

## Christian Outreach and World Religions New Age



### The Modern New Age Context

1. A 1990 CNN poll estimated that 35% of all American believed in reincarnation.
2. This means that some 35-40 million people in the U.S. believe in one of the central tenets of the New Age.
3. The term “New Age” comes from an astrological phenomenon. Approximately every 2,000 years the astral formations of the Zodiac shift positions in relation to the earth. The old age under Pisces is shifting to the new age of Aquarius.

### The Historical Roots of the New Age Movement

1. Its basic beliefs come from Hinduism and Buddhism. These beliefs came directly from Eastern teachers and were passed indirectly through the Transcendentalism of Whitman, Thoreau, and Emerson.
2. Groups and Personalities: Fox sisters (1848) channeling; Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891) co-founder of the Theosophical Society in 1875; 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), the Church of Religious Science (Ernest Holmes).
3. Modern Personalities and Trends: Deepak Chopra and self- improvement/health; guided imagery; values clarification; globalism; Fritjof Capra and *The Tao of Physics*; transpersonal psychology; the Green movement; deep ecology; Transformational Technologies; Anthony Robbins; Wayne Dyer.
4. More recently new agers have disassociated themselves from the idea of “New Age” and prefer to say they are into “spirituality.”
5. A rising trend in the New Age movement is witchcraft (Wicca). It is closely related to goddess worship and neopaganism. These groups hold to the divinity of nature and that spiritual power is available to those who properly manipulate these “natural forces.”
6. Another strain is associated with UFOs. They claim to be able to channel the ideas of aliens from other galaxies and dimensions. These aliens might be considered Ascended Masters who have come to enlighten and rescue the earth from the evils of the old paradigm, especially Christian beliefs.

### Core Beliefs of the New Age Movement

1. Humanity’s fundamental problem is that of perception. We have forgotten that we are unconditionally connected to and emanated from God, which is Universal Mind. Under the old age we relied on the dualistic way of thinking that humankind is unique and separate from the rest of nature. Western, rational, linear, and separatistic thinking, has brought us science, technology, and economic dominion by a few. We are on the brink of international strife, environmental disaster, and societal disharmony.
2. God is not a personal, holy Being. *Monism* and *pantheism* best describe God. God is one in the sense of being a oneness without duality or differentiation. There is no separation within God. It is “beyond” all distinctions including persons and good and evil. This oneness is a force or energy. It is the Cosmic Mind or the Universal Self. The divine energy flows within and beneath all things.
3. Humans are unconditionally connected to the Universal Self. We cannot sever this relationship. We can be ignorant of it. The goal of Yoga, for example, is to experience Oneness-- and interconnectedness with all things.
4. The mind is the center of activity. Our minds are able to exert tremendous power over “reality.”
5. The immediate goal is the perfection of our ability to love. Reincarnation permits us to learn from lifetime to lifetime.
6. The means often involve spiritual guidance from many possible sources: Ascended Masters, disembodied spirits, UFOs, the spirits of animals, and angels.

7. The ultimate goal is Oneness that is beyond all separation and differentiation, to relinquish all attachments and identification with the individual self.

#### Common Arguments and Objections

1. *Christians are so judgmental. I want to be part of something that is loving and tolerant to all.* New Ager may cite Jesus' command not to judge (Matthew 7.1-5). This however must be interpreted with in the New Testament context such as John 7.24, "Stop judging by mere appearances and make a right judgment." What they mean by "love" ignores the existence of evil. True love comes from God, who distinguishes good from evil. True love must not tolerate evil.
2. *The book of Genesis teaches that humanity is separate from nature and encourages people to exploit nature.* Scripture also says that Adam tended the garden. Exploitation came with the fall into sin. Now even the natural world cries out for redemption (Romans 8.21). Stewardship demands that we care for God's creation. Practically the environmental record of Christian cultures is much better than non-Christian cultures such as India, China or the Soviet Union.
3. *How can Christians believe that God damns some people to hell for their sins?* We condemn ourselves. "Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil" (John 3.19). The parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates God's desire for salvation (Luke 15.11-24). There is a distinction between good and evil. "Judgment" is making a distinction. Without it "Oneness" would have to include murder, rape, environmental destruction, manipulation, etc. This position not only denies the nature of God, but it underestimates the seriousness of sin. If God is a person, our sins are personal affronts to Him. Finally, you will notice that the New Ager has no right to judge anything anyway since they believe is total Oneness. How can a New Ager judge that God is wrong for judging. That's making a distinction! Unfortunately they probably haven't thought this out to its absurd conclusion.

#### Helps For Witnessing

1. Acknowledge their search for spirituality.
2. Work toward the primary issues: Don't get off track concerning yoga, crystals, martial arts, channeling etc. Talk about the nature of God. Is He personal or not? Do good and evil exist?
3. Concerning reincarnation: Show that this is an attempt to overcome moral imperfection. This is impossible because our greatest imperfection is sin against God. Only God, the offended One has the power to forgive.

Most of the information for these Bible studies has been drawn from *The Compact Guide to World Religions* by Dean C. Halverson, Bethany House Publishers, 1996.