



# **The New Age Movement**

## **In this class session we will study:**

- The ways in which Christians are vulnerable to New Age ideas.
- The unique mind-set of New Agers.
- The historical path through which the New Age worldview has become so prevalent in society.

## **Introduction**

For some, the twenty-first century lends itself to a new philosophy. This worldview involves Eastern mysticism and Western occultism and a fascination with the supernatural. This fascination has led many to make contact and communicate with spirit entities. It also involves a never-ending search for the higher self, the god within.

According to astrologers, this millennium coincides with the beginning of the Age of Aquarius and the dawning of a new age of enlightenment that promises peace, harmony, and prosperity. Consequently, this New Age utopian mirage has captured the imagination of many would-be seekers of truth and wisdom.

The New Age is an umbrella term that covers a range of interests, beliefs, and practices: holistic health and wellness; altered states of consciousness through Eastern mystical meditation and visualization techniques; self-awareness of the god within; self-motivation can-do disciplines; esoteric, out-of-body experiences; reincarnation and past lives; a revival of the occult, parapsychology, and the psychic phenomena; global community oneness; nature worship (respect for Mother Earth, Gaia); and feminine wisdom and goddess worship.

## **The purpose of this book**

This course seeks to:

- acquaint the reader with the New Age movement so it can be more readily identified.
- provide background knowledge and thinking of the New Age movement.
- supply Bible study outlines for witnessing to friends or relatives who are caught up in the New Age.

The best way to use this material is to view it as a resource manual when witnessing to New Agers who are seeking truth or who show an interest in

Christianity. It contains:

- a section on the New Age areas in which Christians are most vulnerable.
- a history of the emergence of the New Age movement, which coincides with the emergence of modern spiritualism for the last days.
- a description of the New Age movement and those who are involved in it.
- a list of entry points or pathways that can lead individuals into the New Age movement.
- several New Age beliefs that seem similar to Adventist beliefs but in reality are quite dissimilar.
- Bible study outlines designed for those involved in the New Age along with valuable background material and summaries.
- a glossary of New Age vocabulary and phrases, including words common to Christianity that have different usages in the New Age worldview.

## Areas of vulnerability for Christians

New Agers, generally speaking, are seeking truth and a new spirituality, but they won't join a Christian church because they want freedom to do as they please, without condemnation or control. So they join the New Age movement, deceived into thinking they will gain freedom, truth, love, peace, and an awareness of their divine nature.

On the other hand, Christians—even sincere Christians—can get caught up in the New Age without realizing it, since its philosophies, beliefs, and practices are subtle and demonic. Some of the areas in which Christians are most vulnerable are: literature, astrology, psychology, holistic health, meditation, music, and martial arts.

## Literature

*Psychology.* Many have New Age literature in their homes, unaware of its undermining influence. New Age psychologist<sup>1</sup> M. Scott Peck's books (*The Road Less Traveled*, *Further Along the Road Less Traveled*, and *In Heaven as in Earth*) have infected a whole generation of Christian readers with pagan concepts and beliefs. These include reincarnation, divine grace within.<sup>2</sup> Some Sabbath School classes have even replaced the study of the Bible study guide with Peck's books. According to author Will Baron, 80 percent of the books in the self-help/psychology section of popular bookstores have been written by New Agers. It is, according to Baron, the main entry of most people into the New Age.<sup>3</sup>

*Health and healing.* It may be that an interest in health has led some to read books that promote alternative New Age holistic health. Examples

are those written by Harvard-trained physician Andrew Weil (*Spontaneous Healing*) or those by the Hindu mystic Dr. Deepak Chopra. Chopra has authored mega-selling books such as *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind*, and *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*. *Time* magazine referred to him as The Emperor of the Soul.<sup>4</sup> Both doctors practice so-called integrative medicine, a combination of Western with ancient Eastern medicine. Chopra uses *ayurvedic*, or Hindu, medicine; Weil combines traditional Chinese medicine with conventional medicine.

## Review

*Why are New Agers so unwilling to join established religions and churches?*

*In what areas are Christians most vulnerable to New Age influences?*

*Explain why New Age is called an umbrella term.*

New Age holistic health has become so popular that the January 1993 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that one in three Americans was using unconventional medicine.<sup>5</sup> A *Time* magazine cover story, entitled *Why New Age Medicine Is Catching On*, states that the growth of alternative medicine, now a \$27 billion-a-year business, is more than just an American flirtation with exotic New Age thinking. It reflects a gnawing dissatisfaction with conventional, or allopathic medicine.<sup>6</sup>

*Near-death experiences.* Some perhaps have been intrigued by Betty J. Eadie's books *Embraced by the Light*, describing her near-death experience or *The Awakening Heart: My Continuing Journey of Love*, dealing with the unveiling of the mysteries of the spirit realm.

*New Age bookstores.* In the past two decades, the demand for New Age literature has been astonishing. One New Age book distributor in the United States reported that he has 3,200 bookstores on his customer list. The Bodhi Tree in West Hollywood, California, named after the kind of tree that Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) was supposed to be sitting under when he was inspired with the four noble truths, is one of the largest New Age bookstores in America. Its shelves stock more than 27,000 New Age titles in approximately 300 sections. Topics range from New Age cuisine to Tantric sex, from Luciferian initiations to New Age Christianity.

