NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY

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EDITORIAL

New Age has peaked, seems to be the consensus, but it has left its mark on contemporary religion and culture. Its mention arouses anything from mild curiosity to passionate commitment and ferocious attacks. For a phenomenon termed 'New Age Movement' it is perhaps surprising to discover that, as our writers agree, there is very little that is new about the New Age phenomenon and it has none of the coherence of a movement – its adherents do not focus on a common goal and select randomly from its assortment of esoteric practices. The New Age phenomenon can be traced as a strand running through history, occurring, it is suggested, at times of change in religious consciousness. Organised religion fails to grasp and integrate this paradigm shift thus creating groups of dissenters who, far from abandoning spiritual belief, seek hungrily to nourish their new understanding of it, often by uncontrolled diversification.

Richard Woods identifies this present phase as having strong Judeo-Christian roots as well as even more ancient pagan connections, while J. Gordon Melton links it to post-seventeenth-century developments, especially the metaphysical and spiritualist churches and the occultists. There is a consensus among our writers, developed by John Saliba, that when viewed from a critical but balanced perspective, the NAM has many positive features in its own right, as well as the ambiguous and absurd, and can act as a healthy stimulus to Christianity, forcing us to focus on issues which we have lost or misunderstood. In common with earlier expressions it is marked by a strong sense of immanent spiritual power which is the source of personal and communal transformation. This most recent phase is marked by its global perspective, permeating all aspects of culture, adding to recovered ancient wisdom the new physics and other frontier scientific knowledge. This world-affirming thrust has given hope to many hopeless First World people, acutely conscious of their globe-threatening life-styles. Rooted in a monistic world-view it is in contrast with orthodox Christianity.

The issues of evil and ritual are two aspects of the NAM which challenge Christianity most. New Age fails to deal with the whole problem of suffering and evil, as Moni McIntyre argues, avoiding any attribution of moral responsibility. This avoidance strikes at the heart of Christianity in challenging the nature and purpose of Jesus' life and his place in history. Michael Northcott examines the NAM's success in reinstating ritual as an experience of participation in spiritual reality and what this success can teach the churches. The healthiest Christian response to New Age would seem to be to see it as a 'sign of the times', challenging us to further reflect and reform in the light of the gospel.

Jacqueline Hawkins

WHAT IS NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY?[1]

By RICHARD WOODS

BOTH ITS ADVOCATES and its opponents have described the New Age Movement in unexpectedly complementary ways. In his sympathetic autobiographical account, *Facing west from California's shores: a Jesuit's journey into New Age Consciousness*,[2] Fr David Toolan sees it as an amalgam of Asian mysticism, modern physics and transpersonal psychologies. According to another recent but hostile assessment by an American Jesuit, Mitch Pacwa's *Catholics and the New Age*,[3] its components include meditation techniques derived from Hinduism, Zen, Sufism and Native American religion, mixed with humanistic psychology, Western occultism and modern physics, along with altered states of consciousness, astrology, the Enneagram, channelling, reincarnation, and new fads like crystals, rebirthing experiences and sensory deprivation.

For Toolan, major contributors to New Age consciousness include academics such as Esalen Institute founder Michael Murphy, Jean Houston, Ernest Becker, Stanilaus Grof, Loren Eisley, David Bohm and Ilya Prigogine. For Pacwa, the philosophical foundations of this new Tower of Babel are the writings of Teilhard de Chardin, C. G. Jung, and Buckminster Fuller, but the architects are Oscar Ichazo and Claudio Naranjo, Matthew Fox, Shirley MacLaine and Elizabeth Clare Prophet.

While New Age enthusiasm may or may not be 'based on experiences of monism that lead people to believe in pantheism, with a tendency to hold millenarian views of history', Pacwa is right about one thing. It is without doubt loosely structured and eclectic.[4] But this conglomeration of novel and antique elements is not a social or religious movement in any reasonably coherent sense, nor is it particularly new. More surprisingly yet, it is deeply, if not wholly, rooted in ancient Christian tradition.

First of all, despite evangelical suspicions of an international, even world-wide conspiracy to infiltrate the educational system, seize political power, and so forth, the so-called New Age Movement is not a movement in the ordinary sense of the term – a body of persons with a common object, a campaign undertaken by such a body, or the activities

of a group toward the achievement of a specific goal, such as the labour movement.[5]

Secondly, there is little new in the so-called New Age Movement either in terms of content or appearance, which is a recurrent phenomenon. The 'New Age' is in fact one of the oldest of all Christian themes, the perhaps inevitable result of the impact of Jesus on Jewish prophetic expectation and apocalyptic prediction. Other, non-Christian elements of New Age teaching also find acceptance (often uncritically) to the extent that they contain 'ancient wisdom', as in the effort to provide a Sufi background to the 'time-honoured' Enneagram developed twenty years ago by Oscar Ichazo and Robert Naranjo.

What *is* new about the New Age Movement is the adoption (also often uncritically as well as superficially) of the language and concepts of the 'new physics' and other frontier areas of science and medicine. Thus, while ancient wisdom may include astrology and Chinese herbalism, it does not extend to the celestial mechanics of Ptolemy or Isaac Newton, much less the surgical techniques of Galen and Paracelsus. Even in this regard, however, such selective conceptual borrowing has generally tended to typify 'modern' theology and avant-garde religious groups, as seen particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[6]

That neo-conservative Christian groups recognize the New Age Movement as a spiritual threat is thus doubly interesting, for many of them *are* relative newcomers on the religious scene. Moreover, they display many characteristics of a true movement. Addressing both the advent of New Age ideas, beliefs and practices as well as evangelical opposition to them as essentially religious phenomena can, therefore, illuminate several aspects of the contemporary situation as the second millennium of the Christian era draws to an end.

The spiritual dimension

If spirituality is taken to mean the beliefs, values and practices that unify and orient our lives in respect to God as the origin and goal of human existence,[7] it would be more accurate to speak of New Age *spiritualities*, given the wide (even wild) proliferation of 'ways' among its constituents. Among their more salient features, such spiritualities are, first of all, *theistic*, perhaps surprisingly so considering the long predominance of atheistic materialism in both the physical and social sciences from which the so-called 'movement' draws much of its theoretical support.

As its critics note, New Age spiritualities emphasize divine *immanence* over transcendence. New Agers hold that God is abundantly present and

accessible to human consciousness by means of a variety of intermediaries, some of which (nature, ritual, sacred texts, love and sexuality, prayer and meditation) it shares with Christianity and other traditional religions. Others (e.g., the selective use of drugs, divination, forms of magic) are incompatible and the cause of serious complaint by more conservative believers.

Although God is not always conceived of in personalistic terms, there is often a pronounced *mystical* tone to New Age spiritual attitudes – the belief that it is possible to become increasingly conscious of our profound unity with God through the right spiritual discipline. (Again, what is 'right' is interpreted variously from person to person and group to group.)

To the extent that New Age spiritualities emphasize the importance of esoteric knowledge or enlightenment in order to attain salvation or ultimate integrity, they are also *gnostic*, with a proportionate tendency to incorporate archaic, arcane, and occult beliefs and practices.

New Age spiritualities are generally *optimistic* about human nature and its perfectibility, both individually and corporately. There is proportionately less emphasis on sin and guilt than in conventional Christianity, especially among evangelicals and fundamentalists (as they are quick to note). Fault and failure are more likely to be interpreted in relation to unrealized human potential and social-ecological destructiveness rather than moral evil.

New Age spiritualities tend to be *integral* and *holistic*.[8] Physicist David Bohm's notion of 'implicate order' and similar concepts are often cited to support belief in a pervasive unity of both the social world and the world of nature. It is this aspect of New Age teaching that arouses fears of monism and ultimately of pantheism among Christian traditionalists.

Lastly, but by no means exhaustively, New Age spiritualities tend to promote personal and social *transformation* – the achievement of a new dimension or level of human abilities in the religious, mental, physical and even political realms, but also a cosmic or universal breakthrough on the order of Teilhard de Chardin's Omega Point.

Righteous reaction

None too surprisingly, evangelical Christian groups, particularly neo-fundamentalists, see in the New Age Movement, and especially its more overtly religious aspects, a danger sufficiently sinister to identify as Satanic, an attitude reflected in the titles of much recent sectarian literature.[9] To the extent that such groups are themselves imbued with eschatological expectations, New Age millenarianism is generally attributed to the Antichrist as well.

Such opposition is understandable with regard to traditionally repugnant subjects such as astrology, reincarnation, witchcraft (i.e., neo-paganism), spiritualism, psychic phenomena, and other 'occult' beliefs and practices. Similarly, a deep suspicion of Asian and other non-Christian religious elements has long since typified the stance of fundamentalists and neo-fundamentalists (as well as some main-stream Christian bodies). A pronounced hostility toward modern science also antedates the late nineteenth-century reaction to Darwin and Freud. The loose combination of these components in the New Age Movement presents an irresistibly inviting target for evangelical opposition, but it does not wholly explain the uneasiness of the Christian Right.

I suggest that a deeper basis for such opposition lies in the fact that New Age enthusiasm has very old Christian roots – the same roots in many respects as the eschatological preoccupations of the neo-conservatives themselves. Evangelical Christianity (and other contemporary religious fundamentalism) and the New Age Movement are in fact sibling rivals sharing at least similar (if slightly eccentric) presuppositions about history and salvation.

Divine novelty and the arrow of time

Central to early Christian preaching and writing, the messianic and eschatological proclamation of a New Age is rooted in the prophetic anticipation of the Day of the Lord, itself a reflection of the unique estimation of *innovation* in ancient Hebrew religion.[10] With 'that day', the inauguration of the messianic era, God will usher in a whole new world.[11] Jesus appeals to this belief in his eschatological discourses: 'Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel' (Mt 19:28).

Corrected and deepened by the later theology of creation, the primitive historical eschatology of the Hebrews was widened to include both nature and worship. Thus, almost everything connected with God eventually became associated with newness, growth and life.[12]

One of the few dissenting voices was that of the cynical Qoheleth: 'What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already, in the ages before us' (Qoh 1:9–10). But the central Hebrew tradition is affirmatively and overwhelmingly innovative, perhaps most eloquently so in the Book of Isaiah: 'Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them' (Isai 42:9).[13]

Christian scripture concludes with one of the most startling pronouncements of all: 'And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new"' (Apoc 21:5).[14]

Christian centuries

The expectation that Jesus would soon return in glory to judge the world and inaugurate the Realm of God created not only a spiritual crisis for the early Church but a thematic that has resurfaced regularly at the end of centuries and, it is now safe to conclude, millennia.[15] Apocalyptic Jewish writings such as the Book of Enoch and 2 Esdras undoubtedly influenced such beliefs, as seen in the epistles attributed to Peter and Jude. It may well have reflected Jesus' own teaching as recorded in the Gospels (see especially Matt 24: 29–30, Mk 13: 24–26, Lk 21: 25–27, etc.). St Paul's exhortations to the Christians of Thessalonika in Macedonia show that he, too, ascribed at first to the return of Christ in physical, personal presence.

Eventually, Paul and his disciples tempered belief in the immediate Parousia with an emphasis on sanctifying life in the present worlds to prepare for the life of glory to come at the time appointed by God. Despite such cautions, some early Christians continued to focus upon the day of Christ's return as the goal of faith. Stimulated by the potent symbolism of the Book of Revelation, such believers frequently centred their attention on the thousand-year reign of Christ described in Apoc 20: 3–6 – the 'Millennium'.[16] Most of these 'millenarians' or 'chiliasts', including Papias, Hermas, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Irenaeus and Commodion, maintained that Christ's Second Coming would inaugurate the Millennium. Later, more literal-minded Christians came to believe that the millennial epoch of peace and justice would precede and indeed inaugurate the Parousia (premillennialism). Others, like Julius Africanus writing in the third century, simply prolonged the beginning of the Millennium for hundreds of years into the future.

Montanism: the 'New Prophecy'

Although opposed by the keenest theologians from the second to the fourth centuries, notably Clement and Origen in Alexandria and Augustine in Carthage, the millenarian theme survived and recurred among radical sectarians. In the second century, an excessive sect of such dissidents called Montanists became a lingering problem for the Church in Asia. From there it spread into North Africa, mainly because of its appeal to the most brilliant apologist of the period, Tertullian of Carthage.

Montanus was himself a Phrygian and may once have been a priest of Cybele. About the year 160 he became a Christian and proclaimed a new revelation centred on the little town of Papuza. By 175, he had gathered about himself a sizeable coterie, including two well-to-do women, Priscilla and Maximilla, who were said to possess the spirit of prophecy. The 'New Prophecy' took the form of ecstatic utterances over which they apparently had no control. Their remarks were copied down by disciples, edited and circulated.

Montanist doctrine asserted that with the new revelation, the third great age of world history had begun. Previous ages had been that of God the Father, encompassing the centuries up to the birth of Jesus, and that of the Christian era itself up to the New Prophecy. But the fullness of revelation began with the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Montanus, who is reported to have claimed 'I am the Father, the Word, and the Paraclete'. All previous dispensations were thus rendered null and void – a corollary which would become a familiar refrain in the centuries to follow.

The Montanists were anti-intellectual, opposing themselves principally to the speculations of the so-called 'gnostics'. They were also millenaristic – proclaiming the proximate return of Christ, the end of the world, and the descent of the New Jerusalem – conveniently enough at Papuza. And like true enthusiasts of all times, they expected, even demanded, that Christians everywhere would accede to their teaching.

Understandably enough, orthodox Christians viewed the goings-on in Phrygia with disfavour and ultimately some alarm. Within a few years, Montanus and his prophetesses were excommunicated by a synod of bishops. An untrustworthy legend claims that all three later hanged themselves.

The perils of Priscillian

The 'new age' thematic appeared again in the fourth century, when in 385 Priscillian, the Bishop of Avila, and several of his principal followers were accused of Manichaeism and sorcery. Like many of their contemporaries, the Priscillianists believed that the world was in the grip of Satan and that Christian commitment required a total separation from secular society. Although millenarianism was not pronounced in their teaching, they were charismatic and prophetic like the Montanists, and included occult teachings and apocryphal works among their interests. Also extreme ascetics, the Priscillianists rejected marriage, abstained from meat and alcohol, fasted, observed vigils, and sometimes prayed without benefit of clothing, like the earlier Adamites who had attempted to return to the primitive innocence of Eden.

Several of Priscillian's rival bishops brought charges against him that resulted in the first imperial inquisition. He and his immediate disciples, including several women, were tortured, and on the basis of confessions thus extracted, were tried and executed by order of the usurper-emperor of the West, the Spaniard Magnus Maximus. Other followers were banished.

New Age speculation and millennial preoccupation did not die out with the decline of Priscillian or of the Empire itself. The barbarian invasions and fall of Rome were frequently interpreted as a sign of the end of the present age. A militant millenarian tone appeared in the fourth- and fifth-century writings of Lactantius and Commodianus, and later in the activities of figures like Eon of Stella. Apocalypticism figured strongly in the spirituality of the Celtic churches as a whole. Both elements resurfaced stridently in the early medieval period.

