

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

The New Age Movement

NORMAN L. GEISLER, PHD*

Background: A Shift in World Views

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On Mars Hill the Apostle Paul faced the Epicureans and the Stoics (Acts 17:18). The Epicureans were the atheists of the day and the Stoics were the pantheists. Today Christianity again stands between the materialist and the mystic. Present-day “Epicureans” are secular humanists, and contemporary “Stoics” are proponents of what has come to be known as the New Age movement.

Western society is experiencing an ideological shift from an atheistic to a pantheistic orientation. The basic difference between these two views is that atheists claim there is no God at all, but pantheists say God is all and all is God. Atheistic materialists believe all is matter, but mystics hold that all is mind.

The shift from secular humanism¹ to New Age pantheism has occurred gradually over the past few decades. It has been a relatively smooth transition because of the commonalities of these two world views. Both atheism and pantheism hold in common a basic naturalistic approach to the world. (1) Both deny an absolute distinction between Creator and creation. Both deny there is any God beyond the universe. (2) Both deny that a God supernaturally intervenes in the universe (by miracles).² (3) And in the final analysis both believe that man is God (or Ultimate), though not all atheists admit this.

Western atheism and Eastern pantheism also have a common enemy. They are both diametrically opposed to Judeo-Christian theism. As Alice Bailey clearly declared, New Agers are committed to “The Gradual Dissolution of Orthodox Judaism.”³ Benjamin Creme is just as emphatically anti-Christian. “To my way of thinking,” he says, “the Christian Churches have released into the world a view of the Christ which is impossible for modern people to accept: as the one and only Son of God, sacrificed by a loving Father

* Norman L. Geisler is Professor of Systematic Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary.

¹ For an exposition and evaluation of secular humanism, see Norman L. Geisler, *Is Man the Measure: An Evaluation of Contemporary Humanism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983).

² This antisupernaturalism is examined in Norman L. Geisler, *Miracles and Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982).

³ Alice Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy* (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1957), p. 551.

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to save us from the results of our sins—a blood sacrifice, straight out of the old Jewish dispensation.”⁴

Other New Age sources are equally emphatic in their rejection of biblical theism. Pantheism does not reject a God in nature. “It only refuses to accept any of the gods of the so-called monotheistic religions [such as Judaism and Christianity], gods created by man in his own image and likeness, a blasphemous and sorry caricature of the ever unknowable.”⁵

The shift from the Old Age humanism to New Age pantheism is manifest in numerous ways in today’s culture. First, there is the growth in pantheistic religions and cults. Along with Christian Science, Unity, Bahai, and Scientology, the growth in “guruism” in the West has been phenomenal. Transcendental meditation, yoga, Hare Krishna, the Church Universal and Triumphant, and the Unification Church are only a few of the more popular cultic manifestations of New Age thought. Along with these are dozens of space cults and the more popular religion of the Force.⁶

Second, New Age thought permeates the media. Many of the most popular movies of the past decade are pantheistic, including “Star Wars,” “The Empire Strikes Back,” “Return of the Jedi,” “Poltergeist,” “The Exorcist,” “Raiders of the Lost Ark,” “Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom,” “ET,” “Close Encounters,” and “The Dark Crystal” (by Jim Henson, a fairy tale of pantheism). Television too has experienced more than its share of occult, magic, and other Eastern influences, from “I Dream of Jeannie” to “Bewitched.” Even children’s cartoons feature “He Man,” “Masters of the Universe,” and numerous magical manifestations of Eastern mysticism. And children’s comics are literally filled with occult manifestations of New Age thought.

Third, much of pop pantheism was generated by the Beatles when they embraced the Mahareshi. George Harrison expressed this in “My Sweet Lord,” a song of praise to Krishna. This same trend continues unabated to date and has even manifested itself in outright satanic lyrics in some hard rock songs.

Fourth, pantheistic influence surfaced in the public schools through the teaching of transcendental meditation (popularly known as TM). Despite the fact that they were found by the court to be religious in nature, other forms of yoga, meditation, imaginary

⁴ Benjamin Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of Wisdom* (North Hollywood, CA: Tara Center, 1980), p. 47.

⁵ *The Golden Book of the Theosophical Society*, ed. C. Jinarajadasa (London: Theosophical Publishing House, 1925), pp. 45–46.

⁶ See a critique of this in Norman L. Geisler and J. Yutaka Amano, *The Religion of the Force* (Dallas, TX: Quest Publications, 1983).

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guides, and exploration of “inner space” and “confluent education”⁷ continue in public schools. Likewise the human potential movement and pantheistic forms of positive thinking methods are frequently taught in schools.

Fifth, the broader culture evidences numerous influences of pantheistic thought from EST (now FORUM) business seminars to holistic health fads (usually vegetarian), relaxation techniques, biofeedback, and biorhythms. The popularity of horoscopes and the supranormal are also indications of New Age thought. The increased belief in reincarnation is an amazing evidence of the turn to the East. A Gallup poll in 1982 showed that nearly one-fourth of all Americans believe in reincarnation, with 30 percent of college students believing it.⁸ And the most important fiction writer of the New Age is the bestselling author Carlos Castaneda, who wrote *The Teachings of Don Juan*, *Tales of Power*, *The Ring of Power*, and others.

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Basic Principles of the New Age Movement

Unlike most religious movements the various New Age religions have no central headquarters or organization.⁹ However, they do have a commonality of core beliefs and goals, and a common consciousness.

DEFINITION OF NEW AGE RELIGIONS

Various terms have been used to describe this rise of pantheistic thought in the West. It has been called the Aquarian Conspiracy, New Consciousness, New Orientalism, Cosmic Humanism, Cosmic Consciousness, Mystical Humanism, Human Potential Movement, and Holistic Health Movement. But the umbrellalike term that encompasses them all is the New Age Movement.

