

## NEW AGE MOVEMENT

**Overview:** New Age thought is a smorgasbord of spiritual and religious ideas, mainly from Eastern religions, that allow its followers to pick and choose from a wide variety of religious teachers and practices. It serves as one of the undergirding influences for many practices and teachings from medicine (some holistic health practitioners, Deepak Chopra), education (“values clarification”), politics (Robert Muller of the U.N., global government), ecology (the green movement, Earth day, animal rights), business (“Organizational Transformation”, Anthony Robbins), and religion (Unity School of Christianity). The New Age movement denies that a transcendent God created all things. Instead all the stuff of the universe is part of the Universal Mind; therefore as we learn to connect to force within us, the power of our mind will be able to exert tremendous power over our “reality”. We will be able to make our positive thoughts become reality in our physical health and to fulfill our dreams.

### **History:**

The term New Age comes from astrology, which predicts a coming age of peace and harmony. This new age is to be the “Aquarian age”, replacing the present Pisces age. According to astrologers every 2,000 years constitutes an age. Astrologers predict the age of Aquarius will be a time of Utopia.

The New Age movement has collected and absorbed the beliefs and practices of a wide variety of historical movements. Its basic beliefs come from Hinduism and Buddhism which were passed directly to the U.S. through a number of teachers, as well as indirectly through the nineteenth century movement of Transcendentalism of Whitman, Thoreau, and Emerson.

The New Age tendency toward channeling - contacting the spirits- came through the Fox sisters of Hydesville, New York who heard rapping in 1848, they claimed were from a murdered peddler who had been buried beneath their home. Other influences were Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) who taught about contacting “Ascended Masters”, Edgar Cayce (1877-1945), the “sleeping prophet”, and Jane Roberts (1929-1984), who channeled a “spirit entity” named Seth.

The New Age approach to the power of the mind with respect to healing came through Phineas P. Quimby, who helped spawn the Mind Science groups such as Christian Science (Mary Baker Eddy), Unity School of Christianity (Charles and Myrtle Fillmore), and the Church of Religious Science (Ernest Holmes).

The New Age concern for ecology was received through the Native American religions and through Rachel Carson's *The Silent Spring* (1962).

In recent years New Age has taken on a new look. In 1987 Shirley MacLaine was on the cover of Time Magazine representing the New Age Movement, yet now she resents being called a New Ager. But, even though she has disassociated herself from the term "New Age" she has not changed her views to any great degree, she prefers to say she is into spirituality. She has stopped being so controversial as she said in a 1994 interview, but it is only that many of their beliefs are now much more commonly held among the culture, such as reincarnation which according to a CNN poll in 1990 estimated that 35% of Americans believe in it.

One of the rising trends in New Age thought is Wicca, the religion of witchcraft. It is closely related to goddess worship and neopaganism. All of these groups hold to the divinity of nature and that spiritual power can be attained through the manipulation of these "natural forces". While Wicca originally attracted older adherents, it is quickly becoming a major attraction for young people. It promises power, mystery, self-gratification, and rebellion against Christianity.

Another recent development is the marriage between New Age thought and the UFO movement. Many channelers are channeling aliens from other galaxies and dimensions. They often tell of an impending dark time for earth, which will only be survived by those who align with the alien entities. They are generally considered to be Ascended Masters, or *bodhisattvas* (see Buddhism) who have come to enlighten and rescue the earth from the evils of the old paradigm, especially Christian beliefs.

### **Views of God:**

God is the Divine Oneness, the essential Reality, the Universal Mind, or Universal Self. They do not think of God in the Judeo-Christian concept of a personal being, but rather a monistic force or energy that flows through all things. But they do not see this energy as lifeless or void of all characteristics, but instead it is a Cosmic Mind or Consciousness.

All New Age practices are based on getting in touch with or manipulating the fundamental force. These practices are called by many different terms, such as psychic energy, consciousness, color, mind, light, vibration, vital energy, life force, *ch'i*, or aura.

### **Views of Humanity:**

If God is the Universal Self, then it follows that we are particularizations of that Universal Self.

### **Humanity's Problem:**

Humanities problem is a lack of perception to our true nature. More specifically we are ignorant of being unconditionally and permanently connected to God, the Universal Mind. During the "old age" of Pisces we relied on the dualistic view that we are unique and separate from the rest of nature. This must change and we must rid

ourselves of this illusion which Barbara Marx Hubbard, a leading New Age advocate calls our fatal flaw.

Coming to a new way of thinking is critical to New Agers. They believe that the Western, rational, linear, and separatist thinking has brought us science, which brought us technology, which brought us economic domination of a few, which has brought us to the brink of extinction through international strife, environmental disaster, and societal disharmony.

What we need is a new consciousness, an enlightened way of thinking, a paradigm shift in order to transform ourselves and the world. They believe the Western culture and religions are materialistic and have hidden the sense of the sacred, the alternative religions predominantly the religions of the East, can give us a better sense of the spiritual and sacred.

### **Views of Scripture:**

They don't have any specific scriptures

### **Views of Salvation:**

The ultimate goal is to relinquish all separation and differentiation from the Universal Self and be merged into the Oneness.

### **Approaching New Agers With The Gospel:**

- Acknowledge their search for spirituality:
- Be aware of the inherent contradiction in the New Age God.  
They often refer to the Universal Mind as being unconditionally loving. But they have mixed two kinds of language for God, one is impersonal (universal, infinite, unconditional) and the other is personal (mind, intelligence, love). By mixing the two they attempt to have the best of both without the negative of either: an impersonal God is universally accepting (thereby removing judgment), and a personal God can be caring and loving rather than cold, uncaring and unfeeling of an impersonal force.

## **Works Consulted**

Halverson, Dean C., The Compact Guide To World Religions, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1996

Nummela, Tom: Editor, One God Many Gods, St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1998