Joachim of Fiore

As the year 1000 approached, fear spread through emerging Christendom that the end of the world was near. The crisis passed with only minor climactic and social disturbances, but the sense of millennial foreboding was not entirely dispelled. Toward the end of the twelfth century, the apocalyptic writings of a former Cistercian abbot, Joachim of Fiore (1132–1202), excited great attention in southern Europe.[17]

Like the Montanists, Joachim and his followers viewed human history as a Trinitarian epic, in which the Old Testament period was under the aegis of the Father, the New Testament period under the Son, but a 'new age' beginning sometime around 1260 would be the era of the Holy Spirit prior to the end of the world. In the coming last age, he predicted, humankind would enter its spiritual maturity, introduced by the appearance of new religious orders. This prophecy would be applied with great latitude in the thirteenth century to a host of unorthodox cults and sects as well as the new mendicant orders, particularly the Franciscans and Dominicans.

For centuries (and today as well), such apocalyptic visions have fuelled the expectations of people weary of 'ordinary' religion and longing for a reawakening of enthusiasm. The 'new age' is always one in which men and women will worship 'in spirit and truth', unhindered by official regulations and institutional restraints, sharing their possessions freely, and able to express love without taint of jealousy, rejection or reprisal. Such 'true believers' impatiently await an era of peace, freedom, truth and justice – the Promised Land, the Kingdom of Heaven, the City of God, the millennial ideal of a wholly spiritual church.

As tends to happen in such instances, hordes of disaffected serfs and opportunistic scoundrels as well as high-minded spiritual seekers seized fervently upon Abbott Joachim's utopian prognostications and soon attempted to hurry things along by social uprisings which were quickly and brutally suppressed. A similar disaster befell the followers of Amaury of Bène in the thirteenth century and the militant Anabaptists in the following two centuries. In this regard, the legacy of apocalyptic spirituality tends to remain tragic.

In the wake of Reform

'New Age' themes arose again in Germany and Switzerland during the Reformation period, when the temptation became all too easy for demagogues like Thomas Müntzer and John of Leyden to identify the beginning of the Millennium with what was in fact the inauguration of religious despotism. Similar episodes in Münster and Geneva ushered in reigns not of peace and justice, but of terror. Fear and subservience quickly replaced love and freedom. Dissent from the dictates of the leaders became punishable by ostracism, exile or even death.

In England and America, the apocalyptic fever found different expression in George Fox's pacific vision as well as a wave of evangelical preaching in both liberal and Adventist sects. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a variety of utopian communities had appeared in England, Germany, and especially the United States. Most were founded by Protestant Christians imbued with an eschatological fervour to witness the perfect society on earth, if not the Second Coming of Christ. Among the more famous were those at Oneida, New York; the Amana Colonies of Iowa; and the Shakers, whose origins lay in the English Quaker revival of 1747. Led by Mother Ann Lee, the Shakers, 'the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearance', emigrated from England to New York in 1774.[18]

Communities of Hutterite Anabaptists that settled in the United States and Canada, as well as Mennonites and Amish groups, shared some characteristics of the more apocalyptic and perfectionist societies. Robert Owen's Indiana commune, New Harmony, and others in Scotland and England embodied the ideal of social perfectionism without a pronounced eschatological spirituality. But expectations of the Second Coming and the imminent end of the world animated the spirituality and activity of many other sects, the most important being the Seventh Day Adventists, founded by William Miller in 1831 in Dresden, New York; the Irvingites or Catholic Apolostic Church, founded in England by Edward Irving in 1832, and the International

Bible Students Association (Jehovah's Witnesses), founded in the United States in 1874.

The twentieth century

Revivalism and evangelical enthusiasm continued to enliven Protestant churches well into the present century. Despite miscalculations and false alarms, Adventist sects have also survived and in some instances have even expanded. Millennial expectations also surfaced in new forms of Pentecostalism. Tongue-speaking and other charisms had appeared at intervals throughout the Christian era, but the Pentecostal movement would reach a height of popularity, especially among Black Americans, following the San Francisco earthquake in 1906.

By mid-century ecstatic spirituality reappeared in Catholic spirituality in the form of the Charismatic Movement, continuing the impulse begun in Protestant Christianity at the turn of the century. Similarly, new interest was rising in Christian hermeticism, Kabbalism, the use of arcane approaches such as the *I Xing*, Tarot cards,[19] and numerological schemes such as the Enneagram, all of which became popular in the 1980s.

A new current of spirituality was also developing from the scientific speculations and theological writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit paleontologist and mystic.[20] In the years immediately prior to the Second Vatican Council, Teilhard's endorsement of the evolutionary hypothesis as a universal cosmological principle, together with his concern for human social development, helped to reawaken the spirit of scientific humanism dormant among Catholics since the Reformation. Both contemporary interest in 'the new cosmology' associated with New Age spiritualities and today's relative freedom from a strictly creationist view of the origin of the universe are at least partial consequences of Teilhard's teaching, as Mitch Pacwa discovered.

In the late 1960s, expectations of a new age of peace, prosperity and enlightenment, the 'Age of Aquarius' extolled in the popular musical *Hair* and based on a loose reading of Eastern religious texts and the writings of C. G. Jung, began to filter into mainstream consciousness. Soon a counter-cultural host of archaic, arcane and occult practices as well as a new interest in reincarnation, psychic phenomena and esoteric mysticism (including a resurgence of witchcraft and Satanism in a variety of manifestations such as the *Exorcist* mania) began to preoccupy the younger generation. (It should be noted, however, that despite occasional instances of psychopathology, contemporary Satanism is more pretentious than dangerous. The Earth-mysticism of neo-pagan

'witches' like Starhawk and others is not only religiously genuine but constructive in its concern with healing the planet and advancing the rights of women and minorities.)[21]

The considerable psychological and cultural energy of this shift in popular consciousness was deflected for a decade by the Vietnam War and worsened economic conditions in the United States and elsewhere. But in the prosperous mid-1980s it erupted again as New Age spirituality.

Christianity in crisis

What seems clear from even so brief a historical overview of the Christian era is that belief in the advent of a New Age has tended to appear at particular moments of crisis, certain turning points in religious consciousness, as well as at the end of centuries and millennia.

The first New Age enthusiasm was the effect of the Jewish messianic expectations at the time of Christ, following subjugation by a succession of imperial armies culminating in that of Rome. Over the following centuries, New Age episodes coincided with historical crises in which the Church faced a morally, politically and theologically ambiguous future – the emergence and consolidation of the Christian state in the Constantinian era; the breakdown of the Christian Empire during the Dark Ages; the end of the first millennium; the disintegration of medieval Christendom in the fourteenth century, particularly the conflicts between the Holy Roman Emperors and the Popes and the rise of nationalism; the fragmentation of the Church and Europe itself during the Reformation; the secular challenges of the Enlightenment and nineteenth-century scientific imperialism; the rise of militant atheism and totalitarianism; and, in the present terminal century of the second millennium, the lingering spectres of global and nuclear war, international economic depression and ecological catastrophe. All things considered, it would have been surprising if New Age enthusiasm and millenarian excitement had *not* become major religious phenomena in our time.

In each case, conventional organized religion failed in one way or another to recognize, address and cope adequately with the crises of the times. Paradigm shifts did not occur fast enough for church leaders to seize the day. Rather, they more characteristically reacted by denying the manifest symptoms of change and, when they could, aligning themselves with guardians of the *status quo* to suppress dissent and innovation.

When as a result ordinary believers, as well as those able to read the signs of the times in the sacred groves of the academy, lost confidence in

organized religion, they did not cease being believers for the most part, but turned to different, more satisfying belief systems.[22] Such alternatives offer reassurance and security in the form of a reversion to simpler, more primitive forms of religion (neo-archaism) or, conversely, a tender of hope for a breakthrough to new forms of faith and commitment, or even a curious mixture of both. New Age spiritualities characteristically seem to combine the ancient and the futuristic in this way – not only in the area of religion, but also in science, medicine and even art. An apt symbol of this tendency may well be a young seminarian playing 'Dungeons and Dragons' on a desk-top computer.

Conclusion

Although the Judeo-Christian sense of divine novelty and the linearity of time, especially with regard to the transcendent goal of history, is a necessary condition for the current manifestation of New Age ideas and attitudes, it is not a sufficient one. As many New Age writers (and their critics) point out, the proximate impetus for the current notion of the coming New Age is Jung's observation that the astrological 'Age of Pisces' will give way to the 'Age of Aquarius' some time in the next century – a wholly pre-Christian notion based on the discovery of the precession of the Equinoxes by Hipparchus in 127 BC.

This great cycle, the apparent rotation of the stars around the earth caused by the slight obliquity of the polar axis, takes approximately 26,000 years to complete.[23] It was originally 'conceived of as causing the rise and fall of [the] ages of the world',[24] which are named for the constellation rising on the eastern horizon on the morning of the vernal equinox.

What contemporary writers do not point out is that the movement of this Great Solar Year is actually retrograde – a slipping *backwards* in space and therefore time. The whole point of the 'precession' is that the sky (and the Ages of the World) will eventually *return* to their original state. The Great Solar Year therefore supports a profoundly conservative understanding of the cosmos.

Hindu and Buddhist conceptions of world ages likewise described the present age as not only a dark one, but the last or at least penultimate one, of a great *cycle*. In all such systems, in contrast to the Judeo-Christian view, the cosmos returns to its beginning and may continue to do so eternally.

The much-heralded 'New Age' of Aquarius is thus a composite of the ancient pagan cosmology funded eschatologically by the Judeo-Christian sense of linear progression towards the Day of the Lord, a view

undoubtedly shaped by Joachimite notions of the three ages of the world. That such paradoxes and confusion attend the seasonal reappearance of New Age movements should not, however, be surprising. They always have.

NOTES

[1] Portions of this article are adapted from 'New Age spiritualities: How are we to talk of God?', an address given at the Conference of Major Religious Superiors, 27 January 1993, at Swanwick, Derbyshire, and published in *New Blackfriars* (April 1993), pp 176–191. Cf also Richard Woods OP, 'New Age spirituality', *The new Dictionary of Christian spirituality*, ed Michael Downey (Collegeville MN, 1993), p 704.

[2] New York, 1987.

[3] Ann Arbon, Michigan, 1992.

[4] See p 13. For confirmation, consult, for instance, the table of contents of *The seeker's guide: A New Age resource book*, edited by John Button and William Bloom, with a foreword by Sir George Trevelyan (London: HarperCollins, 1992).

[5] Cf the *Oxford encyclopedic English dictionary*, *American heritage dictionary*, etc.

[6] See especially Slater Brown, *The heyday of spiritualism* (New York, 1972).

[7] Cf Jon Alexander OP, 'What do recent writers mean by *spirituality?*' *Spirituality Today*, vol 32, no 3 (September 1980), p 253.

[8] 'The purpose for each of us is to achieve integration and fulfilment within a holistic and intimately interdependent world in which consciousness and matter are one' (Button and Bloom, *op. cit.*, p 13).

[9] See, for instance, Erwin W. Lutzer and John F. Devries, *Satan's evangelistic strategy for the New Age* (Wheaton IL, 1989), Caryll Matrisciana, *Gods of the New Age* (London, 1985), and Lawrence Osborn, *Angels of light? The challenge of New Age spirituality* (London, 1992). Cf also Roger Ettis and Andrea Clarke, *The New Age and You* (Eastbourne, 1992). For a less hostile and more sober evaluation, see Douglas R. Groothius, *Unmasking the New Age*, (Leicester/Downers Grove IL, 1991).

[10] For a now-classic statement of the distinctive Hebraic-Christian concept of the progressive, linear character of history *versus* the cyclical, repetitive quality of time typical of pagan cultures, see Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and history: the myth of the eternal return* (New York, 1959).

[11] See, for instance, Deut 31:17; Isai 2:11; 13:6, etc.; Jer 4:9; 46:10; Ezek 30:3; 38:19; Hos 2:16; Joel 1:15; 3:18; Amos 5:18; 8:9; Obad 1:15; Zeph 1:14; Zech 2:11; 14:1; Mal 4:5; Mt 7:22; Mk 2:20; Lk 10:12; Jn 14:20; Acts 2:20; 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; 1 Thess 5:2–4; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Tim 1:12; and 2 Pet 3:10. The terms 'world' and 'age' are equivalent in so far as they both refer primarily and concretely to temporal eras.

[12] The noun and verb *chadash* generally conveys the notion of newness which funds this tradition. They are often used in conjunction with the word for 'create', *bara'* (*beriy'ah* is used in Num 16:30, and is based on the same root). In Greek, these terms are rendered by the words *kainos* and *neos*, which imply youth and freshness.

[13] Cf 43:19: 'Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert', and 48:6: 'You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it? From this time forth I make you hear new things, hidden things which you have not known'. See also Jer 31:22; Mt 13:52. Newness, especially eschatological novelty, is reflected in the following themes in both Jewish and Christian scriptures – New Commandment, New Covenant, New Creation, New Heart, New Heavens, New Earth, New Jerusalem, New Life, New Man, New Mercies, New Name, New Nature, New Wineskins, New Song, New Spirit, New Teaching, New Thing, New Tongues, New Way and New World. For examples, see Num 16:30,; Pss 33:3; 40:3; 51:10; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; 42:10; 62:2; 65:17; 66:22; Jer 31:31; Lam 3:22–23; Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26; Mt 9:17; 13:52; 26:29; Mk 1:27; 2:21–22; 14:25; 16:17; Lk 5:36–38; 22:20; Jn 13:34; Acts 2:13; 17:19; Rom 7:6; 1 Cor 5:7; 11:25; 2 Cor 3:5–6; 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph

2:14–15; 4:22–24; Col 3:9–10; Heb 8:8; 8:13; 9:15; 10:19–20; 12:24; 2 Pet 3:13; 1 Jn 2:7–8; 2 Jn 1:5; Apoc 2:17; 3:12; 5:9; 14:3; 21:1–2.

[14] For an articulation of this theme certifiably free of current New Age sentiment, consider this statement from Karl Barth's *Dogmatics in outline* (London, 1949): '. . on the third day there begins a new *Aeon*, a new shape of the world, after the old world has been completely done away with and settled in the death of Jesus Christ. Easter is the breaking in of a new time and world in the existence of the man Jesus, who now begins a new life as the conqueror, as the victorious bearer, as the destroyer of the burden of man's sin, which had been laid upon him' (translation by G. T. Thomson, p 122).

[15] On eschatological expectations of the period and later occurrences, see E. R. Chamberlain, *Antichrist and the Millennium* (New York, 1975). On eschatology in general, see R. H. Charles, *Eschatology* [1898–99] (New York, 1963), J. A. T. Robinson, *In the End, God* (New York, 1968), Edward Schillebeeckx and Boniface Willems (eds), *The problem of eschatology* (New York, 1969 [*Concilium* 41]), D. S. Russell, *Apocalyptic, ancient and modern* (London, 1978), and Zachary Hayes OFM, *Visions of a future: a study of Christian Eschatology* (Wilmington DE, 1989) and his *What are they saying about the end of the world?* (New York, 1983).

[16] Old Testament and apocryphal influences include Dan 7:13–14, Isai 27:13, the Book of Enoch and 2 Esdras. Possible New Testament sources include Mt 24: 29–30, Mk 13: 26–27, Lk 21: 25–27, 1 Thess 14–17, 2 Pet 3: 8–13, and Jude 14–16.

[17] See Bernard McGinn (trans), *Apocalyptic spirituality: treatises and letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-en-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Franciscan Spirituals, Savonarola* (New York and London, 1979). For a brief account of Joachism and subsequent millennial beliefs, see Chamberlain, (*op. cit.*) and Norman Cohn, *The pursuit of the Millennium* (New York and Oxford, 1970).

