CULTS

– Sunday School Notes –

9 The New Age Movement

The *New Age Movement* is a growing belief system in North America encompassing thousands of autonomous – and sometimes contradictory – beliefs, organizations and events. It blends the theology of pantheistic Eastern religions with practices from Western occultism. The term *New Age* itself refers to the *Age of Aquarius*, which, according to *New Age* followers, is dawning. It is supposed to bring peace and enlightenment and to reunite man with God.

In contrast to other cults, the *New Age Movement* is difficult to define. There is no *New Age Church*, no *New Age Religion*, no officially registered *New Age Organization*, no membership, no founder and no leader of the movement. Instead, it is a widespread way of thinking that appears in many forms, beliefs, and practices such as

> Astrology, Aura, Black and White Magic, Chakras, Chi Energy, Crystals, Druidism, Eastern Mysticism, Extraterrestrials and UFOs, Firewalking, Gaia, Gnosticism, Hare Krishna, Hinduism, Human Potential Movement, Mind Science, Native American Spirituality, Near-death Experiences, Nirvana, Parapsychology, Psychic, Reincarnation, Shamanism, Spiritism, Tai Chi, Taoism, Tarot Cards, Theosophy, Trance-Channeling, Transcendental Meditation, Transpersonal Psychology, Witchcraft, Yin-Yang, Yoga, and Zen.

Some of the practices seem to be little more than innocent relaxation techniques with no religious content – only designed to reduce stress and physical tension. But actually all of them are based of one or more of the following beliefs

1. *All is one – all reality is part of the whole*
2. *Everything is God and God is everything*
3. *Man is God or part of God*
4. *Man never dies*
5. *Man can create his own reality.*

The *New Age Movement* uses a special terminology for these beliefs. Words like *holistic and synergistic thinking, networking, global unity and harmony, cosmic energy, awakening, consciousness*, and *human potential* dominate conversations and writings. They sound esoteric and fascinating, but also hide the true religious content behind a scientific appearance. As a result, *New Age* practices have made their way into almost every area of the culture - sociology, psychology, medicine, the government, ecology, science, arts, the business community, the media, entertainment, sports, education, and even the church. Christians and non-Christians alike have been seduced to accept practices and beliefs that are clearly based on anti-Christian doctrines.

9.1 History

Historically, the *New Age Movement* can be seen as the modern revival of ancient religious traditions and practices. Its actual original roots are found in the Garden of Eden, as described in **Genesis 3:4–5**

> And the serpent said unto the woman, you shall not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

In the original lie, Satan questions God's word and authority and, disputes that death results from disobedience, and claims that through the acquisition of secret or Gnostic wisdom man can be enlightened and can be *like God*. Over the centuries, this lie resulted in a variety of religious traditions and occult practices, which were already strongly condemned in the Old Testament (**Deuteronomy 18:9–17; Isaiah 47:9–15**) but nevertheless developed in the pagan cultures. It continues to its ultimate state of development and will be revealed as Satan's one-world system at the end of the age (**Revelation 17-18**). *(see Pastor's lesson)*

The major world religions whose beliefs and practices are entwined with the *New Age Movement* are *Hinduism* (ca. 3,000 B.C.), *Buddhism*, (ca. 560 B.C.), and *Taoism*, (ca. 500 B.C.). Another prominent occultic influence was *Druidism*, the religion of the Celts, which extended from 300 B.C. into the middle ages. These teachings were transplanted into modern times by Emanuel *Swedenborg* (1688-1772), the *Theosophical Society* founded by Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), and through the First *World Parliament of Religions*, held in Chicago in 1893, which essentially initiated the spread of Hinduism throughout the United States. The 1960s witnessed a particular revival of Eastern mysticism and the study of secret wisdom from India. *Zen Buddhism*, *Carlos Castanada*, *Transcendental Meditation*, and *Yoga* became very popular. In the eighties, *Shirley MacLaine*'s books and television shows gave the *New Age Movement* more popular exposure and momentum.

Today, various research polls are consistently demonstrating that a significant shift has been occurring in the West and that millions of adults have embraced a world view that is totally at odds with the faith they profess. According to surveys 86% of Americans claim to be Christian, yet 72% reject the notion of absolute truth, 40% believe a *New Age* (pantheistic) view of God, 30% believe in reincarnation, and 36% believe that astrology is scientific.

