Christ in a New Age

In April of 1982 a full-page ad appeared in the *Dallas Morning News* and other major newspapers around the world. The ad headline read “The Christ Is Now Here.” Notice the term *The Christ*. This is a direct reference to a coming “Messiah” who is expected to usher in a New Age of peace and unity. The term New Age refers to “a time of transformation, a time that will bring great change.”

The change that is to come (which many believe is already here) will be a renewed emphasis on the self and self-discovery. This self-discovery is rooted in paganism, witchcraft, and Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

The New Age Movement has become an umbrella term for the “rising interest in the occult in our day.” Within occult circles the Movement is perhaps better known as the Aquarian Age, the Human Potential Movement, the Holistic Health Movement, or simply Cosmic Humanism. In all of these systems, human beings are seen as free to do their own thing without any accountability to anyone or anything beyond themselves.

In the occult world it is a common belief that there are twelve ages in evolutionary time and that each age lasts approximately two thousand years. Astrologers believe that the current age of Pisces will phase out of existence as we near the year 2000, and the New Age of Aquarius will take its place.

During this time of change and spiritual deception, a growing number of people are embracing New Age practices. About 67 percent of American adults claim to have had a psychic experience. Twenty- five percent of the population believe in reincarnation and among college students that percentage rises to thirty. Forty-two percent of American adults believe that

they have been in contact with individuals who have died. One survey stated that (1) 67 percent of American adults regularly read their astrological forecast and (2) school childrens' belief in astrology is growing dramatically from 40 percent in 1978 to 59 percent in 1984.

Male vs. Female Energies

According to occult thought, the Piscean Age has as its foundation the male-centered energies that characterize Christianity. The Aquarian Age, on the other hand, is an attempt to bring balance back into the evolutionary process by introducing female energies into our understanding. Those who have embraced this new-age understanding of humanity believe that all of the problems that man faces are a direct result of Christianity and its perceived male- centered belief system.

Therefore, a change in man's thinking must occur to bring about a more equal system that will allow feminine energies to govern humanity. This female-centered system will be based on intuition and experience rather than logic and rational thought, the latter being seen as male characteristics.

The Bible teaches us that human beings, both male and female, are accountable to the God of creation and are equal in His sight (Gal. 3:28). We are not divine beings who are simply ignorant of our god- like state (Ps. 100:3).

Back to the Future

The past fifty years have given rise to Secular Humanism, the notion that "man and the rest of the material universe are all there is and that there is no supernatural realm and certainly no God." This idea fostered the view that man is only accountable to himself. However, Secular Humanism offers little or no hope to humanity and fails to provide any answers concerning the possibility of human existence after death.

Because Secular Humanism cannot answer man's spiritual questions, many people consider it to be an inadequate answer for individuals seeking wholeness in body, mind,and spirit. Thus even though Secular Humanism has largely replaced Christianity as the dominant religious and philosophical system in the West and established itself as a more "tolerant" way, it cannot answer man's deep questions about himself and his future.

New Age occultism seemingly had the answer. It allowed man to maintain his evolutionary prominence and regain the lost "spirituality" he had previously placed at the altar of humanism. The New Age Movement has permitted man to move toward an evolutionary future in which he becomes an autonomous god who is answerable to no one but himself.

In contrast, the Bible clearly teaches that man is finite and limited in his knowledge of himself and his universe. Isaiah 55:8-9 clearly indicates God's perspective of man's inability to achieve divinity:

> *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,*
> *Neither are your ways My ways," declares the Lord.*
> *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,*
> *So are My ways higher than your ways,*
> *And My thoughts than your thoughts."*

Likewise, the Scripture identifies the attributes of God as being all-knowing (Matt. 19:26), all-powerful (Rev. 19:6), holy (Rev. 4:8), eternal (Ps.90:2), and loving (1 John 4:16). Man obviously misses the mark on all the above qualities, and it becomes quite apparent that he really is less than divine.

New Possibilities or New Age Lies

The New Age offers man the same deal the serpent offered Eve in the garden. If you eat of this fruit (in this case the idea that you are divine), you will become like God—knowing good

from evil. All you need to do is deepen your awareness of this new reality by becoming more open to the Christ within.

The occult world teaches that man is a spiritual being and that God, as an energy force, is inherently within all mankind. Therefore, there has never really been a separation or estrangement, only a belief in one. The New Ager believes that all of life is connected and a part of the whole. Oneness is a goal to be achieved. Man and God are one.

