

NEW AGERS

Invade the Classroom

By Verlie Ward and Gerry Colvin

Belief in evolution is the central myth of the New Age mythology.

Twenty-five first-graders lie silently on the classroom floor, but this is no emergency drill. It is an exercise from their new "curriculum."

The children are first instructed to imagine that the sun is shining warmly on them. They are then told to gaze into its brightness, without fear of its intense light. Finally, they are directed to try to bring the sun down into their bodies, feeling its warmth, power, and illumination.

"Imagine you are doing something perfect," orders the teacher, "and that you are perfect." She continues in this vein: "See yourselves as dazzling with light, feeling completely at peace because you are completely perfect. You are intelligent and magnificent, and you contain all of the wisdom of the universe within yourselves."¹

- ★ See the streets lined with silver-wrapped candy kisses.
- ★ Feel multicolored chocolate sprinkles falling on you.
- ★ See a huge marshmallow rock.
- ★ Feel its softness.
- ★ Listen to roasted walnuts floating in a sea of hot melting chocolate.
- ★ See yourself sliding down the sides of giant lollipops.
- ★ See yourself climbing into an enormous peanut butter cup.
- ★ See yourself breaking off a piece of chocolate and dipping it into the smooth peanut butter.
- ★ Smell all the candy.
- ★ Now see yourself hanging and swinging on a long red piece of licorice.
- ★ Feel its stickiness.
- ★ See yourself getting ready to leap into a large chocolate bar.

The late Beverly Gaylean designed this Los Angeles public school-based exercise in "confluent education" (first introduced in 1971 by George Isaac Brown²) to give students an "expanded view of learning." In a 1980 interview, Gaylean elaborated:

Once we begin to see that we are all God, that we all have the attributes of God, then I think the whole purpose of human life is to reown the Godlikeness within us; the perfect love, the perfect wisdom, the perfect understanding, the perfect intelligence, and when we do that, we create back to that old, that essential oneness which is consciousness.³

Targeting goals of imaging and meditating, Gaylean wrote three federally funded education programs for the Los Angeles public schools. In the early 1980s, the similarly New-Age oriented Project GOAL (Guidance Opportunities for Affective Learning) was developed with federal and state funds to benefit handicapped children in Irvine, California, as well as nonhandicapped students in 54 other California school districts.⁴

But such educational "programming" is not an isolated endeavor. The ensuing slightly bizarre "guided fantasy" is drawn from a collection of imaging activities prepared for use by elementary school teachers:

- ★ See yourself walking toward the entrance of a magical candyland.
- ★ Walk through the gate and see a large mountain made of thick dripping chocolate and mounds of ice cream.
- ★ See trees made of chewy gumdrops of all colors.

- ★ See yourself walking on the squares of the chocolate bar.
- ★ Notice the footprints as you sink into the chocolate.
- ★ Look around and notice all the different candy.
- ★ You are leaving...take a bag filled with your favorite candy.
- ★ See yourself returning to the classroom.
- ★ When I count to 10, open your eyes.⁵

Trance therapist-teacher Harriette Davis says that parenting in the New Age "becomes a spiritual journey taken by parent and child, one teaching the other in reciprocal agreement." Harriette conducts Rainbow Bridge workshops for parents and children having "trouble integrating on this Earth plane." The classes, made up of "past life regression" and "psychic awareness" exercises, feed on the normal frustrations and guilt attendant with parenting responsibilities.⁶

In her book *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, Marilyn Ferguson writes approvingly of such forces at work in American education:

For example, tens of thousands of classroom teachers, educational consultants and psychologists, counselors, administrators, researchers, and faculty members in colleges of education have been among the millions engaged in personal transformation. They have... begun to link regionally and nationally, to share strategies, to conspire for the teaching of all they most value: freedom, high expectations, awareness, patterns, connections, creativity... Even a tiny minority of committed teachers, counselors and adminis-

trators can set off seismic shocks with programs that work.⁷

The American educational system has limited and fragmented our students, "relentlessly turning wholes into parts," complains Ferguson. She says children require an authentic initiation into their uncertain world, not bones from a cultural graveyard.

Where they want to do real things, we give them abstract busywork, blank space to fill in with the "right" answers. Where they need to find meaning, the schools ask memorization; discipline is divorced from intuition, pattern from parts.⁸

A wide array of New Age programs are now available in various institutions of higher education. Citrus Community College in Azusa, California, offers credit for self-hypnosis classes and parapsychology courses stressing ESP, telepathy, clairvoyance, interpreting auras, recognizing out-of-body experience, and

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harnessing psychokinesis. The California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco offers sexual-counseling classes

derived from Tantric and Taoist practices. Accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and granting a Ph.D. in psychology and a master's degree in anthropology, philosophy, and religion, the institute's weekend workshops have included "Ethnobotany and Shamanism: Psychedelics Before and After History" and "Towards a Psychological Archaeology and the Forgotten Nose."⁹