The *New Age Movement* is now comprised of hundreds of groups and individuals who have gained significant influence on almost every area of our culture. The movement expresses itself in widely divergent forms, from the blatantly obvious to the subtle and from the organized religious to the secular ones. As a result, even many Christians have been fooled by *New Age* thinking and now tend to mix beliefs into their faith which in today‘s world sound so plausible but are completely wrong from a biblical perspective. In this sense, the *New Age Movement* is the successful continuation of

Satan's ultimate lie, ultimately aiming at the seduction of Christianity.

> For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. **(Mark 13:22–23)**

On the other hand, not everything labelled with the term *New Age* is actually related to the *New Age Movement*. Record companies, for instance, have discovered, that the label *New Age* is good for marketing purposes. In reality *New Age* music only refers to a certain style of music. Many musicians suddenly found themselves in this category. You will find even certain classical music and some pretty good Christian music in this section.

9.2 Major Doctrines

As far as doctrines are concerned, there is nothing really new in *New Age*. Its two key elements – *Evolutionary Godhood*, the spiritual evolution of man into God, and *Global Unity*, the assumption that everything is linked together – are only modern reformulations of ancient Hindu teachings and almost identical to the foundations of *Christian Science* or *Scientology* – if you abstract from certain peculiarities.

Nevertheless, the *New Age* formulation is smoother and more appealing. The new age, which is soon to come, shall bring peace and enlightenment, harmony, mutual love and acceptance – and who does not want that? Naturally, *New Age* followers look forward to the coming of a new leader who unites the world in love and harmony. *New Age* practices are designed to explore the human potential and to push man ahead into a new spiritual horizon, closer to God and closer to *being* God.

Therefore, we will not only discuss *New Age* beliefs but also reveal how they are hidden in the various *New Age* practices that can be found everywhere in this country.

9.2.1 Sources of Authority – anything but the Bible?

The *New Age Movement* rejects the idea of an absolute truth and therefore does not have any particular source of authority. The only absolute dogma in *New Age* is that *truth is relativistic* – each person has its own reality and subjective experience: what is true for one person may not be true for another. This makes it almost impossible to dispute with devoted *New Age* followers. If you have a different opinion, they simply say "*it's fine – if you believe so, that is your reality*". But they do not think that your reality is relevant for them as well – at least not on the spiritual level.

Nevertheless, due the the sheer number of *New Age* groups there are many publications such as the New Age Journal, Body Mind Spirit, Yoga Journal, Gnosis, East West, Noetic Sciences, and Omega, which influence the minds of *New Age* followers and constantly stir up new concepts.

9.2.2 God

Even though many *New Age* adherents describe God in personal terms, the *New Age* concept of God is quite vague. *God* is an impersonal life force, consciousness or energy – much like "*The Force*" in the movie *Star Wars*. The *New Age* view of the world and the universe is *monistic* and *pantheistic*, which means that everything that exists is of One essence, and that One essence is God. Everything is a different form of that essence and the *Divine Force* is what holds everything together.
There is a variety of colorful descriptions of this divine force in the many *New Age* publications and many names for God among different *New Age* groups, such as *God-consciousness, Universal Love, Self-Realization, the I AM, Higher Self, Brahman, Nirvana*, etc. However, *New Age* generally rejects God as a personal eternal being who created, rules over, and defines the limits of His creation (**Acts 17:24–26**).

9.2.3 Man

The fact that God is in everything obviously elevates the position of man. *New Age* adherents often believe that man is *perfect and divine*, able to create his own reality. In *New Age*, **Psalm 46:10** reads as "*Be still, and know that you are God*". Each individual thus has a *higher self* inseparately and eternally related to its person. For some, this is the immortal soul, for others an extraterrestrial being. The higher self is immortal and has perfect memory. In *New Age* terminology, it lives in *holographic time* which is not bound to the linear order of time as we know it. It is also *androgynous*, that is in perfect balance between male and female, positive and negative energy.
Since man is intrinsically divine, perfect, and with unlimited potential, his only real problem is *ignorance* of that fact. Man's perception of finiteness is in reality an illusion. Thus he needs to become enlightened through experiential knowledge (*gnosis*). *New Age* groups offer various occultic techniques to enable individuals, and ultimately the world, to evolve into this one divine consciousness and to become God again.
An almost universal belief among *New Agers* is an adaptation of the Hindu concept of *reincarnation* which teaches that after death the soul, or essence comes back in another form to continue spiritual evolvement. *New Agers* misrepresent church history, the doctrines of Christianity, and often twist Scripture to support the idea that original Christianity taught reincarnation. For them, *resurrection* and being *born again* is just the same as reincarnation. They argue that the early church suppressed the doctrine of reincarnation and censored its teaching.

