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God, after the Fall, is a kind of revelation reserved for the regenerate. Only a believer can know God's original intention in nature: knowledge of himself as Creator, Provider, and Redeemer.

## CONCLUSION

Perry Miller argued that once Edwards 'grasped that all we know or can know is the idea garnered from the objects of experience', he 'was dedicated to the proposition that the relation of mind to object, of truth **P. 126** to embodiment, is intimate, vital and indissoluble'.<sup>71</sup> This philosophical dedication led Edwards to the conclusion that the images of nature were not separate from truth; they were truth. To Miller, Edwards was a Lockean typologist who fused nature with grace.

Nature was not truth for Jonathan Edwards. He followed Calvin too closely to make such a theological mistake. He carefully maintained the distinction between the visible and invisible worlds: 'creation is *of* God, and *in* God, and *to* God',<sup>72</sup> but creation never *is* God. The natural order is always a foreshadowing of the greatest Beauty: Christ's excellency.

Although Calvin and Edwards closely linked nature and revelation, Miller's interpretation missed Calvin's passion for natural beauty and therefore missed Edwards' dependence on the reformer. For both, natural revelation condemns fallen humanity. However, for redeemed men and women, nature is a revelation of God's glory which brings the believer in closer union with him. With corrected sight, the regenerate person can use nature to teach Christian truth, see God visibly manifested, acknowledge and praise the Creator, and read the world as a book of types of the world to come. After grace, humanity can respond to God's creation using Calvin's words:

What else can we then do  
But stir ourselves to trust,  
Invoke, praise, love Him?  
For all God's handiwork  
Is made for man.<sup>73</sup>

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# New Age Promise: Age Old Problem?

Evangelical Alliance U.K.

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>72</sup> Edwards, *Dissertation*, 120.

<sup>73</sup> Calvin, *The Piety of John Calvin: An Anthology Illustrative of the Spirituality of the Reformer of Geneva* (transl. and ed. F. Battles; Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1969), 190.

### *Reprinted with permission*

*This popular article sharply focuses our attention on the magnitude of the New Age movement, alerting Christians to the radical nature of the change in world view and lifestyle advocated by the movement. New Age religions and philosophies are attracting large numbers of 'tired souls' and those concerned about the impending ecological disaster threatening the life of the inhabited world. The simplicity of the article leaves many questions unanswered, for not all in alternative medicine, or in the green political movement, or the movement for human potential, are false; but it challenges us to re-examine our basic Christian assumptions. If the roots of the rainbow are deep in the past—folk religion, casteism, mysticism and the occult—how much more do Christians need to discover the Shalom with its roots in the Old Testament, and its hope in the eschaton.*

Editor

## **THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT**

From faith healing on the NHS to psychic festivals in your town hall—a new age of spirituality is upon us.

It is now more than respectable to turn to inner resources or outside powers for enrichment and survival. Indeed, unless yoga, ginseng tea, a belief in reincarnation and a close check on your astrological chart are part of your lifestyle, you could soon be seen as belonging to the Dark Ages.

This flood of disconnected mind-over-matter pursuits gained momentum more than 20 years ago, though they have roots in pagan rites, occult practices and eastern spirituality that are centuries old.

In the 1960s, The Beatles embraced the eastern mysticism of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi; an assortment of astrologers and psychics came to the surface, and a startling variety of alternative healing methods began to capture attention. Today there is a massive industry in what has been dubbed the New Age movement. People dissatisfied with the West's materialistic culture are turning to the East and back to pre-Christian beliefs and practices. Including spirit guides, pyramidology, tarot readings, crystal energy, homeopathy and yoga. It is all here—and more. [p. 128](#)

One mail order catalogue now offers page after page of books on New Age issues—covering a variety of types of fortune telling, psychic discovery and healing methods. Small ads in countless publications provide endless columns of similar products—plus the services of psychics and practitioners in alternative healing. And *The Guardian* ran a regular series of approving articles under the heading of New Age.

Particularly attracted to the New Age way of thinking are young people. They are reaching out to the other-worldly music provided by the likes of Brian Eno, Tangerine Dream and Claire Hamill. And to the loose carefree clothing embossed with mystic Yin/Yang and eastern symbols.

## **ALTERNATIVE WORLD VIEWS**

All this activity is bound to affect the attitudes and actions of 'ordinary' people. It has. An authoritative survey by Mintel shows that 8 out of 10 people would be prepared to use 'natural' rather than conventional 'scientific' medical treatment. The Daily telegraph has described 'a staggering change in attitude' to alternative medicines.