As a working definition, the New Age Movement is a broad coalition of various networking¹⁰ organizations that (a) believe in a new world religion (pantheism), (b) are

⁷ In *Confluent Education* Beverly Galyean admits: “I think the whole purpose of life is to reown the Godlikeness within us; the perfect love, the perfect wisdom, the perfect understanding.... The system of confluent education as I work with it is totally dependent on that view” (quoted by *Christianity Today*, May 16, 1986, p. 20).

⁸ Reincarnation is evaluated in Norman L. Geisler and J. Yutaka Amano, *The Reincarnation Sensation* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1986).

⁹ There are some broad-based groups, such as The Unity-in-Diversity Council, World Trade Center, 350 South Figueroa Street, Suite 370, Los Angeles, CA 90071; and The International Cooperation Council, which publishes the *Directory for a New World*, Los Angeles, 1979.

¹⁰ Networking is done by “conferences, phone calls, air travel, books, phantom organizations, papers, pamphleteering, photocopying, lectures, workshops, parties, grapevine, mutual friends, summit

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working for a new world order, and (c) expect a New Age Christ. Of course, not all who participate in the New Age movement are necessarily conscious of all these aspects.

NEW AGE JARGON AND SYMBOLS

Words common to New Age thought include awakening, centering, consciousness, cosmic energy, force, global village, holistic, human potential, initiation, interdependent, network, planetary vision, rebirth, spaceship earth, synergistic, transcendent, transformational, transpersonal, and unity.

Of course, New Age belief has no franchise on these words. Not everyone who uses these words is necessarily buying into New Age pantheism. All meaning is discovered by context and usage.

A number of symbols, some old and some new, have been adopted by the New Age including the rainbow, pyramid, triangle, eye in a triangle, unicorn, pegasus, concentric circles, rays of light, swastika, yin-yang, goathead on a pentagram, and even the numerals 666 worked into art. But here again, not all who use some of these symbols belong to the New Age movement. After all the rainbow was set up by God as a sign of His promise, and no New Ager should rob a Christian of its true significance.

NEW AGE PRAYER

The New Age Movement has a prayer known as “The Great Invocation,” which has been translated into over 50 languages. It is often found as a book marker in New Age literature. According to George Trevelyan, leader of the New Age movement in England, “it expresses truths common to all major religions, and is now being used across the world by people of many differing faiths and creeds. It is a prayer which focuses the call for help from man to the Higher Worlds.”¹¹ It reads as follows:

From the point of Light
 within the Mind of God
Let light stream forth into
 The minds of men.
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love

meetings, coalitions, tapes, newsletters” (Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* [Los Angeles: J. B. Torcher, 1980], pp. 62–63).

¹¹ See George Trevelyan, *A Vision of the Aquarian Age: The Emerging Spiritual World View* (Walpole, NH: Stillpoint Publishing, 1984), p. 171.

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within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into
the hearts of men.
May Christ return to Earth.

From the centre where the
Will of God is known
Let purpose guide the little
wills of men—
The purpose which the
Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we
call the race of men
Let the Plan of Love and
Light work out.
And may it seal the door
where Evil dwells.
Let Light and Love and
Power restore the Plan on Earth.

Since most of the words seem “innocent” enough, the prayer needs some explaining. To the author(s) of this prayer, “God” is a pantheistic God, not a theistic one. “Love” is not a volitional act of compassion by a person but is an impersonal cosmic energy that unifies everything. “Christ” refers not to Jesus Christ but to the universal Christ spirit, which they believe has dwelt in different great religious leaders including Buddha, Jesus, and other gurus. “Masters” refer to occult leaders who give revelations. “The plan” is the occult plan whereby a new world order is to be established by the cooperative participation of the masses in occult powers.

NEW AGE “HOLY BOOKS” AND FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS

Like most religious movements the New Age has books with “revelations” of New Age religious thought. Some of the more important ones are these: *Isis Unveiled*, by Helena P. Blavatsky (1877); *Oahspe*, by Newbrough (1882); *The Secret Doctrines*, by Helena P. Blavatsky (1888); *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*,¹² by Levi Dowling (1907); *The*

¹² *The Aquarian Gospel* is a rewriting of the life of Jesus from a pantheistic perspective in which Jesus is presented as a pantheist who believes in reincarnation and is a master (occult) magician. See Levi Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (1907; reprint, Marina del Rey, CA: DeVorss & Co., 1982).

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Urantia Book, by Bill Sadler (1955); *Revelation: The Birth of a New Age*, by David Spangler (1976); and *Messages from Maitreya the Christ*, by Benjamin Creme (1980).

The last two writers have written many books that supposedly present revelations, prophecies, and teachings of the New Age.¹³ Creme for example claims to receive telepathic messages from the Christ. David Spangler claims that the revelations now being received by New Agers like himself are every bit as important as what were given to Jesus.

