

New Age Movement in Holistic Christian Education and Mission Perspectives: An Integrative Approach

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Abstract

The New Age movement represents a significant social and religious phenomenon that has displayed and continues to create a transformative influence on several aspects of society, including religious beliefs and practices, as well as the field of Christian religious education. The influence of the New Age Movement on Christianity has been observed among various Christian individuals and communities, including those in Indonesia. This study aimed to find a model of Christian education and a missionary approach to reach out to new Christian community agers. This study uses integrative research methods. The results of the study found an integrative model that includes nine stages in reaching new agers: changing evangelical thoughts that are negative towards new agers, loving new agers with sincerity, stopping thinking negatively about new agers, being friends for new agers, knowing new agers, understanding what new agers understand, inviting new agers, sharing good news, and disciplining them.

Keywords: Holistic Christian Education; Integrative Approach; Mission Perspectives; New Age Movement; New Agers



INTRODUCTION

The new age movement is one of the social and religious movements that has changed, is changing, and will continue to change the world, including religion and Christian religious education. Thomson (2018) describes this movement as a social and religious movement. The movement emerged at the beginning of the postmodern era, around the 1970s (Melton, 2008), in response to the failure of modern rationalism, in which formal religions, including churches could not solve social problems and human spiritual hunger. Therefore, there was a rise in social, humanitarian, and religious concerns, especially the fusion of modern religions with ancient beliefs such as reincarnation, astrology, physical and psychic energy (Gecewicz, 2018); belief in supernatural things, including natural forces (Enroth, 2005) so that humans are considered to have natural energy and can reach the divine level (Enroth, 2005). Since then, world society has experienced a shift from a rational modern paradigm to a phenomenal, spiritual, ideological and sociological postmodern paradigm (Lumintang, 2015). The new age movement is one of the ways that some postmodern societies address today's social and spiritual emptiness. This coincides with the fact that the world is increasingly chaotic as standards of truth become increasingly relative and moral crises continue to increase (Tanyid, 2014), including increasing cases of immorality, such as sexual immorality and seizure of church assets (finances) among evangelical Christians (Lumintang, 2017).

Indeed, the social and spiritual problems lost in the modern era can be answered through holistic and integrative Christian education and mission. Christian Education includes intellectual, character, ethics, morals, behaviour, and the main spirituality returned to its original purpose, similar to God in Christ Jesus (Winardi, 2018). In this way, Christian education is inseparable from the complete Christian

mission. The full Christian mission is a complete fusion of textual, contextual and communal missions. This holistic Christian education is inseparable from the holistic Christian mission. Holistic Christian education is a complete fusion of textual, contextual and communal missions. Based on this understanding, Metzger (2005) defines a holistic mission as a mission that departs from the Gospel as a whole, for the person is a whole through grace by the person is a whole. Therefore, to reach the full followers of the new age movement, it is necessary to understand this view based on the perspective of Christian education and mission and with an integrative approach between education and mission. Therefore, to reach the full followers of the new age movement, it is necessary to understand this view based on the perspective of Christian education and mission, and with an integrative approach between education and mission, new agers can be reached as a whole.

The new age movement has influenced Christianity. Many Christian people and communities in Indonesia have become very dynamic in their activities (Sokoy, 2004). Religious syncretism and pluralism rule over Christians so that they believe in the Bible and the Scriptures of any religion (Frisk & Nynas, 2012). They believe in the power of Jesus, as well as the power of themselves. It is called by Vitz (1977) "the Cult of Self-Worship and Selfism as Idolatry". Furthermore, McDowell and Stewart (1992) pointed out that "the new age movement is vast and takes in a broad spectrum of concepts from the occult to Eastern philosophy and global transformation". Groothuis (1986) describes this movement as a neo-pagan idol. Any religious community very easily accepts this movement. Gaisler commented, "I thought you could not teach religion in the public schools. Well, you cannot teach the Christian religion, but you can teach new age movement religion" (Murphy, 1992). The influence of the new age movement on children is enormous, through books, such as the

curriculum series entitled "Impressions" containing horror and occult stories, through scientists, such as Albert Einstein and Spinoza, who are adherents of pantheism (Murphy, 1992).