9.2.4 Salvation

Reincarnation is usually seen as a step in the progression towards Godhood. But progressive steps are not always guaranteed and the number of reincarnations may run into millions. That is determined by the law of *Karma* – the law of cause and effect. What you are now is determined by what you did in your previous existences. The

higher self remembers everything and these memories need to be resolved and cleared if we are to go on to a higher enlightenment. Self-realization, total enlightenment, or illumination, where the soul enters into the endless freedom from the demanding control of karma, is the ultimate goal. From there on, there is no rebirth – one has reached the *Nirvana*, the place of passionless peace.
In contrast to Hinduism, none of the *New Age* books emphasizes ascetism or clean living as a way to clear the karma. Instead, there is a great emphasis on *Global Unity*. Since everyone and everything is linked together, man is to live in unity with man, nature, the earth, the universe, and God. The *New Age Movement* teaches that we will learn our proper divine relationship with one another and through this achieve harmony, mutual love, and unity. At a first glance, this appears to be a goal well worth to be pursued, but there are several caveats.

- The *New Age* understanding of unity with nature and the earth opposes the Scriptural teaching of man's superiority over plants and animals (**Genesis 1:26-27, 2:19**). While we certainly have to show more responsibility for what God has entrusted to us instead of abusing our planet as we currently do, this does not mean that there are no differences between animals and humans or that we should worship earth and nature, as *Native American Spirituality* and the *Gaia* movement use to do.
- Most *New Agers* believe that harmony can only be achieved through economic unity. They hope for a single world leader, who will eventually guide the world into a harmonious economic whole. The scriptures warn us that such a leader will very likely be the coming Antichrist (**2. Thessalonians 2:3–4**):

  > Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

There is a very thin borderline here between honorable goals and ideas that are in sharp contrast with the Scriptures and we have to learn to discern properly.

9.2.5 Jesus Christ

The *New Age* teachings about Jesus Christ have become very popular among those who believe Jesus to be only a great moral teacher. They believe that during the "lost 18 years" before Jesus appeared publicly at the age of 30, Jesus became an explorer who traveled to far off lands to the spiritual centers in India and Egypt, and Tibet, where he studied under various spiritual masters. During that time he evolved to the state of "the Christ", the ultimate state of self-realization. When he returned to his native people in Israel, He taught a Hindu world view of *Christ consciousness*, expressed in terms that the Hebrews would understand. So Jesus was merely a way-shower, whose primary function is to awaken humanity and illumine the path.

This contradicts everything Jesus said and did. The theory of Jesus studying in India under the gurus simply does not fit into the New Testament record. The gurus are all vegetarians. Jesus ate the Passover lamb, fed multitudes with fish, after His resurrection ate fish demonstrating to He was actually resurrected bodily. Jesus taught one life and then judgment, heaven or hell, which certainly is antithetical to Hinduism. He only quoted books and prophets from the Old Testament, none else. Jesus was without sin, so he could not have broken any even the smallest Jewish law, which means that he had to attend three Jewish feasts every year. Traveling back and forth between India and Israel all the time would simply have been impossible. So, if we accept the biblical account of Jesus, he could not have been in India during the "lost 18 years". Besides, he did not need to study. **Luke 2:41–47** clearly points out that at the age of twelve Jesus already had all the knowledge he needed.

9.2.6 The Holy Spirit

There are no teachings about the Holy Spirit.

9.2.7 Things to come

We are at the beginning of a new age – the *Age of Aquarius*, the eleventh sign of the zodiac. Astrologers say that this age is characterized by a new religious atmosphere and a heightened degree of of spiritual and cosmic consciousness. It will be a time of liberation of the mind, of love and enlightenment, an age of a balanced viewpoint. During this age we will move beyond the masculine God the Father, who has dominated the Piscean age during the past 2000 years, and be nurtured by the Mother-Goddess, a feminine energy.

There are different opinions about when the Aquarian age will begin. Some say that we are already in it. Others believe it will be complete in 2062. There are no astronomical data available to determine this, so it mostly depends on what people believe. In any case, it is supposed to be inaugurated by the coming of a supermind, a perfect being who will lead us into a long awaited era of universal peace, love and joy. For *New Agers* this is the being anticipated by all religions – the Hindu *Avatar*, the *Al Mahdi* of the Muslims, the Jewish *Messiah*, the Buddhist *Maitreya*, or the *second coming of Christ* – they all point to the same being that is soon to come. Actually, in April 1982 full-page ads were placed in all major newspapers around the world claiming that "*THE CHRIST IS NOW HERE*" but he has never been revealed publicly.

