

CULTS AND FALSE RELIGIONS

The New Age Movement

REVIEW:

- What are the 3 assumptions that form the JW world view? (Divine guidance comes only through the WT Society; JW's alone have the truth about God; every other church is false and controlled by Satan.)
- What is the goal of Mormons? (To attain godhood on the basis of good works)
- What did we learn about Allah, the god of the Koran? (he is really Allah, the pagan moon god)
- What is the key belief of Buddhism? (Reincarnation, or the circle of life)
- What is the major problem of the Roman Catholic religion? (Human tradition is elevated above the Bible)
- Hinduism takes the bold step of proclaiming that we are _____. (God)
- Scientology is a voyage of _____. (self-discovery)
- SDA's teach that we are still under the _____. (Law of Moses)

READING:

I Timothy 4:1 ¹Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

John 8:44 ⁴⁴Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

II Cor 11:14 ¹⁴And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. ¹⁵Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

INTRODUCTION:

The **New Age Movement** is in a class by itself. Unlike most formal religions, it has no holy text, central organization, membership, formal clergy, geographic center, dogma, creed, etc. They often use mutually exclusive definitions for some of their terms. The New Age is in fact a free-flowing spiritual movement; a network of believers and practitioners who share somewhat similar beliefs and practices, which they add on to whichever formal religion that they follow. Their book publishers take the place of a central organization; seminars, conventions, books and informal groups replace of sermons and religious services.

- 8% believe in astrology as a method of foretelling the future
- 7% believe that crystals are a source of healing or energizing power
- 9% believe that Tarot Cards are a reliable base for life decisions
- about 1 in 4 believe in a non-traditional concept of the nature of God which are often associated with New Age thinking:
 - 11% believe that God is "*a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach*"
 - 8% define God as "*the total realization of personal, human potential*"
 - 3% believe that each person is God.

I. FOUNDER:

"**Old Occult**" -- The New Age Movement is a modern revival of very ancient, divergent, religious traditions and practices. The actual original root is squarely centered in Genesis 3:1-5, and reverberates throughout the movement's continued historical expressions. In the original lie, Satan questions God's word, His authority and benevolent rule (v. 1), disputes that death results from disobedience, that is sin (v. 4), and claims that through the acquisition of secret or Gnostic wisdom man can be enlightened and can be "like God" (v. 5).

II. HISTORY / ORGANISATION:

Many of the occult practices and beliefs revived by the modern NAM were a part of very early pagan cultures. Many practices common to the NAM, such as witchcraft/sorcery, spiritism, divination, (clairvoyance; seeing the future), necromancy (consulting the dead), and astrology, are clearly and strongly condemned in Scripture (Deuteronomy 18: 9-17; Isaiah 47: 9-15). These and other occultic practices were spread through the ancient magic and mystery religions of the Chaldeans, Egyptians, and most notably, the Assyrian-Babylonian culture (*Ancient Empires of the New Age*, pp. 15-62). The lie of Genesis 3 is significantly developed in Babylon (Isaiah 47) and continues to its ultimate state of development, revealed as Satan's one-world system at the end of the age (Revelation 17-18).

Three major world religions whose beliefs and practices are entwined with the NAM are Hinduism, Buddhism, circa 560 B.C., and Taoism, circa 500 B.C. (*Handbook to the World's Religions*, pp. 170, 221, 252). Another prominent occultic influence in Europe was Druidism, the religion of the Celts, which extended from 300 B.C. into the middle ages (pp. 114-19).

III. PURPOSE: THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT IS A RELIGIOUS SYSTEM WITH TWO BASIC BELIEFS: EVOLUTIONARY GODHOOD AND GLOBAL UNITY.

1. What is Evolutionary Godhood?

a. It is the next step in evolution. It will not be physical, but spiritual:

- i. **For the most part, the NAM. espouses evolution, both of body and spirit.** Man is developing and will soon leap forward into new spiritual horizons. Many New Age practices are designed to push one ahead into that horizon. Some of them are astral projection which is training your soul to leave your body and travel around; contacting spirits so they may speak through you or guide you; using crystals to purify your body's and mind's energy systems; visualization where you use mental imagery to imagine yourself as an animal, in the presence of a divine being, or being healed of sickness, etc.

b. Evolutionary Godhood also means that mankind will soon see itself as god, as the "Christ principle."