Many films and television programs contain the teachings of the new age movement that offer cosmic, mystical, and occult forces. Some of them have been broadcast on several television channels in Indonesia. They are very liked by many Indonesian children, such as Smurf, Captain Planet, Kung Fu Ninja, Ninja Turtles, Teenage Mutant, Side Kick, Indiana Jones, Star Wars, Harry Potter and so on (Setyanti, 2016; Astuti, 2021; Wiyanto, 2021). These movements have influenced many church and ecclesiastical communities or institutions (Kusmyadi, 2013). The new age movement spread in Indonesia from major cities to small towns (Sirnopati, 2020). The Synod of the Indonesian Bethel Church (GBI) also responded theologically to the input of the new age movement in Indonesia (Pram, 2018). In particular, the new age movement has entered into Christian schools, which recognize all the truths of all religious figures such as those found on the walls of classrooms of schools, many attached words of wisdom from Sidarta Gautama (Hindu), Dalai Lama (Buddha), Mother Theresa (Catholic) and Imam al-Ghazali (Islam). Likewise, breathing, meditation and yoga practices in Christian schools, including religious pluralism, challenge Christian theology (Objantoro, 2016).

The church needs to be equipped with a variety of literature to understand how to overcome the influence of the new age movement. Enroth (2005) wrote what is a New Religious Movement? (Enroth, 2005). Enroth wrote What is a New Religious Movement? The same was done by Chryssides, who wrote new age, Witchcraft, and Paganism in his book entitled Exploring New Religions (Chryssides, 1999). Some other authors are more "attacking" this movement, such as Herlianto's writing entitled Humanism and the New Age

Movement ([Herlianto, 1990](#)), as well as writings from Jatmiko, which highlights the dangers of the new age movement ([Jatmiko, 2019](#)). Some authors rate the new age movement based on the Bible, such as Clark's writing new age pantheism ([Clark, 2021](#)). These writings generally examine the new age movement descriptively, analytically and apologetically. Still, no model of Christian educative and missionary approach has been found to reach the new agers in the Christian community. The study aimed to find a model of an educative and missionary approach to Christianity to reach the new agers in the Christian community. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge in Christian religious education and missiology because it provides an integrative model between education and mission as an effort to reach out to new agers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

New Age Movement: Social, Political and Psychological

The new age movement is complicated to define because it has a very broad background related to different multi-faceted backgrounds, such as social, political, cultural, religious and psychological. Furthermore, the new age movement is difficult to define because there are no sacred texts, hierarchies, dogmas, creeds, doctrines, collections, central organization, membership, or leadership. They reject any institutional religion, belief, or authoritative hierarchy ([Chryssides, 1999](#)). Slick (2008) states that this is a collection of different theologies with a common tolerance thread, and the existing differences are not questioned in the frame of "universal truth". They disagree with the final claim of truth. Vitz (1977) stated, "In all its diversity, this new age movement is difficult to define because its boundaries are blurred. It is a kaleidoscope of shifts in beliefs, modes, and rituals".

Furthermore, the new age movement is difficult to define because "there are no sacred texts, hierarchies, dogmas, creeds, doctrines, collections, central organization, membership, and leadership. They reject any institutional religion, belief, or authoritative hierarchy (Chryssides, 1999). Slick states that this is a collection of different theologies with a common tolerance thread, and the existing differences are not questioned in the frame of "universal truth" (Slick, 2008). They disagree with the final claim of truth. Vitz (1977) stated, "In all its diversity, this new age movement is difficult to define because its boundaries are blurred. It is a kaleidoscope of shifts in beliefs, modes, and rituals".

