

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT (NAM)

1. All is one; therefore all is God

While some would divide this thought into two separate principles, it combines two aspects of new Age teaching with regard to God. The idea that *all is one* is the core teaching of the new Age. It is at the foundational principle of the mysticism in Eastern religions and in turn of the new Age philosophy. Both the humanistic and occult aspects of the new Age embrace the oneness of matter and energy, divinity and humanity. This same New Age principle is expressed in science, medicine, politics, education, environmental concerns and the entertainment media. Russell Chandler wrote, “The New Age bottom line can be stated in three words: ‘All is One.’ the cosmos is pure, undifferentiated, universal energy—a consciousness or ‘life force.’ Everything is one vast, interconnected process.”¹⁵

Monism is an alternate expression of this same concept. Monism is the belief that all is one in complete unity with a continuous unbounded and undivided reality. This relates closely to the New Age teaching that ultimate reality is only what one perceives in the mind. Things that seem to be different and distinctive—e.g. good and evil—have no real existence, for all is one. The *oneness* that pervades all things is described as Divine Mind, Universal Energy, or the Force. In effect, there is no difference between God, a tree, or a human being.

On the other hand, if all is one, then all must be God. All that exists—rocks, plants, animals, people—is part of the divine essence, the dynamic force, the ultimate reality, the universal energy. The God of the New Age is thus an impersonal energy force or field that fills the universe. This is *pantheism*—that God, the universal energy, is in all things and therefore all is God. Douglas Groothuis comments,

The One does not have a personality; it is beyond personality. God is more an “it” than a “he.” The idea of a personal God is abandoned in favor of an impersonal energy, force or consciousness. Ultimate reality is god, who is in all and through all; in fact, God is all.¹⁶

Walter Martin, when identifying ten key doctrines of the New Age, quotes without additional comment what New Age writers have said or written. On the doctrine of God, Martin quotes from *The Seth Material* by Jane Roberts, who channeled the spirit entity called Seth. The quotation clearly identifies the New Age idea of God, often attempting to blend with the biblical teachings about God.

He is not one individual, but an energy gestalt . . . a psychic pyramid of interrelated, ever-expanding consciousness that creates, simultaneously and instantaneously, universes and individuals that are given—through the gift of personal perspective—duration, psychic comprehension, intelligence, and eternal validity.

This absolute, ever-expanding, instantaneous psychic gestalt, which you may call God if you prefer, is so secure in its existence that it can constantly break itself down and rebuild itself.

Its energy is so unbelievable that it does indeed form all universes; and because its energy is within and behind all universes, systems, and fields, it is indeed aware of each sparrow that falls, for it *is* each sparrow that falls.¹⁷

2. Mankind is divine and has unlimited potential

Logically, using the foundational New Age principle that all is one and all is God, the human race must also be divine in its essential nature. Dr. Philip Lochhaas explains this New Age error: “any human being may say ‘I am God’ in the same sense that ‘the man from Nazareth’ said it.”¹⁸ A corollary to the divinity of mankind is that in being one’s own god each person creates his/her own reality. “Humans are nothing but ‘congealed energy,’ the seeming solidification of thought. Hence the oft-quoted New Age slogan: ‘You create your own reality.’”¹⁹

A prime example how this dictum is actually applied can be seen in Werner Erhard, the founder of *est* and its offspring, The Forum—human potential training seminars. Although lawsuits and a variety of other accusations caused Erhard to sell Werner Erhard & Associates, which had run *est* and the Forum, and also led to Erhard's reported disappearance in 1991, his story still illustrates well how the eclectic (cafeteria-style) New Age philosophy can affect a person's life.

Werner Erhard, originally John Paul (Jack) Rosenberg, was a used car salesman from Philadelphia with a wife and four children. In 1959, in the midst of an extra-marital affair, he moved to the San Francisco area. Here, in order to evade his former wife's efforts to locate him, he changed his name to Werner Hans Erhard. Erhard became involved in scientology and mind dynamics, Zen Buddhism, Hypnosis, yoga, encounter therapy, and transpersonal psychology. He was active in Silva Mind Control, a forerunner of his own training seminars. He also spent time in India with several Hindu gurus.²⁰

As a result, Erhard came to believe that he was god in his own universe. *Est* (Erhard Seminars Training) was begun in 1971. In 1985, with some changes and modifications, *est* was repackaged into a new self-improvement seminar called The Forum. A goal of Erhard's seminars is to lead an individual to give up false belief systems, to accept that each person creates his or her own reality, and to experience the reality of being god in one's own universe.

