

THE DIFFICULTY IN DEFINING THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

To properly identify the New Age Movement and analyze its beliefs, doctrines, and practices, is a monumental task. It is a complex system that is constantly reshaping and reforming its structure. The New Age Movement is extremely broad and draws from numerous sources. Although there are many unified beliefs, there is also great diversity. This diversity makes pinpointing certain doctrines difficult because all representatives of the New Age may not be in agreement of all beliefs. The New Age Movement is also a group of people who exalt change and evolution. Their perspective and convictions can change often, making it difficult to clearly state their current beliefs.

With these thoughts in mind, this booklet will attempt to breakdown the foundational structure of the New Age movement and allow the reader to better understand its philosophy.

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INTRODUCTION

The New Age Movement is rapidly growing throughout the world. Almost 60 million people dabble in some form of New Age or occult practices. There has been a tremendous increase in its popularity and acceptance which is influencing world politics, educational methods, and media.

Many people today view the New Age Movement as having positive ideas capable of promoting world peace and helping people become more sensitive to ecological concerns. Most, however, do not understand the underlying dangers of the New Age Movement

In this booklet, we will present the Biblical truths concerning New Age practices and show Christians how to discern between "Christianity and the New Age Movement."

THE BEGINNING ROOTS OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

To most people the name "New Age" implies that this movement is a fairly modern one. But once the high tech dust is blown from its cover, the New Age can easily be traced back to such sources as ancient Babylonian occult religions, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Its origin can even be found in the biblical Garden of Eden.

In Genesis chapter 3, we see Satan's first attempt to indoctrinate mankind into this religion in the temptation of Eve. The temptation was to forsake God's way of life and to believe the serpent's promise that by rebelling against God man could "be as gods" and never die. These two thoughts (becoming a god and never dying) are the basis for the New Age Movement.

HISTORY OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

Satan's first attempt in the Garden of Eden to pull mankind away from submission to the Almighty God has led to scores or other attempts throughout the ages. The birth of eastern religions has allowed this rebellion to grow throughout the centuries. Since their beginnings, these eastern religions have gripped literally hundreds of millions in their teachings and have helped carry out Satan's big lie. The New Age Movement is rapidly growing throughout the world. Almost 60 million people dabble in some form of New Age or occult practices. There has been a tremendous increase in its popularity and acceptance which is influencing world politics, educational methods, and media.

The two most dominant and influential eastern religions that lay the foundation for the New Age Movement are Hinduism and Buddhism. It is advantageous for every Christian to understand the basic philosophy behind these two religions in order to better understand the New Age Movement. The next few pages will give a brief history of these influential religious systems. **HINDUISM** - The beginning of Hinduism can be traced to the period between 2000 to I 000 B.C. Although there is no known founder of Hinduism, history records that spiritual laws and truths were revealed to men called "rishis" who were " spiritual" men living in northern India.

Hinduism teaches that "Brahman" is the infinite, supreme, absolute spirit being. Brahman is a perfect god who is absolutely unchangeable. Since Hinduism teaches that only things that are permanent are real, only Brahman is real. There are hundreds of lesser gods that can also be worshiped, but only as long as people realize that these gods are merely different aspects of the supreme Brahman.

Hinduism teaches that every living creature has an "atman", which is their spirit or soul. This atman is given to each creature by Brahman, hoping that the final destination of the atman will again be eternal union with Brahman. Union with Brahman cannot be accomplished in one lifetime, therefore, each individual atman must pass from body to body, lifetime to lifetime, guided directly by the laws of karma. This process of body to body experience over the course of multiple lifetimes is known as reincarnation. This is the transmigration of the soul.

According to the laws of karma, your current life is a result of the deeds performed in a previous life. Your next reincarnation depends on the deeds you accomplish in this lifetime. Man must go on through the repeated process of transmigration, until the atman is perfect enough to be with Brahman

It is these same thoughts that are being taught today by New Age leaders, gurus, and spiritual teachers to usher in a "new age".

