

THE “NEW AGE” MOVEMENT

On several occasions in the course of Acts, we see the enemy’s efforts – through counterfeits or other means – to oppose God’s work. A few examples may be called to mind: (1) Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3); (2) Israel’s history and rebellion as reviewed by Stephen, demonstrating their idolatry and hardening through their accepting the enemy’s counterfeits (ch. 7); (3) Simon the sorcerer’s subtle opposition (ch. 8); (4) the magician Bar-Jesus on the island of Cyprus (ch. 13); (5) the pagan crowds in Lycaonia, desirous to worship Paul and Barnabas (ch. 14); (6) the divining slave-girl at Philippi (ch. 16); (7) the sons of Sceva, trying to practice exorcism; (8) the pagan crowd of Diana worshippers, both in Ephesus (ch.19); (9) the superstitious people on Malta and (10) the ship dedicated to some of the “gods” (ch. 28). All these various elements of opposition, through acts that were but imitation or counterfeit in these stories recorded by Luke, also play a role in the new age movement which is invading the Christian profession in our day. Let us not forget that many of its components come from paganism and have been introduced into the professing Church at various points in the past. The way things happen today may be different in approach and in organisation, but the enemy’s basic principles and tactics remain the same (cf. 1 Jn. 2:15-17; 4:1, 3). Let us have a brief look at some of them.

Introducing the Old as a New Movement

A rapid growing global movement today, sometimes adopting the name of *Aquarius* as its astrological identity, is preparing the coming of a new world-order and/or leader. In these developments, we may see the preparations for the coming of the Antichrist – under different names or guises – in anticipation of the fulfilment of biblical prophecy. The New Age movement is an organized system of deception, led by Satan’s mastermind, often a mixture of truth and error. This is again the case as it is with all the works of the devil, a murderer from the beginning, a liar and the father of the lies (Jn. 8:44). It presents a mixture of old religious ideology and practices that have kept people from the truth of the gospel in many parts of the earth. On the other hand, the biblical promises of a coming “new age” refer to the future reign of our Lord Jesus over this earth, which will be introduced after a period of dreadful acts of judgment (Rev. 6-20). Despite his hostility against God and His people, trying to counterfeit God’s activity everywhere, the enemy’s efforts will, ultimately, only lead to the realization of God’s plans for this earth! In a short analysis like this, it is impossible to cover all the aspects of this movement. In the last few decades thousands of books have been published in North America, Europe, and throughout the world, in which this movement is presented, promoted, discussed or opposed.

The Origins of the New Age Movement

PAGANISM. Some of the roots of the so-called new age are very old and may be traced back to the Mother Earth concept of the Greeks and other pagans, civilised or uncivilized. A gifted philosopher, Aristotle, brought a number of diverse elements – some of which he adopted from other religions – together in his cosmology. His impact has been tremendous in various periods of Church history, as has been the case with the influence of other pagan philosophers.

GNOSTICISM. At the beginning of Church history, this strong and seductive movement (inauguration rites, claiming “higher” or “secret” knowledge) was exposed and refuted by the teachings of the New Testament, by John’s writings in particular, and also by Paul in several of his epistles. Gnostic doctrines include the denial of creation as taught in the Scriptures and the refusal of the biblical concept of sin and salvation. This movement was “officially” conquered by the Church in the 5th century, but it continued to exist through secret followers and resurfaced openly in the

Renaissance and in the Jewish Cabala, as well as in our day (example: *the Da Vinci Code*).

PANTHEIST MYSTICISM. The ideas of “god-consciousness” and of a “higher spirituality” (called *spiritual pride* in the Bible) were common elements in the older “philosophies” of freemasonry, astrology and alchemy. Today, these same influences are added to a mixture of paganism that is adopted in the “new age” movement, like Zen-Buddhism, Taoism, or Hinduism. So, instead of being new, this movement is partly old-time pantheism. C.S. Lewis used to call it “ancient damned nonsense.” It may be considered remarkable that atheism, which used to be very acceptable to rationalistic scientists, does not have much appeal to modern man. However, instead of turning from atheism and evolutionism to the true and living God, the gods of pantheism have become ever more popular. The “new age” needs them to achieve its purposes in filling atheism’s “vacuum.”