This New Age principle states that each one of us is God in disguise. J. Gordon Melton summarizes this "good news" in an article on rebirthing in the *New Age Encyclopedia, First Edition*. He refers to Leonard Orr, the developer of the rebirthing technique: "According to Orr, human beings are a reservoir of the fullness of divine power. That is to say, each person is God."²¹

3. Mankind's basic flaw is the ignorance of his divinity

Since ultimately all is one, part of the divine essence and sharing in the universal energy or force, and since humanity is God, it would seem that there should be no problems. All things should flow smoothly and harmoniously. At the very least, nation should not be warring against nation. According to New Age teaching, the human race is the most highly evolved life form on planet Earth, the life form most capable of achieving the realization of its divine status. Therefore, humanity should be at peace with itself and all else that exists, especially because everything else, even the earth, also participates in the energy that flows throughout the universe.

However, although the NAM tells us that reality is only that which people create in their own minds, the news headlines tell us there are problems in our world. What is our problem? Why do nations war against nations? Why is man's inhumanity to man the focus of television and newspaper news reporting? The NAM answer is not a conflict between good and evil, for the reality of such conflict doesn't exist. Good and evil exist only in the reality each person creates in the mind. The problem is not sin, for there is no personal God to whom we are held accountable for our faults and failures. God is an impersonal energy force that is in all things.

What then, according to the NAM, is mankind's problem? Simply stated, it is that we are ignorant of our status as gods. We are walking in darkness, not the darkness of sin, but the darkness of ignorance. We have forgotten our true identity. We need to be enlightened again to see who we really are.

Tal Brooke is the president of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project which is devoted to offering a biblical perspective on new religions and spiritual trends. In his early adult years, before his conversion to faith in Jesus Christ, Brooke spent two decades following the New Age and its occult practices. On the basis of his previous personal involvement and his research and study of the New Age, Brooke in *When the World Will Be as One* summarizes what he envisions to be the birth of a New World Order. He provides a concise statement of the second and third principles of the New Age.

The mystery of man's ultimate identity is finally revealed as his divinity within. It is the basic tenet of pantheism, the core belief of Hinduism: All things are One, since all energy is divine consciousness "frozen" into matter. Since all things are made of God, man in his deepest self is none other than God. But without "enlightenment," he does not know this and, in effect, lives as an amnesiac. The purpose of man is to realize that he is God, thus ending the "illusion" of separation.²²

In *West Side Story*, a hit musical of the 1960s, a song by one of the street gangs has the line, "I'm deprived on account of I'm deprived." The lyrics of the New Age song would change that to read, "My actions are deprived because I remain unenlightened." The "illusion of separation" to which Tal Brooke refers is *maya*, another of the many Hindu concepts that form the mix of the eclectic NAM. "Maya: A Hindu teaching that the only reality is the deity Brahman, the Supreme Absolute, and that all else in the material world is an extension of Brahman's thoughts and therefore illusory or transitory."²³

4. Mankind's basic need is personal transformation produced by consciousness-altering techniques

Since for the NAM sin does not exist, mankind doesn't need a Savior. Instead, mankind needs enlightenment. To bring to an end living with the "illusion of separation" each person needs to pursue personal transformation to levels of higher consciousness that will lead to full "god-realization."

Douglas Groothuis writes, "To gain this type of transformation, the three ideas that all is one, all is god, and we are god, must be more than intellectual propositions; they must be awakened at the core of our being,"²⁴ He describes how the est and Forum seminars of Werner Erhard are designed to awaken these ideas within us. He writes,

And what are we to do? We are to look within. As one New Age ad put it, "The only way out is in." All is perfect, says Werner Erhard. The trouble is we don't *see it*. Humans are not deprived or dependent on any outside source of deliverance or strength. The answer is not reconciliation with a God different from ourselves, but the realization that we ourselves are God. The self is the cosmic treasury of wisdom, power and delight. . . .