From a biblical perspective, events will be quite different. Christ will return visibly for all the world to see – there is no need to announce his presence. But the rapture of his church will be followed by the great tribulation for the unsaved and not an age of universal happiness. Afterwards, the millenial kingdom will be reigned by Jesus Christ, and not by some new Mother-Goddess.

9.3 New Age Practices and Beliefs

New Age is much less a definite cult which emphasizes worship and religious teachings than a movement that is characterized by its practices and the underlying beliefs. In general, *New Age* practices are designed to prepare people for the new age to come and to push them ahead into a new spiritual horizon, towards the *Global Unity*, closer to God and closer to being God. In the following we will briefly discuss some of the activities that come under the umbrella of the *New Age Movement*.

9.3.1 Astrology

Astrology is a method using the position of the planets, sun and moon at the time and place of birth as signposts to explain the person's character, life and destiny. It is based on the occult belief that man and the universe are connected by a mystical force, or are – using *New Age* terminology – in global unity. Therefore, man is a microcosm of the patterns of his planets at birth, and the planets reflect one's inner self. The task of the *astrologer* or the *horoscope* is to interpret the constellations of the star in order to determine what the future will bring for a particular person.
The word *horoscope* comes from the Greek, meaning literally a *watcher of the hour*. A chart of the planetary position at birth purported to reveal the person's destiny. There are three main components of the chart: the *planets*, the *Zodiac signs* and the *Twelve houses*. The planets represent people and aspects of the emotional, mental or spiritual self. The zodiac signs describe the way in which the planets are limited or expanded. The houses represent various areas such as self, home, marriage, career, etc. Thus, roughly, the planets are *who* or *what*, the zodiac signs are *how* and the houses are *where*. Additionally, the angles between the planets must be considered. Present and future influences are read by comparing the present movement of planets to the birth chart, a method called *transits*. Another method, the progressed chart, is calculated with each day after birth equaling a year in real life.
Traditionally, *Astrology* was *fatalistic*: the chart elineated a personality and course already ordained by the planetary influences. Aspects of the chart were seen as either beneficial or adverse. Today, the humanistic view of a person as the master of his or her fate has turned the chart into a set of possibilities and choices. Chart symbols are viewed as having both negative and positive possibilities, which makes the chart a blueprint for the self and soul, a pattern that can be rearranged in various ways by the self-aware individual. For the *New Ager*, *Astrology* is a tool to "know thyself" as well as a tool of divination. Modern *Astrology* prefers to call interpretations of the future "*coming trends*" which will help us to make choices.
There is no clear evidence of how *Astrology* began, but most historians believe that the Chaldeans were the first to develop it. Already in **Deuteronomy 18:9–12** the Bible strongly condemns divination and worship of the heavens, both of which *Astrology* is a part. Verses like **Deuteronomy 4:19, 17:3, Daniel 2:27–28, 5:7, Isaiah 47:13**, and **Acts 7:42** are equally clear.

People have pointed out that *Astrology* occasionally makes very accurate predictions and are therefore convinced the chart is working based on spiritual and mystical universal laws. While the accuracy of certain predictions cannot be disputed, the very fact that not *all* predictions are 100% accurate clearly indicates that *Astrology* is not from God, which can only mean that those involved in *Astrology* operate – often unknowingly – on demonic supernatural power.

9.3.2 Channelling

Channeling is the process whereby a human host claims to enter into an altered state of consciousness thereby allowing a spirit entity to take possession of their body and give instructions to *New Age* believers. This altered state can be in varying degrees of control. Some channelers will have complete control of their body and simply speak the message of the spirit guide. Others will completely loose consciousness, entering a deep trance as the message is given from the entity. A third group of channelers will often remain conscious but will voluntarily yield control of their body for the purposes of allowing the entity to use their hands for writing messages. This form of *Channeling* is more commonly known as *Automatic Writing*.

The history of *Channeling* can be traced back to its earlier more blatantly occult roots of *Spiritism*. In the 1840's the *Fox sisters* claimed to communicate with the spirit of a murdered man. Their convincing act tricked thousands until 1886 when they finally confessed that they were frauds. Nevertheless, the *Spiritism* movement was under way. Proponents of *Spiritism*, *Automatic Writing* and other forms of communication with the dead, were *Helena Petrovna Blavatsky*, who founded *Theosophy* in 1875, *Alice Bailey*, founder of the *Arcane School* in 1923, and others who have influenced the development of *Channeling*. But it was not until the 1960's and '70's that *Channeling* became commonly accepted and even fashionable. Today, there are ten thousands of channels throughout the world today. These channelers travel to *New Age* fairs, seminars and conferences throughout the world, where *New Age* devotees flock by the tens of thousands to hear the latest truths.