- i. **The NAM. teaches that Man's basic nature is good and divine. This opposes God's Word which says...**

that we are sinners: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: " (Rom. 5:12).

and that our nature is corrupt: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Eph. 2:3,).

c. It teaches that since man is divine by nature, he then has divine qualities.

- i. This is an important part of NAM. thinking. Because the average New Ager believes himself to be divine, he can then create his own reality. If, for example, a person believes that reincarnation is true, that's fine because that is his reality. If someone he knows doesn't believe in it, that is alright too because that is someone else's reality. They can each have a reality for themselves that "follows a different path."

d. In contrast to this, the Bible says that God alone is the creator: "Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I *am* the LORD that maketh all *things*; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;" (Isa. 44:24).

- i. **The New Ager who believes in his own divinity and ability to create usurps the authority and position of God.** He also is still listening to the lie of the devil who spoke to Eve and said she would be like God (Gen. 3:5).

e. Reincarnation

- i. **Though not all New Agers adhere to reincarnation, most believe in some form or another.** And, many believe the Bible was changed to remove any verses that might have taught reincarnation. But this accusation only shows the limitation of their knowledge. The Bible never had any references to reincarnation.
 - ii. **Reincarnation opposes the Word of God** which says that it is appointed for man to die once, and after this comes judgment (Heb. 9:27).
2. **The second major element of the New Age Movement is Global Unity** which consists of three major divisions: Man with Man; Man with Nature; and Man with God.
- i. **Man with man.**
 - a. The NAM teaches that we will all learn our proper divine relationship with one another and achieve harmony and mutual love and acceptance through the realization and acceptance of this divine proper knowledge.
 - b. The New Age hope is reminiscent of the Scriptures that speak of the coming Antichrist:
 - i. 2 Thess. 2:3-4, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁴Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.." See also Rev. 13:17,14:9,11; 16:2; 19:20.
 - ii. **Man with nature**
 - a. Since the NAM. says that God is all, and all is God, then **nature is also part of God**. Man must then **get in tune with nature** and learn to nurture it and be nurtured by it. In this, all people can unite.
 - b. **American Indian philosophies** are popular among New Agers because they focus on the earth, on nature, and man's relationship to them.
 - c. New Age philosophy generally seeks to merge with those **philosophies that put man and nature on an equal level**. We are no more or less important or different than our cousin the animal, bird, or fish. We must live in harmony with them, understand them, and learn from them, is the general philosophy of the New Age.
 - d. This is opposed to the Scriptural teaching of man's superiority over animals (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:19). This does not mean that Man must abuse what he is over, but Man is given the responsibility of caring for and being stewards of God's creation (Gen. 2:15). God will hold Christians responsible for the stewardship that has been entrusted to them.
 - e. The New Agers have a name for the earth. It is Gaia. Gaia is to be revered and respected. Some New Agers even worship the earth and nature.
 - i. This opposes the Scripture that says we are not to have any other Gods before God (Ex. 20:3).
 - iii. **Man with God**
 - a. Since the NAM. teaches that man is divine by nature, all people, once they see themselves as such, will be helped in their unity of purpose, love, and development. The goal is to fully realize our own goodness. It is obvious that this contradicts Scriptures, Rom. 3:10-12: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹²They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

b. Additional beliefs of the NAM. View of God are:

- i. **He (it) is impersonal, omnipresent, and benevolent** -- therefore he (it) won't condemn anyone.
 - a. **The New Age god is impersonal.** An impersonal God will not reveal himself nor will he have specific requirements as to morality, belief, and behavior. This is why reincarnation appeals so much to them. With it, there is no judgment, there is a second chance, a third chance, and fourth, etc.
 - b. It should be noted that because the New Ager **seeks to elevate himself to godhood**, he must **lower the majesty and personhood of the true God**. In other words, **the universe isn't big enough for one true God, but it is big enough for a bunch of little ones.**
- ii. **There are no moral absolutes in the New Age.** Therefore, they claim to have a **spiritual tolerance for all "truth systems."** They call this "harmonization."
 - a. **The New Age movement does espouse honesty, integrity, love, peace, etc. It just wants to do it without the true God.** It wants to do it not on His terms, but **on its own.**

IV. SOURCE OF AUTHORITY:

New Agers claim no external source of authority -- only an internal one ("the god within"). They believe the individual is the standard of truth, saying that "truth as an objective reality simply does not exist" (Shirley MacLaine, *It's All in the Playing*) (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; Matt. 5:18).