Once the true knowledge (or *gnosis*) of reality is realized, higher powers are activated within. The limitations of a supposedly finite and imperfect being fade into the limitless potential of the truly enlightened being.²⁵

The New Age path to achieving such transformation centers in various consciousness-altering techniques—participating in human potential seminars similar to those of est or The Forum; sensory deprivation by spending time in a flotation tank; meditation accompanied by physical and breathing exercises; engaging in creative visualization in which one's mind pictures the reality of what one desires life to be—all intended to raise consciousness levels. The body, like the mind, is also considered both a receiver and transmitter of cosmic forces. Tuning the body through yoga, reflexology, iridology, acupuncture, some kinds of martial arts, and Therapeutic Touch will in New Age thinking, help to achieve higher consciousness. If one is not successful in achieving higher consciousness by such practices, then perhaps using various objects whose energy patterns resonate with those of mind, body, and spirit—such as rock crystals, pyramids, colors, and flower essences—will help.

One can hardly write about the New Age without referring to Shirley MacLaine and her writings. She certainly ranks near the top of a list of popular and well-known entertainment personalities who have actively promoted the NAM. In a later chapter we will devote more space to what she has written. Here a quote from one of her books will demonstrate yet another technique for raising one's consciousness levels—meditative chanting and speaking affirmations.

The ancient Hindu Vedas claimed that the spoken words *I am*, or *Aum* in Hindi, set up a vibrational frequency in the body and mind which align the individual with his or her higher self and thus with the God-source. The word God in any language carries the highest vibrational frequency of any word in the language.

Therefore, if one says audibly *I am God*, the sound vibrations literally align the energies of the body to a higher attunement.

You can use *I am God* or *I am that I am* as Christ often did, or you can extend the affirmations to fit your own needs. . . .

Before performing I always did them [affirmations] during the overture and continued right on through my entrance. I felt the alignment occur all through me and I went on to perform with the God Source as my support system.²⁶

If all else fails, certainly individuals will be in touch with the divine energy or force when they allow themselves to be used as channels for a spirit guide, or at least learn from the teachings of such a spirit guide. Again, Shirley MacLaine serves as an example of how powerful a spirit guide can be. Although her interest is no longer what it once was, MacLaine at one time totally committed herself to the teachings of Ramtha, who supposedly is a 35,000-year-old ascended master channeled through a woman named J. Z. Knight. Through Mrs. Knight, Ramtha has issued a book. Some of Ramtha's quotations are found in *The New Age Rage*, edited by Karen Hoyt and J. Isamu Yamamoto. Robert J. L. Burrows, one of the authors, quotes from the teachings of Ramtha:

God . . . has never been *outside* of you—it is you. God, of itself, is holy without goodness or evil. . . . God simply is. I am here to help you realize that you are an ongoing immortal essence. There is no voice that will ever teach you greater than your own. . . . Who you are this day is the answer to *everything* you have ever wanted.²⁷

If you feel that you need to experience personal transformation or spiritual enlightenment, the NAM will almost certainly have some technique to help you reach your goal. However, one needs to ask, “If I pursue a New Age technique or teaching to find spiritual enlightenment, will I end up dancing in the light or walking in darkness?”

5. Personal transformation is the springboard to global transformation

Why all the concern about personal transformation? Why all the effort through consciousness-raising techniques to enlighten people to the divinity within them? The answer—to elevate cosmic consciousness on the part of a “critical mass” of people so that the goal of global transformation may be achieved. Shakti Gawain, a noted spokesperson for the NAM, author of the best seller *Creative visualization*, writes in another of her books, *Living in the Light*, about a radical spiritual transformation taking place on a worldwide level as the human race lets go of its present way of life and builds a new world in its place. She explains,

The new world is being built as we open to the high power of the universe within us and consciously allow that creative energy to move through us. As each of us connects with our inner spiritual awareness, we learn that we can create our own reality and take responsibility for doing so. The change begins within each individual, but as more and more individuals are transformed, the mass consciousness is increasingly affected.²⁸

In other words, the world's future depends upon people being willing to accept their role as creators of reality. As more and more people strive toward a high consciousness, eventually the NAM will achieve its goal—a new and better world of complete peace and harmony, where all people and things exist side-by-side in the oneness they share with the divine essence.