[18] See Robley Edward Whitson (ed), *The Shakers: two centuries of spiritual reflection* (New York, 1983) and Edward Andrews, *The people called Shakers: a search for the perfect society* (New York: 1963 edn).

[19] See in particular *Meditations on the Tarot: A journey into Christian Hermeticism*, trans Robert Powell (Amity NY, 1985).

[20] For an overview of Teilhard's spirituality, see Thomas M. King SJ, *Teilhard de Chardin* (Wilmington DE, 1988), and Ursula King, *Towards a new mysticism: Teilhard de Chardin and Eastern religions* (New York, 1980).

[21] See Starhawk, *Dreaming the dark: magic, sex and politics* (Boston, 1982).

[22] Cf among other studies, Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic* (London: Penguin, 1991 edn); Peter Berger, *The sacred canopy* (Garden City NY, 1969); and Norman Cohn, *The pursuit of the Millennium* (*op. cit.*).

[23] For a brilliant and comprehensive study of this phenomenon and its significance to the ancient world, see *Hamlet's mill: an essay on myth and the frame of time* by Giorgio di Santillana and Hertha von Dechend (Boston, 1969), especially pp 58–75.

[24] *Ibid.*, p 59.

NEW AGE RITES

The Recovery of Ritual

By MICHAEL S. NORTHCOTT

THE DEMISE OF RITUAL is a principal feature of the corrosive effect of modernity on the Christian Churches of northern Europe. The declining appeal of Christian ritual amongst the urbanized European masses in the nineteenth century provided the first indication of the decline in the influence of institutional Christianity which was to become such a feature of Christianity in modern western Europe. Consequently controversy over the character of ritual rapidly overtook the new urban churches in the early modern era. Contemporary ritual controversies concerning the gender of the leaders of ritual, and the language of the rite, continue to provide the principal focus of struggle over the shape and identity of the churches as they respond to the erosion of their influence and appeal in advanced industrial society.

The rejection of religious ritual is a central feature of modernity, modernity being understood as the experience of personal and social disintegration which characterizes life in modern societies. As Maurice Berman puts it, to experience modernity 'is to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air'.[1] Instead of the ritualized world-view of pre-modern peoples, through which they intended to control nature and the spirit of place, to communicate with the gods, and to determine the destiny of the tribe or community, modernity erodes community and the links of human life with the rhythms of nature and the ways of the spirit. The technological and rational control of human and natural life excludes mystery and depth, and dissolves the relations between people and place and spirit. Consequently ritual loses its physical, social and spiritual location, and religious ritual is impoverished. In pre-modern societies people constructed rituals to enable them to relate significant events to the life of the gods and to their own destinies. But significant events in modern societies from the birth of a baby to the moving of the family home to the experience of dying now take place without any form of ritualization.

People whose horizons are set by modernity have become the subject of what Tom Driver calls 'ritual misapprehension' whereby the perceived need for ritual, and in particular religious ritual, is lost.[2] This ritual misapprehension has contributed to the increasing difficulty of Christian ritualizers in making sense of the symbols and wisdom of the Christian tradition in relation to the cultural and social context of modernity. Consequently Christian ritual is perceived by most non-churchgoers, and some churchgoers, as boring, arcane and out of touch with the realities of contemporary life. People suffer a residue of Christian ritual for certain rites of passage, but they do not make these rituals their own, nor do they see the need for ritual in relation to their experience of life as a whole.

The need for rituals in secular societies has not however diminished and indeed popular culture is mobilizing ritual action in a range of ways. The ritual enactments of Michael Jackson or Madonna in their fantastical stage shows and videos, when they are not descending to the merely pornographic, have utilized the whole panoply of Christian symbols and ritual ceremonies.[3] Those who attended, or watched on television, Jackson's 1992 Bucharest concert saw him donning a great range of ritual clothes and postures, representing everything from the evil, horned goat to the ascended Christ as his stage show climaxed with a literal ascension in a jet pack out of the stadium. Crucifixion, resurrection, the demonic and the angelic, Christ and the devil, the conflict between good and evil – ancient Christian symbols were paraded before a transfixed audience in a ritual performance, a kind of laser-light mystery play, or an orgiastic and blasphemous abuse of Christian symbols and imagery, depending on your point of view.

Aside from the banal commercial exploitation of ritual in popular culture and mass entertainment, there are a number of indicators of the re-emergence of ritual as a significant element in new social movements and new religious movements in the West. The huge memorial quilt of the 'Names Project' being created in memory of those who have died from AIDS with a square for each person who dies, and the candles and vigils of peace campaigners such as the women of Greenham Common or their contemporaries outside the Faslane Base of the Trident submarines in western Scotland, represent just two examples of the mobilization of ritual in recent protest movements. The recovery of ritual can be seen even more clearly in that assemblage of therapies, belief systems, communes and religious orientations which is the New Age.

In order to understand the nature and function of ritual as it is finding expression in the New Age movement, it will be helpful first briefly to

consider the elements and functions of ritual as these have been identified by social anthropologists from observations of primal and pre-modern societies where ritual is a central feature of social and cultural life. Ritual action may be defined as behaviour which is repetitive, stylized and performative, and which is characterized by sequential regularity and involves some kind of obligation or prescription.[4] It also involves social interaction of a controlled kind. Its purpose may be to re-enact a myth, it may be cathartic, a way of releasing tension or pain in a society or community, or of dealing with struggle or even violent conflict. It may also be designed to invoke the presence of divinity or ancestral spirits, to bridge the gulf between the human and physical world and the world of spirits and the unseen. Ritual involves self-forgetfulness, the fusion of wills, as all take their parts in a collective dance or drama – it involves an inner consent and an outer submission to the forms and rhythms of the rite, often enabled by music.[5] Ritual also involves the breaking of the usual boundaries and hierarchies of social life – what Victor Turner calls the liminal moment where identities are fused and social status is temporarily abrogated.[6]

Ritual is also 'make believe' – an 'as if' experience. Ritual magic removes the participants temporarily from the regular context of their lives and puts them in a place or state they dream of or hope for. Through ritual the participants may seek a kind of transformation of consciousness, or a healing of the self – an individual experience, through the collective, of conversion, of a changed self-perception, or a collective expression of a desire for the values of another world.[7] The experience of transformation through ritual may help resistance to a culture of oppression, or indeed of secularism, where spiritual values or the moral and social aspirations of the group are reaffirmed in contradistinction to their exclusion from everyday life – 'doing is believing'.[8]

While some social scientists emphasize the collective and transformative aspects of ritual, others emphasize its individualistic and conserving functions.[9] Social scientists of a secularist hue tend to see ritual as a mechanism for preventing social change, for adjusting the individual to marginality or oppression. And indeed much ritual, especially Christian ritual, is not transformative. The tendency of the Church, far from transforming or liberating the individual, is often to load the ritual participant with guilt. The mostly male-led, stone-encased, organ-accompanied rituals of the Christian Church seem to disable rather than empower individuals and communities for personal and spiritual liberation. The dysfunctional nature of much contemporary Christian ritual is one of the central features of the decline of mainstream Christianity in the face of modernity in Western Europe.

According to the authors of the *New Age encyclopedia* the defining experience of New Age is an experience of personal transformation.[10] This experience, which they characterize as a religious experience, is of a psychological and spiritual nature. The moment of transformation often arises from a personal crisis resulting from the domination of negative experiences such as poverty, illness, stress, relationship breakdown, boredom or purposelessness. The New Age experience is said to produce a new openness, new egalitarian relationships, a sense of abundance, of health regained, of excitement, intensity, and hope for a new future. New Agers seek to utilize New Age tools or rituals to maintain the effects of the initial conversion experience. These rituals may take individualistic or collective forms. Individual rituals may include the wearing of crystals, physical exercises such as yoga or Tai Chi, and various forms of meditation. Collective rituals are practised at various New Age centres, including holistic health or meditation centres, at gatherings or seminars led by New Age speakers such as Sir George Trevelyan, and in New Age communities like the Findhorn Community in Forres, Scotland. For the purposes of this paper I will be drawing upon two sources of New Age ritual as practised in Britain. The first is the rituals which participants practise and experience on seminars and workshops in the Findhorn Community. The second is a ritual manual called *Sacred times. A new approach to festivals* by the New Age writer William Bloom.[11]

The Findhorn Community began thirty years ago in a remote corner of north-east Scotland. In the late 1960s Peter and Eileen Caddy, David Spangler and others established an ecological, meditative 'alternative' community which has become a focus for the global movement of the New Age and draws thousands of visitors annually from Northern Europe and North America. Physically the community has grown up around a collection of caravans to include various meeting halls, energy-efficient wooden houses, two large community houses, Cluny and Newbold, where guests may be accommodated amongst community members, and a garden, the Findhorn Park, renowned for its outsize vegetables. The community is now a charitable foundation and has spawned a variety of enterprises in Forres, including associated retreat and conference houses, a Steiner School, and old people's home, and computer and ecological consultancies.[12]

A major part of the Findhorn operation is its experience and workshop programmes. There are a variety of rituals which participants will experience on these programmes. The first is 'attunement'. This involves participants standing around in a circle holding hands in silence

to establish a sense of oneness and of spiritual presence. This will be done before a meal, or before any group exercise or event. Another ritual is the sharing of what are called 'angel cards'. These cards, which are the size of very small playing cards, have on them the name of a particular virtue or emotion, such as joy, charity, compassion, peace, gentleness or creativity, and a pictorial representation of a figure which displays this virtue. Each person in the group receives one of the cards and they are supposed to make that virtue their own and to evince the power they have within them to become the virtue given to them. Another ritual is a circle dance where the participants hold hands and dance round in a circle. The circle may take the form of a spiral or a more linear circle. Typically this is performed to music. The shape of the circle symbolizes the equality of all the participants. The moving circle, or spiral, represents the weaving together of separate wills into a common purpose. Another ritual is the inward–outward experience. This involves particular participants in the group working on various issues in their own spiritual and personal quest, perhaps a broken relationship or a bad experience going back to childhood. The purpose of the ritual action would be for the individual to represent the experience by movement and actions and to achieve inner release or healing. This inward–outward experience will draw other members of the group into the action as necessary. Most small and large group activities at Findhorn involve 'sharing' where each member vocalizes how the experience was for them to the rest of the group, or shares a meaningful event from the day in the community, or a particular issue from their lives which they believe that the workshop is opening up for them. Finally the community often meditates together as a collective. The day begins with a collective meditation of around twenty minutes, and there is another at lunch-time. Meditation may be followed by visualization, where the well-being which these collective acts generate is envisaged as spreading to calm the world.[13] Alongside these collective rituals, individuals are encouraged to meditate in the sanctuary and the Park where various symbols, and the strange fecundity of the garden itself, are said to encourage spiritual awareness and inner harmony.

The aim of all that happens at Findhorn is personal and social transformation. The rituals of the workshops, and the community life, are designed to address the crises of materialism, self-alienation and ecological catastrophe which characterize society at large:

> People can best begin to transcend such a state through the discovery and development of connection with the source of all, the Indweller, the divine reality underlying all forms and present in each of us. Then life

> becomes meaningful, empowerment develops and effective action can be taken within any social situation.[14]

The use of ritual and technique at Findhorn is, according to Carol Riddell, a member of the community, for two purposes. Firstly they are designed to help on the journey inward to the 'higher self'. Secondly they are designed to help in healing of the self-identity and the removal of selfishness, to unblock inner resources and remove obstacles to love and compassion.[15] The transformation of individuals and of the Community is said to contribute to a wider natural and social, even global, transformation. According to Riddell the spiritual energy radiating from the Community, through its members and the web of those who have experienced Findhorn and taken the experience back to their own contexts, is an energy which contributes to the formation of a 'new humanity' and a new ecological harmony between humanity and all living things which will eventually save the planet from the destructive path that civilization is currently pursuing.

In a manual of ritual and festival William Bloom identifies various motives and functions for New Age ritual. These include the quest for spiritual authenticity through a re-engagement with the sacred, the need to explore the interactions between human consciousness and the spiritual realm, the quest for ecological harmony, and the need to find inner freedom from the hooks of psycho-social reality, to find true self-identity and psychological well-being. Through ritual and festival New Agers aim to discover an authentic spiritual source within themselves instead of submitting to the imposing spiritual authority of traditional religious rituals. The ultimate aim of New Age ritual according to Bloom is that participants are empowered to become their own 'sacred celebrants'.[16] 'I love these festivals for the spiritual strength they give us. It is beautiful to see men and women, ordained by nothing other than their own inner calling, leading ceremonies, meditations and festivals.'[17]

According to Bloom ritual is not only participative but also changing, open, fluid, it represents the spirit 'for us' but does not fix the spiritual reality into prescribed and unchanging forms or rigid rules. Instead it follows ecological and psychological rhythms and harmonies, the natural rhythms of sun and moon. The inner ecology which the rituals create and reflect also contributes to and draws upon a cosmic ecology. The energy which these rituals create empowers individuals and spreads beyond the collective and the festival to all the dimensions of life on earth.

The rituals that Bloom describes relate to life events such as birth and death, and to natural cycles such as the movements of the sun and moon.

In a ceremony of greeting of a new-born baby are included these words of welcome to the child: 'Dear and beautiful thing, we welcome you and we honour your presence. You have chosen to manifest in this form, in this incarnation, and we celebrate this cycle of your existence.'[18] Bloom commends ceremonies which follows the lunar cycle because the movement of the moon 'not only relates to the tides but to human psychological states'. Thus in a ceremony entitled 'Full Moon Meditation' the participants after centring and earthing themselves on the ground where they stand or sit, are encouraged to focus on the problems of the world: 'With the fire of compassion we become aware of world problems – those areas and situations of conflict, pain, injustice and cruelty, in need of healing'.[19] They are then encouraged to focus on 'the source', a source of power which appears to recall both the external nature of the moon as well as an inner light of inspiration and love:

> And we become aware of a point high above us, a source of love, light and healing. With all our discipline and aspiration, we lift our consciousness up to touch that high source of spirit. And with discipline and strength we hold that high focus.[20]

The celebration of the passage of time and solar and lunar cycles not only brings joy and meaning to life, but symbolizes the death and resurrection of members of the cult, and the occult or hidden knowledge of the connection of festivals, temples and certain energized places to the earth's energy. This celebration brings blessings to the environment and to the individuals who take part.[21]

Bloom is critical of traditional religious ritual which he sees as hierarchical, formalist, empty of meaning, cerebral, excluding the dimensions of feeling, sensation, dance and rhythm, as well as the natural rhythms and cycles of the cosmos. The authoritarian rituals of the traditional religions do not transform or heal humans or nature, or promote ecology. The rituals of the New Age are not like these old, discarded religious forms. The new rituals are constantly changing and recreating the spiritual dimension and this reflects the fact that for New Agers this dimension itself is constantly in process.[22]

New Agers are seeking to reinstate ritual as a source of spiritual identity, or collective action and belonging, and of personal and social transformation within modernity. New Agers have taken up many of the functions and characteristics of ritual as it operated in primal, premodern cultures and re-engaged it with the quest for individual meaning and psychological well-being in the flux and mêlée of social and cultural life which represent the experience of modernity. The articulation of the

primal with the modern is a central feature of the movement as a whole.[23] New Age rituals reflect the smörgåsbord character of the religious ideology and the symbol structure of New Age, drawing upon many different spiritual paths and religious systems, combining elements of western paganism and Christianity with elements drawn from Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Participation in a New Age seminar or a Findhorn retreat can cost a considerable sum – from £30 for a day seminar to £350 for a week-long workshop. The entrepreneurial character of New Age therapies and seminars, and their appeal to modernist individualism and utopianism, expressed through the quest for personal, social, ecological and cosmic transformation, indicate the extent to which the movement has successfully located itself within modernity, while at the same time drawing on many elements of premodern traditions and culture.