There are several summaries of New Age “fundamentals” by their own writers. Blavatsky, the famous Russian mystic and foremother of the New Age movement, listed three basic beliefs or “secret doctrines”: impersonal, eternal God; eternal cycles of nature; and man’s identity with God and reincarnation.¹⁴

The English follower of Blavatsky, Alice Bailey, summarized New Age teaching in four beliefs: the fact of [pantheistic] God, man’s relationship to God, the fact of immortality and of eternal persistence, and the continuity of revelation and the divine approaches.¹⁵

Benjamin Creme, the self-appointed “John the Baptist” of the New Age Christ, lists four fundamental teachings of New Age religion: God’s [pantheistic] existence, man’s immortality, continuing revelations from messengers, and man’s ability to evolve into Godhood.¹⁶

In an excellent book evaluating the New Age movement, Douglas Groothuis lists six basic beliefs: all is one, all is God, humanity is God, change in consciousness, all religions are one, and cosmic evolutionary optimism.¹⁷ At least 14 doctrines are typical of New Age religions. While not all New Age groups hold all these beliefs, most groups embrace most of them. And all groups are characterized by the pantheistic perspective reflected in them. These beliefs are: (1) an impersonal god (force), (2) an eternal universe, (3) an illusory nature of matter, (4) a cyclical nature of life, (5) the necessity of reincarnations, (6) the evolution of man into Godhood, (7) continuing revelations from beings beyond the world, (8) the identity of man with God, (9) the need for meditation (or other consciousness-changing techniques), (10) occult practices (astrology, mediums, etc.), (11)

¹³ *Visions from Findhorn: Anthology* (Farres, Scotland: Findhorn Publications, 1978), p. 82.

¹⁴ Max Heindel, *Blavatsky and the Secret Doctrine* (1933; reprint, Marina del Rey, CA: DeVorss & Co., 1979), pp. 61–64).

¹⁵ Alice Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ* (New York: Lucis Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 144–50.

¹⁶ Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 150.

¹⁷ Douglas R. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), pp. 18–30.

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vegetarianism and holistic health, (12) pacifism (or anti-war activities), (13) one world (global) order, and (14) syncretism (unity of all religions).

Some Leaders of the New Age Movement

The New Age movement has many dimensions. Its ancient pantheistic roots go back to Hindu and Greek thought. The modern Western roots reach into the last century.



MODERN SOURCES

The Russian mystic, occultist, and cofounder of theosophy Helena Petrova Blavatsky is the grandmother of the New Age movement. She is the author of *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrines* (1888). These books are mystical “Bibles” of New Age thought.

Alice A. Bailey (d. 1949) was an English mystic who received telepathic communications from Tibetan occult master Djwhal Khul (known as D.K.) for 30 years about “The Plan” for a new world order. She is the author of numerous works, including *Letters on Occult Meditation* (1922), *Discipleship in the New Age* (1944), *The Reappearance of the Christ* (1948), and *The Externalisation of the [occult] Hierarchy* (1957). Bailey contributed much of the vocabulary to the New Age movement.

CONTEMPORARY SPOKESPERSONS

General presentation. Marilyn Ferguson’s book *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1980) is one of the best overall popular presentations of New Age thought. It is well written and interesting.

Religious dimension. David Spangler is one of the foremost writers of New Age religious belief. His main works include *Revelation: The Birth of a New Age* (1976) and *Reflections on the Christ* (1978). Benjamin Creme’s works fit into this category as well. He wrote *The Reappearance of the Christ* (1980) and *Messages from Maitreya the Christ* (1980). Also George Trevelyan’s books, *A Vision of the Aquarian Age* (1977) and *Operation Redemption* (1981), have been quite influential.

Political dimension. Two names stand out here: Mark Satin, *New Age Politics: Healing Self and Society* (1979), and Robert Muller, *New Genesis: Shaping a Global Spirituality* (1982).

Scientific dimension. In the area of the new physics, *The Tao of Physics*, by Fritjof Capra, is a notable New Age work, as are David Bohm’s *Quantum Theory* and *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. In the area of cosmology, Paul Davies’s books, *God and the New Physics* and *Superforce*, are a modern pantheistic explanation of origins.

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Psychological dimension. Abraham Maslow's work, *The Farthest Reaches of Human Nature* (1971), and *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences* (1980), are part of the New Age phenomena. Other psychologists, such as Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, and Rollo May, have New Age themes. Barbara Brown has produced a New Age anthropology in her book *Supermind* (1983).

Health and dietary dimensions. Viktoras Kulvinskas produced *The New Age Directory of Holistic Health Guide* (1981). There is also *Survival into the 21st Century: Planetary Healer's Manual* (1925), and Leslie Kaslof's *Wholistic Dimensions in Healing* (1978).

Historical and cultural dimensions. Two New Age historians and cultural apologists stand out: Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends* (1972) and *Unfinished Animal* (1977), and William Irwin Thompson, *From Nation to Emanation* (1982).

There are endless other New Age groups, including communes, camping programs, music, schools, even New Age businessmen's organizations and centers (like Findhorn Community, Scotland). There are ecology groups, political action organizations, lobbying groups (such as New Directions) and even New Age publishing houses (such as Lucis Publishing Company, formerly Lucifer Publishing Company). A complete list of these groups is included toward the back of Mark Satin's book, *New Age Politics*.

NEW AGE MAGAZINES AND JOURNALS

Among the numerous publications with New Age themes the following should be mentioned: *East-West Journal*, *Yoga Journal*, *New Age*, *New Realities*, and *Whole Life Times*. Of course New Age articles can be found in the magazines of most of the pantheistic religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Christian Science, Unity, Scientology, and others. New Age articles even appear in *Science Digest* and other mainline magazines.

New Age Doctrines

A brief analysis of some New Age teachings about God, the world, man, Christ, salvation, and the future will be helpful in understanding the movement.

REVELATION

New Agers believe in special and continual revelations. In fact they believe that

the Word of God [is] revealed in every age and dispensation. In the days of Moses it was the Pentateuch; in the days of Jesus, the Gospel; in the days of Muhammad, the Messenger of God, the Qur'an; in this day, the Bayan; and in the Dispensation of Him Whom God will make manifest, His own Book—the Book unto which all

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the Books of former Dispensations must needs be referred, the Book that standeth amongst them all transcendent and supreme.¹⁸

That is, there is a progression of continual revelations, with the latter superseding the former.