New Age philosopher Benjamin Creme, in his book *The Reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of Wisdom*, points out that "in a sense there is no such thing as God, God does not exist. And in another sense, there is nothing else but God: only God exists. . . . All is God. And because all is God, there is no God."

Confused? You should be! In other words, God is impersonal. Creme is saying that God is not a person, but that He is an energy that is in all things; therefore, you are divine, along with the rest of creation.

The Scripture, however, is clear in its teaching that God is a personal being and distinct from His creation. God, the Father, has a personal nature. For example, God has a will (Matt. 6:10 and 1 John 2:17), God knows (2 Tim. 2:19), God plans (Eph. 1:11), and God communicates (Ex. 3:13 14). God is distinct or separate from the world, but He is actively involved with His creation (Heb. 11:3; Col. 1:17; Ps. 113:5-6; Isa. 57:15).

Jesus: The Way, or the Way-shower?

For the New Ager, Jesus is one of many Christs who appear in a given age to direct humanity toward the divine—in effect, to show the way to divinity. Jesus was a man who by virtue of his working through the spiritual road-blocks of his life gained the highest evolutionary level that man can achieve and was

given the office of “Christ.”

Scripture, however, does not allow for such a view. Nor did Jesus consider Himself one of many Christs who would come to point man toward his own personal divinity. John 14:6 is clear in its meaning: there is only one way to the Father and that way is by accepting Jesus as Who He claimed to be, the God-man, the only begotten Son of God. He is not simply one who shows the way, but **is** The Way.

Not only did Jesus confess His deity (Matt. 22:41-45; 26:61-64; Jn. 10:30-33), but His Father likewise acknowledged His deity (Heb. 1:5-8). Jesus is the Word (John 1:1); He is the first born of all creation (Col. 1:15), and the gate by which we must enter for salvation (John. 10:7 9).

Within the New Age belief system, Lucifer is not seen as an evil personality but is looked upon as the angel of man’s inner evolution. He opened the doorway to man’s recognition of himself as god.

In his book *Reflections On The Christ*, David Spangler says that “Lucifer is literally the angel of experience. Lucifer, then, is neither good or bad in his true essence. He is completely neutral. He is an agent of God’s love acting through evolution.” So Lucifer is a positive influence on man who desires the best for humanity and does not embody evil in any form.

Spangler goes on to say, “Lucifer comes to give us the final gift of wholeness. If we accept it then he is free and we are free. That is the Luciferic initiation. It is one that many people now…will be facing, for it is an initiation into the New Age.”

The Scriptures do not allow for such a view. Jesus is the deliverer, Lucifer is the deceiver (John 8:44). Jesus is the savior, Lucifer is the accuser (Rev. 12:10). The “initiation” that man must receive is in reality a free gift from God (John

10:7-11). It is not a mystical experience from this world that leads to spiritual death but a gift to be appropriated that leads to eternal life.

Salvation for a New Age

At-one-ment, or absorption into the One energy that is God, is a prominently held view of most New Agers' understanding of salvation. It is the unfolding of one's consciousness to the point that the "True Self," the divine nature, is realized. As a flower unfolds petal by petal, so too does spiritual evolution unfold, revealing the deeper realms of God-consciousness.

In New Age thinking, salvation is "the gaining of enlightenment." It is a state of consciousness in which the person's separation from other humans is transcended and unity is achieved. It is the absorption of the one into the all. Individuals lose their distinctive personality and become one with the impersonal energy they believe to be God.

Christianity teaches that humans are finite beings who only become whole, in the biblical sense, when they receive God's spirit (Tit. 3:5; 1 John. 5:11). Therefore, true spirituality results from an act; it is not simply a part of human nature (1 John. 1:8-9, Rom. 10:8-9).

Education and New Age Humanism

We said earlier that Secular Humanism lost a lot of its popularity and power because it wasn't satisfying. It didn't adequately meet man's needs or fulfill his spiritual yearnings, especially his concerns about life after death. Still the humanist philosophy is a continued threat to the Judeo-Christian worldview, but now the dominant threat from humanism is New Age Humanism a marriage of New Age spirituality with Humanism's man-centered thought system.

Humanism was and is a real threat to our Christian heritage, but the Eastern philosophical ideas found in New Age thought are even more dangerous to our way of life. Bringing the two systems together into New Age Humanism is more deadly still because in this new synthesis is both a seductive, false religious system and an agenda-driven philosophical system. Inherent in New Age Humanism is an evangelistic zeal to convert (or subvert) the opposition, and gaining influence on the young is a primary goal. One method is getting control of our educational program.