The New Age movement has many sub-divisions, but it is generally a collection of Eastern-influenced metaphysical thought systems, a conglomeration of theologies, hopes, and expectations held together with an eclectic teaching of salvation, of "correct thinking," and "correct knowledge." It is a theology of "feel-goodism," "universal tolerance," and "moral relativism."

In the NAM. **Man is central.** He is viewed as divine, as co-creator, as the hope for future peace and harmony. A representative quote might be: "I am affected only by my thoughts. It needs but this to let salvation come to all the world. For in this single thought is everyone released at last from fear." (A course in Miracles, The Foundation for Inner Peace, Huntington Station, N.Y. Lesson 228, p. 461.)

V. KEY LITERATURE

Prominent expressions of the NAM were carried on into more modern times in Europe and America by Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), transcendentalists like Thoreau, Emerson, and Wordsworth (early 1800's), and Theosophy introduced by Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) (*The New Age Rage*, pp. 22-4). The **decade of the sixties** witnessed a **revival of Eastern mysticism** as traditional values were being challenged. Zen, Carlos Castañeda, the Beatles, Transcendental Meditation, and yoga all became popular.

In the eighties, Shirley MacLaine's autobiographical books and television mini-series gave the NAM more popular exposure and momentum. Today, various research polls are consistently demonstrating that a significant shift has been occurring in the West, both in the beliefs and practices of the New Age world-view. For example, 36% of Americans believe that astrology is scientific, and 25% now believe in reincarnation (Russell Chandler, *Understanding the New Age*, pp. 20, 130-133).

It is important to recognize even the most disguised forms of the New Age Movement. The following is a list of some of the organizations, beliefs and practices associated with the NAM: astrology, aura, black and white magic, bioenergy, Brahman, Buddhism, chakras, *chi* energy, Christ-consciousness, Christian Science, Church Universal & Triumphant, crystals, Druidism, Eastern mysticism, ESP, EST, the Forum, extraterrestrials, firewalking, Gaia, gnosticism, Hare Krishna, higher consciousness, Hinduism, human potential movement, Kaballah, karma, Magic, Mind Science, Native American spirituality, near-death experiences, neo-paganism, nirvana, parapsychology, prana, psi, psychic, reflexology, reiki, reincarnation, Religious Science, shamanism, Silva Mind Control, spiritism, Tai Chi,

Taoism, tarot cards, Theosophy, therapeutic touch, trance-channeling, Transcendental Meditation, transpersonal psychology, UFOs, Unity School of Christianity, Witchcraft, yin-yang, Yoga, and Zen.

VI. ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY:

Unfortunately for the NAM. the fear they want to be released from might very well be the fear of damnation, of conviction of sin, and it is even, sometimes, fear of Christianity and Christians. Though the NAM. is tolerant of almost any theological position, **it is opposed to the "narrow-mindedness" of Christianity that teaches Jesus is the only way and that there are moral absolutes.**

VII. DOCTRINAL SUMMARY:

In general, the religious views of the NAM are:

God—an impersonal all-pervading energy.

The Holy Spirit—an energy that can be used creatively or psychically.

Jesus Christ—a New Age teacher and illustration of an enlightened individual who realized he was God.

Man—inwardly good and divine; thus he carries within himself all that he needs for time and eternity.

Salvation—development of psychic powers and higher consciousness. This is achieved by looking inside one's self and **practicing New Age techniques** to finally **attain awareness of personal divinity.**

Sin—ignorance of personal divinity

Death—the moment one hopes to experience a merging with God, the all-pervading energy of the universe. This only comes if personal transformation or enlightenment has been obtained.

Satan—normal consciousness—man existing in his state of unrealised potential.

Heaven—Hell—good or bad states of consciousness in this life.