Opinion polls show that 27 out of 100 adults in the UK now believe in reincarnation—the highest rate in Europe As one commentator observed, 'New Age influence is

penetrating our society everywhere—in cinema, psychology, education, politics, business and medicine.’

The underlying beliefs of the New Age movement are steadily capturing the minds of millions and touching almost every corner of our society.

In effect, New Age is ushering in an alternative way to see the world. It is re-establishing an age-old set of assumptions concerning the most vital areas of life—Who are we? What is God like? How do we solve the problems of the world? This strikes at the very heart of both scientific knowledge and the Christian and Jewish tradition that is the foundation of our culture.

These are things in life that we take for granted. Gravity, the four seasons and so on. For Christians, the same is true on issues of personal belief.

God made us—‘*In the beginning God created ...*’ God is personal and listens to our prayers—‘*When you pray say Our Father ...*’ Jesus shows us what God is like—‘*He who has seen me has seen the Father ...*’ We can do things that are wrong and need to be forgiven—‘*Forgive us our sins ...*’

The New Age message tells a different story. Binding this ‘movement’ together are some basic beliefs. [p. 129](#)

These beliefs include—

All is one (monism). A god-like force runs through all creation—trees, animals, rocks, people.

Because everything is the same then ‘all that is is God’ (pantheism). The Earth becomes divine. Things—like crystals—have power and influence.

If all is God, then so are we. To quote New Age guru Shirley MacLaine—or, at least, the ‘Higher Self’ she claimed was talking through her at the time—‘Everyone is God. Everyone’.

Each person is responsible only to themselves—not to a creator God.

‘Right’ and ‘Wrong’, good and evil are merely illusions and different aspects of ‘the One’. Each person decides their own morality.

Humankind has fallen from a past golden age. Previous civilizations—from Atlantis to King Arthur—had a wisdom which we have lost. We have to regain our metaphysical memory—hence the New Age emphasis on consciousness changing techniques—mantras, meditation, yoga and so on.

The universe is in a state of evolution of becoming. And humanity—as part of this process—is becoming more conscious of itself and will eventually fuse with the One.

This way of viewing the world is increasingly influencing almost every area of society. It becomes ever easier to trace its input and influence among scientists, educators, politicians, business executives, sociologists, entertainers and—at times—even some in the Church.

The New Age sounds so very attractive to tired souls. Who would not like to reach their full potential, be in good health and learn how to love a little bit more? But there are those who have serious doubts.

External observers argue that at the end of the the New Age rainbow lies something far less rewarding than is being claimed. That this is actually a world view built on false premises and empty promises.

At the same time some who were once New Age followers speak of never really finding the promise fulfilled or of finding peace within themselves.

This is hardly surprising when you look closer at what New Age really stands for and the age old deceptions on which it is built.

## DISCOVERING THE ROOTS OF THE RAINBOW

The New Age is neither 'new' nor an organized 'movement'.

A major strand of New Age thinking is grounded in the occult. Indeed, the name 'New Age' was coined at the beginning of this century by Annie Besant who later took over from Russian medium and occult writer Helena Blavatsky as leader of the Theosophical Society. Besant also adopted a Brahmin boy, in India, who she believed to be the next Messiah. p. 130

Helen Blavatsky had founded her movement on revelations she had received regarding world affairs from 'ascended masters'—a group from former civilizations who had evolved to a higher plane.

The phrase 'New Age' refers to the dawning of the new age of Aquarius—based on the astrological theory that each 'star-age' lasts for 2000 years. We are, so New Agers claim, on the way out of the sign of Pisces, the fish, a sign identified with Christianity. The new Aquarian age replaces that with one of humanism, brotherhood and occult activity.

New Age can also not be accurately described as a 'movement'. It has no headquarters or co-ordinating structure. It is simply an unorganized network of those committed to making the Earth 'a better place to live in'.

It is hard to grasp exactly what is and what isn't New Age. This is because under its banner gather a seemingly limitless array of disconnected beliefs and lifestyles.

The New Age roots are in a board range of concepts, from evolutionary optimism and spiritism, to karma and reincarnation. From eastern pantheistic mysticism and science fiction to the Human Potential movement. Astrology and occult practices rub shoulders with the Green movement and alternative medicine.

However, New Age spiritual activities fall within three distinct strands.