Anderson asserts that "the new age movement is not seen as a religion but a new way to think about reality (the worldview)" (Anderson, 1991). The new age movement is a worldview consisting of a multi-belief, multi-focused, multi-faceted synthesis of Far Eastern religions and mystical religions, especially Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and the Occult, adapted to and influenced by Western materialistic cultures. According to Branch (1996), it sometimes appears in secular forms. This means that parts of Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufi Mysticism, and Christianity are all represented in the (mixed) new age. The fusion of elements from different Eastern religions would offend serious practitioners among them. The new age was influenced not only by Eastern religions but also by the plurality of religions and ethnic and cultural plurality. The new age is a free-flowing spiritual movement. New age people have similar beliefs and practices, which they add to any formal religion they follow into syncretism. All this can be explained through the Christmas tree in [Figure 1](#).

Figure 1

Syncretic practices of the New Age Movement



All followers of the new age movement tend to choose components that exist in modern major religions, such as components of worship, religious celebrations, prayer, fasting, and piety, which are combined with eastern (ancient) religions, such as shamanism, magic, druidism, gods (mother) earth, ancient Egypt like a cult. Therefore, Slick wrote that everyone's hopes are united with the chosen teachings of salvation, correct thinking, and knowledge. These are theologies of "good feelings", "universal tolerance", and "moral relativism" (Slick, 2008). Therefore, the new agers are united under the common bond of universal truth to form "a new world order". In this case, there is no longer one absolute truth – all are acceptable. Therefore, the finality of Christ was rejected by the new agers.

The new age movement can be viewed as a millennial movement. Kyle points out that humanity stands between two epochs in human history, the Pisces Age and the Aquarius Age" (Kyle, 2002). Ferguson (1980) admits that we leave the dark age of Pisces and enter the millennium of peace and harmony. There is a transition from the age of Pisces (modern rationality) to the age of Aquarius (postmodern Spirituality), happiness, and harmony of all things. The age of Aquarius is a millennium of love and light – in the words of the famous song "The age of Aquarius" (Jatmiko, 2019). Although it is

experiencing a significant revival, the "new age" is nothing new. In fact, he is ancient, and it goes back to pre-modern times (Heelas, 1993). The age of Aquarius was supposed to bring peace and enlightenment and reunite man with God, as intended by Bailey (1998).

Common themes that New Agers often talk about or voice include: (1). Our world does not reflect who we are at our best. (2). All our social and political problems go back to what they were 300 years ago. (3). The political system needs to be changed with the help of new political theories that suit our times. (4). Social change requires deep awareness, not just institutional change. (5). Ecological struggle, feminist, loving global unity. (6). Its values are anti-violence, diversity, a sense of community and sufficient. (7). Human development, not economics, but new age society. (8). Avoid large governments, corporations and institutions. (9). Start this process by connecting the hierarchical structure with the horizontal network. (10). The ultimate goal is unification through networking at many levels rather than concentrating the world on one centre. (11). Political power is those who develop themselves personally and spiritually. (12). They prefer evolution more than revolution (Jatmiko, 2019).

Several social and economic factors support and reinforce the spirituality of the new age. Another social support for the new age was the theological collapse of most "mainstream" Protestantism. When liberal Protestantism declines as a fact of life, it leaves a huge spiritual void. In many instances, this spiritual need has been met by the sophistication and novelty of new age messages (Vitz, 1977). That is why many Western Christians abandoned their main church traditions and moved to the new religious movement, one of which was the new age movement.

The development of humanistic psychology was powerful in support of the new age movement. One source of support for the new age came from Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. These two

Psychologists created a whole climate of opinion that makes the unconscious, the interior world, seem more real than the conscious mind, with its awareness of external reality. Vitz states that "The main psychological sources for the new age were humanistic psychology, and especially Abraham Maslow with his conceptualization of humanistic psychology, and Carl Rogers, the main co-creator of humanistic psychology together with Maslow, focused mainly on therapeutic techniques; it is the client-centred general interpretation of counseling that has the greatest influence" (Vitz, 1977). Vitz further explained, "The current interpretation of humanistic psychology is developing and impacts many world religions. Nowadays, psychological worship comes from humanistic psychology, which affects the worship of many churches so that it seems self-worship" (Vitz, 1977). That is why most contemporary worship today is more psychological emotions than spiritual activity.