For example, in the early eighties, *Instructor* magazine, a publication for teachers, carried an article entitled, "Your Kids are Psychic! But they may never know it without your help." The article says that "teachers in particular are in a position to play an exciting role in the psychic development of children." The article goes on to identify psychic ability as the practice of telepathy, clairvoyance, and other psycho-technologies.

Another example of the Eastern influence on education is the teaching of the late Dr. Beverly Galyean. Her primary premise is as follows:

> *In essence we are not individuals but part of the universal consciousness [which is God]. Realizing this essential unity, and experiencing oneself as part of it, is a major goal for a child's education. Because each person is part of the universal consciousness which is love, each child contains all the wisdom and love of the universe. This wisdom and love is the higher self. The child can tap into this universal mind and receive advice, information and help from it. This is usually done through meditation and contact with spirit guides.*

Dr. Galyean continues by saying that "once we begin to see that we are all God…the whole purpose of life is to reown the

Godlikeness within us; the perfect love, the perfect wisdom, the perfect understanding, the perfect intelligence, and when we do that, we create back to that old, that essential oneness which is consciousness."

An example of this philosophy is found in Dr. Jean Houston's text *The Possible Human*. Dr. Houston, the past president of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, espouses a New Age understanding of education. She refers to "The Master Teacher" as being an inner ally who has urgent messages to send us. Houston says that "if we cooperate with them that is, with our own deepest knowing we begin to notice an astounding change in our lives." In other words, she is talking about demonic spirit guides that will seduce the individual into the occult world.

Another example is found in a college level textbook that is most often used on the freshman level. The text *Becoming A Master Student* includes a chapter titled "You create it all" in which students are told that they create everything including the lectures they attend, the textbooks, their instructors, and their classmates. All those things they are absolutely certain they do not control the weather, wars, world hunger, the planets in actuality, they create those, too.

Our response is obvious: we must speak on behalf of our children in the educational arena. Unless we achieve this goal, we will have emotionally and spiritually lost the battle for our childrens' future.

A Biblical Response

Transformation is the key element in the recipe to bring about the New Age. Change must take place in the lives of individuals as well as society. The New Ager sees his transformation as his becoming one with the universe, and as equal with all therefore, he has no need for a savior. He

becomes more and more introspective as he looks within himself for answers, guidance, and so on.

Likewise, transformation is an important element in Christianity. The Christian is to be transformed (Rom. 12:2) from within, thereby presenting himself wholly acceptable to God. We are new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17), with a new nature (Eph. 4:24). This inward transformation, a renewing of the mind, results in an outward expression of care and concern for others.

For the New Ager, transformation is an open door to the occult world; for the Christian,transformation is the process whereby the believer becomes more Christlike.

God has called us out of darkness to become sons and daughters of His Light, His Truth, and His Kingdom (John 3:19-21). The New Age world lies in darkness, and God is calling the Christian to bring a candle and penetrate the darkness.

Evangelizing the New Ager

When witnessing to a New Ager it is helpful to begin your discussion on a topic of common interest where you share a compatible view. In so doing you establish a non-threatening precedent for fair treatment in your communication.

Issues that may be common to both parties the rejection of humanism, human rights, or ecology would be a good place to begin your discussion. Remember your goal is to be a positive witness and to proclaim the saving grace of Jesus. Consider these points for effective witnessing:

- *Pray that God will give you direction as you share.*

- *Always define one another's terms and establish a biblical reference. This is necessary even though New Agers will be unlikely to accept the Bible as authoritative.*

• Stress the uniqueness of Jesus as the Savior and His resurrection as proof of His true divinity.

• Remember that arguing is not a positive witness. It is important to share your personal relationship with the Lord. A personal relationship with Jesus is virtually impossible for the New Ager since he views God as being impersonal.

• Look for opportunities to present Jesus as a person who is knowable and who desires a relationship.

• Help him recognize the reality of evil and see that Jesus is his only avenue of escape.

• Show him that man's problem is sin and not ignorance of his personal divinity. The New Ager must realize that because of his personal sin he is unable to escape the reality of separation from God. Jesus, as the only sinless Son of God, is the answer.

Salvation for the New Ager is oneness with all of creation. You want him to understand not only God's grace, but also Christ's sacrifice on the cross which was sufficient for the New Ager as well.

This New Age of Aquarius that is to come upon the scene in the near future has eroded much of the Christian consensus that was once held. The challenge of the Christian church is great, but it must be met. If not, our culture will increasingly return to paganism.

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