The ultimate message of the *New Age* is manifest in the message of the various channelers. That message being, All is God, you are a part of the All, therefore you are God. Since you are God then you can alter reality to fit your view of truth. *New Agers* come to the channelers to find out how they can use the spirit world to influence reality. Again, the Bible strongly forbids communication with the dead (*Necromancy*), as expressed in **Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:9-12 & 15; 1 Samuel 28; 1 Chronicle 10:13-14; Isaiah 8:19**. It should also be noted that channelers either commit fraud (i.e. fake spiritual communication), are self-deceived (2 Thessalonians 2:10; 2 Timothy 3:12) or in actual contact with demons who are masquerading as deceased spirit masters (see **Isaiah 19:3; Ephesians 6:12; 1 John 4:1-3**). Neither of these options is in any way beneficial.

9.3.3 Psychics

Very strongly related to channellers and astrologers are *psychics*, who claim to have many gifts or talents in the area of extrasensual perception, clairvoyance, communication with the spirit world, abilities to read the human aura and use these special skills as a healer or reader. The history of psychics may be traced back thousands of years ago to the seers, shamans, and soothsayers of ancient pagan religions and occult practices. Their spread through Europe and America began in the early 19th century and continued constantly over the past 150 years. During the lifetime of *Jeanne Dixon*, America's most famous psychic, America experienced unparalleled growth in the interest and acceptance of psychics and paranormal phenomena. Over her 50 year career Dixon was advisor to world leaders including US presidents and wrote eight books. At the time of her death in January 1997, Dixon syndicated columns were featured in over 800 daily newspapers worldwide.

Today, the psychic industry has become a remarkably successful business. Psychics offer their services day by day through hundreds of late night commercials and toll-free phone numbers. Dionne Warwick's *Psychic Friends Network* alone is estimated to receive 3 million minutes of calls a month at about $4 per minute. Psychic fairs are commonplace in the US. Metaphysical and *New Age* book stores can be found easily in almost every American city, and the Internet is booming with *cyberpsychics*.

Much of the mystique and lure of modern psychics is the alleged *proof* of their claims through various alleged supernatural manifestations. People often trust psychics because of their persuasive demonstrations, although the history of psychics is littered with cases of proven fraud. Professional magician James Randi, for instance, has publicly exposed a number of psychics, spiritualists, channelers, and charlatans. One of Randi's first targets was Israeli psychic *Uri Geller*, tested by the Stanford Research Institute for his powers to bend spoons and levitate objects. Randi demonstrated that the tricks were actually very simple and much assisted by the people's imagination.

The likelihood of fraud and fakery is one reason the Bible warns against relying on *signs and wonders* as evidence for truth-claims. Jesus always refused to give additional signs to those who did not believe his message, for he knew that people get easily deceived by signs. "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect" (**Mark 13:22**). The Bible tells us not to look at celebrated random examples of some accurate predictions, but requires a prophet to be 100% accurate all the time. Jeanne Dixon certainly was not always accurate, and neither are any of today's psychics.

But even real examples of spiritual manifestations would not prove the phenomena is harmless or from God. The Bible warns of demons, *seducing spirits* and *doctrines of devils* (**Timothy 4:1**).

> Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (**1 John 4:1**).

9.3.4 Extraterrestrials and UFOs

The UFO phenomenon has increased steadily over the last 50 years. While in the 1950's only 3-1/2% of the US population believed in UFOs this number has risen to an impressive 75–85% today. The past has no shortage of witnessing strange sightings in the heavens that could not be verified as comets or some other natural phenomenon and the search for *extraterrestrial intelligences* is well underway. There is the Californian S.E.T.I. Institute (*Search for extraterrestrial Intelligence)* and numerous other groups. The *Voyager* spacecraft has been sent out into space accompanied with a message to try and contact some other life in outer space. The *Aricebo Observatory* in Puerto Rico is involved as well as many others from different countries.

How did we get to this view of mankind being just another species in the universe? It has become the inherent consequence of our acceptance of the evolution theory. It is only natural, we are told, that while we were developing here on this planet the same could have been happening elsewhere given the correct conditions. Given enough time anything can happen. Some scientists even suggest that there could be beings so beyond man on the evolutionary scale that they would look like Gods to us and many people are certainly fascinated by this idea.