It is precisely in this dimension of the relation between the ancient and modernity that Christian ritual has become inherently problematic. As liturgies and rites have been 'modernized' in an attempt to bring them into closer touch with the language and culture of contemporary life, the mystery and awe of the old ceremonies has often been lost while at the same time the new rites often maintain the older hierarchical, clerical structure. Consequently the link between participation in ritual and personal and social transformation is not reconstructed by liturgical reform. If the Church is to reconstruct its ritual in such a way as to re-engage with modernity then it may be that Christian ritualizers have much to learn from New Age rites.

It is certain that the rituals of the first Christians were charismatic – that is, spontaneous and inspired – performative and transformative. The ecstatic experience of believers brought the Spirit alive in the midst of the congregation, the dangerous (because of its cannibalistic connotations) shared meal of the eucharist re-created the experience of the founder, it made Christ present through the ritual performance of the eucharistic gathering, the agape meal, which challenged the social, ethnic and even sexual hierarchies of the time. Modern liturgical reform has sought to re-create the spirit of early Christian worship but it has tried to do this by means of textual archaeology. The assumption has been that the provision of new liturgical texts will itself produce a renewal of worship in the context of the declining appeal of the old rites in modern societies. Not enough attention has been paid to the significance and function of ritual, collective performance and celebration as the means of legitimating and making real the spiritual quest of Christians.

The hierarchic sacramentalism of Catholicism, and the cerebral word-based worship of Protestantism, both represent aberrations and distortions of Christian ritual practice which have disabled the Church in responding to modernity. The modernist rejection of ritual was assimilated by many western radical and liberal theologians, with the effect that the management and revision of ritual in the churches was often left to those of a more conservative and hierarchical tendency.[24] The response of theological modernism to this dilemma has been to seek a 'religionless Christianity' in Bonhoeffer's famous phrase. This response has de-legitimated mystery and ritual and capitulated to the modernist myth of secularization and the techno-rational control of human and natural life. New Age represents a rejection of both these features of modernity which Christianity in western Europe has preferred to assimilate rather than to challenge, while at the same time New Age embraces the mobility and pragmatism which also characterize modernity. The strengths of New Age ritual and spirituality are precisely in the reincorporation of pre-modern cosmology, the relocation of ritual in relation to spirit and matter, and all the major events of human life. In opposition to rationalism and secularism New Age represents a resacralization of human life in all its dimensions and offers ritual means for rediscovering the sacred in everyday life.

New Age rites reflect a range of beliefs which Christians do not share and may find heretical or at least misguided: the pagan connotations of praying under a full moon, the belief in reincarnation, the vague references to spiritual power or energy. Christian theology sets the function of ritual in its proper context, in the sacramental life of the Christian Church which is a sharing in the life and nature of God as creator and sustainer of the cosmos, as Jesus Christ the redeemer of life, and as present Spirit. But like the New Age rites Christian ritual needs to be reconstructed in such a way as to re-engage with the cosmic and the natural, with the seasons and the passage of time, with matter and spirit, the psychological, the political and the social, realizing the ritual power of Christian ceremony to transform human life in the context of modernity.[25]

In the present phase of human history, as the problems of ecological limitations approach us, Christian ritual, like New Age ritual, needs to recreate an experience of participation in spiritual reality which also relates to the quest for wholeness in the creation and in the human self. We need a new approach to ritual which takes up the power of ritual as still recognized and affirmed in so many non-western cultures, and increasingly by New Agers in the West. Ritual is powerful. It may be

used for good ends, and for bad. Rituals may be utilized to legitimate totalitarianism, or to promote the global marketing of a pop idol. In their struggle with modernity the churches of the West should seek to reclaim the power of ritual to legitimate the Christian message, to create spiritual experience, to empower participants for healing and conversion, to build community, and to resist the values of a secular and materialist age. As Beverly Harrison has said 'the goal is to ritualize', to invoke, to make present the powers of God as Trinity, and of the Spirit in the midst.[26]

NOTES

[1] Maurice Berman, *All that is solid melts into air: the experience of modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), p 345.

[2] Tom F. Driver, *The magic of ritual. Our need for liberating rites that transform our lives and our communities* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991).

[3] Richard H. Roberts, 'A Postmodern Church?', Open College Lecture, University of St Andrews, 3rd December, 1992 (unpublished).

[4] Gilbert Lewis, *Day of shining red. An essay on understanding ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp 6, 7.

[5] S. J. Tambiah, *A performative approach to ritual. From the Proceedings of the British Academy* vol 65 (1979) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

[6] Victor Turner, *The ritual process. Structure and anti-structure* (London: Allen Lane, 1969).

[7] Barbara Mayerhoff, 'The transformation of consciousness in ritual performances: some thoughts and questions' in Richard Schechner and William Appel, *By means of performance. Intercultural studies of theatre and ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp 245–249.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] This is the approach to ritual characteristic of the writings of Emile Durkheim. See further his *The elementary forms of the religious life* (second edition, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1976).

[10] J. Gordon Melton, Jerome Clark and Aidan A. Kelly, *New Age encyclopedia* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1990).

[11] William Bloom, *Sacred times. A new approach to festivals* (Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Press, 1990).

[12] Carol Riddell, *The Findhorn Community. Creating a human identity for the 21st century* (Forres, Scotland: Findhorn Press, 1990), pp 1–4.

[13] *Ibid.*, p 146. [14] *Ibid.*, p 39. [15] *Ibid.*, p 44.

[16] William Bloom, *op. cit.*, pp 1–4.

[17] *Ibid.*, p 8. [18] *Ibid.*, p 31.

[19] *Ibid.*, p 75. [20] *Ibid.*, p 77.

[21] *Ibid.*, p 91. [22] *Ibid.*, p 5.

[23] See further Michael S. Northcott, *The New Age and pastoral theology. Towards the resurgence of the sacred, Contact Monograph No 2*, (1992).

[24] Driver, *op. cit.*, p 9.

[25] For a collection of Christian rituals which take up New Age approaches to ritual, such as the concern for nature and the seasons, the celebration of all of life, and the quest for spiritual experience and wholeness through ritual, see Scott McCarthy, *Celebrating the earth. An earth-centred theology of worship with blessings, prayers and rituals* (revised edition San Jose, California: Resource Publications, 1991).

[26] Beverly Harrison, cited Driver, *op. cit.*, pp 212, 213.

WHITHER THE NEW AGE?

By J. GORDON MELTON

In the 1960s the United Kingdom gave birth to a very American social movement.[1] It was metaphysical, immanental, world affirming and millenarian. It found its intellectual roots in nineteenth-century German idealism but more immediately drew inspiration from the eschatological hopes which had taken different forms in occult circles, especially in those groups which had formed all around the fringe of the more conservative and staid Theosophical Society.

We now know that by this time, while the number of people publicly identified by membership in one of the several visible occult and metaphysical groups was relatively small, public acceptance of some key occult ideas (reincarnation, astrology) and practices (meditation) had quietly mushroomed over the twentieth century. Literally millions of people had dropped away from the older churches and synagogues, but they left not for secular atheism, but because they perceived that the churches and synagogues had become too secular. Like many Evangelical Protestants, they complained that more traditional religious organizations were bogged down in various administrative concerns and non-religious matters and had failed to nurture the spiritual life of members. In part, they located the problem in something they called 'organized religion', and they sought an alternative spirituality, but one which would not take them out of the world. The New Age Movement was an ideal answer.

The long view – whence the New Age?

Because of the way we have told our religious history, centred as it is upon the story of the emergence to dominance of Christianity and the coming to the fore of the great national churches, we generally neglected and discounted the continued attempts to express dissent from that dominant perspective as little more than occasional outbreaks of heresy and apostasy. However, by the middle of the eighteenth century, as powerful forces of dissent massed against the traditional order, they could no longer be ignored. In the salons and cafés of pre-Revolutionary France, one could perceive the emergence of a working alliance between secularists (from atheists to deists), political revolutionaries, and occultists (Rosicrucians, Freemasons), an alliance later vividly portrayed in the picture of the United States' first president in his Masonic garb and the placing of occult symbols on the new country's national seal.[2]

While leaving the older churches in place, post-Revolutionary governments in France and America immediately opened new space for most every form of religious dissent, though the subsequent religious history of the two countries moved in quite different directions. England, escaping the violent revolution, slowly (and at every step over the objections of the powers that be) allowed more and more room for dissenters. Even with the very different paths they have followed, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and most of the other western European countries arrived at the same place. In each, a vital powerful, influential Christian community remains, that community no longer controls the culture in the ways it did when backed by state power, and religious dissenters in a bewildering variety of forms have risked coming out into the open. The communities of dissent no longer just request space to exist quietly on the cultural fringe, but now demand a place on the culture's board of directors.

As a focus of dissent, eighteenth-century occultism gave way to a variety of spiritual movements which took every conceivable organizational form. Possibly the largest of these movements was Freemasonry. While organized as a fraternity, Masonry effectively spread a new gnostic spirituality. Its visible alliance with revolutionary parties in Italy earned it the wrath of the Roman Catholic Church, but elsewhere it was able to develop apolitically, and, since it was not a 'church', and did not openly 'compete' with 'Christianity', it could grow and spread to every city and town. With few exceptions (Roman Catholics and the more conservative Evangelical Protestants), it was rarely seen as a spiritual competitor of orthodox Christian thought and many church members and leaders joined. In America, where only twenty to thirty per cent of the public were church members through the nineteenth century, Freemasonry functions as a spiritual home to many not affiliated with a church.[3]

Through the nineteenth century, in the freer post-Revolutionary cultures, numerous movements above and beyond Freemasonry gave expression to the alternative spirituality – Swedenborgianism, magnetism, Spiritualism. Other than Swedenborgianism, these movements were not originally 'church-forming' and each swept across the United States, Great Britain and continental Europe. Each, through its lectures and literature and the ensuing public controversy over its ideas, was influential far beyond its core membership (which remained relatively small). To say they were not church-forming is not to suggest that they lacked organization. Quite to the contrary: they were highly organized with groups modelled upon contemporary non-metaphysical clubs and

associations. They found their great prophet in the person of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, orthodox Christianity, which had experienced spectacular growth through the century (at least in North America), was shaken by the initial phase of what would later be called Modernism. The need to respond positively to new scientific findings (especially geology and biology), problems of immigration and urbanization, and biblical criticism, underlay the most significant Christian theological revolution since the Reformation. Modernists were challenging traditional Christian assumptions at every turn and once they gave ground on primary Christian affirmations of the Trinity and divinity of Christ, their end results were often difficult to separate from that of the metaphysicians.[4]

Once the key ideas of the Trinity and the deity of Christ were compromised, other ideas were soon to follow. A lower Christology undercut ecclesiology and ideas about church membership as a necessary element in salvation. For example, Modernist theology saw church membership as desirable, but certainly not an ultimate issue of salvation. Hence, in the end, it was optional.

Modernism emerged contemporaneously with a marked increase in the presence of occult metaphysical ideas within the culture and metaphysical leaders saw themselves as responding to many of the same intellectual concerns as Modernist church leaders. For example, Christian Science and New Thought, building their programme around a 'practical' Christian application of Emerson's ideas, appeared in the 1870s and 1880s respectively. Most surprising to their critics, both movements experienced immediate popular response and built national organizations in their first decade. A small group of Emerson's children in New England, associated together in Boston's Metaphysical Club, nurtured the first of a lineage of best-selling metaphysical authors – Ralph Waldo Trine and Henry Wood. In their first generation, at least, Christian Science and New Thought claimed for themselves a position within the Christian community, and were greatly offended and surprised when the churches failed to offer them any recognition.[5]

But, for our purposes, and from the perspective of the New Age, the most important of these movements to emerge in the late nineteenth century was Theosophy. While New Thought and Christian Science were peculiarly American movements and their spectacular success in the United States was not repeated elsewhere, the Theosophical Society, founded in 1875, became a worldwide movement during the career of its founders (the last of whom died in 1906). Not only could theosophical

lodges be found in countries from India and Australia to Russia and Great Britain, but it would spawn numerous similar groups, a number of which would eclipse it in membership.[6]

Alternative spirituality in the twentieth century

By the beginning of the twentieth century the various voices of an alternative spirituality had settled into several competing camps, each with its own self-assigned task. In the 1890s Spiritualism adopted a 'church' model and mediums founded centres to serve the individuals who found their way to its door. During their first generation, the Spiritualist churches differentiated themselves into a set of 'denominations' including several African-American groups initially composed of people pushed out of the white-dominated groups. British and European Spiritualists created similar groupings.

New Thought backed away from the feminist social agenda which had characterized its first generation, and retreated into its 'practical' programme of assisting individuals in self-healing and discovering a place in the new corporate society. Like Spiritualism, New Thought differentiated itself into a number of denominations – the Unity, Religious Science, Divine Science, etc. Membershipwise, they remained quite small, but otherwise their influence was tremendous. Unity, for example, functioned for many years primarily as a literature ministry, printing inexpensive tracts, pamphlets, magazines and books that circulated far beyond the bounds of the Unity study groups. Picked up by commercial publishers, the writings of leading metaphysical spokespersons such as Emmet Fox, William Walker Atkinson, Walter Lanyon, and Stella Terrill Mann quietly reached millions who never asked about the organizational ties of the person whose book they were reading.

Under the leadership of two dynamic women, Annie Besant and Katherine Tingley, Theosophy entered the twentieth century as a growing movement. The independent American Theosophical Society under Tingley found its focus in the community at Point Loma, at San Diego, California. Here Tingley attempted to model the good society, a quite successful experiment during her lifetime. Unfortunately, without her dynamic appeal, it soon folded and that branch of the society began a steady decade by decade decline. Meanwhile the international Theosophical Society under the leadership of Annie Besant began to experience a period of growth, the most spectacular phase of which was focused upon a messianic millennialism. Convinced of the cosmic role of young Jiddu Krishnamurti, in the 1920s Besant toured the world announcing the coming of a World Saviour through this unassuming

young man. Never had the Society experienced such growth. A new age was dawning.

The Theosophical Society's millennialism became the focus of debate within the movement. Other branches, especially the Tingley branch, rejected it. At least one movement, the Aquarian Foundation, was established to embody a competing messianism.[7] Occult magician Aleister Crowley announced that a new aeon had already begun in 1904 and Crowley accepted the task of working for the dominance of his 'thelemic' teachings. This first wave of millennialism fell in a series of scandals beginning with Krishnamurti's resignation in 1929. But the seed had been sown and the hope of a new age, so much a part of Christian thinking, had now found a home in the occult metaphysical world. So important had it become, that even after its near banishment in the Krishnamurti disappointment, it was never far from conscious thought and always waiting a return.