BUDDHISM - The beginning roots of Buddhism can be traced back to about 560 to 480 B. C. Buddhism was founded by a man named Siddhartha Guatama who later would be given the name Buddha or "the enlightened one." Siddhartha began Buddhism as a protest against some Hindu doctrines which disagreed with the answers he received while being enlightened during his meditation time.

It was during these enlightened moments that Siddhartha (now Buddha) would develop the eight basic techniques (8-fold path) that formed the structure of Buddhism.

- Right Meditation 5. Right Belief
- 3. Right Occupation 7. Right Action
- 4. Right Speech
- 2. Right Effort 6. Right Aspiration

 - 8. Right Thought

Buddha taught that these eight steps, if followed properly, would allow any person the ability to obtain spiritual peace and happiness. The problem, when compared with Biblical teaching, is that these steps are based solely upon the works of self in an effort to obtain eternal presence with God. Today, these beliefs are being continually taught throughout the entire spectrum of the New Age Movement.

The Bible teaches that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us . . . " Titus 3:5 **THE CONNECTION FROM OLD TO NEW** - Although there are many others influences, occult practices, and cultist influences that help to build the New Age, most of its foundation can be traced to the adaptation of Hinduism and Buddhism through the Theosophical Society. This group was founded in the latter part of the nineteenth century by Helena Blavatsky (known as Madame Blavatsky). She was an avid promoter of such convictions and practices as: Hindu philosophy, spiritism, channeling, seances, and other teachings directly opposed to Biblical Christianity.

The hippie movement of the 1960's became the most current predecessor of the contemporary New Age Movement. The influences of Timothy Leary, and musical groups like The Grateful Dead and the Beatles (who were avid followers of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi of Transcendental Meditation), pushed a curious and independent generation towards a new psychedelic-mystical revolution. **FROM THE 60'S TO PRESENT** - Many people now view the 1960's as merely a short lived experiment in the extravagant. However, the 1960's strategically paved a way for a generation known for their counter culture activities to become a dominant and persuasive culture for the present New Age effort.

The younger generation of the 60's were looking for answers beyond humanism and materialism, experimented with psychedelic drugs which ushered them into an experience with the mystical and esoteric. On the heels of this movement, various forms of eastern religion came rushing in modified to a more western taste. Hare Krishnas chanted, and yogis and gurus gave counterfeit promises of spiritual enlightenment. This paved the path for a generation to be seduced into becoming accustomed to a new, non-Christian spiritual menu. As time passed, these people left their hippie apparel and filled the ranks of influential occupations. This group of "conscious" believers have now become part of the gears of society and are aggressively implementing their new belief system into the entire political, financial, religious, and educational world.

WHAT IS THE NEW AGE?

The New Age Movement is an umbrella term referring to a variety of people, organizations, events, practices, and ideas. It is not a centrally organized movement with one human leader. Although it includes cults, sects, and even parts of certain "Christian" denominations, it is not restricted to any one of these. It is a constellation of like-minded people and groups desiring a spiritual and social change that will usher in a new age of self-actualization. Usually this scenario requires a throwing off of both traditional monotheism (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), and secular humanism (Rationalism, Atheism, Skepticism). Scores of New Age groups - whether they concern holistic health, politics, science, religious cults or psychology - loosely coordinate their efforts through networking to obtain their common objectives and goals.

I. Confronting the New Age, by Douglas Groothius. p. 18

COMPARING THE NEW AGE TO BIBLICAL TRUTHS

To properly understand and evaluate the differences between the beliefs of the New Age and Christianity, it is imperative to fully understand the doctrines, definitions, and terms of the New Age Movement.