Through guided meditation, a Stanford business professor coaches his students to improve their entrepreneurial creativity and intuition. "Let go of judgments," he orders, "your obstructing thoughts and outmoded perceptions—whatever keeps you from tapping the reservoir of magnificence within!" The recommended reading for his course includes books on Zen, Yoga, the Tao Te Ching, and *I Am That* by Swami Muktananda.¹⁰

Gay Luce, consultant to the National Institutes of Mental Health and the President's Scientific Advisory Committee, says, "We have to realize once and for all that there is no separation between the sacred and the secular, so it will be natural for our children to assume this." She fully expects meditation techniques involving the body's energy chakras to be taught in the kindergarten soon.¹¹

Humanist John Dunphy declares: "I am convinced that the battle for humankind's future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith: a religion of humanity that recognizes and respects the spark of what theologians call divinity in every human being."¹²

Evolution Goes "Inside"

"I believe in UFOs because I know we simply can't be alone in the universe," a young student declares during a class discussion on new religions at the University of Calgary.¹³ Several others quickly join her, all arguing that the "facts of evolution" definitely point to life on other planets. In fact, evolution proves that UFOs must exist, they declare. Once this is accepted, the students quickly get around to imagining Atlantis and numerous other occult-related beliefs.

Belief in evolution is the central myth of the New Age mythology. Without the idea of evolution, the architects of the New Age Movement would never be able to supply its believers with sufficient integrating elements to hold everything together. The myth of evolution, however, creates a comprehensive system that can embrace the total mythology in all its diversity.

One currently popular New Age book was written and published by Louise Hay, a self-proclaimed "metaphysical counselor." Claiming to have cured her-

self of terminal cancer, Hay now “offers practical steps for dissolving both the fears and the causations of diseases.” Her views, however, constitute a strange bag of positive thinking, common sense, *mysticism, agnosticism, and pseudo-Christianity*:

1. What We Give Out, We Get Back
2. The Universe Totally Supports Us in Every Thought We Choose to Think and Believe
3. The Universal Power Never Judges or Criticizes Us
4. Most of Us Have Foolish Ideas About Who We Are and Many, Many Rigid Rules About How Life Should Be Lived
5. When We Are Very Little, We Learn How to Feel About Ourselves and About Life by the Reactions of the Adults Around Us
6. When We Grow Up, We Have a Tendency to Recreate the Emotional Environment of Our Early Home Life
7. The Only Thing We Are Ever Dealing With Is a Thought, and a Thought Can Be Changed
8. All Disease Comes From a State of Unforgiveness.¹⁴

New Age ideology challenges Christian teachers on several fronts.

Seem innocent enough? Hay’s true allegiance is revealed in her subsequent declaration that we actually “choose our parents.” And she definitely has something more in mind than a play on words! Listen as she defends her amazing belief with an equally startling explanation:

Each one of us decides to incarnate upon this planet at particular points in time and space. We have chosen to come here to learn a particular lesson that will advance us upon our spiritual, evolutionary pathway. We choose our sex, our color, our country, and then we look around for the particular set of parents who will mirror the pattern we are bringing in to work on in this lifetime.¹⁵

Detecting New Age Influences in the Classroom

Although New Age political concerns and coded terminologies may highlight questions of discernment, New Age therapies, programs, and practices are of even greater concern. If overtly religious, they may appear quite compatible with Christian faith. If inconspicuously secular, they may seem merely innocuous. On the other hand, some New Age practices are clearly condemned in Scripture, e.g., spiritism and various forms of divination (see Deuteronomy 18:9-12).

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tian teachers on several fronts. Obviously, it is not always apparent what aspects of the New Age methodologies

are corrective and which parts are harmful. In reality, these issues ultimately

Continued on page 47

NEW AGE MOVEMENT	CHRISTIANITY
1. God is the world—impersonal and amoral.	1. God is Creator, personal, and moral.
2. Humanity is evolving, and is the measure of all things, and the reservoir of all truth.	2. Humanity was created in the image of God but is now fallen, and Truth is revealed in harmony with Holy Scripture.
3. Human problems are anchored in ignorance of people’s true potential.	3. The fundamental human problem is rebellion against God and His law.
4. The answer to all human problems may be found in a higher consciousness.	4. The answer to human problems may be found in a faith that is obedient to Christ.
5. Death is an illusion, history cyclical, religion merely superstition.	5. Death is the end of mortal life; history is linear and providential; true religion comes from God.
6. Jesus Christ is just one of many “guru” manifestations of the Supreme Consciousness.	6. Jesus Christ is the unique God-Man, the only-begotten Son of the Father, our only Lord and Saviour.

NEW AGERS INVADE THE CLASSROOM

Continued from page 11

mately come down to a conflict between world-views. Christian teachers have a solemn responsibility not only to recognize but also to reject practices and beliefs that contradict Scripture-based truth.