*Eastern mysticism.* A string of gurus have blended eastern concepts with the West's thirst for fulfilment, expression and enlightenment. The storm troops of Transcendental Meditation, Divine Light, Hindu and Buddhist meditation techniques have marched in.

*Nature religions* from around the world, featuring Druids, the folk beliefs of American Indians, superstition and Wicca witchcraft, for example, are another New Age strand.

*The occult* is also in the mix—from fortune telling to spirit guides, astral projection to witchcraft.

It is hardly surprising that this strange cocktail of religious concerns should be having such influence today. In the 1960s the spiritual poverty of materialism drew a generation of Flower Children towards this world of New Age promise. They are now the business leaders and intellectuals of our day. p. 131

## PRIESTS AND GURUS OF THE NEW AGE

As a result, this unstructured movement now has a range of powerful protagonists to express its message. Each use their words and actions to expand the boundaries of New Age. To them it is a way of saving the world.

Actress and entertainer Shirely MacLaine—dubbed the 'high priestess of New Age'—gives lectures, interviews and travels the TV chat shows to present her philosophy—and

promote her books. Her message is clear, 'Know that you are God; know that you are the universe.'

Of herself she has said, 'I am that I am', to her the 'grand truth'. But for those who recognize the phrase as coming from the Old Testament and having been spoken by God to Moses in front of the burning bush, it is a disturbing blasphemy.

Yet Shirley MacLaine's mission is to help us all realize that our problems stem from being unaware of our divinity. If only we could wake up to the truth, all could be well.

She has written that there is 'one basic spiritual law which would make the world a happier, healthier place', and it is that 'Everyone is God—everyone'. She is out to make sure we hear that message and believe it.

Singer John Denver reportedly sleeps under a pyramid structure to enhance his energy level and openly advocates self-awareness techniques and New Age beliefs.

Werner Erhard founded 'est' (Erhard Seminar Training—now known as The Forum) His self-awareness and management training course—modelled by many others—offer the principle to reach one's full potential and be master of your own destiny.

The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi placed at least £32,000 worth of advertising space in The Times to present a way 'designed to bring perfection to every form of national life'.

While there may be no New Age HQ, central budget and an agreed masterplan, there is a definite 'working-together' in operation. Leading New Ager Marilyn Ferguson describes this as the 'Aquarian Conspiracy' in her influential book of the same name. She is highlighting the way many are working toward changing our way of thinking.

By 'conspirators' Marilyn Ferguson really means co-workers. She says, 'The Aquarian Conspirators range across all levels of income and education ... There are legions of conspirators ... in corporation, universities, on city councils and the White House staff, in state legislators ... in virtually all arenas of policy-making in the country ... The conspirators linked ... by their inner discoveries ... an [p. 132](#) unlikely kind of conspiracy ... They have coalesced into small groups in every town and institution ... There are tens of thousands of entry points into the conspiracy.'

It is these 'entry points' that are the most visible aspect of New Age. And these innocent encounters grow in both number and depth of involvement. But before long the conspired-against unknowingly becomes part of the conspiracy.

## **A PERSONAL PILGRIMAGE**

Few people discover New Age concepts in a blinding flash. The first encounter may be totally innocent—even trivial. But it can lead to an eventual total absorption.

There are four stages in the journey.

1. Turning On—It begins with an initial New Age encounter. Anything from alternative medicine to management training to some occult contact.
2. Exploration—The next step is a desire to 'explore'. For example, Fiona Cartledge, of the 'Sign of the Times' New Age fashion store in London's Kensington Market, says, 'Young people don't just wear this fashion. They want to read and learn about what is behind the symbols too.'

There is no shortage of books, seminars and encounter groups to fuel anyone's desire to know more.

3. Integration—Contacts made through exploration create a network of friends with a common outlook. While the outworking of New Age principles fits easily into a person's lifestyle.
4. Conspiracy—This is the joining up with others in a sense of belonging and shared objectives. A fully committed New Ager says, 'I am into this'.

The true story of Susi perfectly illustrates the route from 'turning on' through to total absorption. It began with an invitation to two weekends of self-awareness training—a welcome opportunity to learn more about herself.

Susi recalls, 'During the first weekend they broke us down. Everyone was told, in very vicious and obscene terms, that their lives were in a complete mess. There was a lot of fear from the moment the course started.

'If anybody objected,' she continues, 'they were humiliated; told how that was the way somebody like them would react.'

The following weekend, the course changed track completely. 'They built us up,' Susi recalls. 'They told us about the other person each of us could be. I left the training renewed and full of power.'