The following pages will give the reader a brief, but thorough view of New Age thought compared to Biblical Christianity. This will give each person a basic understanding of the differences between the two. We recommend if you are planning to work with those involved in the New Age Movement you thoroughly study their beliefs and the Christian responses to those beliefs. **MONISM – ALL IS ONE/ONE IS ALL** - Monism is a metaphysical theory (a philosophy that explains the nature of being and reality) that New Agers adhere to which views reality as a unified whole. Everything in the universe is believed to be formed from the same material.² There is no separation; there are no ultimate boundaries; each of us are like waves in a cosmic ocean. Annette Hollander, a leading New Ager, writes, "The more we can experience our interconnectedness (oneness) the less willing we will be to destroy each other and the world".³

BIBLICAL VIEW OF MONISM - The very thought of monism is contrary to the foundation of God as the Creator who has the ability to create a wondrous diversity of created things. Genesis 1:2 records that before God's creation "The earth was formless and empty."⁴ God spoke, and all that was spoken came forth (Gen 1). The New Age Movement teaches that the creation is the same as its Creator. The Bible teaches that no Creator is the same as His creation. God is distinct from the whole of creation.

- 2. The New Age Cult, by Walter Martin, p. 18 .
- 3. Confronting the New Age, by Douglas Groothius, p. 21
- 4. Confronting the New Age, by Douglas Groothius, p. 21 14

PANTHEISM – ALL IS ONE - Pantheism is a New Age doctrine believing God is not an individual being, but a force of infinite intelligence and consciousness. This force is found in all of creation from trees to humans. Since we are a part of that force, we too, are gods. Shirley MacLaine, a well-known New Age leader, says "I know that I exist, therefore I AM. I know the god-source exists, therefore IT IS. Since I am a part of the force, then I AM THAT I AM".⁵

BIBLICAL VIEW OF PANTHEISM - The Bible clearly shows that the one, true, Almighty God is an uncreated moral being. (Moses was confronted with this truth in front of the burning bush. God said "*I AM who I AM*" Ex. 3:14). Isaiah firmly declared in Isaiah 33:22, "for the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver." These truths uniquely designate God as a moral, personal, uncreated, and self-existent God. The New Age doctrine of pantheism teaches that self-fulfilled man can be as god.⁶ The Bible teaches that sinful man can be forgiven and accepted by a loving and all wise God.

5. Dancing in the Light, by Shirley MacLaine, p. 420

6. Confronting the New Age, by Douglas Groothius, p. 23

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TRANSFORMATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS - FALSE CONVERSION -

New Age believes that all humans have the universe inside and are walking microcosms. We carry the inner secrets to our own true nature. The key to reaching higher levels of energy and consciousness must be obtained by confronting the inner and outer worlds. Joseph Campbell said, "Heaven and Hell and all the gods are within us."⁷ The goal is to reach "superconsciousness" and to reach an infinite depth of full awareness of "the self."

BIBLICAL VIEW OF TRANSFORMATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS -

The New Age teaching is a counterfeit conversion at best. New Agers rely solely upon themselves to reach "the force" or the godhead. Jesus clearly stated in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, the life; no man comes to the Father except through Me." Jesus also said in John 3:3, "Most assuredly, I say unto you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Biblical reality indicates the only way to see the Kingdom of God is to experience a genuine spiritual conversion through faith in Jesus Christ.

7. When the World Will Be As One, by Tai Brooke, p. 41 16

RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM — ALL RELIGIONS ARE ONE -

Syncretism is the attempt to unify differing religious systems. New Age has mixed western occultism, eastern mysticism, neo-paganism, and human potential psychology together in an effort to demonstrate that all religions are one. New Age teachers even go as far as to say that even the deeper teachings of Christianity are in harmony with all other religions.

