personal identity from? Or how do we explain the existence of evil and ignorance? We may also ask when there is an argument between two people, who both believe to be God, who gives in? Which of the two can possibly admit to being wrong since they are both supposed to be God?

And because a person believes that he or she is God, does that mean this person believes he must dominate in all relationships with others, or ignore a country and its laws? And how does he account

for sickness? If he is God, why can he do nothing about death, disease and human suffering that is rampant on our planet? As one observer pointed out: “As soon as you begin to apply its philosophy to the real world, the New Age Movement is shown to be nothing more than a great metaphysical fraud.”

Monism – *All Is One*

In the New Age Movement all is one. The technical term for this belief is monism and was embraced by the Greek philosopher Thales (585 B.C.), who is usually thought of as the father of Greek philosophy. Thales rejected many of the mythological explanations of the origin and nature of the Universe, believing that the physical world contained rational and intelligible evidence as to its origin and meaning.

Within this general framework, Thales embraced Monism, the theory that all reality consists of only one basic stuff of essence out of which everything in the cosmos was made. He believed that this primal substance was water, which was said to contain the cause of motion and change, and therefore of life itself. In this sense, it could be said to be divine.

Other philosophers of the same era focused their monism elsewhere. Anaximenes (550 B.C.) taught that the primal substance was air; Heraclitus (500 B.C.) saw fire as the first principle of reality, from which everything flowed in a constant state of flux, guided by a kind of universal reason; Parmenides (480 B.C.) believed that the only reality was *being*, of which nothing can be said other than it is. Empedocles (495-435 B.C.) taught that all matter was composed of four elements, earth, water, air and fire, and that their interaction explained all motion and change.

Monism has taken various other forms over the centuries. Some regarded the primal substance as material and others regarded it as spiritual, both of which are in direct conflict with theism.

Objections for Monism

First, the totality of things includes evil, whereas God is without evil of any kind. Monism also implies that there is no essential difference between good and evil, because eventually everything flows into a single unity, an idea that has very serious implications. To quote the words of Os Guinness: “There are no moral absolutes, moral values are only relatively true or sociologically useful and the question of ethics is only the question of the optimal ground rules.” But to reject moral absolutes and say that right and wrong are ultimately the same thing is to destroy any basis for law and order and morality in society.

A Spirituality Without Repentance

From such a belief system, it is easy to see why New Age teaching rejects much of Orthodox Christianity, which is considered too rigid. As you can imagine, the word sin is not a popular word for its followers. New Age teaches that man’s problem is not sin, but ignorance of our true self and true potential, which is solved by enlightenment, spiritual revelation and good education.

Put very simply, it invites people to make up their own moral menu for life and living, choosing their own truths, their own values and their own reality. The philosophy of Shirley MacLaine, along with many other New Age advocates, could be summed up in these words: “If it feels good, do it.”

The New Age offers the attraction of a spirituality without the price of repentance. “Guidance comes from within,” it is said, and many

in the movement feel led to condone or practice divorce, abortion, promiscuity, homosexuality and much worse.

No Grounds for Judgement

As you might also have gathered from the above analysis, the biblical doctrine of Judgement in the New Age is too a very unpopular word for its followers. Instead, reincarnation is taught almost universally throughout the movement, but not always where one will be graded up or down depending on how good or bad he has been. Monism is taken to even further extremes in some parts of the New Age in which there is no distinction made between God and Satan. Since all is one, the devil himself is worshipped.

All Is Well

The third saying that summarizes New Age beliefs is that all is well. We are all making progress onwards and upwards towards complete spiritual enlightenment and utopia. As I mentioned previously, many see the establishment of a new world government and a new world religion and that this utopia will be ushered in by a world teacher who will bring economic and religious unity.

They are absolutely right; the Bible calls such a man the Antichrist, and that is what our spiritually enlightened, politically correct world will get. And if anyone refuses to worship him, he will have them beheaded. So much for tolerance!

In *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s* Marilyn Ferguson makes it quite clear that the New Age Movement sees itself as much more than just another religion or cult:

Broader than reform, deeper than revolution, this benign conspiracy for a new human agenda has

triggered the most rapid cultural realignment in history. This great shuddering, irrevocable shift overtaking us is not a new political, religious, philosophical system. It is a new mind, the ascendance of a startling world-view.

New Age teaches that in order to bring this about there needs to be a “*Consciousness Renaissance*,” in which man achieves higher states of “*god-consciousness*” until he sees that “heaven is here on earth every day.” This idea is reinforced by another overlapping branch of New Age; a *Quantum Leap of Consciousness*.

02

AREAS OF INFLUENCE

The influence of New Age beliefs on society today is absolutely enormous, and has affected and penetrated every area of our culture and human experience without people even being aware of it. It has infiltrated the arts, music, politics, the business world, the medical profession, the education system and even many Christian denominations.

Watch out for the over-emphasis and misapplication of the biblical teachings on love, tolerance and unity, and the absolute silence, and often abhorrence, on the necessity for unbelievers to repent.

The famous pop star Terence Trent Darby claimed that the late Marvin Gaye dictated songs to him from heaven; this is what New Agers call a *channel*. Many others in the music industry openly admit to using these practices.