Susi was later to discover that she had undergone initiation into New Ager Werner Erhard's 'est'. p. 133

Susi soon noticed a change in the way she approached life; she began to live it solely for herself. 'Morality didn't bother me very much anymore. And I was able to direct my thoughts and actions towards making things work instead of being limited by old beliefs about myself or others.'

She found that she could no longer relate to her old friends, dropping them one by one. 'At the time I was having problems with my boyfriend. We loved each other very much, but we were going through a difficult phase. I was amazed at how easily I was able to dismiss six years of close friendship by simply deciding that "it doesn't work" and leaving it behind.' Her attitude also changed to the world around her. 'I believed that everything needed to be transformed. The "power of being" within me launched me into doing good works—humanism—because I felt I had the power to make things happen. But at the end of the day, all the credit went to myself. Without knowing it, I got closer to becoming my own god.

'At one point, I actually began to feel that "I Am" and to say it. It was only later I learnt that Jesus had said those words. I'd just thought it was part of the altered state of being enlightened. I thought all the power came from within me,' she admits.

'But now I know it was obviously a spiritual power. At the time, I didn't know I could make myself available to powers governing my mind and spirit. But when you open yourself up to any spirit, you open yourself up to the powers of darkness. It is the ultimate deception; that the self is God.'

## **A MORE EXCELLENT WAY**

The only honest way to evaluate any aspect of the New Age movement is to put Jesus into the picture. Jesus describes God as a loving father with whom we can have a friendship. Not as an impersonal force who can be experienced but never known.

Jesus speaks of those who follow him as needing to sacrifice their lives for each other. Not as putting their own needs and self-attainment first.

Jesus speaks of God as someone we can depend on in times of trouble. Not of us needing to rely on our own strength to get on terms with him or to help save the planet.

It was in order to show us the real way to live and to worship that God sent his son, Jesus. When Jesus died on the cross he was taking on himself all the blame and punishment for the wrong things we have done. He was paying the price to make it possible for us to be forgiven and for friendship with God to be ours. p. 134

Jesus came alive from the dead and now lives in the lives of those who turn to follow him. Through prayer and reading the Bible we can be close to God today.

Jesus is relevant to all aspects of our lives and the world around us. God has always cared about injustice, pain and oppression, and works against it through his people until Jesus returns at the end of time and puts all things right.

It is the age old answer to the emptiness and futility that people experience when they do not know God as a friend and a father for themselves.

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***New Age Promise: Age Old Problem?* in attractive format is available from Evangelical Alliance, London. See Journal Information. Here is it slightly edited and without illustrations. p. 135**

# The Reincarnation of the Soul

Vishal Mangalwadi

*Reprinted with permission from The Seer, April and October 1990, this part of a chapter in the author's forthcoming book *In Search of Self: A Journey Beyond the New Age**

*If the claim of opinion polls is true, that 27 British adults in every hundred now believe in reincarnation, then the Christian Church must re-centre its evangelistic message if it is going to meet effectively this apologetic challenge. This forceful article by a credible Indian Christian apologist unmasks much of the sentimentality and wishful thinking about reincarnation. The biblical doctrine of the final resurrection of all human beings is good news to those who trust in the resurrected Christ for their salvation but bad news for those whose hope is only in reincarnation. Neither a crass materialistic resurrection, as in Islam, nor a spiritualized reincarnation as in Hinduism can satisfy the human longing for peace and justice now and eternally. The resurrection of Jesus Christ holds the key to our understanding of the solution to the present political, economic and ecological crises, and the meaning of death and life beyond death.*

Editor

Millions of people all over the world are getting excited about the doctrine of transmigration or reincarnation of the soul. This doctrine, technically called *metempsychosis*, teaches that human souls do not die at physical death but are reborn into different bodies many more times.

It is true that scientists never did disprove the existence of the soul, and that their efforts to reduce mind and self-consciousness to the biological brain never did succeed. As neurologist Wilder Penfield said in his paper for the Conference of Brain Researchers held at the Vatican in 1966: 'If we are good scientists, we cannot claim that science has already explained the mind.' In other words, man has a solid core to his personality from which his decisions emanate; a core which, Penfield says, 'controls his thinking and directs the search-light of his attention'.

Yet it is equally true that the scientists who assumed that the material world was the only reality did succeed in persuading several generations to accept their belief that the soul and the supernatural were all that there was to reality.