

The Age Old New Age Movement

What is the oldest religion in the world? Christianity is the oldest religion, for its origin is in God's eternal plan (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9). But what is the oldest religion in the world? Which religion was in the world first?

Christianity is as old as Genesis 3:15, when God, through the Gospel, brought Adam and Eve to faith in the promised Saviour. But in a sense, the New Age Movement is even older. It goes back to Genesis 3:5 when Satan deceitfully promised that Adam and Eve would be "as gods." The basic temptation of the New Age Movement is man's idolatrous desire to be God. The "new age" it promises is already here. It is "*this present evil world*" (Galatians 1:4).

The teaching of the New Age Movement is fairly simple. It is hard for Christians to understand only because it is so totally different from what the Bible teaches. It seems complicated because there are so many facets and forms, so many versions and varieties of it, with a multitude of teachers and organisations pushing it. It seems like a trackless forest with dense and tangled underbrush. But the basics are simple.

The New Age Movement is pantheism, the old teaching that god (small "g"!) is everything and everything is god. It is the old lie behind Hinduism and Buddhism. It has been in the East for many centuries and has occasionally cropped up in the West. It has been coming on strong for two or three hundred years in Western civilisation. It is the idea behind moral relativism (if everything is god, everything is good). It is also behind Ecumenism and Globalism (one world religion, one world government).

Pantheism is directly opposed to Christianity, to the truth about God and man. It is so exactly contrary to the Bible's teaching that a more complete contradiction can hardly be imagined. Whenever we affirm Christian truth, we deny pantheism.

For pantheism, everything is god and god is everything. We should not capitalise "god" in the pantheist sense because the word has no personal meaning. For pantheism, god is a thing, an "it." For the pantheist, god is not outside the world but in the world as the soul is in the body. This fictitious god is the soul of the world, a spiritual but impersonal concept of "nature." Everything is both material and spiritual. Everything is somewhat divine, a little bit of god. The rock, the tree, the bug, the man are all little outcroppings of this god.

Pantheism teaches the transmigration of souls (popularly called "reincarnation"). The idea is that when the body dies, the soul joins up with a new body. Successive transmigrations should mean upward mobility until the soul is finally reabsorbed into god like a drop of water into the ocean. Personal identity ceases.

Nothing could be more contrary to the Bible. The Bible teaches: God made the world and is not part of it; God is personal, in fact, tri-personal (there is only one God, but the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each true God); the soul of the human individual goes to heaven or hell when the body dies and will be reunited with that same body in the resurrection.

Pantheism teaches works righteousness. For whether the next transmigration is a step up or a step down depends on works. Various forms of pantheism disagree about the details, about which works work. But like all religions of human or demonic origin, pantheism is a religion of law alone, teaching only human works righteousness. Only Christianity is the religion of Christ's righteousness, given to us by God through the Gospel of God's grace in Christ, received through God-given faith.

Only in Christianity are we told to hope not because of what we have done – rather, *in spite of* what we have done (sin!). We hope because of what Someone else has done for us. Jesus Christ, God and Man in one Person, lived the perfect life and died the perfect death. He kept the laws we have broken and suffered and died in our place for our breaking them. For His sake alone, we have forgiveness, life, and salvation.

The New Age Movement is preposterous. It is foolish, stupid, and silly. But that does not mean that it will not be popular. For fallen man is spiritually foolish, stupid, and silly. Fallen man is prone to fall for things like the New Age Movement, as the long history of pantheism shows.

We are surrounded by the New Age Movement. It fits with everything that does not fit with Christianity. It loves evolution (the impersonal development of this world, with no Creator outside). It pushes moral relativism (if god is developing in everything, everything must be morally good in some way). It embraces Communism (impersonal, evolutionary development in economics). It rejects as bigotry every claim to speak the real truth or to know the one true God, for it wants to make truth subjective and to deny any real religious differences.

In our preaching and teaching, we must warn others against the New Age Movement. But that does not mean that we must become experts in this field. We should know it well enough that we can warn people specifically. But every time we teach Biblical truth, we are opposing the New Age Movement. And every Biblical truth we teach is against the New Age Movement. So our most important study, as always, remains the Word of God.

We have a fight on our hands. We need the Sword of the Spirit in our hands (Ephesians 6:17).