

# The New Age Movement

Rudyard Kipling once wrote that “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” But that can no longer be said now that a pantheistic Eastern philosophy has spread to this country. The primary vehicle for this transmission of ideas has been the New Age Movement.

Evidence of Eastern philosophy’s arrival can certainly be seen in many ways. Statements by movie stars, the growth of Eastern cults, and the popularity of films like the Star Wars trilogy testify to the growing influence of New Age ideas. In the movie *The Empire Strikes Back*, for example, Yoda espouses pantheistic ideas to his Jedi disciple, Luke Skywalker: “You must feel the Force around you. Here, between you and me. Between the rock . . . everywhere. Yes, even the land.”

## Defining the New Age

The New Age Movement has taken on a variety of names including the Human Potential Movement, the Third Force, the Aquarian Conspiracy, Cosmic Consciousness, and Cosmic Humanism. Although most refer to it as the New Age Movement, many in the movement do not like that label, and many others would not even consider themselves part of the movement, even though they may hold to many of the core beliefs of the New Age Movement.

Accurately defining the New Age is a formidable task for several reasons. First, the New Age Movement is eclectic and diverse. It is not a cohesive movement but is exceedingly diverse in its composition and ideology. The unifying factors are shared ideology rather than a shared organizational structure.

Second, the New Age Movement is difficult to define because it emphasizes and encourages change. The New Age Movement is

syncretistic and therefore evolutionary in its nature. Many proponents change their perspectives, and so it is frequently difficult to pin down the major beliefs of the New Age Movement.

## **Major Tenets of the New Age**

Even given the diversity and transitory nature of the New Age Movement, there are still a number of major tenets generally held in common by most groups within this movement.

First is the belief in monism. New Agers believe that “all is one.” Everything and everyone is interrelated and interdependent. Ultimately there is no real difference between humans, animals, rocks, or even God. Any differences between these entities are merely apparent, not real.

Second is the belief in pantheism. Since New Agers already believe that “all is one,” the next logical assumption would be that “all is god.” All of creation partakes of the divine essence. All of life (and even non-life) has a spark of divinity within.

The third major tenet of the New Age follows as a logical conclusion from the other two. If “all is one” and “all is god,” then we should conclude that “we are gods.” We are, according to New Agers, ignorant of our divinity. We are “gods in disguise.” The goal, therefore, of the New Age Movement is to discover our own divinity.

Fourth, we discover our own divinity by experiencing a change in consciousness. The human race suffers from a collective form of metaphysical amnesia. We have forgotten that our true identity is divine and thus must undergo a change of consciousness to achieve our true human potential (hence the name, the Human Potential Movement).

A fifth tenet is reincarnation. Most New Agers believe in some form of reincarnation. In its classic form, the cycles of

birth, death, and reincarnation are necessary to work off our bad “karma” and to reach perfection. The doctrine of karma says that one’s present condition is determined by one’s actions in a past life.

The Western version of reincarnation held by many New Agers places much less emphasis on bad karma and postulates an upward spiral towards perfection through reincarnation. This view has been espoused by such people as Shirley MacLaine, Sylvester Stallone, George Patton, and Henry Ford.

A final major tenet is moral relativism. New Agers think in terms of gray, rather than black or white. Denying the law of non-contradiction, New Agers will often believe that two conflicting statements can both be true. They will therefore teach that “all religions are true” and “there are many paths to God.”

## **A Biblical Evaluation**

When the tenets of the New Age Movement are examined, they are not really new at all. The New Age is really old occultism in new linguistic garb. Many of these concepts can be found in basic form in Genesis 3. Notice these statements made to Eve in the Garden: “You will be like God” (pantheism), “You will not surely die” (reincarnation), “Your eyes will be opened” (change of consciousness), and “Did God really say” (moral relativism).

First, a Christian view of reality rejects the concept of monism. The Bible teaches that God’s creation is not an undivided unity but a diversity of created things and beings. The creation is not unified in itself but held together by Christ in whom “all things hold together” (Col. 1:17).

Second, Christianity is theistic, not pantheistic. New Agers teach that God is an impersonal force, while the Bible teaches that God is an imminent, personal, triune, sovereign God. God

is separate from His creation rather than merely a part of the creation as pantheism would teach.

Third, we are created in God's image (Gen. 1:26) and therefore have dignity and value (Psalm 8). New Agers teach that we are gods and thus have divinity within our humanity.

Fourth, New Agers flirt with the occult in their attempt to achieve a change in consciousness. Although these practices are frequently described in benign terms such as parapsychology, they involve direct contact with spiritual entities. The Bible warns against the danger of these practices and lists such activities as divination and spirit channeling as detestable practices (Deut. 18:9-13) that are to be avoided.

Fifth, the Bible teaches resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15), not reincarnation of the soul. Likewise, the doctrine of karma is foreign to the gospel. Salvation comes from grace, not through the works in this life (Eph. 2:8-9) or in any other alleged past life. We will not be reborn after death. Hebrews 9:27 clearly teaches that "it is appointed for men to die once and after this come judgment."

Finally, the Bible teaches absolute truth. God has clearly communicated to us his moral law (Ex. 20:1-17), which we are to obey. Contrary to the New Age teaching that "there are many paths to God," Jesus clearly taught "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

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