As for the Bible, Alice Bailey adds, "Little as the orthodox Christian may care to admit it, the entire Gospel story in its four forms or presentations, contains little else except symbolic details about the Mysteries."¹⁹

The Hindu leader, Mahatma Gandhi, declared clearly, "I do not regard everything said in the Bible as the final word of God or exhaustive or even acceptable from the moral stand-point."²⁰ Of the Gospels he said,

I may say that I do not accept everything in the Gospels as historical truth. And it must be remembered that he was working amongst his own people, and he said he had not come to destroy but to fulfill. I draw a great distinction between the *Sermon on the Mount* and the *Letters of Paul*. They are a graft on Christ's teaching, his own gloss apart from Christ's own experience.²¹

In short, New Agers pick and choose in the Bible as it fits their own purposes. Indeed, Levi Dowling rewrote the Gospels to make Christ into a pantheistic occult magician who believed in reincarnation.²²

Contemporary New Age writers speak of "revelation," "inspiration," "overshadowing," and "visions." Creme described his telepathic communications this way:

It descends on me and comes down as far as the solar plexus and a kind of cone is formed, like that, in light. There is an emotional outflow as well. It is the mental overshadowing which produces the rapport so that I can hear, inwardly, the words. The astral overshadowing allows what is called the True Spirit of the Christ, the energy of the Cosmic Christ, to flow out to the audience and through

¹⁸ Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1952), p. 270.

¹⁹ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 126.

²⁰ M. K. Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus Christ* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, 1963), p. 41.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²² Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel* 7. 37. 19 (p. 77).

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the audience to the world.... I am aware of His Presence, I can sense part of His mind in my mind. It is difficult to describe, but it is there.²³

Likewise, Spangler tells of receiving his revelations as follows:

I found that my consciousness came into contact with a force or a presence. It could not be accurately described as a being but definitely as a point of revelation, a mirror of sorts. This resulted in six statements of vision, six communications, which were put out in little booklets from Findhorn and which inspired a number of questions. In an attempt to answer the questions I ended up writing the book called, *Revelation: The Birth of a New Age*.²⁴

In this book Spangler said,

When I sat down to write, I envisioned a publication of about twenty to thirty pages. I had no intention of writing a book. However, as I began, it was as if I were overlit by another aspect of this presence of Limitless Love and Truth. Insights which I had gained over the years through my communions with higher levels, new information, and a deeper identification with some of the processes behind that presence all came together in a synthesis of inspiration, and I found myself writing non-stop for several days.²⁵

These “revelations” are continual. For, as Alice Bailey put it, “Never has Deity left Itself at any time without witness. Never has man demanded light that the light has not been forthcoming. Never has there been a time, cycle or world period when there was not the giving out of the teaching and spiritual help which human need demanded.”²⁶

Since revelations from the occult Masters are not infallible and are even contingent on human cooperation, their prophecies are not infallible. Indeed, they often conflict. In spite of this, some claim a unique role for their “revelations.” Spangler, for example, claims:

No other revelation to equal it has been offered to humanity, but all revelations of the past have led up to it. Jesus gave the great bridge through proclaiming our kinship with God, our sonship with him. Buddha gave the great bridge in enabling us to find the balance of our own being so that the energies we receive are expressed in harmony with the whole. Through knowing wisdom and through knowing love we now should be at a point, and we are at a point, where God can

²³ Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 108.

²⁴ David Spangler, *Revelation: The Birth of a New Age* (San Francisco: Rainbow Bridge, 1976), p. 77.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁶ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 147.

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reasonably say to us, "All right, I have given you the keys. I have given you the tools. Now build with me."²⁷

GOD

The New Age view of God is pantheistic. God is all and all is God. God is an impersonal force or energy. The most popular presentation of such a God is in George Lucas's "Star Wars" movie series. Lucas wrote, "When you are born, you have an energy field around you. You could call it an aura. An archaic description would be a halo.... When you die, your energy field joins all other energy fields in the universe, and while you're still living that larger energy field is sympathetic to your own energy field."²⁸ Or as Creme put it, "God is the sum total of all that exists in the whole of the manifested and unmanifested universe."²⁹ God is "Limitless Love."³⁰ By love some New Agers mean "a great cosmic energy" that streams from the center of the universe.³¹

But yet God, according to New Agers, is literally indefinable.³² He is beyond all thought and speech,³³ and is literally "unspeakable, incomparable, beyond description ... what is that? It is impossible to say!"³⁴

Thus the pantheistic God is not a definite person but a presence that transcends all individual beings. As Spangler claimed, "Am I God? Am I a Christ? Am I a Being come to you from the dwelling places of the Infinite? I am all these things, yet more."³⁵ What is more than God? In Spangler's words, it is a "presence" that transcends all concepts of God, an infinite reality.³⁶ Thus "that central Reality can be called by any name that man may choose according to his mental or emotional bent, racial tradition and heritage, for it cannot be defined or conditioned by names."³⁷ Indeed God is called both good and evil. He has a "light side" and a "dark side."³⁸

²⁷ David Spangler, *Reflections on the Christ* (Farres, Scotland: Lecture series, 1978), p. 87.

²⁸ *Time*, May 19, 1980, p. 73.

²⁹ Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 115.

³⁰ Spangler, *Revelation*, p. 60.

³¹ Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 122.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

³³ P. Swami, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* (Hollywood, CA: Vedanta Press, 1963), p. 45.

³⁴ *Upanishads*, 6. 7, quoted by Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), p. 34.

³⁵ Spangler, *Revelation*, p. 60.

³⁶ Spangler, *Reflections on the Christ*, p. 82.

³⁷ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 144.

³⁸ George Lucas, *The Empire Strikes Back* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1980), p. 134.