BIBLICAL VIEW OF RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM - The Bible declares there is only one true God and therefore only one true religion. A syncretism mindset perverts the uniqueness and identity of Jesus Christ and brings Him down to a level with all other so-called enlightened masters. Rev 17:14 calls Jesus "the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings." He is not just another god but the one true God. The Bible also clearly states that there is just one God and not many, as New Agers proclaim. "Hear Oh Israel the Lord thy God is one God" (Deut 6:4). **REINCARNATION** – Reincarnation refers to the cyclical evolution of a person's soul as it repeatedly passes from one body to another at death. This process continues until the soul reaches a state of perfection.⁸ The New Age Movement believes that this process of reincarnation brings final union with the god force. This cyclical rebirth continues under the laws of karma (what you sow you reap in like proportions). How many lifetimes this process takes is dependent upon the person's ability to replace his bad karma with good karma.

BIBLICAL VIEW OF REINCARNATION - The doctrine of reincarnation implies that we can become our own saviors and that Christ's death on the cross had no bearing on our eternal destiny. In Heb 9:27, there is a clear statement as to the amount of "cycles" we will experience, "and it is appointed for men to die once and then the judgment." The Bible teaches the futility of man to work out his own salvation. Salvation is a gift from God. "For by grace you are saved through faith; and not by yourselves; it is the gift of God; not by works lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8-9)

8 . The New Age Cult, by Walter Martin, p. 133 18

CREATE YOUR OWN REALITY - The phrase "create your own reality" is often taught in New Age circles as a basic premise. The idea is that we are not under any objective moral law. Rather, we all have different ways to realize our divine potential. And since "all is one," we can't slice up life into categories like good and evil. That is perceived as being too dualistic; we must move beyond good and evil in order to reach our full potential. Furthermore, New Agers believe God does not judge our sins, and therefore there is no need for forgiveness.⁹

BIBLICAL VIEW OF CREATING YOUR OWN REALITY - Biblical view of creating your own reality - New Age beliefs strip away our need for dependence upon a personal God. Reaching our full potential is impossible without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Likewise, true Christians submit to the moral laws of God and the teachings of the Bible. Anyone who believes otherwise is not abiding in the doctrine taught by Christ. Concerning this doctrine, II John 1:9 says, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son."

9. Confronting the New Age, by Douglas Groothius, p. 24

UNLIMITED HUMAN POTENTIAL - The New Age teaching of "god within us" causes New Agers ultimately to believe they are gods and have power over all things. New Agers teach that human potential is unlimited. Shirley MacLaine explained this thought by declaring "you are unlimited." This conviction desensitizes a person from seeing his own sinful condition and from any awareness of personal sin.

BIBLICAL VIEW OF UNLIMITED HUMAN POTENTIAL - The Bible has a completely different view of mankind's ability to reach his full potential without Christ.

"There is none who does good, no not one." Rom. 3:12 "Every man at his best state is altogether vanity (empty)." Ps. 39:5 "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Isa. 64:6

These scriptures show God's perspective of man without Christ as his Savior. True followers of Christ have been promised the strength and power to overcome all things, but this power is only available after one is converted from seeking his own ways to following Jesus. (Phil 4: 13)

10. Dancing in the Light, by Shirley MacLaine, p. 133

EVOLUTIONARY OPTIMISM - Although some New Age teachers aggressively promote the need to raise human consciousness in order to combat the impending catastrophe of the earth, most New Agers have a general optimistic outlook of the future. The New Age Movement is waking up the divine within to usher in a new world order. This utopia mentality envisions a one world government, global socialism, and a New Age religion that will soon take over planet earth and usher us into a new world order.

BIBLICAL VIEW OF EVOLUTIONARY OPTIMISM - Christians should be wary of all attempts by humanity to create its own heaven. Christians live in the anticipation that history will culminate in the literal, physical, and visible return of Jesus Christ in power and glory. It will not end in a New Age brought about by some grandiose elevation of human consciousness.¹¹

11. Confronting the New Age, by Douglas Groothius, p. 21

NEW AGE PRACTICES

The broad spectrum of New Age trends, groups, and beliefs make it difficult to accurately document all New Age practices. As previously mentioned, there are some 60 million people who dabble in some form of New Age practice ranging from peace marches, with a New Age message of change, to occult practices. Because of this, we will list only the major practices being used to usher in this "New Age."