Completing the Picture: Links with Humanism and Gnosticism

Besides taking into consideration various old roots, the present day “new age” movement cannot be understood without the influences of great, modern humanistic philosophies (the father of modern philosophy, Immanuel Kant), existentialism (Kierkegaard), dialectic materialism (Hegel) and post-modernism. Religious leaders have also shared in its present ideological formation, as for instance Teilhard de Chardin, the father of “theistic evolutionism,” with ideas like “God emerged from matter,” “the cosmic Christ,” and total transformation of matter into “god” or “pure spirit.” These blasphemous ideas, with the “cover” of Christianity, are mixed together with humanistic modern philosophies, as well as with the Gnostic, pantheistic and mystical “philosophies” of the past. What is *new* in today’s “new age” movement is *the scientific guise* in which “religious” systems and pagan philosophies have been, and are being, introduced into the modern communities of the western world. It is a new combination of modern scientism and ancient paganism.

Two Main Streams in the New Age Movement

Because of the limited size of this study, an incomplete outline can be sketched without giving definitions, explanations or proofs. For further documentation the reader may refer to the materials mentioned at the end of this review.

1. Scientific Theories (so-called)

Physicist Fritjof Capra (USA) suggests a new paradigm, a turning point in science. Although he does not use expressions like “New Age” or “Aquarius,” he is one of the “high priests” of this movement. He speaks of the necessity of a new, more “spiritual” approach to science, in harmony with mysticism: a kind of marriage between “science” and “mysticism.” Along similar lines, the Nobel Prize winning Prigogine (Europe) has developed a theory to “prove” that evolution is a fact, despite the implications of the laws of thermodynamics. According to these scientists, the existing “energy” (different names are being used) in the cosmos is linked with all “creatures” (this interconnectedness resembles the biblical concept, but erases the distinction that exists between the Creator and His creation). Added to this is the idea of fluctuations in the evolutionary process, which is also supposed to occur in the near future (“quantum leap in consciousness”).

2. The Esoteric or Astrological Background

The esoteric background of the “new age” has to do with something affecting the human mind. New-agers teach that an “altered state of consciousness” (ASC) is necessary to tap into the universal resources of “energy” – whether through yoga, “healings,” transformation, mystical experiences, (transcendental) meditation, or one of the other procedures. Approximately 150 different methods are said to be practised today in order to help people reach this ASC. Many procedures and methods, familiar in mysticism, occultism and Eastern religions, are also used in the New Age movement – often while using different terms.

Some Distinctives of the New Age Movement

1. **ALL IS ONE.** Everything depends on everything and is related to everything. There are no absolutes! Therefore, there are no essential differences or distinctions, only appearances of difference. God and Satan, good and evil, are the same; “god” is good and evil at the same time. What blasphemous concepts! Compare this with dialectic materialism where black becomes white and vice versa: what is good for you may be bad for me. We should realize that this relatively new philosophy is as old as Hinduism and other eastern religions.
2. **ALL IS “GOD.”** Creation and “creator” are one and the same. This is pure pantheism: there is no personal, transcendental God, as we Christians know Him to be: the One who is also omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. New-agers speak about “the force”: “may the force be with you.” To them, the universe is one big unity: no definite distinctions, although there are gradations or different levels in “godhood” (the term “godhead” is avoided here on purpose). Although pantheists maintain that everything which exists is “god,” and “god” is everything, they also teach that there are various upward or downward phases or levels of “godhood” (material substance, plants, animal kingdom and human beings; where humans may evolve or devolve). In general, only upward evolution is mentioned, with the ultimate possibility of being completely united with the supreme “godhead” and reaching the state of nirvana. Today, the ultimate reality is “spiritual.” This fits in with the next points.
3. **HUMANITY.** Man is “god”; “god” dwells within you and you are the “u-niverse.” Compare this with the first distinctive. The earth is a living organism which brings forth human beings through a long process of evolution, and so we are an extension of “Mother earth,” “we are all one.” However, in the NAM the emphasis is put on “spiritual” aspects, giving primacy of mind over matter. We have to learn, they say, “to tap the latent potential of the human mind, to find the god within us.” This idea is basically a humanistic form of philosophy, according to which man is autonomous and thus his own “god”; it also fits in with the lie that man’s basic problem is not sin, but ignorance (cf. Gen. 3:5b).
4. **A CHANGE OF CONSCIOUSNESS** (or awareness). This is necessary to obtain a true “divine” identity. Compare this with the lie of Genesis 3, “You will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Around 150 different methods are in vogue to change this state of awareness and this is actually taking away a God-given protection against demonic influences. To mention a few: (self-) hypnosis, visualising, centering, focusing or meditation, channelling; biofeedback; imposing of hands, use of drugs, sensitivity training, healing, massage, “transformation,” etc. Often this ASC is promoted under slogans which encourage people to reach their “higher self,” to develop their self-potential which, in this context, implies coming into contact with demons who, in a subtle way, will take over control.
5. **HOLISTIC PRINCIPLES.** The following is an example of one of the serpent’s lies, carefully mixed with “truth.” Holistic healers stress the unity of spirit, mind and body (which is a biblical concept). Then they link this with the cosmos, as if this human “unit” should be in harmony with, and at the same time a reflection of, the universe (which is an un-biblical concept). This is just one example of Satan’s many strategies to confound and control.
6. **COSMIC EVOLUTIONISTIC PRINCIPLE.** Progress, optimism, a “great future”; even through death, people will come back on a higher level (reincarnation). The possibility of degradation (contrast to evolution) is carefully avoided in the pantheistic propaganda. Therefore, they like to speak of the need to “plug into god’s good side” (see also principles number 3 and 4).