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Spangler even went so far as to say that the ultimate force in the universe has two sides—the “Christ” side and the “Lucifer” side.

Christ is the same force as Lucifer but moving in seemingly the opposite direction. Lucifer moves in to create the light within through the pressure of experience. Christ moves out to release that light, that wisdom, that love into creation so what has been forged in the furnace of creation can become a light unto the world and not simply stagnate within the being.³⁹

JESUS CHRIST

The New Age view of Jesus Christ involves a separation of the human Jesus from the divine Christ spirit (or office), which New Agers believe dwelt in Him and other great religious teachers. According to Benjamin Creme, “Christ” said, “I am your Friend and Brother, not a God.”⁴⁰ Again, “the Christ is not God.”⁴¹ When a woman knelt to worship Jesus, He supposedly replied, “Good woman, stay; take heed to what you do; you may not worship man; this is idolatry.”⁴²

Jesus is divine “in exactly the sense that we are divine.”⁴³ That is, “He is Divine, having perfected Himself and manifested the Divinity potential in each of us.”⁴⁴ For according to some New Agers, “Christ was the most advanced human ever to walk on this planet.”⁴⁵ But this same Christ spirit dwelt in “Hercules, Hermes, Rama, Mithra ... Krishna, Buddha, and the Christ.” All these were “perfect men in their time, all sons of men who become Sons of God, for having revealed their innate Divinity.”⁴⁶ So, as Creme admits, “in the esoteric [occult] tradition the Christ is not the name of an individual but of an office in the Hierarchy” (of occult masters). That is, Christ is a master occult magician who, according to Dowling, solved “the problem of the ages” by showing that “human flesh can be transmitted into flesh divine.”⁴⁷

³⁹ Spangler, *Reflections on the Christ*, p. 40.

⁴⁰ Benjamin Creme, *Messages from Maitreya the Christ*, vol. 1 (Los Angeles: Tara Press, 1980), no. 19, p. 46.

⁴¹ Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 115.

⁴² Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel*, p. 36.

⁴³ Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 120.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁵ Shirley MacLaine, *Out on a Limb* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), p. 91.

⁴⁶ Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 28.

⁴⁷ Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel*, p. 261.

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Actually many pantheists believe that Jesus did not die.⁴⁸ As Dowling affirms, “Jesus did not sleep within the tomb.”⁴⁹ He was alive, though unmanifest. In His resurrection He simply transmuted from “carnal flesh and blood to flesh of God.”⁵⁰ Jesus took on a body of a “higher tone,” that is, a spiritual one.⁵¹ Even this is not unique, for the pantheistic Christ said, “What I have done, all men will do; and what I am, all men will be.”⁵² Occultists relate all this to degrees of initiation. Jesus was a third-degree “initiate” when He entered the world. He became a fourth-degree “initiate” at His crucifixion and a fifth-degree “initiate” at the resurrection. The same process is open to all men.

MAN

According to New Age thinkers man is basically a spiritual being, not a material one. That is, he is “energy.” “Man is a thought of God; all thoughts of God are infinite; they are not measured by time; for things that are concerned with time begin and end.”⁵³ Man is a soul force. “It is a subatomic force, the intelligent energy that organizes life. It is ... everywhere—[it] is that [which] we call ‘God.’”⁵⁴

Man is the “Breath made flesh.”⁵⁵ “The spiritual being, Man, descended from a subtler plane to assume a body, the necessary sheath in which to live amid earth vibrations.”⁵⁶ But his “body” is not real. “It is a manifest; is the result of force; it is but naught; is an illusion, nothing more.”⁵⁷

Man is basically spirit, and he is essentially good. As Shirley MacLaine put it, “mankind and all life, is basically good.”⁵⁸ Thus “we ascend until we reach the pinnacle of that which life is spent to build—the Temple of Perfected Man.”⁵⁹ For “at the Transfiguration Christ

⁴⁸ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: Allison V. Stewart, 1909), 44:20–30.

⁴⁹ Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel*, p. 255.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 261.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵⁴ MacLaine, *Out on a Limb*, p. 326.

⁵⁵ Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel*, p. 57.

⁵⁶ Trevelyan, *A Vision of the Aquarian Age*, p. 11.

⁵⁷ Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel*, p. 57.

⁵⁸ MacLaine, *Out on a Limb*, p. 204.

⁵⁹ Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel*, p. 55.

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revealed the glory which is innate in all men.”⁶⁰ Thus Dowling’s Jesus said, “What I can do all men can do. Go preach the gospel of the omnipotence of Man.”⁶¹

Since man is infinite and omnipotent, his main task is to discover his own divinity. As one writer stated, “One of the major teachings of the Christ [is] the fact of God immanent, immanent in all creation, in mankind and all creation, that there is nothing else but God; that we are all part of a great Being.”⁶² Marilyn Ferguson illustrates this as she vividly describes the story of a man watching his sister drink milk: “All of a sudden I saw that she was God and the milk was God. I mean, all she was doing was pouring God into God.”⁶³

A New Age “Christ” (known as Lord Maitreya) supposedly gave this message: “My purpose is to show man that he need fear no more, that all of Light and Truth rests within his heart, that when this simple fact is known man will become God.”⁶⁴ So “man is an emerging God and thus requires the formation of modes of loving which will allow this God to flourish.”⁶⁵ Accordingly “the tragedy of the human race was that we had forgotten we were each Divine.”⁶⁶

But if man is God, to whom does man pray? Creme gives a forthright answer:

One doesn’t pray to oneself, one prays to the God within. The thing is to learn to invoke that energy which is the energy of God. Prayer and worship as we know it today will gradually die out and men will be trained to invoke the power of Deity. This is one reason why the Great Invocation was given out—to enable us to learn the technique of invocation.⁶⁷

Actually, New Agers believe in “prayer” not as intercession but as meditation. They believe in consciousness-altering techniques such as yoga, hypnotism, biofeedback, peak experiences, psychotherapies, and psychotechnologies.⁶⁸ The goal of prayer is

⁶⁰ Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 604.