One prominent mid-century theosophist, Alice Bailey, pumped new vitality into the movement's millennial hopes. She suggested that theosophical founder Blavatsky ascribed special significance to the last quarter of each century as a time pregnant with newness. Besant erred, claimed Bailey, because she anticipated the new age which would not arrive until late in the twentieth century. It was Theosophy's task, as Bailey was writing, to prepare people for the coming new age.[8]

By the 1960s in England, the forces had been marshalled for the launching of a new movement. Spiritualism was firmly entrenched as an established dissenting movement. Theosophy, including the Alice Bailey wing, was strong, though its presence was obscured by its division into a multitude of small organizations, many only loosely aware of their roots in the parent Theosophical Society. Astrology had made a significant comeback from a state of almost non-existence in the mid-nineteenth century. Since the end of World War II, new religious teachers had relocated from the mystic East. In the wake of interest in consciousness-altering drugs, psychologists turned their attention to the study of the religious means of changing consciousness and in the process provided new credentials for alternative approaches to the spiritual life. Times were ripe for a new religious movement that could integrate these longstanding trends.

The New Age

As originally proposed, the New Age Movement came to centre on several fairly simple ideas. Dominating the movement was a form of *millenarianism.* As the century drew to a close, Planet Earth would be the

recipient of new waves of spiritual energy. These energies were generally pictured in astrological terms and people often first heard of the New Age as the 'Aquarian Age'. The changes in the configuration of the heavens signalled, if not caused, the release of the new energies.

The first visible result of the incoming energies was the awakening of a few people to their presence. The awakening made them spiritually aware in a traditional sense, but also gave them new insights and abilities. For example, among the people who gathered in a small community at Findhorn, near Inverness, Scotland, were those who became attuned to the nature spirits and by utilizing the co-operation of the spirits they produced some spectacular results in the relatively barren ground.[9]

The spirits provide the means of personalizing contact with the spiritual world. Ultimate reality is not found in a personal deity, but an impersonal power, usually described as spiritual law or principle. That principle does not transcend the world, but is *immanent* in life and nature; it orders the world and determines the structure of our environment. Co-operation with or attunement to spiritual law brings happiness; disobeying spiritual law or fighting spiritual reality is ultimately futile and the source of all human problems.

Regular contact with spirit entities provided guidance for the slowly growing community of New Age believers and transformed those individuals involved. As other people were brought into the early believer's orbit, they too were transformed. The energies were spreading. Drawing upon familiar images from theosophical literature, those original New Agers began to speak about 'spiritual light', and of their gatherings as points of lights. An early goal of the movement was to locate the various groups of people affected by the first wave of incoming energy and sensitive to the spiritual world, and to link these groups into a worldwide network of light. Thus linked, the groups would be able to saturate the world with focused spiritual energy. People would be transformed, but more importantly, the world itself would be transformed. Not only would new transformed individuals appear, but a New Age would arrive.[10]

The message of the New Age swept through the West. Among the physically attuned, it had much the same effect that the contemporaneous charismatic movement had among conservative Christians. As the charismatic movement first emerged among small groups here and there, and networking began to take place through new parachurch organizations like the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, so came the New Age. First articulated in small groups like the

Wrekin Trust in Great Britain, the New Age radiated outward to the continent and across the Atlantic to North America. Already in place were numerous independent theosophical groups who quickly saw their role in the emerging network of light. By the end of the 1960s, an international movement was in place and travelling evangelists like Anthony Brooke, soon to be joined by David Spangler and a host of others, circled the globe to announce to any that would listen that the New Age was about to arrive, and to link individuals who responded into autonomous centres, new points of light.

No one expected the overwhelming response or planned what happened next as the movemental dynamics took over. Just as the early charismatic groups worked and prayed for a global revival, most who were there in the beginning were amazed when it happened far beyond their wildest dreams. In like measure, the early points of light were swamped by the response to the New Age message, and somewhat taken aback by the uncontrolled diversification the movement manifested.

Looking backwards, we can now see how the New Age Movement spread so quickly as its ideas and ideals were adopted by the many metaphysical and spiritualist churches and numerous occult groups which, having assumed a low profile, existed heretofore somewhat invisibly on the religious landscape. Many of these simply altered their programmes in response to the vivifying movement, and new adherents led in the formation of many new groups. The Movement also picked up a dynamic from previous Christian revivalistic movements by contrasting its new life over against the dead routine of the older churches which had killed the 'Spirit' by over-attention to form and organization. The New Age Movement contrasted itself with 'organized religion'. It saw itself as not 'organized', nor was it 'religion': it was a free-flowing spiritual movement. Thus New Agers rarely founded 'churches' or 'temples' or similar religious-sounding centres. Instead, New Agers founded numerous spiritual groups which gradually took on all the functions and provided all the services of older churches. Rejecting hierarchical models, New Agers adapted as their organizational model the Baptist/Free Church movement. Baptists, are, for example, built around autonomous congregations affiliated together in loose associations and networked with hundreds of independent missionary agencies, publishing houses, and special cause groups which present the very same bewildering anti-organizational ethos as the New Age Movement.

As with the Free Church movement, above and beyond the local groups, what little power there is in the New Age Movement is held primarily by publishers and networkers. An international structure of

bookstores, distributors and New Age book and magazine publishers form a mega-network that co-ordinates the distribution of materials across Europe and North America and increasingly other parts of the world. Individual leaders are almost entirely dependent upon this publishing structure to reach the public with their message. By their willingness to publish and promote an individual, they can provide them with a large audience or consign them to oblivion. A second set of New Age leaders stands at the nexus of networks of groups. These leaders (frequently also an integral part of the publishing mega-network), organize the large New Age conventions and facilitate the movement of lecturers, speakers and workshop leaders, nationally and internationally.

Much of the success of the New Age Movement in the 1980s can be attributed to its establishment of a broad *world-affirming* programme for action. More traditional occult organizations had tended to renounce worldly action as ultimately irrelevant and had programmed a rather narrow emphasis upon individual occult training. Responding to the needs of the world, the vision of global transformation was immediately particularized in an agenda focused upon several social problems. International relations, health, and the environment topped the New Age social programme. Some early adherents to the emerging New Age Movement had also been active in the older peace movement. New Agers added the agenda of the peace movement to their programme. Locked out of formal diplomacy, they were able to articulate ways in which otherwise ordinary citizens could contribute to the cause of peace through contacts with people in countries with whom their own governments had less than cordial relationships. New Agers believed that, given the influx of spiritual energy, their limited efforts would be multiplied immensely and directly contribute to global change.

Also, at the same time that the New Age Movement was emerging, another movement was developing from the convergence of interests of some physicians who had an occult background with colleagues who were frustrated with traditional medicine's seeming inability to deal with certain longstanding problems (cancer, chronic pain syndrome, etc.). Early meetings of some like-minded physicians in the 1960s led to the creation of the holistic health movement, which in turn found a hearty compatibility with the New Age Movement. The two soon intertwined and became somewhat inseparable. New Agers saw in holistic health a similar cultural critique to that which metaphysical religion had offered to the churches. In return, holistic health practitioners found New Agers a ready clientele upon whom to practise their brand of medicine.

Also, quite early New Agers made common cause with the older environmental movement and as the environmental movement grew New Agers had a public issue with which to identify. This identification was especially easy after the publication of what became known as the 'Gaia hypothesis', the idea that the earth is itself best understood as a single living organism. Closely related to the environmental cause has been animal rights.

Within the New Age Movement, the language of peace, healing and environmental restoration merged with New Age language of spiritual transformation, and the images of one issue borrowed as metaphors by the other. People began to speak of healing the earth, and transforming the way in which governments relate. With this mingling of broadly applicable concerns, coupled with the adoption of the New Age perspective by a measurable number of the public, the New Age Movement could be said to have matured. Occultists and metaphysicians no longer offered just a programme of occult training and a home for cultural dissent, but presented a complete alternative life-style.

The downfall of the New Age

Just as the New Age alternative matured and as individual aspects of its programme found some acceptance beyond its rather vague boundaries, the movement itself underwent both a massive attack from the outside and an internal critique which has led to its virtual demise. Outside critics levelled their attack at the movement's naïveté. Critics did not offer a substantive argument against the movement so much as hold it up to ridicule. The two parts of the movement which seemed most vulnerable were the practice of channelling and the widespread use of crystals. Mediumship, the claimed ability of certain individuals to contact the world of disembodied entities, experienced a significant rebirth under its transformed name, channelling. The term had orginated in the realm of flying saucers to describe the telepathic manner of the communication with earthlings by space beings. While the practice was dismissed by some, more effective criticism centred upon the more successful channels who had become wealthy through the practice. Crystals presented a more substantive problem. Many outrageous claims were made concerning the supposed 'scientific' properties of the crystals to store and transmit energy. In the end, those who promoted the use of crystals were forced away from any scientific claims and had to defend the use of crystals entirely on less attractive spiritual grounds. However, by that time the damage of the controversy to the New Age Movement had been done.

While critics were ridiculing the New Age, its theoretical leaders were questioning its adequacy. New Age theoreticians like David Spangler attacked the most central of New Age commitments, the notion of an imminent global cultural transformation.[11]

The youthful voices of the 1970s lost their faith that a new age could actually arise in their lifetime, even with all the combined efforts. This loss of faith in the possibilities of cultural transformation coupled with a response to the stinging criticisms of the more shallow aspects of the movement, led many of the leaders one by one to pronounce its obituary. By the early 1990s one could see a noticeable decline in the number of people who would identify themselves as New Agers.

Whither the New Age?

While the New Age Movement has passed its peak and entered a period of decline, it would be a mistake to think of it as having gone away or as simply destined to the dustbins of history. Many critics misunderstood the New Age as a superficial cultural fad, somewhat like hula hoops, which people use for the moment and then replace with something else equally ephemeral. Such were the critics who reduced the New Age to simply channelling and crystals.

However, at the heart of the movement was a clear and mature religious vision, which had the depth of the centuries-old Western metaphysical tradition, to some extent informed by the new Eastern wisdom traditions which have been steadily growing in the West over the last few decades. Thus, while the label 'New Age' passed into oblivion, the substance of belief and practice remained. The old New Age Movement had undergone a re-organization assumed under a variety of new names, names which many would argue actually better describe the community of transformed, spiritually-awakened, compassionate, earth-loving people the movement was structured to be. In Los Angeles, for example, the largest old New Age gathering takes place under the name 'whole life'.

Even though the name has largely disappeared, and the hope of a coming cultural transformation has markedly declined, all of the old trappings of the old New Age Movement remain. The publishers and bookstores are still in business; the number of 'New Age' magazines remains stable; the networks continue to promote a steady diet of lectures and worships. The larger cities still have annual conventions of believers. And a fourth to a third of the public still report their adherence to the more popular 'New Age' ideas and practices.

As the New Age has lost its vision of a cultural change, it has settled down as one aspect of the community of religious dissenters (which

includes Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims and occultists of all stripes) in the West. As a result of the Movement, metaphysical and occult religions have developed a new vocabulary and a new respectability. With their holistic alternative vision of life, New Agers have entered the public arena. Given the secular context of the political realm, it is to be expected that individuals committed to different aspects of the 'New Age' programme will find themselves in the places of power ready to change at least their little part of the world, if unable to move the entire culture.

NOTES

[1] This essay attempts to synthesize some twenty years observation of the New Age Movement and draws in part from insights found in two previously published texts on the Movement: J. Gordon Melton, Jerome Clark, and Aidan A. Kelly, *The New Age encyclopedia* (Detroit MI: Gale Research, 1990) and James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (eds), *Perspective on the New Age* (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992).

[2] Cf James H. Billington, *Fire in the minds of men* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

[3] The gnostic worldview which permeates Freemasonry is very clearly presented in the popular textbook, *Morals and dogma of the ancient and accepted Scottish rite of Freemasonry* (Charleston SC: L. Jenkins, 1916).

[4] On Modernism as a theological movement see William R. Hutchinson, *The Modernist impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).

[5] On New Thought and related movements see Charles S. Braden, *Spirits on rebellion* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963).

[6] On Theosophy see Bruce F. Campbell, *A history of the Theosophical movement* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1980).

[7] The best of the several books on the Aquarian Foundation is John Ollphant's *Brother Twelve: the incredible story of Canada's false prophet* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991).

[8] Alice Bailey's crucial 'New Age' ideas are found in *The reappearance of the Christ* (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1948) and *Discipleship in the New Age* (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1944).

[9] On the early years of Findhorn see Paul Hawken, *The magic of Findhorn* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1975).

[10] Among sources describing the early process of networking and naming the first people to link is Ralph F. Raymond (Brother Francis), *The universal link concept* (Los Angeles: Universal Link Heart Center, 1968).

[11] In 1988 Spangler attempted to redefine the New Age through a series of articles which appeared in a spectrum of New Age periodicals. Among these articles which effectively demythologized New Age perspectives was 'Defining the New Age', which appeared in *New Realities* (May/June 1988).

SIN, EVIL AND DEATH IN THE NEW AGE

By MONI McINTYRE

THE FATHER OF A MAN I KNOW has just died after a long and painful illness. The son describes his deceased parents as 'nice people' who were 'very supportive' of him. A friend called to update me on the progress of her recuperation from back surgery. She states that her difficulties are compounded by the double talk of a particular physician and the administrative nightmare of an ineffectual health care system. A disconcerted transsexual phones me daily to report her increasing lassitude after years of physical and psychological distress from hormone therapy designed to prepare her for surgery she can neither afford to have nor bear to live without for much longer. I take a walk to ponder these situations and contemplate the enormity of human sorrow and the wonder of human courage.

Each of these individuals worships at the same church which I attend regularly. Day after day both the priests and people of the parish try their best to alleviate the mental anguish of these and other persons whom we meet. Through personal prayer, parish activities, and the celebration of the sacraments, the ministrations exchanged between and among individuals make significant differences in the lives of these believers. Still, it seems that as one pain is alleviated, at least one other moves in to fill the vacuum. Many of the problems raised by sin, evil and death go unresolved. Within the Christian mystery there is, finally, a requirement for faith in the midst of *real* suffering.

The magnitude of pain on this planet is incomprehensible. The universal experience of suffering produced by the demise of a loved one is immeasurable. At times one can scarcely manage one's own difficulties and care for those of even one other without grave inconvenience and manifest inadequacy. The phenomenon of massive evil, whether unprovoked or as a response to another evil, is almost beyond our imagining. One can neither describe adequately one's own penchant for perpetrating evil nor provide a credible explanation for large-scale human abuse. The experience of sin, evil and death strains the human imagination and mocks our longing for cosmic, social and personal wholeness.

No religious or philosophical tradition has ever been able to provide satisfactorily a cogent and unambiguous explanation for the enormity of the world's afflictions. All members of creation, it would appear, endure various degrees of suffering for dubious benefit. Peoples of all ages have looked to the cosmos for answers to their primal questions which include the meaning of human suffering. In increasing numbers, contemporary individuals are choosing avenues and explanations proferred by New Age philosophies in favour of traditional religious explanations.

In her article heralding the annual 'Psychics, Mystics, and Seers Fair' in Toronto, Ontario, journalist Patty Winsa describes the growing New Age preoccupation with palmistry, astrology and the occult. Winsa notes that:

> experts in psychology believe the phenomenon [of the rise in superstition and otherworldly beliefs] is linked to the decline in interest in traditional religion and a need to find spirituality in an ever more technologically oriented world.[1]

Gallup poll figures indicate that belief in the devil and witches is increasing among Canadians, according to Winsa.