Notice what some of the implications of the above principles 1-4 are: human life is completely bound up with the cosmos and therefore a state of consciousness of this “fact” must be developed to become united with the “godhead.” This “unity” between man and cosmos explains the desired connection between “science” and mysticism (the two “mainstreams”). Example: “punctuated” evolution is consistent with the ideas of Taoism, Buddhism, or Confucianism.

New Age Popular Strategies

The enemy is very subtle and adapts his methods to new situations, in order to continue his opposition against God's interests and truth.

1. **SUCCESS.** People are being promised success when they accept "new age" philosophy and are ready to use (some of) its methods. Some slogans: "think and grow rich"; "whatever the human mind can believe, the human mind can achieve." Miracles are possible, provided that you learn to get access to the potential of the human mind, etc. New age consultants have a fast growing influence in big companies, in education, in governments and in the military.
2. **TRUTH MIXED WITH ERROR.** The above point 5 of the "distinctives" gave an example of this "mixing" of what is right with what is wrong. People will do almost anything to obtain or maintain good health. This *legitimate* need is used to introduce people to popular (but ultimately harmful) new age healing methods, even through seminars in churches.
3. **THE GUISE OF SCIENCE.** Science is like a modern god or "a holy cow"; this is certainly true for evolutionism. People bow to it without hesitation or reservation. Eastern religions, spiritism and occultism are using the guise of science to "sell" things which people never would "buy" if they were told that these are linked to magic, witchcraft or demonism. Crystals and horoscopes are sold under the pretext of science but they are really a pseudo-science.
4. **SELF.** People are told that all the resources they need to tap into lie within themselves. They have to be enlightened as to their self-potential. This is one of the subtle ways they are put into contact with their so-called "higher self," which really means with demons!
5. **ENTERTAINMENT.** There is no question about the impact "new age" has in using entertainment, whether music, games, movies, or other forms of "fun." People are indoctrinated in a light-hearted way by Eastern mysticism and blasphemous parodies of Christ and Christianity. Items that are considered "just a game" (Ouija-board, Dungeons and Dragons) introduce them into the world of the occult. It is often through "music" that they reach an altered state of consciousness and, in this unsuspected way, come under the leadership of demons. In this manner, many professing and perhaps even born-again Christians get into the occult, before they realize it (if they ever do).
6. **PLAY WITH WORDS.** Instead of mediums, new-agers speak of channelers. Instead of witchcraft, they say that people are speaking to the dead. Instead of demons, they talk about ghosts, entities, spiritual guides, inner angels (for children) or ascended masters. It sounds nice: but, unless it is fake, real existing evil spirits are involved, even when they say that these are "good" spirits.
7. **ADAPT TO PEOPLE'S INTERESTS.** If people are interested in health, there is a complete range of methods available. The same is true in relation to science, religion, politics or whatever interests people may have. Thus, in the "new age" movement, there are many ways to reach "the divine." Whatever is good for you, will lead you to "salvation." There are as many ways to reach "god" as there are interests among people. The methods presented "seem to work," in general, although not always, but the question arises: "what is the ultimate price?" A healed body ... but a tormented spirit! Mind-expending techniques, "finding your identity" and "help" offered in many different ways ... in exchange for bondage to Satan. Is that a fair deal?