⁶¹ Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel*, p. 263.

⁶² Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 134.

⁶³ Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980’s* (Los Angeles: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980), p. 382.

⁶⁴ Creme, *Messages from Maitreya the Christ*, no. 98, p. 204.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 81, p. 170.

⁶⁶ MacLaine, *Out on a Limb*, p. 347.

⁶⁷ Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, pp. 135–36.

⁶⁸ See Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age*, pp. 47–48.

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“attunement” or “at-one-ment” with God. It is the modern version of Plotinus’s mystical union with God.⁶⁹

Not only is man infinite, omnipotent, and immaterial; he is also essentially immortal, according to New Age thinkers. “Man cannot die; the spirit is one with God, and while God lives man cannot die.”⁷⁰ So eventually “man will come to know himself as the Divine Being he is.”⁷¹

SIN AND SALVATION

New Age thought has no place for sin. Man is basically good. “Evil” is not moral guilt but spiritual imbalance. As Spangler put it, “Man holds the ultimate responsibility for the redemption of what we have come to call ‘evil energies,’ which are simply energies that have been used out of timing or out of place, or not suited to the needs of evolution.”⁷²

In *The Aquarian Gospel* one reads that “evil is the inharmonious blending of the colours, tones, or forms of good.”⁷³ “Evil” exists only on the lower level. As the Zen masters claim, for a man of “character,” “the notions of right and wrong and the praise and blame of others do not disturb him.”⁷⁴ New Ager Mark Satin agrees, saying, “In a spiritual state, morality is impossible.”⁷⁵ So for New Agers, as “for Hindu thought there is no problem of Evil.”⁷⁶ As Mary Baker Eddy claimed, evil is an illusion, an error of mortal mind.⁷⁷

Belief in good and bad is a form of dualism rejected by the monistic views of New Agers. New Age ethics “is not based on ... dualistic concepts of ‘good’ or ‘bad.’”⁷⁸ New Age religion “does not share the Western view that there is a moral law, enjoined by God or by nature, which it is man’s duty to obey.”⁷⁹

This is not to say New Agers are without moral values, but only that the ones they have are *chosen* by man, not *revealed* by God. As Satin put it, “We recognize that we’re

⁶⁹ See Plotinus *Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, 3d ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 5. 5. 6; 6. 9. 4.

⁷⁰ Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel*, p. 19.

⁷¹ Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 36.

⁷² Spangler, *Revelation*, p. 38.

⁷³ Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel*, p. 78.

⁷⁴ Watts, *The Way of Zen*, p. 20.

⁷⁵ Mark Satin, *New Age Politics*, rev. ed. (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1979), p. 98.

⁷⁶ Watts, *The Way of Zen*, p. 35.

⁷⁷ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health*, 584:1–16.

⁷⁸ Spangler, *Revelation*, p. 13.

⁷⁹ Watts, *The Way of Zen*, p. 52.

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responsible for choosing everything—our parents, our personalities, everything. We even experience events as if we've created or willed them in some way."⁸⁰

Rather than believing in opposites like good and evil, right and wrong, New Age proponents hold to one all-embracing cosmic force called "love." This "love" is "a totally impersonal but *all inclusive* cohesive, binding force which draws all men and all things together, and holds them together. It is the energy which makes humanity One."⁸¹

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Since there is no sin (such as breaking of moral law), there is no need for a payment for sin. Thus New Agers do not believe Christ died for man's sin. In fact the "Jesus" of *The Aquarian Gospel* opposed the concept of a Passover lamb. Dowling records these words:

I am disturbed about this service of the pascal feast. I thought the temple was the house of God where love and kindness dwell. Do you not hear the bleating of those lambs, the pleading of those doves that men are killing over there? Do you not smell that awful stench that comes from burning flesh? Can man be kind and just, and still be filled with cruelty? A God that takes delight in sacrifice, in blood and burning flesh, is not my Father-God. I want to find a God of love, and you, my master, you are wise, and surely you can tell me where to find the God of love.⁸²

Crete rejects orthodox Christianity because it presents "a picture of the Christ impossible for the majority of thinking people today to accept—as the One and Only Son of God, sacrificed by His Loving Father to save Humanity from the results of its sins; as a Blood Sacrifice straight out of the old and outworn Jewish Dispensation."⁸³ Bailey adds, "It is impossible to believe that they [New Agers] are interested in the views of the Fundamentalists or in the theories of the theologians upon the Virgin Birth, the Vicarious Atonement."⁸⁴

How then can a person be saved? According to New Age religions, "salvation" is not redemption from sin; it is reunification with God. It is overcoming the inexorable law of karma, which condemns one to suffer in the next life for things done in this one. As Shirley MacLaine, movie star and "pop" theologian of the New Age, stated, "If you are good and faithful in your struggle in this life, the next one will be easier."⁸⁵ So in Spangler's words, "man is his own Satan just as man is his own salvation."⁸⁶ This

⁸⁰ Satin, *New Age Politics*, p. 100.

⁸¹ Crete, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 123.

⁸² Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel*, p. 52.

⁸³ Crete, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 25.

⁸⁴ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 143.

⁸⁵ MacLaine, *Out on a Limb*, p. 45.

⁸⁶ Spangler, *Reflections on the Christ*, p. 39.

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salvation is achieved by some form of consciousness changing or meditation by which one overcomes duality, multiplicity, and inharmony and becomes one with the One (God).⁸⁷ This then is the “attunement” or at-one-ment that constitutes New Age “salvation.”

