



CHRISTIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Walter Martin, Director

NEW AGE MOVEMENT

The "new age movement" has become the most common name used to describe the growing penetration of Eastern and occultic mysticism into Western culture. The words "new age" refer to the "aquarian age" which occultists believe to be dawning, bringing with it an era of enlightenment and peace. Encompassed within the new age movement are various cults which emphasize a mystical experience (including Transcendental Meditation, the Rajneesh cult, Eckankar, Church Universal and Triumphant, and the Divine Light Mission); the followers of various gurus, such as the late Swami Muktananda, Sai Baba, Da Free John, Baba Ram Dass (Richard Alpert), and others; the various organizations and programs that make up the "human potential movement" (est, Lifespring, Silva Mind Control, Summit Workshops, etc.); and many (though not all) of the advocates of the various approaches to "holistic health."

Though the beliefs and emphases of the various groups and individuals who make up the new age movement can vary widely, they share a common religious experience and philosophical base. This similarity in the midst of diversity could be contrasted to the many traditions within historic Christianity which differ on many peripheral doctrines, and yet share a common experience with the Holy Spirit, resulting from a common faith in Jesus Christ. Members of the new age movement share a common belief that "all is one" -- that is, everything that exists together composes one essential reality or substance. This ultimate reality is identified as God, usually seen as an impersonal consciousness and power. Resulting from this belief in the divinity of all things is the belief in the inherent divinity of man. Thus, the obvious separation of the human race from God is viewed differently by the new age movement than it is by the Christian church. Whereas historic Christianity believes that man was separated from God due to his transgression of God's law, the new age movement believes that man is separated from God only in his own consciousness. He is the victim of a false sense of separate identity which blinds him to his essential unity with God. Thus, the means of salvation advocated in the new age movement are various methods of altering the consciousness (e.g., yoga, meditation, chanting, ecstatic dancing, drugs, etc.), which enable man to consciously experience his supposed union with God, an experience which is considered to be "enlightenment."

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The new age movement also heavily emphasizes the ancient Hindu doctrines of reincarnation and karma. The law of karma teaches that whatever a person does, good or bad, will return to him in his experience in an exact proportion of good or bad. Since most people are unable to pay off in one lifetime all of the bad "karma" that they have accumulated for their bad deeds, they are compelled to return in new incarnations until all of their bad karma has been balanced by good karma.

Due to the efforts of a woman by the name of Constance Cumbey, there has recently been much discussion about an alleged new age conspiracy to establish a one-world government and enthrone a world ruler. We are in the process of researching some of the assertions that Mrs. Cumbey has made, and plan to present an article on the new age movement -- what it is, and what it is not -- in a forthcoming issue of our publication, Forward. At the present, we can state that there is definitely an Aquarian Conspiracy, as Marilyn Ferguson, a member of the new age movement, writes about in her book by the same title. Many people within the overall new age movement believe that they can hasten the coming of the age of peace by working together to influence developments in western culture's political, economic, educational, and religious life. Among some of these people there are definite efforts underway to promote the development of a united worldwide society. However, we have not found anything to substantiate Mrs. Cumbey's claims that everyone involved in the new age movement is a part of this conspiracy (many of the "new age cults" are exclusive, and it is difficult to imagine them working to enthrone any world ruler besides their own particular leaders), nor have we yet found evidence that any specific individual has been selected to occupy the place of world ruler. We have not seen evidence to the effect that the conspiracy is so highly developed and influential that it is presently in a position to accomplish its goal of a one-world culture. The new age movement could certainly play a part in the great deception of the tribulation period described in various biblical prophecies, and we should definitely keep our eyes on it. However, it would be counterproductive for the body of Christ to respond to this movement with hysteria resulting from a belief that the Antichrist is about to be revealed, or by making public declarations that the new age movement is involved in conspiratorial activities that cannot be factually substantiated. The new age movement's efforts to infiltrate our society with Eastern mysticism must be resisted, and their activities must be monitored, but it must be done in a sane, biblical manner, in a spirit of peaceful sobriety.

Prepared by:
Elliot Miller - 11/82