

TRUTH IN THE TEST TUBE 711

What Is New Age? (First in SERIES of 3)

VOICE: Professor, I'm confused. Several of my friends are talking about "New Age" and "the New Age Movement." But some of them say it's one thing, and others insist it's something completely different.

PROF.: That doesn't surprise me. Let's figure out, what is "New Age," really?

FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

VOICE: Professor, what is the New Age movement?

PROF.: The "allaboutspirituality.org" website answers, "New Age is a combination of metaphysical, Eastern-influenced thought systems. ... This movement comprises countless 'theologies' that often center on religious tolerance and moral diversity. The main phrases (or 'isms') that reveal the focal point of New Age thought are 'feel-goodism' (do whatever feels good, as long as you are not hurting someone else), 'moral relativism' (situational ethics), and 'pluralism' (universal tolerance)."

VOICE: "Universal tolerance" and "moral relativism" seem to mean New Age followers think nothing is right or wrong. They can do whatever feels good to them.

PROF.: Yes. Author Bob Larson is an expert on cults and "alternative spirituality." He has lectured in more than 80 countries and written more than 30 books.

We're basing much of today's discussion on his 574-page book, *Larson's Book of World Religions and Alternative Spirituality*. It is copyright and used by permission of NavPress, all rights reserved, and represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

VOICE: Larson begins his chapter on the New Age Movement, saying, "The name *New Age* has been around for decades. But what is it, and who started it?"

PROF.: He answers, "The New Age encompasses many aspects. Extrasensory perception claims to perceive things by means other than the physical senses, such as telepathy and clairvoyance. Telepathists claim to transfer thoughts into the mental states of others. Clairvoyants claim to receive information from an object or event. Some New Agers... claim to predict the future through dream therapy, numerological consultations, and tarot card readings."

Much of it is based on astrology, not astronomy. One magazine recently pointed out, "Astrologers don't claim to be scientists and the feeling is mutual. Says NASA, 'Astrology is something else. It isn't science.'" ¹

VOICE: But the advice from those sources is often wrong. Some people have followed that kind of investment advice and lost their life savings. Others have married a person that an "adviser" suggested, and regretted it the rest of their lives.

1 Tasmin Crimmens, "The Age of Aquarius: Leaving 2016 and Entering a Period of Revolution," *Elle Magazine*.

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PROF.: Wikipedia says, “New Agers develop their own worldview ‘by combining bits and pieces to form their own individual mix.’” Larson calls it “a spiritual cornucopia.” Others call it “supermarket spirituality.” CrossWalk.com adds, “Each New Ager fills his tray with whatever assortment fits his appetite. All is liberally seasoned with self-centeredness.”²

VOICE: So believe whatever you want. There is no doctrinal statement, no Bible or other source that all New Agers accept as their authoritative guide. That's similar to the “spiritual but not religious” way some of my friends describe themselves.

PROF.: One major emphasis is to draw ideas from various sources – blending them, even if they contradict each other.

VOICE: Blending contradictory ideas? That can be confusing.

PROF.: Some of the movement's leaders suggest that the term New Age may be outmoded. *New Age Journal* changed its name to *Body and Soul* magazine” in 2002. Many stores display their spirituality books in the “mind-body-spirit” section.

Dr. Ron Rhodes identifies several characteristics of the movement, in his booklet titled *New Age Movement*. Its followers believe everything is one unified whole, that everything is part of the divine nature, and people are divine beings. In other words, *that humans are gods*.

VOICE: Some New Agers use expressions like “the Copernican mindset.” Copernicus revolutionized our understanding of the solar system. He displaced the idea that the sun rotated around Earth, and replaced it with planets orbiting the sun. But what does that have to do with New Age ideas?

PROF.: “Displacement” is a good word to describe New Age thinking. It attempts to displace the present system in which various worldviews **confront** each other, and replace them with a worldwide **oneness** of soul and spirit.

VOICE: Unity sounds like an improvement, compared to the factions, strife and wars that we have today.

PROF.: It would be, if it were the *right kind*. But Larson points out, “...Instead of Ghandis...and Christs to guide the way, there are millions of alternate thinkers, each seeking separation from the past while favoring new explanations of reality.”

One website features a drawing of a big red heart, with planets revolving around that heart. The “Copernican mindset” would be the belief that humans are at the center of the spiritual universe, with everything else orbiting around us.³

2 Barbara Curtis, “What Is ‘New Age’ Religion, and Why Can’t Christians Get on Board?,” Crosswalk.com

<http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/what-is-new-age-religion-and-why-cant-christians-get-on-board-11573681.html>

3 John Elkington and Lorraine Smith, “Overdue: The next Copernican mindset,” *The Elkington Report*, April 10, 2017, <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/overdue-next-copernican-mindset-shift>.

