

Challenging the Cults

9. The New Age



In the 2nd century Irenaeus (120-202 AD) wrote *Against Heresies*, he catalogued the beliefs and history of Gnostics. The Gnostics offered the world a different type of “Christianity”, with a different “Jesus” and a different “Gospel”. Irenaeus wrote to help Christians refute the false Gnostic systems that led people astray from the “Biblical Christianity”. Gnosticism competed with Christianity because it had a similar offering to Christianity, there was a Gnostic Jesus, Gnostic gospels, claiming to be written by those close to Jesus¹.

The Gnostic belief systems can be seen in both Islam and Mormonism today. Islam’s belief that Jesus never died on the cross originated with Basilides, who lived during the time of Hadrian (A.D. 117-138). The Mormon system of multiple gods ruling over multiple planets, and Jesus and Satan being brothers, is found in Gnostic belief systems.

The New Age, is not “New” but repackaged from the Pre-Judean/Christian world in a form acceptable to Post modern age. The New Age unlike most cult systems is a collection of ideas and teachings with a common theme. Like Gnosticism, The New Age utilizes Christian themes and names but is packaged with pagan and Hindu teachings, offering a much different “Gospel”. New Age concepts such as Channeling² and Astrology are condemned in the Old Testament, and are not new at all. The current “New Age Gnostic system can be traced back to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky.

Origins



In the late 19th century Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, cofounder of the Theosophical Society, announced a coming New Age. She believed that theosophists (who embraced Buddhist and Brahmanic notions such as reincarnation) should assist the evolution of the human race and prepare to cooperate with one of the Ascended Masters of the Great White Brotherhood whose arrival was imminent. Blavatsky believed that, as the world's hidden leaders, members of this mystical brotherhood guided the destiny of the planet. Her ideas contributed to expectation of a New Age among practitioners of Spiritualism and believers in astrology, for whom the coming of the new Aquarian Age promised a period of brotherhood and enlightenment. Blavatsky's successor, Annie Besant, predicted the coming of a messiah, or world saviour, who she believed was the Indian teacher Jiddu Krishnamurti. In the 1940s Alice A. Bailey, founder of the Arcane School (an organization that disseminated spiritual teachings), suggested that a new messiah, the Master Maitreya, would appear in the last quarter of the 20th century. Bailey also established the “Triangles” program to bring people together in groups of three to meditate daily. Participants in the program believed that they received divine energy, which they shared with those around them, thus raising the general level of spiritual awareness.

¹ By using the names of New Testament figures and attaching their names to Gnostic writings the Gnostics set up a competing system to the church. The Gospel of Thomas, The Gospel of Phillip, The Gospel of Mary were Gnostic writings attached to the names of New Testament figures.

² Channeling is the where a living individual becomes the channel of communication where a departed spirit communicates to the world of the living.

In 1970 American theosophist David Spangler moved to the Findhorn Foundation, where he developed the fundamental idea of the New Age movement. He believed that the release of new waves of spiritual energy, signaled by certain astrological changes (e.g., the movement of the Earth into a new cycle known as the Age of Aquarius), had initiated the coming of the New Age. He further suggested that people use this new energy to make manifest the New Age. Spangler's view was in stark contrast to that of Bailey and her followers, who believed that the new era would arrive independent of human actions. Spangler's perspective demanded an active response and shifted the responsibility for the coming of the New Age to those who believed in it.

Returning to the United States in the mid-1970s, Spangler became the major architect of the movement. He presented his ideas in a set of popular books beginning with *Revelation: The Birth of a New Age* (1976) and attracted many leaders from older occult and metaphysical organizations to the growing movement. The collapsing psychedelic movement also provided new supporters, including spokespersons such as noted psychologist Richard Alpert, who, like Timothy Leary, was an advocate of the use of hallucinogenic drugs to achieve mystical experiences. Alpert, however, found enlightenment in India, and returning to the West as Baba Ram Dass, he disavowed the drug experience and advocated more traditional spiritual disciplines. Simultaneously, periodicals were published to disseminate information and to create a sense of community within the decentralized movement. As the movement grew, bookstores opened that specialized in the sale of New Age books, videos, and meditative aids.

Today, many New Age writers like the Gnostics in the past are attempting to combine their version of God with the Biblical God. Neale Donald Walsch, author of the "*Conversations with God*" series claims to have had a dialogue with God in his books. He describes the first occurrence.

Neale says that he heard a voice, soft and kind, warm and loving, that gave him an answer to this and other questions. Awestruck and inspired, he quickly scribbled these responses onto the tablet.