METHOD

This study uses qualitative methods with an integrative holistic approach (Lumintang and Lumintang, 2016). Integrative research is one field of science (cognate) or the field of study of theology known as integrative theology. Integration is a general term in research literature describing a process, condition, system and end state (Gulledge, 2006). Just as understanding the relationship between two or more things takes many forms, so does integration, understood in many forms of integration according to the field of science. Philosophically, the word "integration" is not a process of unification, but a process of relating two or more different things in a way that is in accordance with the nature of these things so that they become whole (Landauer & Rowlands, 2001). The integration of education and missiology is for the sake of wholeness (Habgood, 1991). One part alone will not arrive at the full, ultimate and final

understanding. (Einstein, 1939) Van Till asserts: "The ultimate reality is not the world but the Creator of all creation" (Hunter 2007; Till 2000). This approach is designed for research to build a complete understanding of several disciplines in the field (cognate of studies), by integrating the study of history, biblical, theological, and practical (Gordon, 2010). So, integrating education and missiology is an attempt to achieve wholeness, the highest and the last.

The steps of integrative research include: *First*, the researcher examines the history of the new age movement, the social, political, and psychological context, and the meaning of rituals and symbols of the new age movement using historical methods. *Second*, researchers use biblical and theological methods to examine the views of the new age movement based on the perspective of Education and Christian mission. *Third*, the authors integrate educational and missionary approaches to reach new agers using holistic integration methods. Through this study, researchers found a model that integrates education and mission as an effort to reach new agers, which includes nine approaches, namely the transformation of negative thoughts of evangelicals towards new agers, loving the new agers with a sincere heart, stop thinking negatively about the new agers, become a friend to the new agers, knowing the real new agers, understanding what new agers have understood, Inviting new agers, sharing the Good News and making disciples.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION

Perspectives on Christian Education and Mission towards the New Age Movement

Although the new age movement does not have a sacred text, a central organization, membership, formal clergy, geographical centre or headquarters, official website or creed, it has a set of beliefs, worldviews, and theology. The new age movement has a worldview

or belief (basic premise). According to McDowell: (1). Their worldview is monistic (all is one) or pantheistic (all are God). (2). The world and evil are just illusions. The real reality is passion and kindness. (3). Human nature is inherently good, but karma prevents humans from realizing their goodness. (4). Man is divine, or Christ in man. (5). Humans determine the desired circumstances responsibly, and then humans will create their future. (6). Eternal reincarnation with the law of karma. (7). Salvation or detachment from the world (illusion) can be achieved through the fusion of the self with nature (pantheism) so that it becomes divine. (8). Self-unification through transformation is increasingly natural. (9). The goal of all is global transformation through the transformation of all human beings and the transformation of the self. Groothuis concluded that this Movement states that all are one, all religions are one, all are God, and man is God through the change of natural and inner consciousness (optimism) (Groothuis, 1986).

The views of the new age movement are contrary to traditional and/or Reformed Christian views. Christianity is theistic (a transcendent and immanent God); all creation manifests as God's creation and is under His sovereign control; man is neither God nor part of God, a creation that was originally good, but because of sin became totally corrupt. Therefore, man cannot be accountable to his Creator, his salvation is not the result of his efforts, but the gift of God solely in and through Christ, and the full salvation experienced when the Lord Jesus came back to pick them up to heaven.

In addition to the nine views above, it is also necessary to know the following understandings: (1). Extreme mysticism, that godhead can be obtained by looking inward, self-centred, self-realizing as a god. All human beings are gods, but unconsciously, it is necessary to rise by means of transcendental meditation. (2). Holism. If nature is God and God is nature, everything is God. (3). Reincarnation, we can

still get a better life after death (cycle), just like the Hindu teaching on reincarnation. (4). Animism, the universe is alive, and the spirit and force behind anything is animism and paganism. (5). Evolutionism, in which man can evolve into God (pantheistic evolution). (6). Optimism, in which they are very optimistic about impossible things (not faith but optimistic). They believe the world will be won one day, and all world leaders will work together. This is meant by the new age, which is bound to materialize according to their optimism. (7). Globalization, all humanity will become one. This is what is known as a global village. (8). Syncretism, combining different religious beliefs and philosophies into one part, becomes one chosen world religion (Murphy, 1992).