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VOICE: What do New Agers make the center of their universe?

PROF.: Themselves – especially their emotions, their wishes and whims. They also follow nebulous “cosmic forces” that are supposedly helping them. The “Jeremiah Project” website explains, “‘God’ is impersonal, cosmic, a God of energy forces. All things, including man, constitute the ONE – called Universal Mind, The Source, Universal Self, Cosmic Consciousness, Universal Presence, or ‘The Force’ – your Inner Voice, Higher Self, or Intuition.”⁴

Larson adds, “The term New Age represents this consciousness, as well as the astrological prediction of the...arrival of an era of the Aquarian Age.”

VOICE: The song “Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In” was popular in the 1960s. It included the words:

“When the moon is in the Seventh House
And Jupiter aligns with Mars
Then peace will guide the planets
And love will steer the stars.
This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius...”

PROF.: Peace guiding the planets and love steering the stars? That's a very idealistic wish.

A completely different interpretation was published last December.⁵ In an article entitled “The Age of Aquarius: Leaving 2016 and Entering a Period of Revolution,” the British magazine *Elle* elaborates that the Aquarius “age” is a “period of revolution fueled by innovation, social media brazenness and free sexuality.”

VOICE: Isn't there a lot of disagreement about *when* the Age of Aquarius supposedly begins? Wikipedia points out that astrologers do not agree on when it will start, or even if it has already started.

PROF.: Right. It takes 26,000 years to cycle through the 12 “signs” of the zodiac. So each “age” is slightly more than 2,000 years. There's no clear line of demarcation that says “yesterday was Pisces and today is Aquarius.”

British astrologer Nicolas Campion [KAM-pee-un] surveyed astrological sources for their opinions. In his 1988 book *The World Book of Horoscopes*, he said a plurality expected that the Age of Aquarius would arrive *in the 20th century*. And the second most popular opinion was the 24th century.

4 <https://www.jeremiahproject.com/deceptions/seven-major-teachings-new-age/>

5 December 2016.

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- VOICE: So far, it sounds as if New Age thinking is abstract philosophizing. Does it ever affect people's daily lives?
- PROF.: Yes, big time!⁶ Larson points out, “New Age beliefs saturate every aspect of American society, from business to sports, education to government. Meditative techniques, such as self-hypnosis, guided imagery, yoga, and centering, are all used as part of stress management work strategies.”
- VOICE: Astrologers use horoscopes to predict future events, including telling a person which day would be best for him to apply for a job or propose to his girlfriend. Housewives use holistic healing, hoping to cure their children. Couples claim “pyramid power” channels energy to improve their sex lives.
Author Marilyn Ferguson sums up her support of the New Age movement in her book *The Aquarian Conspiracy*. She describes the New Age as a time for people to unleash “the deity within.” She encourages New Agers to “go to the depths of the soul...for all that God can do is focused there.”
- VOICE: If she thinks “all that God can do” is focused in the souls of humans, she has a very small view of God and His ability. The God who reveals himself in the Bible created the entire universe.
- PROF.: The “allaboutspirituality.org” website says, “Although New Age is generally tolerant of almost any world religion or philosophy, it is opposed to the ‘narrow-mindedness’ of Christianity that teaches Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal salvation.”
When they exclude Christ, they develop some very strange alternatives. For example, some school systems encourage children to visualize themselves as animals or objects. One teacher instructed students to imagine tiny vultures living inside them; they would *grow* when the child was bad or *diminish* when the child was good.
- VOICE: Imaginary animals monitoring a child's behavior and hurting him when he misbehaves? That sounds like a New Age substitute for God. The Bible says to God, “O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.”⁷ Displacing God and replacing him with an imaginary vulture is a very poor substitute.
- PROF.: Larson writes, “New Age seekers look for a divine being within themselves... God becomes the self, and the self becomes God.”
- VOICE: “God becomes the self, and the self becomes God.” An upside-down view of reality.

⁶ Very much.

⁷ Psalm 139:2-4.

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- PROF.: Dr. Carl Raschke [RASH-kee], of the University of Denver, analyzes New Age activity on a medical and spiritual level. He calls it “the spiritual version of AIDS” because “it destroys the ability of people to cope and function” – like destroying our emotional and spiritual immune system.
- VOICE: Well, Professor, I've decided that I don't want to get involved with the New Age movement. But you also mentioned that it goes by other names. So how can I detect it when it uses other aliases?
- PROF.: Listen for expressions like “crystals,” “channeling,” “altered states of consciousness,” or “karma.” Those are central to many of the variations of New Age ideas.
Being aware of the terminology of false ideas, helps us to keep our emotional and spiritual immune systems functioning well. We will continue our discussion next time.
- FORMAT: THEME AND ANNOUNCEMENT

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