It is interesting to observe how the idea that extraterrestrial beings could pay us a visit mutated from a scare into something that quite a few people actually hope for. In the late 40's Orson Wells narration *The War of the Worlds* over the radio scared hundreds of people out of their houses. Through the 1950's the movies expressed our fears of these alien visitors as enemies waiting to take over our planet. But slowly our attitude changed. TV shows like *Star Trek* gave us space as the final frontier, and an acceptance to move out beyond our earth. New movies came showing that UFOs were not really our enemies but our friends, welcoming us to a new frontier.

In fact, true UFO believers are looking for a *technological savior* to show up in the sky and expect spirit beings to land here on earth to help establish a new world order. More than 700,000 people have already reported sightings of UFOs or claimed abductions. Others claim to be in constant communication with extraterrestrials. They receive *Transmissions* through what we already know as *Channelling* and *Automatic Writing*. The messages are identical to ones the mediums and spiritists have been getting for centuries, just a bit more with technological slant.

One message received over and over again says "*The Christ of the Aquarian age will arrive in the first public spaceship landing, to be seen by all your people on international satellite television*", and many *UFO* believers are looking forward to that day. Just imagine a landing of UFOs and one comes out arrayed in white saying he is the Christ. Do you think the world would be convinced? After all he came just as he left from the sky and every eye will behold him. What if he had powers and was able to do signs or miracles, how could anyone refute it?

But if that were to happen, would it really be Christ stepping out of the UFO? Wouldn't it be just one of the greatest deception ever fostered upon mankind – with the potential of leading millions of people astray? What can we actually expect from UFOs and extraterrestrials?
According to the descriptions of UFOs defy the laws of physics. They travel at speeds of 5,000 to 10,000 mph without making a sonic boom. They make immediate stops and survive the inertia. They are invisible on photographs, disappear and reappear somewhere else. So if UFOs actually exist, they are certainly not from this physical world and you don't really want to get in contact with them. Reports of those who claim to have been abducted by UFOs are strongly reminiscent of medieval tales of encounters with demons and the communication between extraterrestrials and mankind strongly resembles well-known occult techniques.
The Bible does not give the slightest hint about life on other planets. Scripture indicates that God created only two kinds of intelligent beings, angels and men. Man was placed here on earth, created in the image of God and with a special relationship to him. No other intelligent beings have ever been created and there are certainly no extraterrestrials. The belief in UFOs and extraterrestrials is nothing but a technologically modified version of the age-old deception that shall lure people into getting into a contact with demons and follow practices that the Scriptures clearly forbid.

9.3.5 Hare Krishna

Hare Krishna, the Krishna consciousness movement can be traced back the India of early 1500's, where public chanting the names of Krishna was first practiced. During the next centuries it experienced several declines and revivals in India and began to conquer the Western World in 1965, when *A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada* emigrated to the United States, opened a store-front center, published his religious magazine *Back to Godhead*, and founded the *International Society for Krishna Consciousness*.
The spirit of the late sixties helped the movement to grow rapidly. George Harrison's song *My Sweet Lord*, probably the most famous instance of public *Hare Krishna* chanting, made the movement quite popular. After the death of Prabhupada in 1977 the *International Society for Krishna Consciousness* has gone through several legal and doctrinal conflicts, including several murder cases and child abuse lawsuits, but managed to survive until this day.
Essentially, *Hare Krishna* is a Hindu-type religion with its own temples and preaching centers. It looks to Krishna as the "*Supreme Personality, the Lord, the complete whole, the Absolute Truth*". Krishna is the creator of all that exists; even the gods worshiped in other religions are simply '*'plenary expansions or parts of Krishna*". Krishna is the Supersoul who enters into everything that is. Thus everything is just "*part and parcel of the Supreme Lord*".

The Bible is acceptable in *Hare Krishna* but it is taught that the Vedic literature of Hinduism contains much more specific information about God than you'll find in the Bible. Jesus Christ, for instance, is one of the demi-god manifestations of Krishna, sent to be the spiritual master of particular people in a particular time. But the true mediator between God (Krishna) and humanity is A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. He is referred to as *His Divine Grace*, a title he chose for himself. It is even said of him that "*Prabhupada was a world-genius, greater than Jesus*" and that he is to be "*honored as highly as the Supreme and Almighty Lord*"
According to *Hare Krishna*, man's only problem is his lust for temporal pleasures rather than love for Krishna. This lust keeps humanity trapped in the material world, rather than pursuing salvation, through millions of reincarnations and the law of Karma. Salvation from this endless cycle is attained only through following the spiritual disciplines of Krishna consciousness. These spiritual disciplines include:

1. *Chanting* the Hare Krishna mantra, the holy name of the Lord Krishna for about 1-1/2 to 2 hours each day, which is considered the solution to all problems.
2. *Distributing Hare Krishna literature*, which may result in the salvation of both member and recipient
3. *Keeping the prohibitions* against four degrading activities that cause humanity to submit to lustful. These are (1) gambling, (2) intoxication from alcohol, drugs, caffeine, and nicotine, (3) sexual activity outside marriage and for any purpose other than procreation, and (4) animal slaughter – which means you have to be strictly vegetarian.
4. *Dressing appropriately.* Men are supposed to shave their head except for a small tuft toward the back of their head and wear an orange Hindu dress. Women wear beautiful and modest Indian *saris*. In recent years the dress code has been eased for those whose assigned duties related to meetings with the general public.
5. *A strictly regulated communal life.*

Although *Hare Krishna*'s emphasis is more religious than the average *New Age* activity, it is based on the same beliefs. The aim at a high degree of purity is certainly honorable but the *Hare Krishna* approach is not the way to salvation. Salvation is not earned by erasing karma through reincarnation, repetition of a mantra, or following an extensive list of rules and rituals. Humans live only once, and then face judgment from God (**Hebrews 9:27**) and the only way to get saved is provided by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 2:8-10**).

9.3.6 Transcendental Meditation and Yoga

Transcendental Meditation, which is advertised as a meditative method of obtaining serenity without drugs, was brought to the West in 1959 by *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi*. It offered peace, happiness and spiritual growth through a system of deep meditation and soon acquired a celebrated following including such famous names as the Beatles, Mia Farrow, and various sport stars. However, is popularity sagged in the late 60s and the Maharishi saw it necessary to revise *Transcendental Meditation*. He shifted the emphasis in the presentation of *Transcendental Meditation* from the spiritual to the practical and scientific to evade both materialistic and religious resistance to his spiritual teachings. *Transcendental Meditation* was presented to the Western world as a scientific way of reducing stress and finding peace within oneself. This strategy permitted *Transcendental Meditation* to obtain government support and a place in the curriculum of public schools. Today, it has become the most widely practiced form of meditation in the country. Thousands of school teachers have become meditators through this system and many have encouraged their students to practice *Transcendental Meditation* as well.

However, while *Transcendental Meditation* strives to couch its concepts in neutral terms and promotes its medicinal benefits as a form of relaxation, it nevertheless incorporates the fundamentals of Hinduism into its approach. Though the techniques can be learned in a purely mechanical way, answers to *How* and *Why* inevitably take the novice into the realm of Eastern philosophy.

According to *Transcendental Meditation*, man‘s ultimate need is for a state of consciousness called *Unity* and man‘s deepest difficulty is his lack of consciousness of his own divine Being. Instead of attaining consciousness of God, people try to be good or merely think *about* God. To quote Maharishi Mahesh Yogi himself, "*All misery in the world is due to missing this one point*"

The *Puja*, an initiation rite leads the novice goes through a ceremony worshiping the Hindu deities and offering them sacrifices. It is only after this ceremony has been performed that one may receive his personal *mantra* to meditate upon. The mantra is given by the master to a follower as a kind of weapon to ward off reasoning, thinking, and conceptualization and unite the meditator with the divine within him. In *Transcendental Meditation* the mantra is a group of sounds that is to be repeated silently over and over again in order to draw the mind towards its own essential nature. The mantra must never be spoken aloud or revealed to anyone. There is a reason for keeping the mantra secret. Devotees would quickly find out that their personal mantra was by no means chosen for them only and that it is much more than just a meditation device. Maharishi himself admits that the use of the mantra invokes gods and spirits from the spirit world – and that is its only purpose.

Gradually, the initiate comes under the control of both his instructor and his own mantra. There comes a time when the constant repetition of his mantra produces a numbness of mind, when he does not even hear himself praying to the gods. His mind empties of all thought, leading towards the *merging of self* with the so called *absolute deity*, Brahma. Eventually, adherents to *Transcendental Meditation* lose touch with reality and many end up with mental disorders. Quite a few suffer demon attack and even possession. It is not unusual that *Transcendental Meditation* adherents take up the occult in its many forms, including levitation, witchcraft etc.