In his books Walsh purports to write down responses to questions he poses to God. God responds to his questions, often contradicting much of the Bible and affirming a pantheistic world view. "God" quotes to Walsh from the Bible, Quran and other texts his views on various subjects. Walsch claim of spiritual communication is not new at all, but is called "familiar spirits".

Channeling Cults

Channeling is a common thread of inspiration in most cults, the founder has the claim of a mystical experience, where he or she communicates to a "Spirit" who identifies itself. This "Spirit" is either an individual who has died and evolved to a higher state, or is a heavenly being such as an Angel. For example,

- Mani, founder of the *Manicheans* had his "Twin" Angel who guided in him in understanding.
- Mohammed, who founded *Islam*, was guided by the Angel Gabriel.
- Joseph Smith was guided by the Angel Moroni, a resurrected being from a former age.
- Sun Myung Moon, founder of *the Unification Church* met with Jesus, Confucius, Mohammad and Buddha.
- David Berg, founder of the *Children of God*, met with Abraham.

The concept of Sprit guides is condemned in the Bible as “Familiar Spirits” The Hebrew word for familiar, means to recognize or to be acquainted with.

'Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God. *Leviticus 19:31*

'And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people. *Leviticus 20:6*

'A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them.' " *Leviticus 20:27*

"When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations.

"There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,

"or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.

"For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. *Deuteronomy 18:9-12*

The Foundation of the Current New Age is the communication with past masters, who are guides for this world. The New Age, claims to be led by those who are on a higher spiritual plain communicating the physical realm. J. Z. Knight claims to channel for Ramtha, a 35,000 year-old-warrior-king and former inhabitant of the mythical civilization of Atlantis. J.Z. is just one of a host of such examples throughout history.

The Source of Channeling

Why does scripture condemn, talking to familiar sprits or channeling? The answer is in the book of Ephesians, chapter 6.

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places *Ephesians 6:12*

The world we live in is both physical and spiritual, the physical is visible but the spiritual is invisible. In this world, there are wicked spiritual forces, fallen angels, who rule over principalities in heavenly realms. In Daniel 10, one of these rulers of darkness, called the “Prince of Persia” resists Daniel’s prayers for 21 days, but is finally overcome. “Familiar Sprits” are fallen angels masquerading as someone “familiar” with the conversation.

Programs such as “Crossing Over” and games like the Ouija board are vehicles for “Fallen Angels” to deceive the listener. This is the reason most cults both Old Age and New Age are similar but just packaged different. The New Age cults originate from the same “Fallen Angels” who authored the heresies and cults before them, just packaged in a more acceptable way.

Beliefs of the New Age

God

The New Age God is an impersonal force pervading all creation; this is known as *Monism* meaning “One-ism”. They believe all that exists is derived from a single force of divine energy. This concept was popularized in the movie “Star Wars”, where the Force, was present in the Universe.

This view of god harmonizes with the Hindu view of *Pantheism*. Pantheism believes all that exists is God; God is all that exists. This leads naturally to the concept of the divinity of the individual, that we are all Gods, Gods within the self and throughout the entire universe. The Hindu Vedas read:

This whole world is Brahma. Tranquil, let one worship. It as that from which he came forth, as that into which he will be dissolved, as that in which he breathes.

Man

Man is ultimately God, this follows from the *Monist* and *Pantheistic* view of God.

This is the being/embodiment relationship, as exemplified primarily in the Eastern religions and philosophies...this relationship simply affirms that all life is one, that I am one with God and can embody Divinity...God and I do not just communicate; we commune and are one. There is no separation except failure to recognize that there is no separation.

Shirley MacLaine, a Hollywood voice for the New Age wrote in here book, *Out on a Limb*,

I know that I exist, therefore I AM, I know that the God-source exists. Therefore IT IS. Since I am part of that force, then I AM that I AM.

Sin and Satan

Since Man is God, there is no standard of right or wrong. The Bible as an eternal code of right and wrong is meaningless.