In the New Age, **God is impersonal and is one and the same as the universe.** Technically, many in the NAM believe in pantheism. In Christianity, God is the personal Creator who is separate, distinct, and over His Creation. In the New Age, man is only a part of an impersonal God. As such, man shares God's essential nature. In Christianity, however, God specifically created man other than himself. Because of man's rebellion against God, he is separated from Him. According to the New Age, **man must transform himself.** He does this **by changing his consciousness and actualising his divine nature.** In doing so he becomes aware of his inner divinity. According to Christianity, Jesus Christ alone is the Saviour and reconciles man to God. In the New Age, salvation is by personal effort and works. **Man must use a variety of Eastern or occultic techniques and apply these to his mind, body, and spirit to obtain enlightenment.** In Christianity, salvation is by God's grace and not by man's work. Man must receive God's gift by placing his faith in Christ and turning from sin. Salvation is not something earned by personal merit. (Eph. 2:8-9)

A number of fundamental beliefs are held by many New Age followers; individuals are encouraged to **"shop" for the beliefs and practices that they feel most comfortable with.**

VIII. NEW AGE PRACTICES

Many practices are found among New Agers. A typical practitioner is active in only a few areas:

Channeling. A method similar to that used by Spiritists in which a spirit of a long dead individual is conjured up. However, while Spiritists generally believe that one's soul remains relatively unchanged after death, most channelers believe that the soul evolves to higher planes of existence. Channelers usually try to make contact with a single, spiritually evolved being. That being's consciousness is channeled through the medium and relays guidance and information to the group, through the use of the medium's voice. Channeling has existed since the 1850's and many groups consider themselves independent of the New Age movement. Perhaps the most famous channeling event is the popular *A Course in Miracles*. It was channeled through a Columbia University psychologist, Dr. Helen Schucman, (1909-1981), over an 8 year period. She was an Atheist, and in no way regarded herself as a New Age believer. However, she took great care in recording accurately the words that she received. Supposedly her spirit contact was 'Jesus.' It was clearly not Jesus Christ.

Crystals. New Agers believe that crystals possess healing energy.

Meditating. A process of blanking out the mind and releasing oneself from conscious thinking. This is often aided by repetitive chanting of a mantra, or focusing on an object.

New Age Music A gentle, melodic, inspirational music form involving the human voice, harp, lute, flute, etc. It is used as an aid in healing, massage therapy and general relaxation.

Divination The use of various techniques to foretell the future, including I Ching, Pendulum movements, Runes, Scrying, Tarot Cards.

Astrology The belief that the orientation of the planets at the time of one's birth, and the location of that birth predicts the individual's future and personality. Belief in astrology is common amongst New Agers, but definitely not limited to them.

Holistic Health This is a collection of healing techniques which have diverged from the traditional medical model. It attempts to cure disorders in mind, body and spirit and to promote wholeness and balance in the individual. Examples are crystal healing, homeopathy, iridology, massage, various meditation methods, polarity therapy, psychic healing, therapeutic touch, reflexology, bodywork, rebirthing, kineology, sensory deprivation etc.

Human Potential Movement (a.k.a. Emotional Growth Movement) This is a collection of therapeutic methods involving both individualized and group working, using both mental and physical techniques. The goal is to help individuals to advance spiritually. Examples are Esalen Growth Center programs, EST (Werner Erhardt, later called 'Forum'), Money and You (Robert Kiasaki), Gestalt Therapy, Primal Scream Therapy, Transactional Analysis, Transcendental Meditation and Yoga.

*****NOTE: Only a relatively small percentage of the population are likely to identify their religion as being New Age. However, this in no way indicates the influence of New Age ideas in this country. Many people identify with 'Christianity' and other religions, but incorporate many new age concepts into their faith. It breeds total confusion and focuses the person on themselves to the elimination of a righteous judgmental God who hates sin and the need for Jesus Christ as Saviour. This eliminates all personal responsibility for their sin.**

IX A BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

1. **God is personal.** If God were impersonal, then the following qualities could not be His.
 - a. God speaks and has a self given name: "I AM" (Exodus 3:14).
 - b. God is long suffering, (Psalm 86:15; 2 Peter 3:15).
 - c. God is forgiving (Daniel 9:9; Ephesians 1:7; Psalm 86:5).
 - d. God hates sin (Psalm 5:5-6; Habakkuk 1:13).
2. **Man is not divine, but a sinner** (Romans 3:23).
 - a. He is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9).
 - b. He is full of evil (Mark 7:21-23).
 - c. He loves darkness rather than light (John 3:19).
 - d. He is unrighteous, does not understand, does not seek for God (Rom. 3:10-12).
 - e. He is helpless and ungodly (Rom. 5:6).
 - f. He is dead in his trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1).
 - g. He is by nature a child of wrath (Eph. 2:3).
 - h. He cannot understand spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14).
3. **Salvation is not correct thought, but deliverance from the consequence of our sin** (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).
 - a. Salvation is God's deliverance from damnation (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 1:18; 2:5; 5:9).
 - b. This salvation is found in no one but Jesus alone (Acts 4:12).
4. **Miracles are from God not from the mind of man** (Matt. 8:1-4; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 17:12-19; Jn 2:1-11).