According to the New Age “prophet” David Spangler it is Lucifer who helps bring unity or wholeness into one’s life. “Lucifer works within each of us to bring us to wholeness, and as we move into a new age, which is the age of man’s wholeness, each of us in some way is brought to that point which I term the Luciferic initiation.”⁸⁸ Spangler further says,

Lucifer, like Christ, stands at the door of man’s consciousness and knocks. If man says, “Go away because I do not like what you represent, I am afraid of you,” Lucifer will play tricks on that fellow. If man says, “Come in, and I will give to you the treat of my love and understanding and I will uplift you in the light and presence of the Christ, my outflow,” then Lucifer becomes something else again. He becomes the being who carries that great treat, the ultimate treat, the light of wisdom.⁸⁹

Lucifer guides all men through a series of experiences geared to awaken in them a sense or awareness of their inner divinity. This guidance continues until a “new light” comes into being (within them) that is capable of manifesting the “One Light” (God). After this light has come into being, the Christ then works to draw that same light out of each man so that there will be an outward manifestation of the newly recognized inner divinity. As Spangler explains, “Lucifer moves in to create the light within through the pressure of experience. Christ moves out to release that light, that wisdom, that love into creation so what has been forged in the furnace of creation can become a light unto the world and not simply stagnate within the being.”⁹⁰ Thus Lucifer and the Christ are seen as partners in this endeavor. It is because of Lucifer’s benevolent role that Spangler calls him “an agent of God’s love.”⁹¹

The goal of the whole process is “Luciferic Initiation,” which refers to a transformation of consciousness. This consciousness is one that recognizes that all past experiences were part of a plan (led by Lucifer) that ultimately led to the recognition and manifestation of one’s inner divinity. This is largely what esoteric salvation is. In light of this it is wrong to fear and reject Lucifer. For the person with this type of attitude Lucifer “plays tricks.”

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 29.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 41.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 40.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 41.

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Eventually, according to New Age belief, everyone will be saved. “The Exponents and the Representatives of all the world faiths are there waiting—under His [the Christ’s] guidance—to reveal to all those who today struggle in the maelstrom of world affairs, and who seek to solve the world crisis, that *they are not alone*. God Transcendent is working through the Christ and the spiritual Hierarchy to bring relief.”⁹² Or, as Robert Short sees it, the “gospel” of the New Age film series “Star Wars” declares that “eventually everyone—even Darth Vader and the Devil—will thankfully serve Christ and worship him.”⁹³

There are many ways to salvation, according to New Agers. “There are a number of paths that can help us return to that experience of unity, that can help us feel at home again in the spiritual and religious states of consciousness. In *Unfinished Animal* Theodore Roszak lists over 150 such paths!”⁹⁴ In fact New Agers believe there is unity in all religions. This is why Baha’ism is so popular among New Agers. As Bailey commented,

God works in many ways, through many faiths and religious agencies; this is one reason for the elimination of non-essential doctrines. By the emphasizing of the essential doctrines and in their union will the fullness of truth be revealed. This, the new world religion will do and its implementation will proceed apace, after the reappearance of the Christ.⁹⁵

FUTURE THINGS

Most New Agers are working for a new world order and unity-in-diversity of all cultures, religions, and countries. Some (e.g., Spangler and Trevelyan) have only a general eschatology, in which Christ “returns” in all humanity. Others have a rather clearly defined doctrine of last things. Bailey gives three basic assumptions of New Age belief about the future.

1. That the reappearance of the Christ is inevitable and assured.
2. That He is today and has been actively working—through the medium of the spiritual Hierarchy of our planet, of which He is the Head—for the welfare of humanity.

⁹² Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 593.

⁹³ Robert Short, *The Gospel from Outer Space* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), p. 55.

⁹⁴ Satin, *New Age Politics*, p. 112.

⁹⁵ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 59.

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3. That certain teachings will be given and certain energies will be released by Him in the routine of His work and coming.⁹⁶

Crete claims that “the Christ” said He would return in June 1945. This “Christ” laid down four conditions:

- [1] That a measure of peace should be restored in the world;
- [2] That the principle of Sharing should be in process of controlling economic affairs;
- [3] That the energy of goodwill should be manifesting, and leading to the implementation of right human relationships;
- [4] That the political and religious organizations throughout the world should be releasing their followers from authoritarian supervision over their beliefs and thinking.⁹⁷

Actually, the pantheistic “Christ” was not to return but only to *reappear*⁹⁸ since, according to Crete, “the Christ” reappeared on July 8, 1977.

He came into the world by aeroplane and so fulfilled the prophecy of “coming in the clouds.” On July 8th, 1977 He descended from the Himalayas into the Indian sub-continent and went to one of the chief cities there. He had an acclimatisation period between July 8th and 18th, and then on July 19th, entered a certain modern country by aeroplane. He is now an ordinary man in the world – an extraordinary, ordinary man.⁹⁹

Following this a full-page ad appeared in major newspapers around the world with the headline, “The Christ Is Now Here.”

Crete believes that “one day soon, men and women all over the world will gather round their radio and television sets to hear and see the Christ: to see His face, and to hear His words dropping silently into their minds—in their own language.”¹⁰⁰ “In this way they will know that He is truly the Christ, the World Teacher.... Also in this way, the Christ will demonstrate the future ability of the race as a whole to communicate mentally,

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 66.

⁹⁷ Crete, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 32.

⁹⁸ Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 597.

⁹⁹ Crete, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 55.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 37.