Even *Yoga* exercises – currently taught to a about 4 and 5 million people each week – are not as innocent as they may seem seem. Many people take up *Yoga* as a harmless pastime to help relieve tension and aches. Experts say, however, that physically yoga is no more effective than any other form of training. On the other hand, the fact remains that even physical yoga is inextricably united with Eastern metaphysics. Every single minute movement to be found in any yoga exercise is really a prayer to the Hindu gods! Each passive, gentle movement is a symbol which 'speaks' to the spirits and is designed to reach a state of union with oneself as God. In other words, whoever practices yoga actually participates in a Hindu ritual.

Unfortunately, because Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has claimed that *Transcendental Meditation* is not a religion, many Jewish and Christian leaders have endorsed *Transcendental Meditation* to their congregations, and practice it themselves. But the origin of *Transcendental Meditation*, its initiation rite, nature, practice, and theory are religious at the core. *Transcendental Meditation* is pure Hinduism and not compatible with Christianity. Christians who take up *Transcendental Meditation* or *Yoga* seriously, will eventually lose all love for their Savior and God, begin to accept *other gospels*, and usually start to say that God can be reached by other faiths. Some may also experience the other horrific problems already mentioned.
Transcendental Meditation is not to be fooled with or toyed with. It is a cult, a lie of the devil, and cannot, in any form, be mixed with Christianity.

It is a sad truth that many of the *New Age* beliefs already made their way into the curriculum of our public schools, often under the disguise of neutral, academic, psychological, or scientific sounding terminology. Terms like *transpersonal psychology, guided imagery, visualization, human potential, inner guides* sound so innocent. Unconventional educators and parents may actually believe that by endorsing these disciplines they are truly helping students and society at large.
Indeed, Yoga and meditation may calm a nervous student; visualization and guided imagery could help improve his creativity; teaching principles of psychic development may enhance his sense of self-importance and increase his sense of power. But many educators and parents do not realize that these techniques already cross the thin line between a normal use of relaxation or imagination and occult techniques or philosophies. Integrating these methods and ideas into school curricula will lay a heavy burden on our children and future generations. Again, we must learn to discern: unconventional new methods may be very helpful but we must not allow the occult to spread further in our schools.
The U.S. Supreme Court has held that religious practice in the schools constitutes a violation of the Establishment clause of the First Amendment since public schools cannot promote the practice or ideology of any religion. If we cannot teach Christian values in schools anymore, we can at least make sure that other religions will not be taught as well – even if they come under the disguise of scientific terms.

9.4 Summary

The *New Age Movement* is a conglomerate of seemingly unrelated groups, techniques, and beliefs that keep influencing each other and constantly create new mixtures. Its characteristic is not a homogeneous doctrine, but practices that are based on a modern version of Satan's original lie. Although no leader can be made out, one can clearly observe how Satan himself orchestrates the whole movement, spreading his lies wherever he can find people open to deception.

Discussions with *New Agers* sometimes appear to be hopeless. But if you address the fundamental issues – the irrationality of relativism, the inconsistencies of living out the *New Ager* view of the world, factual and historical errors, and the biblical account of the real God, Jesus, and gospel – then they may realize that there is a choice to be made instead of blurring the distinctions, and that love and forgiveness can not be found in an impersonal force but only in the God of the Bible.

10 Dealing with Cultists

We have gone over the teachings of 8 major cults and the biblical responses to their teachings. Now that we know what they believe – what can we do if we get into contact with people that are involved in a cult or the New Age Movement? Witnessing to them can be very frustrating, if you let them steer the discussion, because you will mostly dwell on topics that are not relevant for their salvation. *You* should be the one who asks questions concerning their beliefs about the fundamental issues. Recall however, that you are trying to reach a lost soul behind the wall of indoctrination, so you should keep a few things in mind.

1. *Do not argue and do not attack or ridicule the person.*

   Avoid anything that could even sound like you are attacking the person. They have a right to have their beliefs.
2. *Do not denigrate the character of the cult's founder*.
3. *Know and use the word of God* – it is quick and powerful (**Hebrews 4:12**). Keep in mind that throwing Bible verses at persons is not enough. You need to know the context in which it was used.
4. *Know what the cult believes* and be ready to ask specific questions about issues where it deviates from the word of God.
5. *Give your own testimony* about what Christ has done for you. There is nothing more convincing than that.
6. *Exalt the Lord Jesus Christ*: He is Lord of all and salvation is through Christ alone. This has to become very clear.
7. *Consciously depend upon the Holy Spirit*. Under his guidance you will be able to reach out.

Of course, there is no guarantee that you will be able to rescue a deceived soul. Sometimes you just have to let them go and pray that the word of God will continue to work in his life, because

> As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth. It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. **(Isaiah 55:10–11)**