Some of Satan's Counterfeits

We know that Satan is God's counterfeiter (please, read 2 Cor. 10-11). Three examples are given:

1. *A new "Christ" or "Messiah."* Pantheism prepares people to look for miracles and so, in God's governmental ways, they will get them (2 Th. 2:8). New-agers speak about "Jesus," but this is *not* the Jesus/Christ/Messiah of the Bible.

2. *A new (counterfeit) religion.* The “new age” is, in many ways, a counterfeit of biblical Christianity: mantras (prayers), rebirthing (born-again), reincarnation (resurrection) and a trinity of evil (Rev. 12-13), in contrast to the divine Trinity. And so, new-agers have 10 new commandments as a counterfeit of the Ten Commandments of Bible. All this is opposition of biblical concepts, by way of imitation (cf. 2 Tim. 3:8; 4:3-4).
3. *A new government.* New-agers are looking for a worldwide economic system, with the power to achieve its goals (Dan. 2-7; Rev. 13, 17-18). This is in imitation of Christ’s coming millennial rule of the world.

Some Real Dangers to Biblical Christianity

The New Age movement (NAM) is a real threat to biblical Christianity. This is because of the following reasons:

1. The NAM wants to eliminate the concept of the God of the Bible from the minds of everyone, especially children.
2. The NAM wishes to bring about a world-government which is in line with its belief that all is one (de facto agreement with socialism and communism).
3. The NAM tries to infiltrate churches, including Bible-believing churches. One of the most subtle and dangerous things that it does is to use biblical terms, but with a non-biblical or even anti-biblical meaning, in order to change or transform professing Christians. The names “Jesus” and “Christ” are being used in an esoteric way, together with names such as Maitreia, Buddha, etc.
4. The NAM promotes the use of hypnotism, yoga, meditation, healing and glossolalia (various forms of so-called speaking in tongues). This is infiltrating a great number of churches and with an alarming speed of “success.”
5. The NAM attempts to influence Christian education, working together with secular humanism to “improve one’s self-image,” “reach one’s human potential,” encourage “positive thinking” and attain a “spiritual uplift.” The use of some of the typical New Age key-expressions and practices of “self-improvement,” “self-realization” (which presupposes that we are masters of our own lives) and “self-help” (which excludes dependence on God) show how the movement has actually progressed.
6. The NAM promotes preoccupation with one’s own self, introducing a “higher self,” called god-consciousness. Satan, working as an “angel of light,” is using biblical concepts or expressions but twisting the truth of the Bible. He has a lot of success with this method because “it works” and appeals to pragmatic North-Americans.
7. The NAM rejects *accountability* to the God of the Bible and attacks the inerrancy of Scripture as if it is a religious document of the same order as documents of various world religions. The battle about the theory of evolution continues to be at the heart of the New Age movement.

Influences and Effects of the New Age Movement

It will only be possible to mention some areas of the NAM’s influence. We should realize, however, that it penetrates all of society as follows:

1. Education (special programs for young children and evening courses for adults), plays, games and toys push the NAM agenda;
2. The arts and entertainment (music, “automatic writing” and painters or other artists working in a trance) carry NAM themes and are produced in their state of altered consciousness;
3. Special radio and television programs are designed to promote new age;

4. Politics (the new world order; certain forms of feminism, some leaders in “Greenpeace”) are driven by their ideology;
5. In business courses in New Age are made compulsory for staff or salesmen;
6. People in governments, police-forces and in the army are indoctrinated (on different levels) with NAM concepts;
7. Churches are infected with systematic forms of infiltration and liberal theology (theistic evolution, dialogue with world religions, criticism of the Bible and liberation theology);
8. Sciences adopt mystical philosophies and abandon absolute values in physics, mathematics and biology;
9. Psychology, medicine and hospital settings have become frontlines in the battle of this false ideology and are probably the area of greatest success for the NAM.
10. These influences and effects can be seen in various methods being used in the context of today’s Christianity (in 2007), sometimes under the pretext of sharing the gospel: witchcraft as in Harry Potter books; yoga and yoga for kids (pagan religious practices); healing and practicing Reiki (wizardry); Feng Shui (occultic lay lines and earth magic); walking the Labyrinth (Celtic paganism); contemplative prayer (or Transcendental Meditation - TM); Tai Chi and other forms of “Christian” martial arts (eastern mysticism, tapping into the “chi”); Liturgy (vain repetitions); candles, icons and incense (items to help focus the will, a.k.a. witchcraft); worship of saints, mother Mary and of angels (other gods, idol worship).