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telepathically, over vast distances and at will."¹⁰¹ Bailey was frank to admit that "the Christ Who will return will not be like the Christ Who (apparently) departed."¹⁰²

Furthermore, "The Christ is not God. When I say, 'the coming of Christ,' I don't mean the coming of God, I mean the coming of a divine man, a man who has manifested His divinity by the same process that we are going through—the incarnational process, gradually perfecting Himself."¹⁰³

According to Creme, the present "Christ" is a reincarnation of the Christ spirit in an occult master who has lived in the Himalayas for the past 2,000 years.¹⁰⁴ Jesus (of Nazareth), on the other hand, "now lives in a Syrian body which is some 600 years old, and has His base in Palestine."

In the last 2,000 years [Jesus has] worked in the closest relation to the Christ, saving His time and energy where possible, and has special work to do with the Christian churches. He is one of the Masters Who will very shortly return to outer work in the world, taking over the Throne of St. Peter, in Rome. He will seek to transform the Christian Churches, in so far as they are flexible enough to respond correctly to the new reality which the return of the Christ and the Masters will create.¹⁰⁵

This New Age occult "Christ" will soon manifest Himself "creating and vitalizing the new world religion."¹⁰⁶ He "will emphasize our inner connectedness as souls, identical with the one soul [God]."¹⁰⁷ This New Age "Christ" will set up a new world order. This will "involve the reconstruction of the world financial and economic order."¹⁰⁸ By his "presence in the world, He seeks to save millions from death and misery through starvation, and to release from bondage those now languishing in the prisons of the world for the 'crime' of independent thought."¹⁰⁹

World government will not be imposed on mankind but will be the result of the manifested brotherhood. The sharing and the cooperation of all mankind, the redistribution of the produce of the world, will result in world government. Any

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 612.

¹⁰³ Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 115.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁰⁶ Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 612; cf. Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 169.

¹⁰⁷ Creme, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 37.

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attempt to achieve or impose world government without the acceptance of sharing is doomed to failure.¹¹⁰

Of course, the “Christ’s” manifestation is conditional.¹¹¹ It depends on human effort to bring about the “kingdom.” For “the Christ and the Masters are not going to do anything but show the way. They are not going to build the new age. We have to build it. We have still to make the inner changes. We have still to make the decisions of accepting the Plan.”¹¹² As Spangler says, we are “co-creators” of the New Age. In short, just as secular humanism is a form of postmillennial atheism, the New Age movement is an expression of postmillennial pantheism.

Comparisons and Contrasts

One reason professing Christians are being deceived by New Age beliefs is that they look mainly at the *similarities* between New Age and Christian beliefs. These are numerous: both believe in God, Christ, prayer, life after death, and many moral values. They also use terms such as revelation, cross, redemption, resurrection, and second coming.

However, like counterfeit currency, counterfeit religions are not detected by noting their similarities to the genuine, but by taking note of their *differences*. After all, a counterfeit \$10 bill has many similarities to a real one. Hence it behooves believers to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1), knowing that many false prophets have gone out into the world.

The following chart contrasts major teachings of biblical Christianity and New Age pantheism.

| | <i>Biblical Christianity</i> | <i>New Age Pantheism</i> |
|------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| God | Father | Force |
| | Personal | Impersonal |
| | Only Good | Good and evil |
| | Created all things | Is all things |
| Man | Made like God | Is God |

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 169.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 31.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 158.

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| | | |
|---------------------|--|---|
| | Is evil | Is good |
| | Spirit/body | Spirit only |
| | Resurrection | Reincarnation |
| Jesus Christ | Same Person | Different persons ("Jesus" and "Christ") |
| | God-Man | God Spirit in man |
| | Death/resurrection | Death/reincarnations |
| Salvation | From moral guilt | From disharmony |
| | By grace | By human effort |
| | Victory over sin | Victory over fear |
| Faith | In divine power | In human potential |
| | Objective focus | Subjective focus |
| | To see God's will done | To see man's will done |
| Miracle | Done at God's command | Done at man's command |
| | Supernatural power (of the Creator) | Supranormal power (of creatures) |
| | Associated with good | Associated with evil |

Failure to make such crucial differences led the well-known author of *The Gospel according to Peanuts*, Robert Short, to claim mistakenly that the God of the Bible and of "Star Wars" are one and the same God.¹¹³

Careful examination reveals that the Christian theistic view and New Age pantheistic view of God are diametrically opposed. The God of the Bible is not an impersonal force;

¹¹³ Robert Short, *The Gospel from Outer Space*, p. 55.

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He is a personal Father. The true God is not a combination of good and evil; He is absolutely perfect (Matt. 5:48); He is so holy that He cannot look approvingly on evil (Hab. 1:13). Furthermore He is not identical with all things; He created all things (Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:15–16). These contrasts show the difference between the true, living God and the false god of the New Age religions. The same kind of stark contrast exists between the God-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ of Scripture and the reincarnate occult master known as “Christ” in New Age thought.

Books Evaluating New Age Thinking

Space does not allow for a critique of pantheistic New Age thought. This is provided for, however, in the following books.

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In addition to articles in the SCP [Spiritual Counterfeits Project] *Journal* (e.g., August 1978 and Winter 1981–82), articles critiquing New Age thought appear regularly in *Forward* (San Juan Capistrano, CA) and *Cornerstone* magazine (Chicago), and from time to time in other evangelical magazines such as *Christianity Today* (e.g., May 16, 1986), *Eternity* (e.g., October 1984), and *Moody Monthly* (e.g., February 1985).

A critique of the basic pantheistic world view of New Age religions is found in the author's *Perspectives: Understanding and Evaluating Today's World Views*, chapter 4. The best general evaluation of the New Age movement to date is Douglas Groothuis's work, *Unmasking the New Age*.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Geisler, N. L. (1987). "The New Age Movement," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 144, 79–104.