New Age is an amorphous concept that, according to Russell Chandler, 'is not a sect or cult, per se'. He states that

> there is no organization one must join, no creed one must confess. Identifying individuals as 'full-blown' New Agers is baffling. Some subscribe to certain portions of New Age, some to others; some dissociate themselves from the movement altogether, though they embrace core aspects of its thinking.[2]

Three representative strains of New Age thinking will be apparent in this article: a channelled entity, a New Age Christian, and a native American. Their notions about sin, evil and death will be considered.

Sin

Sin is a highly complex issue for Christians. It is a fundamental category of Christian ethics and moral theology. Simply stated, sin is traditionally understood as (a) the condition into which one is born (original sin), (b) deliberately and freely chosen individual acts of commission or omission against the Creator (sins), and (c) the basic choice one may take for the direction of one's life (fundamental option). A fourth category, social sin, is generally used to describe the systemic evils of society, e.g. homelessness, poverty, for which no single individual

may be blamed but in which all members of society share some responsibility. James Childress points out that

> in general, Roman Catholic moral theology has concentrated on sins, while Protestant ethics has concentrated on sin, emphasizing the broken relationship with God in mistrust and a lack of faith.[3]

Joseph Fuchs distinguishes between the moral and theological relevancy of sin:

> A sin is precisely a defect; by sin we refuse to put order into this world. Therefore a sin, objectively considered, is against the Creator of this world and the order of this world, against the Creator of the human person and the order of the human person. Sin is a violation and this violation is brought about by a free choice, a psychologically free act. In this psychologically free act we make a choice of this or that reality out of all the realities of the world (*liberum arbitrium*). Here we find the *moral* relevancy of sin.
>
> The *theological* relevance of sin affects the personal relation of a human person to God . . .[4]

Sin, for Fuchs, is more than a single person's initiating moral discord into the world. The larger concern is that in sin one changes one's self-understanding.

Proponents of New Age perspectives tend to dismiss the traditional Christian understanding of God. There is, it is thought, no transcendent Other to whom one is accountable, although there are spirits that may influence the course of human events. As a result, sin, as a theological category, i.e. related to a single divine entity, must necessarily be rejected. New Agers tend to believe that the human is the measure of all things; indeed, the self is the beginning and the end.

Channelling is the means one uses to contact a spirit, deceased mentor, extraterrestrial being or, possibly, an animal evolved into another plane of consciousness. 'Emmanuel', described as a 'spiritual friend', was channelled through Pat Rodegast and Judith Stanton. He maintains that 'you are responsible not only for your actions day to day but for the very fact of your existence, which extends your involvement even beyond conception and the grave'.[5] Persons do not owe their existence to a single Creator of the universe. We create ourselves even before we are born, presumably through some form of reincarnation. One may wonder, then, just how Emmanuel, as a former living human being, is able to remain outside of human experience and make this

observation about the human situation. Might Emmanuel be standing in for some form of an otherworldly God figure? What happens when channelled entities disagree with one another? These questions are not usually discussed in New Age literature, although they leave their readers curious.

According to Emmanuel, humans are incapable of making a free choice for evil. For example, in his discussion of guilt, Emmanuel states that persons do not choose wrongly. Instead,

> Guilt is second judgment. It is looking at oneself in hindsight and saying, 'I really ought not to have done that'. But, my very dears, if you *really* 'ought not to have', you would not have.
>
> Know that at the moment of happening, it was all appropriate. If you have learned since that the act was not what you would choose now and you feel guilty, know that the act itself has brought you to this understanding. That was all it was meant to do.[6]

It seems logically inconsistent that one can be both responsible for one's existence while at the same time be incapable of making a moral choice. If it is true that everything one does is 'appropriate', then how can one account for the hurtful choices that are made by human beings?

Interestingly, Emmanuel does admit that

> of course there seems to be darkness in all of you, however it is not as you believe it to be. It is only a shadow, cast by the interface of your false illusions, that cuts you off from the Light.[7]

Whatever this 'darkness' is, it is clearly not intrinsic to the personhood of individuals who, according to Emmanuel, are 'Beings of Light working through the maze of [their] own misconceptions'.[8] The exact nature of the human person is never discussed, but the spiritual or non-material element is obviously an intrinsic component.

Emmanuel does recognize moral evil within human persons:

> Within each one of you there is a small portion, some smaller than others, where there is hate, where there is racism, where there is a voice that says, 'I am different than you and I am better'. Wherever you can hear that voice, you are speaking to what you have perceived in the outer world as Hitler.[9]

It appears that while human 'darkness' is illusory, hatred is real but, in any case, no one is morally responsible for it. There is, in other words, no sin. If however, one knows that there are 'false illusions', it would seem

that there is a consequent responsibility to become aware of them and shed them for 'truth', however one understands it.[10]

Another New Age thinker on the subject of moral evil is clinical psychologist Kenneth Wapnick who has become a chief spokesperson of *A course in miracles*, a widely disseminated educational programme that combines psychology and spirituality. Wapnick has argued that

> Jesus did not suffer and die for our sins . . . because once you see his death in that way, then you make sin real. You make sin real and then you have to atone for it. The whole idea of the Course is that sin is an illusion . . .. For the Course, sin never really happened . . .. The Bible speaks of a sinful humanity that is separated from God and in need of reconciliation through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. The Course would dismiss such teaching by saying that its source is not God, but the guilt-ridden, separatist ego.[11]

Wapnick links the notion of sin with guilt and fear. He rejects the notion of original sin because, he believes, it implies separation and alienation from God that neither heaven nor earth can heal. As we realize the impact of this situation, we experience guilt which springs especially from this false awareness of who we are but also from what we have done.

> Due to this sense of basic wrongness and wrongdoing, we will fear the punishment we are sure is forthcoming as our just deserts. We are seemingly helpless in the face of the basic anxiety and terror that inevitably accompany the belief in our own guilt.[12]

From a traditional Christian perspective, Wapnick and all New Agers reject what ought to be rejected. Belief in a God or system that does not allow for a return to grace and ordains punishment for an ontological condition over which one has no control surely deserves to be abandoned. In fact, this interpretation is a misreading of what believers mean by the 'good news of salvation'.

Wapnick and others seem to miss the wonder and joy of the reality of forgiveness for Christians. What the psalmist perceived so long ago has somehow escaped their experience: 'A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn' (Ps 51:17). God will not and cannot, we believe, abandon us. When Christians argue in favour of the reality of original sin, they are admitting to a certain proclivity toward evil which they neither chose nor are able adequately to explain. When they claim responsibility for perpetrating certain wrong actions and beg forgive-

ness, they proclaim an awareness of their inability to live blameless lives without the grace of the divine. They endorse belief in their own free will as well. The admission of responsibility for one's wrong actions before God must be coupled with a firm desire to avoid similar behaviour in the future. This is at once to say something about both the nature of God and the nature of the human person, i.e. one *can* do this without fear of reprisals, and, one *must* do this in order to realize one's human potential. The reward, far from being a punishment, is a peace beyond all telling.

Evil

Christians make no attempt to deny the reality of evil in the world. Ethicists distinguish between moral and non-moral evil. Moral evil, also known as sin, has been discussed above. It occurs when one violates the moral law, i.e. the universal natural law available through the light of human reason, or, for believers, when one disobeys the will of God. Non-moral evil, by contrast, includes those disorders which do not have their origin in human sin. It is the latter with which we are primarily concerned in this section.

Several approaches to evil are prominent in New Age thinking. Evil may be considered an illusion or ascribed to one's karma, a rough equivalent of sin. Russell Chandler surveys leading spokespersons for New Age philosophies who prefer to think of evil as an invention of the human imagination. Among his notables is Shirley MacLaine who, he points out, does not believe in evil as such:

> Evil, she believes, is only what you *think* it is . . .. In MacLaine's view, evil is denied, change is always good, problems disappear, guilt evaporates, and potential is unlimited.[13]

Chandler also reports on other New Age experts:

> In New Age thinking, observes Art Lindsley in *New Age Rage*, 'the only way to transform this evil situation is to eliminate the illusion of the finite, the personal, and the social. Disease and suffering are illusory – a matter of consciousness. If we alter consciousness, we eliminate disease.
>
> And, apparently, even war.
>
> New Age spokesman and physician Dr Irving Oyle was once asked how America should deal with the Vietnam War. 'If we all stop thinking about it', he replied, 'if we all stop agreeing on its objective reality, it will cease to exist'.
>
> Entities Seth and Michael, as channelled respectively by Jane Roberts and Jessica Lansing, stated that evil has only as much reality and power as people give it by their basic beliefs. The same applies to devils and demons.

> This view, according to researcher Lanny Buettner, gives demons alleged power through negative telepathic suggestion: 'If a man believed his neighbourhood was filled with muggers, he would telepathically attract a mugger, thus confirming his belief'.[14]

Regardless of their approach to the presence of evil, New Agers believe that human beings are essentially good and are bound to progress.

Native American spirituality has been included among New Age literature. Evil in this genre is generally considered to be related to human intentionality. Dhyani Ywahoo is a member of the Etowah Band of the Eastern Tsalagi (Cherokee) Nation. She is the founder and head of Sunray Meditation Society in Bristol, Vermont and directs a training programme called the Peacekeeper Mission. She believes that 'evil is thoughtless action, evil is what causes harm to others. Evil begins in the heart of ignorance and the desire to dominate.'[15] Ywahoo speculates on the origins of evil:

> How is it that evil comes into the world? Evil comes, as my grandparents told me, from people having pride and thinking they have dominion over creation and others. In the Tsalagi creation story about Star Maiden, it is told that when she came to Earth she inhaled a wind and became pregnant and bore two sons. One of them wanted to do things in another way. And these twins fought within their mother, and she died giving birth to the stormmaking one because he came out from underneath her arm rather than in the natural way. And from her body came all the good things that we know. This is one explanation that was given to us as children as to how evil originated. The real lesson in this story is that when we want to argue with the natural plan, when we become so arrogant that we seek to go against the order of things, we bring forth a negative energy. When we act without considering how our actions will affect others, when we act in a way that may cause harm to others, in this moment or three generations from now, then we are planting the seeds of evil.[16]

In short, Ywahoo believes that evil occurs when persons abuse the sacred gifts of life, intimacy and knowledge.

Many New Agers would dismiss raw human carnage and malice as persons following their 'karma'. For ordinary Christians, it is somewhat appalling to contemplate the deliberate manifestations of hatred and blatant acts of violence as 'appropriate' and 'the way it is supposed to be'. Something in the human psyche ought to recoil in horror as one contemplates the preponderance of both animal and human suffering at the hands of individuals bent upon causing senseless mutilation and

death among innocents. To excuse the evil in these human actions implies a naïveté and denial that traditional Christians find untenable.

Death

As far as we can tell, death is the ultimate qualitative change in the life of persons as we have known them. This can be seen most clearly in the case of a person who has suffered from a long and debilitating illness. The body deteriorates around an indomitable spirit which finally takes its leave. To all appearances, the struggle between what is and what will be is over. If anything follows this life, only those who have gone before know for sure.

From a theological perspective, death is not the final human event. Rather, it is the very act in which a person becomes her or his decisive self. It is at this moment that one 'enters eternity', if indeed it may be said that eternity has a beginning. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in any case, is viewed as the single most important event in the salvation of the world. By virtue of his life, death, resurrection and ascension, we may also live beyond the grave.

The death of human beings has been seen variously as a consequence of original sin, as a manifestation of actual sin, and as the natural termination to life. Feminists in particular have resisted linking sin and death too closely. For example, Rosemary Radford Ruether rejects the first two of these notions:

> The notion that humanity is culpable for its own finitude has laid upon Christians an untenable burden of guilt. Although we may evaluate our mortality as tragic, or seek to embrace it as natural, what mortality is not is sin, or the fruit of sin. The (preapocalyptic) Hebrew view that mortality is our natural condition, which we share with all other earth beings, and that redemption is the fullness of life within these finite limits, is a more authentic ethics for ecological living.[17]

Ruether notes further that both women and the earth have suffered inexorably when the ties between sin and death have been too tight.

Humans have long desired to eliminate death and live forever. Russell Chandler notes that

> basically, there are three beliefs about what happens after death: annihilation, which holds that nothing happens because there is no reality outside the world of matter; resurrection, the Christian belief that a person's mortal body is transformed into an immortal one; and reincarnation, which theorizes that death is a passage to cyclical but unending rebirth.[18]

New Agers tend not to prefer annihilation or the traditional concept of resurrection, but they do espouse variations on the theme of reincarnation within the New Age literature.

For example, Dhyani Ywahoo notes that

> in Tsalagi view, one has seven lifetimes in which to come again to complete realization. It can be done in one lifetime, and in seven it is certain to be complete. Then one may become a planet, a star, the quintessential fire permeating all things, or rest in the formless. It is good to help those in need, as a caretaker.[19]

Ywahoo describes the ingredients of 'conscious rebirth' with these caretakers:

> Friends or family who choose to be born again together may select a particular constellation in the sky upon which to gaze. When one is reborn and becomes old enough, seeing this constellation [*sic*] will spark remembrance of commitment to be again with those dear ones. In the process of dying one projects one's consciousness to that constellation, and those who will remain on Earth, they, too, meditate on that particular constellation while their friend is dying, so that the thoughtstreams are the same. The dying person's friends also keep clear the stream of their emotions during this time, so that the dying person's journey in the clear light is not obscured by clouds. At a higher level of consciousness and with the help of certain rituals and ceremonies, one can choose the actual kind of relationship one will have with one's friend in the next lifetime.[20]

The Tsalagi nation teach their people to be unafraid of death and live each day to the fullest. In this way, death will be a peaceful transition to another season of one's life.

Both Kenneth Wapnick and channelled entities stress death as illusion. In a section entitled 'The unreality of death', Wapnick states that 'death is merely a belief, and in his resurrection Jesus proved that belief to be an illusion'.[21] He describes death as 'the quiet laying down of the body after it has served this holy purpose' of teaching Jesus' lessons of forgiveness.[22] Resurrection is 'the awakening from the dream of death . . .'.[23] Just as death is unreal, so is sin which is the cause of death.

Channelled entities reject the belief in annihilation following death. For example, Emmanuel explains that

> death is like taking off a tight shoe. *Even when you are dead, you are still alive.* You do not cease to exist at death. That is only illusion. You go through

> the doorway of death alive and there is no altering of the consciousness. It is not a strange land you go to but a land of living reality where the growth process is a continuation.[24]

In fact, death is described as the 'greatest gift'[25] that the school of life can offer to an individual. Emmanuel states emphatically that 'death cannot kill You'.[26] In response to the question, 'Where did my friend go when he died on Sunday?' Emmanuel replies, '*Where you go when you erase the lines of self-restriction. Your friend went out of illusion.*'[27]

Fear is the biggest obstacle to a joyous experience of death although once one has walked through the door of death, one no longer lives in fear and pain is not part of this new experience. A welcoming committee is there to greet the new arrival and make the transition a joyous one.

> Once the soul is oriented, the Guides will appear. What is seen depends on the belief system. It may be a lighted Buddha, a lighted Christ, or another holy figure, but it will be Light. The soul will then be led to where it needs to go and where, at the deepest level of being, it wants to go.[28]

Channelled entities live 'on the other side' and so, one is urged to believe, their testimony can be trusted.

In short, death for New Agers is almost universally considered to be a natural transition to another and better phase of life. The best preparation for this movement is to live life to the fullest. The journey is to be anticipated rather than feared because it will bring one closer toward one's true identity.