All previous studies depart from the following fundamental thoughts: First, The source of authority. The new age movement rejects absolute truth because it has no particular source (Bible) authority. The only absolute dogma in the new age – each person has his subjective reality and experience. What is right for one person may not be true for another. Second, God. Although many new ages adherents describe "God" in personal terms, in the end, "God" is Ferguson's life force, consciousness or impersonal energy as "Aquarian Conspiracy". New age people believe that everything that exists is of one essence, and that is God in the form of energy, consciousness, strength, and love (Branch, 1996).

Third, Jesus Christ. The new age's teachings on Jesus Christ have become very popular among those who believe that Jesus was but a great moral teacher. They believe that during the 18 lost years before Jesus appeared in public at the age of 30, Jesus became an explorer who travelled to distant lands to spiritual centres in India, Egypt and Tibet, where He learned from various spiritual teachers. Thus, Jesus was a man who evolved spiritually to the state of "Christ". Christ is the actual state of the highest essence. Everyone's true existence is

"Christ", and everyone's goal is to achieve self-realization..." So, for the new age movement, Jesus Christ is one of the many appointed Gods – the guidepost whose function is to awaken humanity and light the way (Branch, 1996). Fourth is the Holy Spirit. New ager did not believe in the Holy Spirit – therefore, there was no teaching.

Fifth, humans do not sin because their true essence is divine and perfect – man can create his reality. The only discontinuity between man and God is man's ignorance of unlimited potential. Man is divine. Absolute truth is replaced by subjective and relativistic experience (Branch, 1996). Sixth, reincarnation is usually seen as a progressive step towards a Godhead, but progressive steps are not always guaranteed, and the number of reincarnations can reach millions. It is determined by the law of Karma (the law of cause and effect). What you did in your previous life determines who you are now. Self-realization, total enlightenment or illumination, in which the soul enters the endless freedom of *Karma* control – that is the ultimate goal. Seventh, The last days. The new ager states that humanity is developing towards a "New Age" of peace and prosperity. This is where the movement got its name. They believe "this golden age" will be a time of no hatred, violence, war, crime, racism, disease, famine, or death. They believe this will be a glorious time on earth when there will be one nation, language, government, and religion.

The main difference between Christianity and the new age movement concerns some theological teachings about God, man, earth, salvation, evil, and Jesus Christ, as suggested by Campbell (2012) and Murphy (1992) that: First, God is an impersonal force, namely nature and creative energy. Second, Man is essentially divine and part of God (nature). Third, the earth is sacred; as a living organism, it has consciousness. Fourth, salvation is obtained through liberation and reincarnation and enlightenment through meditation. Fifth, the evil does not exist, and what exists is ignorance. Sixth, the

saviour is the teacher of enlightenment and divine consciousness that everyone can achieve, such as the Avatars of the Pisces Age, magicians and graduates from the Esoteric Mystery Schools (Harry Potter). At the same time, the Christian teachings about God are one living, personal, sovereign God over all things. The man was created in the image of God (not God) but sinned. God created the earth for His glory. Salvation is only by the grace of God in and through Jesus Christ. Evil is rebellion against God's will through the sinful nature of man and the work of Satan. Jesus Christ is the second person of the Triune God who became flesh, without sin, as the mediator of the only God and man, who suffered, died on the cross, was buried and rose, ascended into heaven, and will come to bring about perfect salvation to the believer.

Based on the point of view of Christian education and mission, all the differences in theological thought of the new ager need to be revealed to Christians so that they know and realize them. The theological view of the new age movement is very different from that of Christian theology. The source of Christian theology is the Bible, and the Bible is the word of God, the absolute truth, whereas the new agers have no definite and absolute source, thus adopting everything they consider good to achieve its goal, which is the new age. Christian theology recognizes a singular and personal God, whereas the new age recognizes many and is not personal. According to the Bible, the Christian Jesus that the new age speaks of is not Jesus Christ. Nor do they believe in the Holy Spirit. The teachings on man, salvation and the end times according to the new age differ from those of Christianity. Therefore, the new age view needs to be known not to be trusted by Christians and to understand them (the new agers) and reach out to them.