The New Age Movement penetrated the business world in the 1990s. Shortly after, many New Age bookstores planted large business sections for their followers in all branches. As a result, a growing number of large companies now encourage TM and training courses based on New Age concepts. Some finance houses even employ astrologers and use other New Age techniques to increase productivity.

New Age concepts and techniques have not only affected the business world; they have also crept into the medical profession. One survey found that seven hundred doctors in Great Britain practice TM and recommend it to their patients. Also, alternative medicine, which sometimes involves New Age practices, has become increasingly popular and on demand.

03

WHY WE MUST REJECT NEW AGE

As we have said, there are some parts of New Age practices and beliefs that are good and helpful for personal development and healthy living. For example, the concern for world peace, ecology and spiritual enlightenment.

Other good examples include the stress on good nutrition, compassion and respect for other people, animals, and nature; all of which find a basis in biblical teaching. Yet as the Apostle Paul warns us, *“Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”*

New Age beliefs completely fall short, contradict and reject most of the glorious truths portrayed in the Holy Scriptures; truths which their advocates have misapplied, misinterpreted and twisted over the centuries.

To begin with, New Age teaching is far from the truth about God the Father, who is not an impersonal, abstract force, but a Unique, Personal, Plural, Spiritual, Eternally Self-Existent, Transcendent, Immanent, Omniscient, Immutable, Holy, Loving Being. He is also the Creator and Ruler of the whole Universe and the Judge of all mankind.

By **Unique**, I mean there is only one God and that all other objects of worship or ideas given the name god are just figments of one’s imagination.

By **Personal**, I mean that God is a living Being who thinks, feels and acts according to His own will and pleasure. He is also the Creator of everything and He created human beings in His own image so we could live in a personal relationship with Him, which involves the love and worship of God and love for our fellow human

beings. As St Augustine said: “You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

By **Plural**, I mean that there are three distinguishable Persons within a single Godhead – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

By **Transcendent**, I mean that God is over and above all things, outside of time and space and completely distinct from the Universe. However, the New Age religion takes us back to paganism and Paul warns us in the Book of Romans against those who exchange the truth of God for a lie and worship and serve created things rather than the Creator.

By **Immanent**, I mean that while God remains separate from the Universe in being and essence, He permeates, fills and sustains it in every aspect.

By **Spiritual**, I mean that God has no physical attributes or dimensions; that He does not have a body, or any characteristics that can be defined in terms of size or shape.

By **Eternally Self-Existent**, I mean that God has always had the power of being within Himself and has neither beginning nor end.

By **Immutable**, I mean that God is unchangeable in every aspect of His being.

By **Omniscient**, I mean that God knows everything, including the past, present and future.

By **Holy**, I mean that God is completely without sin or deficiency in His being, essence or actions.

By **Creator**, I mean that God by His own choice and power brought into being all reality other than Himself.

By **Ruler and Judge**, of all mankind I mean that God is in sovereign control of everything that exists or happens and He alone determines the eternal destiny of every member of the human race.

Far from the Truth about Jesus

Second, the New Age gets nowhere near the truth about God the Son, Jesus Christ, who is considered as one of the ascended masters together with Buddha, Krishna and others in the movement. Unfortunately, in trying to accommodate Christ into New Age thinking, adherents miss out on the glorious truth that He was and is God made flesh for our salvation.

And that Jesus alone has the power to free a person from sin and its dire consequences – guilt, fear, death and hell – and to enable him to love and serve others and become more like Himself in character. On the contrary, although there is a great deal of talk about compassion and love for others in the New Age movement, its doctrines are very self-centred. The starting point for change is with personal development and a love of self.

The worship of oneself manifests itself in books and courses on self-realisation, self-fulfilment, self-help, self-confidence, self-improvement, self-worth and self-love. The highest goal of all is to find one's own happiness, satisfaction and success. To find one's own self is to find God it is believed.

This of course, is an explicit assault on the self-denial at the heart of true Christianity and is another one of the devil's lies. The only way to true fulfilment and happiness is through loving and serving the one true God and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, loving and serving others.

The way of fulfilment is not self-worship, but self-denial, exemplified in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And what a fulfilment that brings! Jesus promised it:

If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves?

(Luke 9:23-26)

“Not by My Own Strength”

Finally, the New Age does not even come close the truth about God the Holy Spirit. Within the Movement we see a search for spiritual power, spiritual experience and transformed lives. Transformation is sought through altered consciousness, Yoga, TM, visualisation, the seven chakras, re-birthing or astral travel and so on.

There may be a power in these activities, but it does not compare to the liberating and fulfilling power of the Holy Spirit in the life of a born-again believer. Actually, these practices can open a person up to evil spiritual powers which seek to enslave and control rather than liberate.

Dear reader, the remedy does not lie in the rejection of Christianity, but in a reappraisal and true understanding of what is at the heart of the Christian faith handed down to us in the Holy Scriptures. If we do this, we will see how everything else in this world falls short of the glorious truths about the Trinitarian God of the Christian Orthodox faith.