Thus the challenge is not new. Through the ages, Christianity has faced attack on all sides. Secular humanism dismissed it as superstitious. The New Age lumps it with Western rationalism and scientism. But perceptive teachers experience Christianity in its true character, not in exaggerated caricature.

The comparisons on page 11 between New Age and Christian perspectives may help to dispel the myth of New Age innocence for an increasing number of Seventh-day Adventist teachers. □

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REFERENCES

- ¹ Frances Adeney, "Educators Look East," *Spiritual Counterfeits Journal* (Winter 1981), p. 28.
- ² George Isaac Brown, *Human Teaching for Human Learning: An Introduction to Confluent Education* (New York: Viking, 1971).
- ³ Adeney, p. 28.
- ⁴ Lynn Smith, "Adult Type Education for School Children," *Los Angeles Times* [Orange County edition] (June 24, 1982) pt. 5, p. 1.
- ⁵ Michael Bagley and Karin Hess, *Two Hundred Ways of Using Imagery in the Classroom: A Guide for Developing Imagination and Creativity in Elementary Students* (Gr. 1-8) (New York: Trillium Press, ISBN 0-89824-084-0).
- ⁶ Quoted in Russell Chandler, *Understanding the New Age* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1988), pp. 154.
- ⁷ Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy, Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s* (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1980), pp. 281, 314.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 284.
- ⁹ Fall 1987 calendar, California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco.
- ¹⁰ Robert J. L. Burrows, "Americans Get Religion in the New Age: Anything Is Permissible If Everything Is God," *Christianity Today* (May 16, 1986), p. 17.
- ¹¹ Celebration of Innovation Workshop, San Francisco, November 7, 1987.
- ¹² John Dunphy, "A Religion for a New Age," *Humanist Magazine* (January-February 1983), p. 26.
- ¹³ Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe-Hexham, "The Soul of the New Age," *Christianity Today* (September 2, 1988), p. 21.
- ¹⁴ Louise L. Hay, *You Can Heal Your Life* (Santa Monica, California: Hay House, 1987), pp. 7-9.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

ADDITIONAL READING

The following books and articles are recommended for further insight into the tenets and insi-

nuations of New Age teachings. Most are written from a Christian perspective, and will be more helpful for Christians than the New Age materials themselves.

- "Empowering the Self: A Look at the Human Potential Movement," *Spiritual Counterfeits Project Journal* Winter 1981-1982.
- Hunt, Dave, and T. A. McMahon, *The Seduction of Christianity*. Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1985.
- David Myers, *The Inflated Self*. New York: Seabury Press, 1980.
- Schlossberg, *Idols for Destruction*. Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson, 1983.
- Sire, James, *The Universe Next Door*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1976.

ORGANIZATIONS

Christian Research Institute. P.O. Box 500, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693-0500. Publishes a quarterly journal, *Forward*, which covers cults and New Age issues.

Jesus People USA. 4707 N. Malden, Chicago, IL 60640. Provides tracts warning about the New Age and publishes the magazine *Cornerstone*.

Spiritual Counterfeits Project. P.O. Box 4308, Berkeley, CA 94704. Publishes informative newsletter and journal. Has done some of the best work on cults and New Age issues.

HEALTH AND THE BIBLE: INSIGHTS FROM ARCHAEOLOGY

Continued from page 16

vides an inspired guide.

Teaching about biblical health laws in the light of archaeological insights can help us and our students avoid the darkness of selfishness and superstition from which we as God's people are called. □

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- ¹ J. H. Breasted, *A History of Egypt: From the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924), p. 101.
- ² S. N. Kramer, *From the Tablets of Sumer* (Indian Hills, Col.: Falcon's Wing, 1956), p. 60.
- ³ A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia:*

Portrait of a Dead Civilization (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1964), pp. 295, 296.

⁴ Roland K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969).

RESOURCES ON ANCIENT HEALTH

The following resources are introductory materials for the upper secondary and college level. Most are common works that can be readily ordered through local bookstores.

- Breasted, J. H., *A History of Egypt: From the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924.
- Harris, J. R., and K. R. Weeks, *X-raying the Pharaohs*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973.
- Kramer, S. N., *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963.
- Oppenheim, A. L., *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, rev. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977.
- Roux, G., *Ancient Iraq*. 2nd ed. New York: Viking Penguin, 1980.

CREATIVE TEACHING THROUGH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Continued from page 27

**Children will
have little motivation
to create if
they feel no one
sees their work.**

involve your students in the community. They can enter poetry or prose contests, declamation contests, and even building project contests. Two of my students, a second and fourth grader, won \$100 apiece building rockets for a state contest. In a declamation contest one of my students was a finalist for the county.

As you expand your creativity, you will find how much fun and reward these activities offer for you and your students. □

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