Integration of Educational and Missional Approaches

As discussed briefly in the methods section, integration is not unification, but rather a process of linking two or more different things or fields in accordance with the nature of the two or more. Integration results in wholeness, such as the integration of theology and philosophy (Lumintang, 2015), ecology and theology (Lumintang, 2015), systematic theology and missiology (Lumintang, 2006), science dan theology (Lumintang and Benyamin, 2022), so with education and missiology. This integration is built on the presupposition that all truth is God's truth (Lumintang and Benyamin, 2022). Missiology precedes education and education enriches missiology. When the two are integrated, they produce wholeness. Both mission and Education come from God mission (Piper, 2009). God's mission is the complete mission, namely sending (going), accompanying, and completing (consummation) it.

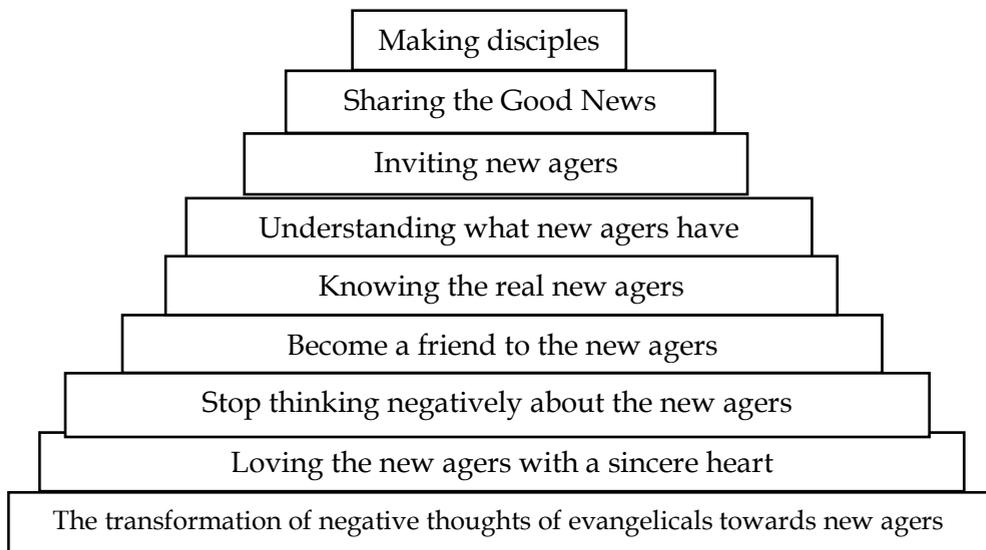
Mission Integration and Education is written in Matthew 28:18-20. This text is known as the Great Commission. In this great mandate, there are several imperative verbs, namely "Go...make disciples of all nations...baptize... and teach". The integration between mission and education can be seen explicitly in the phrase "go and make disciples of all nations" and education in the word "teach". This can be applied in schools such as Samford University Orlean Beeson School of Education, where the education is designed for students who wish to integrate ministry and teaching in a Christian mission setting (Abby, 2017). Even education itself is a mission, said Trevor Cooling in his article entitled "Go and Make Disciples: Education as Christian Mission" (Cooling, 2008). Making disciples (missions and education) is for everyone, and certainly includes new agers. This is not only taught by the Lord Jesus but has been carried out by the Triune God.

Jesus Christ was sent by God the Father into the world, becoming flesh to reach out to man. It is called *Coram deo* (in the presence of God).

The incarnation provides some principles of education and mission as the task of the church in the world, especially to reach out to the unreached, such as the new agers. To apply incarnational mission as the cornerstone of an integrative approach to education and mission, the authors offer nine integrative steps to reach new agers. These nine steps depart from the great commission that starts from making disciples to the great commandment (love), from evangelism to education, as described in [Figure 2](#).