A Few Bible Passages about Satan’s Strategy

Let us carefully consider Genesis 3, since it lays out the pattern for the “New Age” as presented by the father of the lie and the murderer from the beginning (Jn. 8:44). In this context, Genesis 3:3-5 is summarized as follows:

1. A clever mixing of truth and error, which is characteristic of “the lie”;
2. A counterfeit “knowledge” in various systems or contexts as in Gnosticism and some initiation-rites;
3. A delusion, contradicting God; Satan is a master of deception;
4. The absence of a personal relationship with the true and living God; a relationship which is a biblical concept. A Satanic rebellion is offered instead: “y o u will be like Gods”;
5. A lie: “Y o u surely shall not die” (which introduces the concept of reincarnation);
6. A half-truth: “Y o u will know good and evil.” This implies that there are no absolute values (cf. humanism, dialectic materialism) but this “knowledge” comes without the power to do “good” or to refuse “evil” (cf. Mt. 6:22-23; Jn. 8:31-36; 2 Th. 2; 2 Tim. 3; Jude 3; Isa. 5:20).

Causes and Religious Characteristics of New Age Movement

The Western world is in crisis (“one world or not a world at all”) with the threat of world catastrophes, increasing pollution, weapons build-up, and so on. The loss of absolute values and the rejection of biblical Christianity have created a vacuum. The enemy tries to “fill” this vacuum, more and more, with occult ideas and practices and with alternate religions and philosophies. Ultimately, the devil wants the true God be replaced by Satan himself. And so he leads people to believe that all world religions lead to salvation and that people can believe as they please. This implies a rejection of the exclusiveness of Christianity, leading to syncretism and ultimately to a “one-world-religion.” An example of this spreading deception is “World-prayer” or the “world-day of prayer.” In humanism, man is considered to be autonomous and not in need of a supreme God but being “god” himself. And so, secular humanism becomes, more and more, a religion. A

few expressions or examples of this religious character of the New Age movement are: “new spirituality,” syncretism (see above), international peace movement, the World Council of Churches, international and interconfessional days of prayer for peace, meditation techniques, feminist theology, rapid growth of Charismatic movements and of (pseudo) religion, even in the former Soviet Union.

Concluding Remarks about “New Age”

The picture the Bible gives of the future world-leader makes it clear that he will unite in himself political, economic and religious powers, together with occult and psychological abilities (Dan. 9:26-27, 11:36-45; 2 Th. 2:3-12; Rev. 13). Many will be led astray, convinced that they are following the truth (“a way that seems right, but its end is the way to death” Prov. 14:12 ESV), thinking that “they see,” but in reality they are blinded by new age influences. The features of the New Age movement, briefly sketched above, fall in line with this “picture.” This fact, among other things, shows that we are living in the end times, close to the fulfilment of the biblical prophecies. This development puts the challenge before the true Christian, *not* to be deceived (2 Th. 2:3; cf. the warnings in Rom. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:18 and 2 Cor. 11:3). And so we need to ask ourselves whether we are really filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18), satisfied with what the Lord gives us, and nourishing our souls on the Word of God. Do others see in us, in our behaviour and in our lifestyle, that we have no need of the things the “new age” offers? This was certainly true of the early Christians, “... y o u turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven” (1 Th. 1:9-10).

Bibliography on “New Age” Issues

General reading:

- “Satan’s Evangelistic Strategy for this New Age,” Erwin W. Lutzer and John F. DeVries, 1989, Victor Books;
- “Unmasking the New Age,” Douglas R. Groothuis, 1986, IVP;
- “Confronting the New Age,” same author, 1988, IVP;
- “The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow,” C. Cumbey, 1983;
- “Alien Intrusion,” Gary Bates, 2004, Master Books.

Science and pantheism:

- “The God who is real,” Henry Morris, 1988, Baker Books;

Medicine:

- “New Age Medicine,” Reisser & Weldon, 1987, IVP;

Psychology:

- “America the Sorcerer’s New Apprentice,” Hunt & McMahon 1988, TBC.

Many more books could be mentioned, but these are reliable, comprehensive and well documented, covering almost all of the points discussed. This study has been adapted from research done in 1989 at a time when, in the USA alone, more than 900 weekly NAM publications were being produced and about 10,000 New Age groups organised into “networks,” were already in existence!

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