Conclusion

Significant anthropological and metaphysical differences distinguish New Age and traditional Christian spirituality. Unlike traditional Christian thought, life and death for New Agers are illusory. Sin and evil are likewise not real for New Agers who tend not to hold individuals morally responsible for their behaviour which would be deemed morally reprehensible by classic Christian criteria. Native Americans, however, reject these aspects of New Age thought and argue that persons are capable of moral evil and live several real lives.

One may not arrive at a precise definition of anything in New Age thought since it is a movement with neither creed nor formal organization. It is inclusive of various trends and has touched virtually every stratum of contemporary life. There are, however, certain identifiable characteristics which are commonly understood to be encompassed in

New Age thought. For example, the New Age is a grassroots movement of people who believe that the world is about to enter a new and better age, commonly called the 'Age of Aquarius'. These individuals question traditional assumptions about the divine, the nature of the human planet and the world around us, and the future of the universe. They espouse a humanistic philosophy and are generally committed to personal and social transformation.

Although 'new' in many ways, it is plain that New Age spirituality has its roots in the ancient religions of the East including Hinduism and Buddhism as well as western occultism and others. Unlike the mainline traditions of Christianity, New Age philosophies deny the existence of absolutes and place the human at the centre of reality. This relativism and anthropocentrism sound alarms for both traditional Christians and ecologists who insist upon human accountability for human error and destruction. The suffering of the entire earth is too profound to take seriously a movement that insists upon a self-centred moral scheme. In a time when most persons are seeking global transformation of our economic, political, social and cultural systems, it is essential that traditional Christians and New Age proponents be attentive to one another. We all believe, after all, that we are related at the deepest levels of human hope and aspiration.

NOTES

[1] Winsa, Patty: 'World of occult is just around the corner', *The Toronto Star*, 31 January 1993, p 1. This event was held at the Exhibition Place, 5–7 February. It regularly attracts thousands of persons, including those willing to pay $95.00 (CAD) for a ninety-minute session with a psychic.
[2] Chandler, Russell: *Understanding the New Age* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1991), p 5.
[3] Childress, James F. in *The Westminster dictionary of Christian ethics*, James F. Childress and John Macquarrie (eds) (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p 585.
[4] Fuchs, Joseph: 'Sin and conversion' in *Introduction to Christian ethics: a reader*, Ronald P. Hamel and Kenneth R. Himes (eds) (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), p 206.
[5] Rodegast, Path and Judith Stanton: *Emmanuel's book: a manual for living comfortably in the cosmos* (New York: Bantam, 1985), p 7.
[6] Rodegast, Pat and Judith Stanton: *Emmanuel's book II: the choice for love* (New York: Bantam, 1989), p 65.
[7] *Emmanuel's book*, p 84.
[8] *Ibid.*, p 84.
[9] *Emmanuel's book II*, p 151.
[10] I am grateful to Pamela Smith, PhD (cand.) of Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for this last insight.
[11] Wapnick, Kenneth quoted in *Understanding the New Age*, pp 192, 193.
[12] Wapnick, Kenneth: *Forgiveness and Jesus: the meeting place of 'A course in miracles' and Christianity* (Roscoe, NY: Foundation for 'A Course in Miracles', 1983), p 50.
[13] *Understanding the New Age*, p 246.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp 246–247.
[15] Ywahoo, Dhyani: *Voices of our ancestors: Cherokee teachings from the wisdom fire* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), p 16.
[16] *Ibid.*, pp 225–256.
[17] Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Gaia and God: an ecofeminist theology of earth healing* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), p 139.
[18] *Understanding the New Age*, p 193.
[19] *Voices of our ancestors*, p 186.
[20] *Ibid.*, pp 186–187.
[21] *Forgiveness and Jesus*, p 232.
[22] *Ibid.*, p 233.
[23] Quoted in *Understanding the New Age*, p 193.
[24] *Emmanuel's book*, p 169.
[25] *Emmanuel's book II*, p 16.
[26] *Ibid.*, p 29.
[27] *Ibid.*, p 133.
[28] *Emmanuel's book*, p 173.

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE NEW AGE

By JOHN A. SALIBA

THE EMERGENCE AND SUCCESS of the New Age Movement (NAM) in the last decade have generated a lot of discussion among Christians of all denominations. Because the New Age world-view seems to permeate all aspects of culture, it has raised many theological and pastoral issues which must be addressed. There is no doubt that Christians should be legitimately concerned about the influence it might have on their faith and morals.

The Christian response to the NAM is especially difficult because it is by no means easy to specify what the New Age is all about. Descriptions of the New Age by adherents[1] and scholars[2] alike tend to be idealistic, highlighting its more acceptable ideological aspects. But when one looks into its specific beliefs and practices, one is overwhelmed by the diversity and complexity of its theological views and ritual practices.[3] And because the New Age is characterized by a lack of a central organization, a rather diffuse leadership, and different types and degrees of involvement and commitment, a uniform Christian reply to the NAM as a whole may not even be feasible. Unfortunately, Christian replies to the NAM have often been determined by the consideration of some of its more negative features that are assumed to be typical of its ideology and ritual.

One of the main reasons why the NAM has encountered so much opposition is not only because it proposes an alternative religious world-view that cannot be easily reconciled with Christianity, but also because it endorses a reinterpretation of several major Christian themes, such as the nature of Jesus Christ and his place in the history of religions. Moreover, many New Age writers tend to depict Christianity as a spiritually bankrupt and intolerant religion that is more interested in safeguarding doctrine than catering to the real needs of the people.[4] Such attacks are bound to elicit apologetic arguments in defence of traditional faith and reciprocal charges against the New Age itself.

Christian fundamentalist response to the New Age

The initial and most vociferous rebuttals of the NAM have come from fundamentalist or evangelical Christians[5] who have interpreted its

popular appeal and success as a significant threat to the survival of Christianity. Two broad approaches to the New Age can be detected among these Christians. The first, spearheaded by Constance Cumbey's[6] and David Hunt's[7] virulent denunciations of the movement, can be described more accurately as a hysterical tirade against all New Age ideas and activities, irrespective of their worth.

Cumbey assures her readers that the NAM is not only a serious deviation from orthodoxy, but also a demonic conspiracy aimed at destroying Christianity itself. She lumps the movement with Nazism and secular humanism and condemns it as the antithesis of Christian belief and morality. Apparently oblivious to such pitfalls as historical anachronism, she subsumes under the New Age everything she disagrees with, including the ecumenical movement, holistic health centres, humanistic psychology and the Montessori schools.

This approach has become typical of many Christian arguments against the New Age. Additional and unsubstantiated charges are brought forth in support of the theory that the New Age is a demonic conspiracy to destroy Christianity by infiltrating all aspects of human life, be they political, educational or religious. Christians themselves are being subtly inundated with New Age ideas. The leaders of the movement are sometimes judged to be self-consciously in league with Satan.[8] Some writers[9] hold that New Agers are 'immoral' because of their belief in reincarnation which is wrongly linked with witchcraft. Others[10] go as far as to accuse New Agers of performing bloody human sacrifices.

The second fundamentalist technique to counteract the teachings of the NAM concentrates on the theology of the movement and endeavours to evaluate it in the light of biblical teachings. This strategy is also apologetic, but it refrains from making preposterous accusations against the New Age. It strives for a more balanced and fair evaluation of the movement. Douglas Grootius, a leading representative of this approach, spends some time analysing New Age theology and concludes that it is characterized by a monistic world view that is in sharp contrast with orthodox Christianity. By postulating that the movement has sociological roots in the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, he de-emphasizes the theory that it is a satanic plot to overthrow Christianity. And by remarking that the NAM does offer hope in a hopeless world, he indirectly suggests that it has some beneficial features that may account for its popularity and success.

Other writers[11] continue the traditional fundamentalist approach to contrast the teachings of the NAM with those of the Bible and discover,

to nobody's surprise, that the movement's religious ideology deviates from biblical texts. And while the tendency remains to condemn the movement lock, stock and barrel, some have admitted, however, that it has focused our attention on a number of issues that Christians have lost sight of or misunderstood.[12] Most fundamentalist writings on the NAM spur Christians to counteract its activities belligerently, although a few have advised Christians to be more prudent and less confrontational.[13]

The fundamentalist assault on the New Age contains some valuable critique of the New Age.[14] But this critique is frequently overshadowed both by the polemical tone of its writings and by poor scholarship. Unfortunately, to many fundamentalist writers, the New Age has become a convenient label for what they have judged to be not only unorthodox but also inherently evil. Christian apologists often portray little understanding of the causes of the movement and show even less talent for discriminating between its laudable and faddish elements. They are reluctant to recognize that the movement has positive features and that discrimination between, for instance, its desire to preserve the environment and its magical rituals is necessary. Moreover, their emotional outbursts and angry recriminations have little pastoral value. Their persistent and repetitive outcries are not likely to convince New Agers to return to their previous religious affiliations nor to help Christians in their task of making their faith relevant in the fast-changing socio-economic conditions of the end of the second millennium.

Mainline Protestant responses

The mainline Protestant Christian reaction to the NAM has also been preoccupied with its teachings. Like the fundamentalist perspective, it has drawn attention to the gnostic elements of the movement and stressed their incompatibility with traditional Christian doctrine. Mainline Protestant writers, however, tend to ignore or reject the satanic conspiracy theory. Their responses are geared to make Christians reflect theologically on, rather than react emotionally against, the presence and influence of New Age ideas and practices. They further see some benefits stemming from the movement.

Richard Thompson, reflecting a United Methodist Church perspective, acknowledges that the New Age preaches hope in confusing times and that it has 'come rushing in to fill the void left by the decline of Christianity and secular humanism'.[15] He berates its evolutionary credo and is more concerned with pointing out how it radically differs from Christianity. He never specifies what answer a committed Christian can give to the movement, though it is apparent that he leans towards confrontation.

More thoughtful evaluations of the New Age, however, have led several commentators to abandon the idea that it epitomizes the antithesis of Christianity. Philip Almond,[16] for example, writing in an Anglican magazine, states that the movement is a revival of the western esoteric tradition which has sometimes existed in creative tension with orthodox Christianity. The New Age's concern for the environment is based not only on its pantheistic slant, but also on a millenarian vision of a world in which all living creatures exist in perfect harmony.[17] When seen as 'a reaction to the technological rationalism and materialism of late twentieth century culture', and as a religious movement that 're-establishes the connection between the mundane and the transcendent',[18] the New Age has something to teach those Christians who have been swept away by the secularization process in western culture.

One of the most elaborate and comprehensive Christian attempts to deal with the New Age is that of Ted Peters, who teaches at the Lutheran School of Theology in Berkeley, California. Peters suggests that four propositions or theses should guide Christians in their encounter with the NAM. He asserts that: 1) 'modest dabbling in New Age spirituality is probably harmless; it may even be helpful'; 2) 'the New Age vision is a noble and edifying one'; 3) 'pastors, theologians and church leaders should take the New Age movement seriously'; and 4) 'the gnostic monism at the heart of the New Age teaching is dangerous because it leads to naïveté and to a denial of God's grace'.[19]

Ted Peters' treatment attempts a balanced assessment which, while recognizing the New Age's merits, pays attention to those teachings that make it a distinct religion. His approach is more ecumenical. Though still worried about doctrinal matters, it avoids hysterical outcries and fearful condemnations. Besides recognizing what is good in the movement, it looks for areas where Christians can learn from, and co-operate with, those involved in the New Age.

Catholic responses

The Catholic answer to the New Age has been varied and contradictory. Some Catholic writers have, in fact, embraced the method and tone of Christian fundamentalists who repudiate anything connected with the NAM and who find little or nothing in it that can benefit Christian theology and/or spirituality. Rejecting in spirit, if not in word, an ecumenical perspective, they envisage the New Age largely as a threat to orthodoxy and orthopraxis.

Among the most comprehensive Catholic conservative assessments of the NAM is that of Ralph Rath.[20] He starts by providing a broad picture

of the various elements that comprise the New Age scene. He then proceeds to detect the inroads the movement has made in the fields of cults, religion, education, politics, science, health, business and entertainment. Finally, he proceeds to outline a Christian rebuttal that is aimed largely at those New Age doctrines that are in conflict with Christianity.

Rath is one of the few commentators on the New Age who refers to inter-religious dialogue. Yet he exhibits little understanding of the requirements of dialogue and even less appreciation of the fact that dialogue is basically a relationship between individuals who have embarked on a religious quest. At one point he states that 'the New Age is based on deception. This is certainly allied to the satanic.'[21] Such statements reiterate the familiar anticult rhetoric that indiscriminately lumps together all non-Christian groups (such as Transcendental Meditation, Yoga, contemporary paganism and satanic cults). They are definitely not conducive to dialogue. Rath, moreover, fails to find any points of contact between the New Age and Christianity. In his final two chapters on basic Christian teachings and evangelization he relies completely on fundamentalist literature. Although he correctly draws attention to the fact that the New Age religion differs from Christianity in doctrine, he overstresses the pantheistic element in the former and fails to make any reference to Christian teachings on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and divinization. And he omits any reference to the rich tradition of Christian mysticism. Apparently unaware of the changing cultural and religious world-view of the late twentieth century, his response to the New Age is bound to be unconstructive and ineffective and is likely to achieve nothing but to buttress the convictions of those who already share his opinions.

A similar, though much more personal, approach to the New Age is that of Mitch Pacwa[22] who appears to have embarked, for a while at least, on a conversion career[23] from involvement in drugs, to astrology, the Enneagram, and other New Age fads. His final conversion to the charismatic movement led him to realize that all his previous experiments were completely opposed to Christian doctrine. While some of Pacwa's critical remarks, for example, those on astrology, Jungian psychology, and Matthew Fox's creation spirituality, are valid, they are deficient for the precise reason that they make no mention of their attractive features that can be reconciled with Christian doctrine. He does not follow the official procedures of dialogue that the Catholic Church has adopted since Vatican II. The way he deals with Jung is typical of the method that builds walls of separation rather than bridges

to understanding. Pacwa rightly reminds his readers of Jung's personal antipathy to Christianity and mythological interpretation of the major Christian articles of faith. He then adds: 'My problems with Jung do not necessarily stem from the psychological insights he offers. In the hands of a professional, these can be useful for personal growth.'[24] Surely, this is the very area that requires further study and development.[25] It is Jung's original psychological insights, his appreciation of spiritual matters, and his sensitivity towards the individual's religious quest that account to a large extent for the revival of interest in his works.

Both Pacwa and Rath, together with the majority of Catholic writers on the NAM, explicitly reject the satanic conspiracy theory, even though a few indirectly seem to admit that satanic influence is present. They are convinced that the movement is the antithesis of Christian belief with few, if any, redeeming qualities. Their approach revolves around the identification of false doctrine conceived as a list of static propositional truth statements. These authors tend to evaluate New Age teachings in the light of conservative Catholic theology. They write as if theological development has already come to an end. They consequently make little attempt to discover and build on common ground.