1. Channeling – The practice of channeling is not new and can be found in the Old Testament of the Bible, described as consulting with mediums and spirits, or spiritism. This practice is conducted by willfully yielding to a spirit through placing yourself into a trance-like state. The purpose is to receive paranormal information from a spirit of the past. **2. Seances** - A seance is a gathering of people seeking communication with a deceased person usually in the form of channeling. A channeler willfully yields his spirit to the control of the spirit of the deceased in order to become a vehicle for that spirit to speak to the people in the gathering. Seances are usually done to reach deceased love ones or famous people.

3. Visualization – Visualization can be used as a creative tool for the mind. The Bible even encourages us to have a vision (Prov. 29: 18). This Biblical type of visualization is needed to perform successfully in life. New Agers instead practice visualization as "mind over matter," where your mental power actually becomes the god and source over all power. Also phrased as "guided imagery," the New Ager believes he can control all things in his life through visualization. **4. Meditation** - This ancient practice as taught by Hindus and Buddhists involves emptying the conscious mind in order to awaken the god consciousness within you. This is usually done by using a mantra (a repeated word or phrase). By concentrating and chanting a mantra word, your mind supposedly becomes attuned to what mystics call your higher self or cosmic consciousness.¹² This practice is in direct contradiction to prayer. Prayer is communication with God through Christ and not an emptying of the mind to reach a god from within.

5. Astral Travel - This experience is also known as an "out of the body" experience. Here the spiritual body is projected out of the physical body to encounter contact with higher beings and astral masters. Although there are documented occurrences of astral projection, most New Agers are unable to obtain this difficult and dangerous state.

12. Evangelizing the New Age, by Paul McGuire, p. 51

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6. Higher Guidance - "Higher guidance" is deemed crucial for the process of spiritual transformation from normal consciousness to cosmic consciousness. 13 There are many tools used to guide the New Ager to this realm. Such tools include: tarot cards, visualization, ouiji boards, astrology, and the like. These tools help guide the person to a place of spiritual enlightenment.

7. Astrology – Although most people think of astrology as a casual glance at their horoscope in the newspaper, the truth is this occult practice is a philosophy contradictory to God's Word. Simply stated, astrology is defined as "the study of life's reactions to planetary vibrations." This predictive art of divining the future is in direct violation of the Bible (Isaiah 47:13-14).

13. When the World Will Be As One, by Tai Brooke, p. 59 14. Llewellyn George, a noted Astrologist

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8. Crystals - New Age leaders believe crystals generate cosmic energy to bring about divine healing, higher consciousness, and super energizing powers. These "cure all" stones are becoming one of the most popular subjects in New Age conferences today. Crystals claim to restore the "flow of energy" in the human body. Crystals are being used for everything from warding off evil spirits to intensifying sexual experiences. This ancient practice as taught by Hindus and Buddhists involves emptying the conscious mind in order to awaken the god consciousness within you.

9. Holistic Health - There are many things in New Age medicine and holistic health that can benefit us physically, such as the emphasis on natural cures and preventative medicine. The Bible also talks about the benefits of a good attitude in bringing about good health (Prov. 14:30, 17:22, 16:24). These holistic practices, however, must be balanced with a Christian perspective. Our source of health should be a responsible maintenance of our bodies combined with a clear devotion and dependence upon Jesus Christ. We need to avoid any holistic health emphasis that incorporates the mystical or the obscure.

RELATING TO THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

In relating with the New Age, we must never forget we are in a spiritual battle (Eph. 6:12). When encountering a New Ager, there can be no substitute for prayer, knowledge, and proper use of the Word of God. Because of the spiritual strongholds holding onto most New Agers, we recommend the following steps to be taken:

1. Receive counsel — Before witnessing to New Agers, ask your Pastor or a church leader if you are sufficiently equipped for this type of encounter. If you are not ready, take someone with you who is experienced in sharing with New Agers.

