

# NEW AGE

## Origins?

### What is theosophy?

### Is New Age a movement?

*A number of fundamental beliefs are held by many New Age followers; individuals are encouraged to "shop" for the beliefs and practices that they feel most comfortable with.<sup>1</sup>*

**Monism:** All that exists is derived from a single source of divine energy.

**Pantheism:** All that exists is God; God is all that exists. This leads naturally to the concept of the divinity of the individual, that we are all Gods. They do not seek God as revealed in a sacred text or as exists in a remote heaven; they seek God within the self and throughout the entire universe.

**Panentheism:** God is all that exists. God is at once the entire universe, and transcends the universe as well.

**Reincarnation:** After death, we are reborn and live another life as a human. This cycle repeats itself many times. This belief is similar to the concept of transmigration of the soul in Hinduism.

**Karma:** The good and bad deeds that we do add and subtract from our accumulated record, our **karma**. At the end of our life, we are rewarded or punished according to our karma by being reincarnated into either a painful or good new life. This belief is linked to that of reincarnation and is also derived from Hinduism

An **Aura** is believed to be an energy field radiated by the body. Invisible to most people, it can be detected by some as a shimmering, multi-colored field surrounding the body. Those skilled in detecting and interpreting auras can diagnose an individual's state of mind, and their spiritual and physical health.

**Personal Transformation** A profoundly intense mystical experience will lead to the acceptance and use of New Age beliefs and practices. Guided imagery, hypnosis, meditation, and (sometimes) the use of hallucinogenic drugs are useful to bring about and enhance this transformation. Believers hope to develop new potentials within themselves: the ability to heal oneself and others, psychic powers, a new understanding of the workings of the universe, etc. Later, when sufficient numbers of people have achieved these powers, a major spiritual, physical, psychological and cultural planet-wide transformation is expected.

**Ecological Responsibility:** A belief in the importance of uniting to preserve the health of the earth, which is often looked upon as **Gaia**, (Mother Earth) a living entity.

**Universal Religion:** Since all is God, then only one reality exists, and all religions are simply different paths to that ultimate reality. The universal religion can be visualized as a mountain, with many **sadhanas** (spiritual paths) to the summit. Some are hard; others easy. There is no one correct path. All paths eventually reach the top. They anticipate that a new universal religion which contains elements of all current faiths will evolve and become generally accepted worldwide.

**New World Order** As the **Age of Aquarius** unfolds, a **New Age** will develop. This will be a utopia in which there is world government, and end to wars, disease, hunger, pollution, and poverty. Gender, racial, religious and other forms of discrimination will cease. People's allegiance to their tribe or nation will be replaced by a concern for the entire world and its people.

### New Age practices:

**Channeling** A method similar to that used by Spiritists in which a spirit of a long dead individual is conjured up. However, while Spiritists generally believe that one's soul remains relatively unchanged after death, most channelers believe that the soul evolves to higher planes of existence. Channelers usually try to make contact with a single, spiritually evolved being. That being's consciousness is channeled through the medium and relays guidance and information to the group, through the use of the medium's voice. Channeling has existed since the 1850's and many groups consider themselves independent of the New Age movement. Perhaps the most famous channeling event is the popular *A Course in Miracles*. It was channeled through a Columbia University psychologist, Dr. Helen Schucman, (1909-1981), over an 8 year period. She was an Atheist, and in no way regarded herself as a New Age believer. However, she took great care in recording accurately the words that she received.

**Crystals** Crystals are materials which has its molecules arranged in a specific, highly ordered internal pattern. This pattern is reflected in the crystal's external structure which typically has symmetrical planar surfaces. Many common substances, from salt to sugar, from diamonds to quartz form crystals. They can be shaped so that they will vibrate at a specific frequency and are widely used in radio communications and computing devices. New Agers believe that crystals possess healing energy.

**Meditating** A process of blanking out the mind and releasing oneself from conscious thinking. This is often aided by repetitive chanting of a mantra, or focusing on an object.

**New Age Music** A gentle, melodic, inspirational music form involving the human voice, harp, lute, flute, etc. It is used as an aid in healing, massage therapy and general relaxation.

**Divination** The use of various techniques to foretell the future, including I Ching, Pendulum movements, Runes, Scrying, Tarot Cards.

**Astrology** The belief that the orientation of the planets at the time of one's birth, and the location of that birth predicts the individual's future and personality. Belief in astrology is common amongst New Agers, but definitely not limited to them.

**Holistic Health** This is a collection of healing techniques which have diverged from the traditional medical model. It attempts to cure disorders in mind, body and spirit and to promote wholeness and balance in the individual. Examples are acupuncture, crystal healing, homeopathy, iridology, massage, various meditation methods, polarity therapy, psychic healing, therapeutic touch, reflexology, etc.

**Human Potential Movement** (a.k.a. Emotional Growth Movement) This is a collection of therapeutic methods involving both individualized and group working, using both mental and physical techniques. The goal is to help individuals to advance spiritually. Examples are Esalen Growth Center programs, EST, Gestalt Therapy, Primal Scream Therapy, Transactional Analysis, Transcendental Meditation and **Yoga**.

**Who's New Age?** Shirley McClaine, Deepak Chopra, Tony Robbins, Marianne Williamson, Oprah Winfrey, Eckhart Tolle

**Advertised at New Age sites:** Tai Chi, Taebo, Feng Shui, Sharper Image

**Advertisers who use New Age symbolism:** Pier 1, Stouffer's Lean Cuisine (Nestle), Celebrix, Ford

### Does Jesus Christ ever appear in New Age thought?

### Are New Age beliefs compatible with Jesus Christ and the Bible?

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<sup>1</sup> www.religioustolerance.org