Figure 2

Integration of Educational and Missional Approaches



The transformation of negative thoughts of Evangelicals towards New Agers

The first step an evangelical Christian group should take is not to change the new agers but to transform your mind because this group really strongly hates the new age movement. Murphy commented, "The new age movement is a satanic movement of self-deification contrary to Christianity" (Murphy, 1992). Robbins (2002) comments that the new agers are looking for a man, whether a god or

a demon, who will be their image as a Messiah, coming to save this earth. They sought to establish a universal leader who would meet the description of the demon god. Therefore, for Robbins, they, namely the new agers, are the antichrist. Many theologians and evangelical leaders still think the new age is the antichrist. In the ears and eyes of the new age, the evangelical group is very difficult to challenge, even regarding them as antichrists. There was no other way to reach out to the new agers. Opening their hearts starts with our readiness to open our hearts first. This is the step from the bottom, which is the first and fundamental step.

Loving the New Agers with a Sincere Heart

Once we have transformed our minds, we must remember that all the people we talk to are human beings whom God loves, and we must also love them. Loving them is based on the love of God for those who are lost. God's love draws people to come to Him, even the lost and helpless return to Him (Lumintang, 2020). The Apostle Paul wrote of one who is possessed by the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:4). If the love of Christ overcomes us, then we will love others, we will be kind to them, as Paul wrote, "Be kind to all men, be able to teach, not be vindictive. Those who oppose him must be taught gently, in the hope that the Lord will give them repentance that leads them to a knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

Stop thinking negatively about the New Agers

The greater obstacle to reaching out to new ager is not because they are exclusive and firmly committed to their doctrines but because of our negative thinking about them. From an educational and mission perspective, if we love them, we will have positive thoughts about them, teach and reach out to them. Therefore, do not regard and treat them as heretics, as antichrists, but as fellow human beings with a new culture. We are not accepting and acknowledging their teachings but

accepting them as fellow human beings (Lumintang, 2021). Let them know that we do not regard them as enemies, sects, and antichrists. On the contrary, let them know we love and think good about them.

Become a friend to the New Agers

Having stopped thinking about them negatively, we must build a good friendship with them. Being a good friend is an essential educational and mission step to reach them. Friendship, of course, is a personal or individual touch. Branch (1996) gave several suggestions, including approaching the new ages individually. In this context, they will open up to us. Therefore, we must be prepared to answer their questions, and we will answer them as friends. We must also prepare and question their backgrounds, books, experiences, and answers to give Christians good direction on where to focus their attention. This step will be continued in the next step.

Knowing the Real New Agers

In this step, we observe and know the appearance and background of new agers, their daily activities, customs, symbols, clothing, speech, social conditions, economic problems and needs, and their reaction to the world around them. Neumann calls this a cultural interaction. For him, this interaction was the beginning of the meeting and the beginning of the incarnation process. This is the first step necessary to understand those we want to communicate with (Neumann, 2013). Communication will only be established and appropriately realised by knowing who they are and what they think and believe.

Understanding what new agers have understood (Common Ground)

If we love them, we will try to get to know them. The first step to approaching the new agers is finding common ground. They will be even more interested if we start with this step. This step is a door that

we can use to enter and know what they know (epistemology). This step was also made by the Apostle Paul when he entered Athens, as Luke wrote in Acts 17. Paul observed Athens and found that they were very religious. In this way, we will find many positive elements in new agers, and starting from that, we will establish good communication with them.

The new age movement and Christianity are two different perspectives. The perspective of the new age movement is monistic, pantheistic and anthropocentric, while the viewpoint of Christianity is theistic and theocentric. However, according to Groothuis, "effectively facing the new age movement requires an attitude of humility, a spirit of love and a conscious effort to reach those in the movement" (Groothuis, 1986). Therefore, he suggested that Christians respond to the new age. The first thing he suggested was the same as this sixth step – this is to observe. (Groothuis, 1986). Like Paul, when he entered Athens, he observed everything that had happened and studied the city (Acts 17:16-23), so he could intersect with all the city's citizens.