## Astrology

Seemingly innocent readings of horoscopes have led some into involvement with occult teachings of astrology and the spirit world. One member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church became involved when her coworkers convinced her to join them in reading the daily horoscope before they began their workday. At first, it seemed like innocent fun. Then someone suggested that they graduate from daily horoscope readings in the newspaper to consultations with a real astrologer. When it came time for the Adventist woman to consult with the astrologer, however, she felt something was not quite right and declined. From that very night, whenever her husband was away on business, she clearly heard the noises of people trafficking in and out of her upstairs bedrooms. Every time she went to check, the noises

would stop, but as soon as she went back downstairs, they resumed. It got to the point that she could no longer stay in the house by herself at night. When she decided to make the problem a matter of fervent prayer, these evil spirits were at last driven from her home.

## **Electronic Games**

Many of the Super Nintendo, Sega Genesis, and Sega Saturn electronic video games involve blatant occult themes and practices such as black and white magic, casting of spells, and personal interactive fantasy role-playing that can seem as real as life itself. One girl, normally mild-mannered and obedient, became what her mother described as demon-possessed, belligerent, and reclusive after several weeks of playing her occult-themed Nintendo electronic games. Only after much prayer by her parents and her decision to get rid of her games was she able to return to her normal self.

## **Holistic Health**

Adventists are especially vulnerable in the area of New Age holistic health because it is promoted as natural and noninvasive and offers the opportunity for patients to participate in their own restoration. The danger, however, is that the principles of holistic health are based on unbiblical worldviews, manipulation of universal energy, mystical meditation, divination, and mind cure. This subtle area of the New Age will be discussed in more detail in a later class.

## **Meditation**

Meditation employed by New Agers, such as Transcendental Meditation (TM), mystical meditation, yoga, visualization, and guided imagery, involve altered states of consciousness. They are a form of self-hypnosis and quite different from biblical meditation. In their preparation for meditation, New Agers place special emphasis on one or more of the following: focusing, relaxation, breathing techniques, sitting positions, mantras (short phrases recited repeatedly to create a resonating effect in the sinuses for relaxation), and mandalas (an intricate circular design as an object for concentration). The ultimate purpose of New Age meditation is purported to be an awareness of the higher self, the god within, oneness with the universe, or contact with spirit guides and entities.

Some elementary public school teachers employ guided imagery during a meditative period to help their students deal with stress. Corporations offer Eastern meditation seminars to help their employees achieve optimum creativity and productivity.

Through the influence of New Age books such as Morton Kelsey's *The Other Side of Silence: A Guide to Christian Meditation*, some pastors conjure the image of Christ and dialogue with Him, then encourage their members to do the same. Christian prayer is replaced with elements of Eastern meditation by misguided members in an attempt to have a closer relationship with the Lord.

## Music

New Age music can be divided into three categories:

- Pop music that promotes New Age philosophies and beliefs through its lyrics. The Beatles, as will be described later, were among the first to do this. Others more current are Elton John with his song *Circle of Life* from the movie *Lion King* referring to the transmigration of life or reincarnation; and Vanessa Williams' *Colors of the Wind* from the Walt Disney movie *Pocahontas*, which clearly promotes pantheism.
- Music with subliminal messages, such as that used in programs for weight loss, smoking cessation, speed reading, memory enhancement, and self-confidence.
- Muzak—meditative music, mainly harmonic, ambient sounds (surrounding, embracing, eerie) usually without melody, rhythm, or lyrics. Labeled as New Age music, it is usually composed on electronic synthesizers and often incorporates nature sounds into the recording. Much of this music is influenced by Hindu, Eastern, and native Indian music as well as by monastery chants. Some of the composers of this type of music are: Vangelis, John Serrie, Kitaro, Yanni, Shakti, Stephen Halpern, Enya, and Enigma.

Stephen Halpern, for example, has produced many albums that clearly integrate Eastern mystical practices with his music. His '*Spectrum Suite*' is designed to enable listeners to focus on each of the seven *chakras* (energy centers) in their bodies, which he thinks correspond to seven colors and sounds. Halpern says, In my work, I seek to align myself with that force, and to uplift the life energies of the performer and listener in order to bring them into closer attunement with their own God-Self.<sup>7</sup> Advertisements for his tapes state that his music has a subliminal effect upon the listener.

*Enigma* is perhaps one of the most demonic meditative New Age albums available in music stores today. One of the song titles in this album, *The Voice and the Serpent*, should be enough to alert a person as to its content. The lead song, *The Voice of Enigma*, is a meditative, mystical experience into the dark spirit world through guided imagery.

Of the three types of music, the meditative type is the most subtle and deceiving because it does help relax and relieve tensions, perhaps through a subliminal hypnotic effect. Some Christian musicians have also composed the same type of harmonic, mystical meditative music. The only difference is that they give their song titles biblical names. Some churches, unaware of what New Age meditative music is all about, play it as background music at various interludes during the service on Sabbath morning. The spiritual danger is that this kind of music, originally designed and written to help prepare the listener for Eastern mystical meditation, can be an entry point or pathway into the occult/pagan spirit world of the New Age.