Not all who identify themselves as Christians are deeply committed to living the teachings of the faith. Many dabble with being a Christian—with occasional church attendance, sending children to Sunday school, having a kind of generic belief in God, but really knowing little about the teachings of the Bible and caring little about the mission Christ gave to his church on earth. Likewise, many in the NAM are dabblers, reading

their horoscope, wearing a crystal necklace for good luck, chanting their mantras, or attempting to create their own reality through visualization. They do not take seriously the deeper meaning of the NAM. However, like many Christians who actively strive to live the teachings of the Christian faith and who work to promote the theology and doctrine of that faith, so many New Agers seriously promote the NAM's deeper philosophical concepts and actively strive to achieve the New Age agenda.

For the serious movers and shakers, the New Age agenda is a new world order, globalism, a "global village." "All is One also applies to nations. National boundaries are obsolete, according to the New Age worldview. Thus, the New Age agenda calls for an emerging global civilization."²⁹ While written from a literalistic and millennialistic approach to Scripture, particularly in regard to the Book of Revelation, Tal Brooke's *When the World Will Be as One* nevertheless provides an interesting and insightful overview of what those who are serious about New Age concepts have in mind for planet Earth.

What is needed, say the leading New Age thinkers, is a major paradigm shift for the living of life. Initially the concept of "paradigm shift" was applied to scientific theories, but New Agers have applied it to planetary consciousness. Marilyn Ferguson wrote what some have termed the "bible" of the New Age. While not directly connected with all that has become associated with the NAM, particularly the faddish aspects, her book, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, has probably done more to initiate and promote the popularity of the NAM than any other book. Ferguson "paints a broad picture of New Age activities and inroads into our culture, and suggests that this signals a transformation so radical that it may amount to an entirely new phase in evolution."³⁰

Keeping in mind that *The Aquarian Conspiracy* is pushing for the acceptance of those ideas and activities that will result in a global transformation, listen to what Ferguson says about paradigms.

A new paradigm involves a principle that was present all along but unknown to us. It includes the old as a partial truth, one aspect of How Things Work, while allowing for things to work in other ways as well. By its larger perspective, it transforms traditional knowledge and the stubborn new observations, reconciling their apparent contradictions. . . .

New paradigms are nearly always received with coolness, even mockery and hostility. Their discoverers are attacked for their heresy. . . .

But the new paradigm gains ascendance. A new generation recognizes its power. When a critical number of thinkers has accepted the new idea, a collective paradigm shift has occurred.³¹

Ferguson strongly asserts that what is needed is a radical shift in the worldview of the inhabitants of planet Earth, a major paradigm shift, that in spite of its seemingly heretical claims will nevertheless establish the model for a global transformation that will be the savior of the planet.

6. All religions are one and lead to cosmic unity

A sixth summary principle of New Age thinking is that all religions are one at their basic core and teach the oneness of all things. This teaching is identified as *syncretism* (a fusion of religions). Again, it seems quite logical to assume that if all is one, all is God, and we are God, then the enlightened teachers and masters of the great religions of the world—Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha, Krishna, and others—would themselves have experienced the higher consciousness of divine oneness. The various religions may have different teachings, "but the vital experience of 'the god within' is common throughout the world."³²

Of course, the syncretist principle requires that the distinctive and exclusive nature of Christianity be denied. In an effort to reconcile the teachings of Christianity with the teachings of the New Age, the NAM goes to great lengths to reveal the supposed secret and hidden teachings of Jesus that were excluded from the Bible. Furthermore, the Christ of the Bible is reshaped and redefined in order to make him a spokesman for the

NAM. For the undiscerning or somewhat biblically illiterate Christian, the result is a version of the 1950's television game show *What's My Line?*—"Will the real Jesus please stand up?" "Christ as the mediator between God and humanity is replaced with the idea of 'Christ-consciousness,' which is another word for cosmic consciousness."³³