Inviting New Agers

After sharing the good news with the new agers, we invite them to participate in Bible services and studies. We can encourage all members to accept them well and become their friends to have a warm relationship with them. This fellowship helps to build meaningful relationships and provides ample opportunities for them to ask questions, discuss, and learn biblical truths (Davis & Moore, 2001). Groothuis suggested his second step, which is to evaluate. He further wrote in his book the following sentence: "Scripture tells us about two things, namely the reasons we have faith (I Pet.3:16) and the reasons opposite to the new age (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). When Paul was in Athens, he spoke about his faith only in Christ and against a god they did not know (Acts 17:23), but meekly and respectfully.

Sharing the Good News

The Worldview of the new age movement is not real, but it greatly draws people's minds to direct them to think that they are God and can improve their lives through their own person. Of course, this is impossible. Humans were born, grew up, lived temporarily on this planet, and must have died. Human beings are limited and can never become God. People need someone greater than them, who can give him forgiveness and eternal life. Only One can fulfill this picture: the mediator of God and man, Jesus Christ. Through His death and bodily resurrection, He has given us what we desperately need, namely forgiveness, assurance, purpose and meaning in this afterlife. This message is in the form of good news shared with them as part of an educational and mission approach (Lumintang, 2021). In this step, we offer new agers a Christian message and show them that Christian truth can be applied to all areas of life and thought. Based on the assumption that all truth is God's truth, we are responsible in all aspects of life and struggle. This is what Groothuis meant by the third point of the Christian response to the new agers, which is to act (Lumintang, 2021). It is not just a concept; it is a real action.

Making Disciples

After new age adherents are open and receive the good news, with an educational and mission approach—make disciples of all nations of Christ (mission) and teach them, then a transformation occurs which is marked by their obedience to do everything that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28: 19-20). Obedience to the great commission is a place of meeting and unity (Dietrich 2018). Discipleship continues the mission of evangelism as part of pastoral ministry (Lumintang, 2021). Making disciples is the core of the mission through education. Therefore, education and mission cannot be separated. Discipleship is a continuous process of making disciples through education (teaching), following Christ, taking up the cross and becoming similar

to Christ (Romans 8:29). Following and becoming like Christ is what Christ's disciples mean throughout life until death.

CONCLUSION

From a Christian education and mission perspective, the new age movement differs significantly from Christianity. All aspects of the new age movement doctrines have no similarity with all Christian doctrines, such as the source of authority, God, humans, earth, Jesus Christ, salvation and the end times. All these differences come from two different worldviews. The worldview of the new age movement is monistic, pantheistic, anthropocentric, and syncretistic, whereas the Christian worldview is monotheistic, theistic, and theocentric. The new age movement is very human-centred, while the Christian view is God-centered. It is not surprising that the teachings and practices of the new age movement have emerged in the Christian community, such as meditation without prayer to the Triune God, yoga by calming and emptying the mind without words, channelling (transfer of energy and Spirit through touching people by hand), health with the power of natural and bodily energy, non-neutral acupuncture, gymnastics with special movements centred on nature and oneself. As a result, the people also experience spiritual emptiness.

There have been many attempts to fill the spiritual vacuum of the new agers, such as apologetic efforts. Without denying these efforts, integrating educational and missional approaches is an all-out effort to reach out and fill the spiritual void of the new agers. Based on the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the integration of educational and missional approaches begins not in changing the new agers but instead changing the way of thinking about the new agers, which results in an attitude of loving sincerely, thinking positively, making oneself their friend, understanding what they understand, then confronting them, and continuing with the act of sharing the most

valuable thing, namely the good news in the form of words and deeds, and is followed by the process of making them disciples who follow and become conformed to Christ.

This study found an integrative approach model between educative and missionary Christians to reach out to the new agers in the Christian community. The integrative approach model in question includes nine stages in reaching out to the new agers, namely changing the negative evangelical thoughts towards the new agers, loving the new agers with sincerity, stopping thinking negatively about the new agers, becoming friends with the new agers, knowing the truth of the new agers, understanding what the new agers understand, inviting the new agers, sharing the Good News and making disciples. Some suggestions are presented for ways to behave, but they do not emerge as implications from a well-developed argument. Overall, suggestions or comments are too generic to be very helpful. There is enormous undeveloped potential in this aspect of the article.

Author Contributions

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Informed consent was not required for this study.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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