- a. Miracles imply an action by someone that is greater than ourselves. If God is impersonal, miracles cannot occur. But they do occur today as well as in Bible times and are not simply proper thoughts or understanding.
5. **Christ means "anointed. Jesus was the Christ, the anointed one."** It does not mean a consciousness or quality of people. Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, the Deliverer from sin.
- a. Jesus is the Christ (Matt. 16:16,20; Luke 9:20).
 - b. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? " (Luke 24:26).
 - c. "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: " (Luke 24:46).
 - d. "... We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. (John 1:41).
 - e. "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.." (Acts 2:31).
 - f. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36).
 - g. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. 5:6).
 - h. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4).
 - i. Christ is crucified (1 Cor. 1:23).
 - j. You sin against Christ (1 Cor. 8:12).
 - k. The blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16).
6. **Only the Bible has the message of Grace.** Grace is the unmerited favor of God upon His people. Grace is the undeserved kindness of God. Every other religious system on earth has some form of salvation dependent totally or in part on what the adherents do. Not so with Christianity.
7. **Humanity is not unlimited, but just the opposite: it is under bondage** (Romans 5:12). Sin is its master and a deadly and deceitful one at that.
8. **True morality is that which is revealed by God in the Bible** (Exodus 20). Anything else is only an imitation, a set of ideas laid down by man that originate from the mind of sinful man.
9. **The Bible opposes almost all the tenets of the New Age Movement.** As Christians, we should be watchful to recognize what is false and teach what is true. We should be wary because the Edenic lie still rings strong in the hearts of the deceived -- and they want us to believe as they.

X. WITNESSING TO NEW AGERS

1. Ask questions

- a. If we are all God, then why do we act so badly?
 - i. They might say it is because we all have not come to a full realization of our true divine potentials. It is ignorance that leads to bad deeds.
 - ii. Then ask them how, if we are divine, our mere ignorant self could so easily override our divine goodness.
- b. Why do our "realities" contradict each other?
 - i. They might say that they don't contradict each other. They are simply different shades of light on the same picture (or something vague like that).

- ii. Then ask if truth contradicts itself. It does not. The logic is that if we are all in different forms of truth, then these different truths can't ultimately contradict each other--or they wouldn't be true. However,...
- a. The NAM says that Jesus is only one of many ways to God. But Jesus said He was the only way to God (John 14:6). They can't both be right; therefore, the NAM teaching that we can create our own truths can't be true.

2. Don't let them take Christian words and use them out of the context of biblical meaning.

New Agers recognize the tremendous influence and spotless reputation of Jesus. They want Him to be associated with their beliefs. As a result, you might find yourself facing a New Ager who uses Christian words--but with non-Christian definitions. Listen carefully, and don't let them steal what is Christian and transplant it into their system.

- You must question the terms they use. You need to make sure that what they mean by Christian terms is the same thing that you mean by them.

3. Listen for internal contradictions.

- As mentioned above, truth does not contradict itself. You must listen to what they are saying and ask questions. Sooner or later you catch on to inconsistencies.
- Inconsistencies usually arise when discussing the relationship between reality and belief.

For example, a New Ager might say that you can create your own reality. I might reply, "Good. Then if I believe red lights are really green, would you want to go driving with me?"

4. Tell them that God is personal, that he loves them, and that Jesus died for their sin.

- a. The Word of God will not come back empty without accomplishing what God wishes it to. Isaiah 55:11 "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it."

If you focus on Jesus, tell them the truth about sin and salvation, and use Scripture, then, at least, they will have heard the truth. Praise be to Jesus the Christ.

- b. Remember, God's word is powerful. Whether or not they accept it isn't the issue. You simply need to present the truth in an accurate and loving manner (Col. 4:5-6; 1 Tim. 1:5).

CONCLUSION:

Do not meddle with New Age practices as you do not know what the outcome will be.

Recognise that most New Agers don't realise they are in the 'New Age Movement' and participating in occult practices. They often think they are only striving to reach their full potential.

Kindly inform New Agers that there are no answers in what they believe only more and more questions. Take them through the Gospel and explain Jesus is the only answer. If they want real joy and understanding they need to receive Jesus Christ as their Saviour.