The NAM's syncretist principle seeks to combine Christianity with other world religions to form a one-world religion—the New Age religion. Those in the NAM who had an earlier Christian background will frequently refer to Jesus as a great teacher. They will use the title Christ, not in its biblical meaning, but to express the divine nature that is in each individual. In *Unmasking the New Age*, Groothuis quotes New Age futurist Barbara Marx Hubbard. In *The Evolutionary Journey*, Hubbard explains her concept of spiritual futurism. She writes, "At this moment of our planetary birth each person is called upon to recognize that the 'Messiah is within.' Christ consciousness or cosmic consciousness is awakening in millions of Christians and non-Christians."³⁴

Because the New Age of today can be traced back to the 19th century, writings from a much earlier period laid the foundation for the present New Age view of Jesus Christ and the move toward religious syncretism. An example is *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* by Levi. In his chapter on ten key doctrines of the New Age, Walter Martin includes several quotations from this book.

As a child Jesus differed but little from other children only that in *past lives* he had overcome carnal propensities to such an extent that he could be tempted like others and not yield. . . .

In many respects Jesus was a remarkable child, for *by ages of strenuous preparation* he was qualified to be an avatar, a saviour of the world, and from childhood he was endowed with superior wisdom and was conscious of the fact that he was competent to lead the race into the higher ways of spiritual living. . . .

Jesus: "Then hear, you men of Israel, hear! Look not upon the flesh (i.e., the person of Jesus); it is not king. Look to *the Christ within who shall be formed in every one of you, as he is formed in me*" (emphasis added).³⁵

Among that which makes up what Marilyn Ferguson identified as the "old as a partial truth" is the historic Christian faith. Its traditional knowledge must be reconciled with the new observations. However, Christianity lays exclusive claim to the path to spiritual enlightenment, truth, and life, for it confesses the One who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6) and "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). The exclusive claims of Jesus the Christ, apart from the distorted pictures of him painted by those in the NAM, cannot be denied by those who would be his disciples. Therefore, Christians will be excluded from the new world order; for the old, never-changing truth they confess cannot be reconciled with the new, ever-changing observations of the New Age. Christianity cannot be blended into a one world religion and remain Christianity.

15 Russell Chandler, *Understanding the New Age* (Dallas: Word, 1988), 28.

16 Douglas Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), 20.

17 Jane Roberts, *The Seth Material* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), 237-38. Quoted in Martin, *The New Age Cult*, 25-26.

18 Philip H. Lochhaas, *How to Respond to the New Age Movement*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1988), 7.

19 Chandler, *Understanding*, 28.

20 “Werner Erhard Flees in the Wake of Tax Liens and Child Abuse Allegations,” *Christian Research Journal* (14:1, Summer 1991), 5. *The Christian Research Journal* is the quarterly publication of Christian Research Institute, the countercult and Christian apologetic ministry founded by Walter Martin, author of the book that has become a standard work on the subject of the cults, *The Kingdom of the Cults*. “The *Journal* is dedicated to furthering the proclamation and defense of the historic gospel of Jesus Christ, and to facilitating His people’s growth in sound doctrine and spiritual discernment.”

21 J. Gordon Melton, Jerome Clark, Aidan A. Kelly, eds., *New Age Encyclopedia* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1990), 377.

22 Tal Brooke, *When the World Will Be as One* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1989), 73.

23 Bob Larson, *Straight Answers on the New Age* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 52.

24 Groothuis, *Unmasking*, 24.

25 Groothuis, *Unmasking*, 25-26.

26 Shirley MacLaine, *Dancing in the Light* (New York: Bantam Books, 1985), 111-13.

27 Karen Hoyt and J. Isamu Yamamoto, eds., *The New Age Rage* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1987), 43.

28 Shakti Gawain, *Living in the Light* (San Rafael, CA: Whatever Publishing, Inc., 1986), 3-4.

29 Chandler, *Understanding*, 33.

30 Elliot Miller, *A Crash Course on the New Age Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), 33

31 Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s* (Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, 1980), 27-28.

32 Groothuis, *Unmasking*, 28.

33 Groothuis, *Unmasking*, 28-29.

34 Barbara Marx Hubbard, *The Evolutionary Journey* (San Francisco: Evolutionary Press, 1982), 157. Quoted In Groothuis, *Unmasking*, 30.

35 Levi, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ* (Marina Del Rey, CA: DeVorss & Co., Publishers, 1907, 1964), 7-8.

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