God is everything—He is everything. So anything you do, you have an inner action in divinity. Remember that, and do what you want to do.³

Contemplate the love of God; how great this Entity-Self is, that is all-encompassing, that will allow you to be and do anything you wish and hold you judgeless. God has never judged you or anyone. If He has then He has judged himself, for who be you but He.⁴

We can take all the scriptures and all the teachings, and all the tablets, and all the laws and all the marshmallows and have a jolly good bonfire...because that's all they are worth. Once you are the law, once you are the truth, you do not need it externally represented for you.⁵

Since New Age, believers do not hold to the scripture and view the world from a Monist and Pantheistic view. The “Force” consists of both good and evil. The personal devil is nothing more than an illusion:

The devil was a masterful ploy by a conquering institution to put the fear of God, most literally, into the hearts of little ones—that God had created a monster that would get them unless they be good to him. The devil was used to control the world most effectively and even today it is still feared and believed. Someone conjured it up—a God—and thus it became, but only to those who believed.⁶

Salvation

Since mankind is not a fallen creature, no salvation is necessary. We only need to rescue from ignorance of our godhood. Once we enter “god-realization”, “enlightenment”, “attunement” or “at-one-ment (With God), we are personally transformed.

³ Douglas James Mahr, *Voyage to a New World* (Lopez, Wash, Masterworks, Inc. Publishers, 1985) 36

⁴ *ibid*, 61

⁵ David Spangler, *Emergence: Rebirth of the Sacred* (New York; Delta, 1984), 144

⁶ Mahr, *Voyage*, 246

We already know everything. The knowingness of our divinity is the highest intelligence. And to be what we already know is the free will. Free will is simply the enactment of the realization that you are God, a realization that you are divine.⁷

The aim of a Course in Miracles is to lead us from duality to oneness—to the realization of our At-one-ment with God, our Self, and all people---our brothers. In this healing, is our Salvation—we are saved from our misperceptions of ourselves as separated individuals. When our perception is corrected we remember our true or higher Self...Salvation is really enlightenment.⁸

Jesus Christ

The Jesus of the New Age is differs from the Biblical Jesus. The New Age separates Jesus from Christ. Jesus was one of many Christs or teachers, who came to show the way. Christ is seen as office being held by an avatar or teacher.

Jesus differed but little from other children, only that in past lives he had overcome carnal propensities...Jesus was a remarkable child, for by ages of strenuous preparation he was qualified to be an avatar, a savior of the world.⁹

In every age Teachers have come forth from this spiritual centre to enable mankind to take its next evolutionary step; we know them, among others, as Hercules, Hermes, Rama, Mithra, Vyasa, Sanskaracharya, Krishna, Buddha, and the Christ. All perfect men in their time, all sons of men who became Sons of God, for having revealed their innate Divinity.¹⁰

UFO's

The belief in UFO's coincides with the belief in masters who appear to guide and direct mankind to a higher evolutionary plain.

Astrology

Astrology is another part of the New Age movement that is repackaged for modern consumption.

12 "Stand now with your enchantments And the multitude of your sorceries, In which you have labored from your youth- Perhaps you will be able to profit, Perhaps you will prevail.

13 You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels; Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, And the monthly prognosticators Stand up and save you From what shall come upon you.
Isaiah 47:12-15

2 Thus says the Lord: "Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, For the Gentiles are dismayed at them.
Jeremiah 10:2

19 "And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.
Deuteronomy 4:19

⁷ William Goldstein, "Life on the Astral Plane," Publishers Weekly (March 18, 1983): 46 (Quoting Shirley McLaine)

⁸ Julius J. Finegold and William M. Thetford, Choose Once Again: Selection from a Course in Miracles, 2-3

⁹ Levi Downing, The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ (Marina del Rey, Calif; De Vorss and Company, 1981), 12

¹⁰ Crème, Reappearance, 28

Recent surveys of US adults indicate that many Americans hold at least some new age beliefs:¹¹

- 8% believe in astrology as a method of foretelling the future
- 7% believe that crystals are a source of healing or energizing power
- 9% believe that Tarot Cards are a reliable base for life decisions
- about 1 in 4 believe in a non-traditional concept of the nature of God which are often associated with New Age thinking:
 - 11% believe that God is "*a state of higher consciousness that a person may reach*"
 - 8% define God as "*the total realization of personal, human potential*"
 - 3% believe that each person is God.

The group of surveys cited above classify religious beliefs into 7 faith groups. ² Starting with the largest, they are: Cultural (Christmas & Easter) Christianity, Conventional Christianity, New Age Practitioner, Biblical (Fundamentalist, Evangelical) Christianity, Atheist/Agnostic, Other, and Jewish, A longitudinal study from 1991 to 1995 shows that New Agers represent a steady 20% of the population, and are consistently the third largest religious group. ²

¹¹ <http://www.religioustolerance.org/newage.htm>, George Barnia, "*The Index of Leading Spiritual Indicators*", Word Publishing, Dallas TX, (1996)