2. Pray – Pray before encountering the person to whom God has led you. Continue to pray during your conversation, and pray after the meeting.

3. Love them — Whenever possible, be sure to openly communicate your love and spiritual concern for them. New Agers are sensitive to feelings and emotions. We must show them our love by demonstrating it in our actions.

4. Avoid attacking — Using criticism in your approach will show a lack of concern, maturity, and discernment to the New Age person. Attacking them will only produce a defensive person unwilling to hear what you have to say.

5. Prove the Bible's authenticity — Most New Agers accept the Bible to be a great philosophical book, but don't accept it as the infallible Word of God. You must set forth the reliability of the Bible in order to substantiate your claims. We recommend using the booklet entitle "Is the Bible the Word of God." This booklet is also available through Mannahouse.

6. Become More Equipped in Witnessing to New Agers – Read some of the recommended books on page 30 to increase your ability to lead those influenced by the New Age to Jesus.



7. Define the terminology being used — New Age adherents frequently use the same terms as Christians, but have different definitions for those words. There must be a clear understanding of the words and their definition in order to make progress.

8. Question, don't teach — The quickest way to turnoff a New Ager is to form a teacher/student role. We do want to communicate, not intimidate.

9. Compare New Age thought to Biblical reality — There are many inconsistencies throughout New Age thought. Once you gain the acceptance of the person with whom you are sharing, begin showing the contrast in a loving but truthful way.

10. Don't force the Gospel — The message of the cross is the power of God to salvation (Romans I : 16). Once they reach a place of openness and a willingness to hear, present the Gospel to them. Remember that God brings conviction and not us. We recommend that you use the booklet entitled, "Are you Going", which is also available through Mannahouse.

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CONCLUSION

The rapid growth of the New Age Movement clearly shows us people are truly spiritually hungry and desperate for answers. As a Church, we cannot sit back and wait for people to walk into the Church, but must go into the world and reach them.

As we continue to watch this movement make inroads into our politics, economy, classrooms, and business world, let us not forget the quote: **"All that is needed for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."**

For a more comprehensive study of the New Age Movement:

Confronting the New Age, by Douglas Groothius The New Age Cult, by Walter Martin Evangelizing the New Age, by Paul Mcguire When the World Will Be As One, by Tall Brooke Lord of the Air (Tales of a Modern Day Anti Christ), by Tal Brooke

CONCLUSION

Cosmic consciousness - A spiritual and mystical perception that all in the universe is one. To attain cosmic consciousness is to see the universe as God and God as the universe.

Mantra - A word of phrase that is chanted repeatedly in an effort to empty the mind and attain "cosmic consciousness."

Metaphysical -The understanding of the supernatural realm.

Microcosms - The repetition of a grand pattern on a smaller scale, and having within ourselves the replication of the universe.

Neo-paganism - A modern, anti-Christian view point.

Paranormal - Beyond or above normal human powers or senses.

Self-Actualization - A person's self view of reality as he desires to see it.

HOW TO BE A CHRISTIAN

In order to receive what Jesus Christ did for you when He died on the cross and rose again, you must willingly:

- **1.** Stop trusting in your own efforts to please God and begin to trust in what Christ has already done. Prov. 28:26, Prov. 3:5-6
- 2. Invite Him to come and live inside of you. Rev. 3:20
- 3. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins. I Jn. 1:9
- **4.** Ask Him to take His rightful place as Lord and God of your life. Phil. 2:11
- Desire to turn away from whatever the Bible says is sin. (This is only possible after Christ has come to live inside of us.) Acts 3: 19, Jn. 1:12

If you need help or desire additional information about the Christian faith, please contact us at the address written on the back cover.

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