In contrast to Rath's and Pacwa's somewhat superficial handling of, and response to, the New Age, David Toolan's erudite and highly sophisticated analysis[26] is in a class by itself. Toolan, like Pacwa, was personally involved in the New Age scene, but on a deeper and more intellectual level. He considers the quest for meaning and healing, which is central to New Age consciousness, as being rooted in both Eastern and Western contemplative and mystical traditions. He, therefore, sees a continuity between Christian thought and some philosophical and theological trends in the New Age. Uniting modern developments in philosophy, psychology, physics and cosmology, Toolan looks towards future developments in Christian theology that would incorporate the best elements of the New Age.[27] He faults the New Age for its idealism and self-centredness and accuses the movement of having a 'claustrophobic, inbred quality characteristic of sects concerned only with saving club-members' own skins'.[28] In agreement with many Christian and non-Christian critics, he dismisses the crystals gazers and psychic channellers as 'the lunatic fringe'.[29]

Writing for a much more general audience than Toolan, George Maloney[30] adopts an ecumenical perspective to the influx of New Age ideas. Like Toolan, he is willing to learn from the NAM. He accepts some basic insights from Jungian psychology on which, he believes, a Christian spirituality can be built. Rather than advocating a total

rejection of the New Age, he looks for areas of agreement with the Christian tradition. He thinks that the New Age's holistic vision of the universe and the role of humanity in it can be harmonized with Christian thought. Moreover, certain elements of the New Age, like the stress on good nutrition, the avoidance of drugs and respect for matter, can all be grounded in Christian theology. He berates the New Age's view of Jesus and its pantheistic theology. But he points out that several aspects of New Age theology are redirecting Christians to traditional theological themes that have been neglected. New Age theology points to the Christian doctrines of Christ the *logos* and the immanence of God. The New Age is fulfilling an important function: it is helping Christians rediscover the richness of their tradition.

The most comprehensive official response to the NAM is probably Cardinal Godfried Danneels' pastoral letter on new religious movements, a letter that includes a large section on the New Age, which is called a 'new religion'.[31] While criticizing the New Age for its egocentric world view and its syncretism, the pastoral letter does not link it with satanism and much less with a satanic conspiracy. It admits that

> the New Age also offers good things: a sense of universal brotherhood, peace and harmony, raising people's awareness, a commitment to bettering the world, a general mobilization of energies for the sake of good, etc. Nor are all the techniques they advocate bad: yoga and relaxation can have many good effects.[32]

The letter's tone suggests that the New Age gives alternative answers to humankind's religious quest. It hints that there are several points of contact, such as mysticism, between the New Age and Christianity. It concedes that the New Age criticism of Christianity may not be completely unfounded.[33] Its stress, however, is still on those doctrinal issues that make the New Age incompatible with Christianity. And it offers little speculation on what the New Age can contribute to Christian theology and spirituality.

A similar approach is taken by Archbishop Edward A. McCarthy of Miami. In a pastoral instruction entitled 'The New Age Movement', he asserts that 'many of the elements of the New Age Movement are altogether incompatible with Christianity'.[34] But he then explicitly recognizes many of the movement's positive features and observes 'that actually the Catholic Church offers many of the answers which New Agers are seeking'.[35] The New Age's reaction to scientific rationalism, its integration of matter and spirit and its stress on mystical experiences are solidly based in the Church's tradition. Spiritual seekers need not

look outside the Church in their quest for peace, harmony and union with God.

Towards a Christian response to the New Age

An effective and relevant response to the New Age must be compatible with the principles of interreligious dialogue. Dialogue, while admitting that there are doctrinal and moral differences between diverse faith perspectives, seeks understanding and co-operation and avoids confrontations and harangues.

Whether the current apologetic attacks against the NAM are having a measurable impact on its popularity is debatable. The refutation of its philosophical and theological premises and the ridiculing of its magical beliefs (like those concerning the healing powers of crystals) and practices (like channelling) are probably having little effect on those already committed to them. Livid condemnation of New Age ideas, blanket accusations of satanic involvement, and emotional tirades against its ritual practices are more likely to reinforce New Agers' dislike of and attacks on Christianity.[36] The reasons why the popularity of the New Age has already peaked and might also be waning is due more to the problems endemic to the movement itself than to outside factors.[37] There is no doubt, however, that even if the NAM will not survive, it has already left its mark on contemporary religion and culture. Thus, for example, Jungian psychology and holistic health, both of which are an integral part of New Age, have been incorporated in retreat programmes and have influenced many Christians seeking growth in their spiritual lives.

A Christian evaluation of the New Age must be guided both by understanding and discernment. The following guidelines should contribute to a better assessment of New Age ideas and practices:

1. Critique of NAM must rely on informed sources and must be conducted in an academic manner. The need to clarify, explain, and defend, when necessary, Christian doctrine must be attended to. But the Church's pastoral ministry must devise more positive ways of relating to and influencing those individuals attracted to the New Age.

2. Refutation of New Agers' arguments that certain beliefs (such as reincarnation) are compatible with Christianity has its proper place. It is also important, however, to point out that many New Age ideas are hardly alien to Christian theology.[38]

3. General condemnations of the New Age as a whole should be avoided and its good features recognized.

4. Stress must be placed on those elements of the New Age that can be harmonized with Christian doctrine and spirituality. For instance, in

spite of the theological problems inherent in Matthew Fox's creation-centred spirituality, there are some elements in this spirituality that can be based on a Christian theology of creation.[39]

5. Efforts must be made to imbue some New Age practices with the Christian spirit. Thus, for example, the environmental movement to preserve the earth need not be based on a pantheistic viewpoint. It could easily be founded on traditional Christian theology.

6. It should be recognized that the Church is in constant need of renewal and that the New Age may be pointing to those areas where reform and renewal are most required. 'Spiritual innovation', writes William Dinges,[40] 'is more often than not an indictment of organized religion and its failure to respond in creative and dynamic ways to new cultural trends.' Official Catholic reactions to the new religious movements have admitted that more can be done for the pastoral needs of the faithful.[41]

The New Age as a 'sign of the times'

In conclusion, the advent of the New Age can be seen as a mixed blessing for Christians who are called upon to respond in faith to the presence of new religions towards the end of the twentieth century. While the New Age may be drawing away from traditional faith many who have embarked on a personal religious quest, it might also be doing a service to Christianity by encouraging Christians to delve deeper in their religious tradition and rediscover its treasures.

Rather than being an indication of satanic conniving or an omen of impending apocalyptic doom, the New Age, like all new religious movements,[42] is 'a sign of the times' calling Christians to self-examination and reform in the light of the gospel.[43] The New Age religion presents an excellent opportunity for the Christian Church better to understand and execute its mission, to adapt and react more meaningfully to the changing needs and conditions of the modern age, to express its teachings clearly to an ecumenical audience and to reform and renew herself in the spirit of the gospel.

NOTES

[1] David Spangler, *The New Age* (Issaquah, Washington: Morningtown Press, 1988), p 3.

[2] J. Gordon Melton, *New Age encyclopedia* (Detroit: Garland, 1990), p xiii.

[3] For an insider's view of the many practices that can be included under the New Age, one can consult *The New Age catalogue: access to information and sources*, by the editors of *Body, Mind, and Spirit* (New York: Doubleday, 1988); the *New Age sourcebook*, by the editors of *The New Age Journal* (Brighton, Massachusetts: Rising Star Associates, 1991); and Marcia Gervase Ingenito (ed), *National New Age*

yellow pages (Fullerton, California: Highgate House, second annual edition, 1988). For a scholarly description see J. Gordon Melton, *The New Age almanac* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1991).

[4] See, for instance, Shirley MacLaine, *Out on a limb* (New York: Bantam, 1983), pp 50–51, who gives a rather mild criticism of Christianity.

[5] For surveys of the Christian fundamentalist approach to the New Age Movement see James R. Lewis, 'The New Age movement: a bibliography of conservative Christian literature' (Santa Barbara, California: Santa Barbara Centre for Humanistic Studies, 1989) and Irving Hexham, 'The Evangelical response to the New Age' in James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton (eds), *Perspectives on the New Age* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp 152-63.

[6] *The hidden dangers of the rainbow: the New Age and the coming age of barbarism* (Shreveport, Louisiana: Huntington House, 1983).

[7] *Prosperity and the coming holocaust: the New Age Movement in prophecy* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1983).

[8] Texe Marrs, *Dark secrets of the New Age: Satan's plan for a one world religion* (Westchester, Illinois: Lion Publishing, 1986).

[9] See, for example, Dave Hunt and T. A. MacMahon, *The seduction of Christianity: spiritual discernment in the last days* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1985), p 213.

[10] Such as Paul de Parrie and Mary Pride, *Unholy sacrifices of the New Age* (Westchester, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1988).

[11] For example, Russell Chandler, *Understanding the New Age* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1988).

[12] Karen Hoyt (ed), *The New Age rage: a probing analysis of the newest religious craze* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1987), p 12.

[13] Consult, for instance, Walter Martin, *The New Age cult* (Minneapolis: Bethany House), pp 97ff.

[14] Cf, for example, Hexham, *op. cit.*, pp 157–58.

[15] 'A look at the New Age movement', *Military Chaplains' Review* (Fall 1989), p 20.

[16] 'Towards an understanding of the New Age', *St Mark's Review* no 144 (Summer 1991), pp 2–5.

[17] *Ibid.*, p 3.

[18] *Ibid.*, p 5.

[19] *The cosmic self* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), pp 194ff.

[20] *The New Age: a Christian critique* (South Bend, Indiana: Greenlawn Press, 1990).

[21] *Ibid.*, p 273.

[22] *Catholics and the New Age* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1992).

[23] See, for instance, James Richardson, 'Conversion Careers', *Society* vol 17, no 3 (1980), pp 47–50.

[24] Pacwa, *op. cit.*, p 68.

[25] Towards the end of his book, Pacwa (*op. cit.*, p 198) counsels Catholics to 'look for good in their [i.e. New Agers'] ideas and relate it to the truth that God has already revealed'. He disappoints his readers, however, by not following his own advice.

[26] *Facing west from California's shores: a Jesuit's journey into New Age consciousness* (New York: Crossroad, 1987).

[27] In a similar approach, Bede Griffiths outlines some of the positive impact the New Age can have on both Christian theology and practice. See his *A new vision of reality: Western science, Eastern mysticism and Christian faith* (Springfield, Illinois: Templegate Publishers, 1989).

[28] 'Harmonic convergences and all that: New Age spirituality', *The Way* vol 32, no 1 (1992), p 42.

[29] *Ibid.*, p 35.

[30] *Mysticism and the New Age: Christic consciousness in the new creation* (New York: Alba House, 1991).

[31] An English translation of this section on the New Age appeared under the title 'Christ of Aquarius?' in *Catholic International* vol 2, no 3 (May 1991), pp 480–88.

[32] *Ibid.*, p 485.

[33] *Ibid.*, p 483.

[34] *Catholic International* vol 3, no 7 (1–14 April 1992), p 335.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] Paul McGuire, *Evangelizing the New Age* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Publications, 1989), p 66.

[37] J. Gordon Melton, 'Introductory essay: an overview of the New Age Movement' in *New Age encyclopedia* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1991), pp xxx–xxxi.

[38] Consult, for example, Paul Collins, 'What's new about the New Age?', *St Mark's Review* no 144 (Summer 1991), p 14.

[39] See the whole issue of *The Way* vol 29, no 1 (1989), which is dedicated to 'creation-centred spirituality'.

[40] 'Aquarian spirituality: The New Age Movement in America', *The Catholic World* (May/June 1989), p 141.

[41] Cf my essay 'Vatican response to the new religious movements', *Theological Studies* vol 53, no 1 (1992), pp 3–39.

[42] This view was expressed by Cardinal Ernesto Corripio Ahumada in his report to the 1991 consistory of Cardinals. Cf *Catholic International* vol 2, no 13 (1–14 July 1991), p 618.

[43] The phrase 'sign of the times' occurs near the beginning of *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican II's 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World'. See Walter M. Abbott (ed), *The documents of Vatican II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), p 201.

THEOLOGICAL TRENDS

Business Ethics and the Pastoral Task

BUSINESS HAS HAD A DUBIOUS ETHICAL record recently. It has rivalled only miscarriages of justice in media attention. As a reminder of some of the British scandals I mention four. At the trial following the Guinness takeover of Distillers four of its directors were said in court to be 'carried away with greed and ambition'. There was the negligence involved in the English Channel ferry *Herald of Free Enterprise* disaster. There have been the details involved in the shut down of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International; and most recently the Maxwell Pension Fund fraud.

At the same time there has been a huge growth in the study and teaching of business ethics, particularly in the USA, from which most of the literature comes. It involves basic questions of morality in business and wealth creation, including the moral implications of a capitalist system which is now the triumphant survivor of the collapse of Soviet and command style economies. Business schools increase in number. The Harvard Business School, perhaps the leader, received in 1987 an endowment of twenty million dollars for the teaching of business ethics from a former chairperson of the Securities and Exchange Commission. *The Journal of Business Ethics*, a monthly from Amsterdam focusing mainly on the North American scene, has now a British counterpart, *Business Ethics: a European Review*, launched by Blackwells in January 1992 under the editorship of Professor Jack Mahoney SJ who holds the chair of Moral and Social Theology at King's College, London, and who has established there a Business Research Centre of which he is the Director.

In the USA by 1988 of the two thousand biggest corporations ninety-two per cent had established ethical codes of practice. In the UK about thirty-three per cent have. What kinds of ethical questions are being raised? They cover a disparate and wide range. I mention a few. One is the ethics of corporate finance. In modern capitalism the separation of ownership from management and control of a company is endemic. The private shareholders, who in the last resort are the owners, no longer take much, if any, serious entrepreneurial responsibility. They are more like punters betting on the success of a horse in a race. It is a type of private property unthought of when what became the traditional Christian defence of private property was advanced by St Thomas Aquinas.[1] The recent Government privatizations have shown that the property-owning democracy which it is intended to create is not seriously expecting to take any risks, but to make an easy gain from a bargain sell-off. In the USA more efforts have been made by small shareholders' campaigns to influence the business policy of corporations than in this country, but the odds are heavily stacked against them, and the effort involved means that it can only be an occasional effort. The potentially effective shareholders are pension and

life insurance funds, but they tend to take a distanced stance from the running of the enterprise. Should they become more involved and less like punters? Those who administer church funds, like the Church Commissioners of the Church of England, need to consider this. It is where the growing ethical investment movement can stimulate reflection and influence action.

As it is, management concerns in research and development which involve longer-term considerations are often frustrated by short-term market considerations. Moreover, if shares are held by a distanced and detached fund the only means of disciplining a management which has become ineffective is by a takeover, and that is a blunt instrument.[2] Continuous fine tuning is preferable.

Many issues arise in connection with accountancy and auditing. Should there be a rotation of auditors? Should auditing be separated from consultancy? Vardy, writing as a Christian, gives many examples of the moral dilemmas which can arise in this area. In one example he says he once adjusted the business forecast figures of a firm to prevent a bank closing it down; thirty-three jobs were saved.[3]

Two issues which are widely discussed need only to be mentioned in passing here. One is the enormous increases in salary which top executives have secured or been given in the recent past; the other is the terms and conditions of loans to Third World countries, and the problems of renegotiating repayment. But a third, which is coming to the fore, warrants a brief comment: 'whistleblowing'. This can be internal within a company or external in relation to the public. Loyalty to the company with respect to confidentiality can conflict with personal and professional integrity and civic responsibility. Since whistleblowers are always assumed to be guilty unless specifically exonerated, they are likely to be victimized.

Then there is sexual or racial discrimination in employment, especially at upper managerial levels. It may be formal, or, because of the cultural air we breathe, informal. White males are in a predominant position of power. It is difficult to correct, for explicit corrective preferences can bear harshly on those who have no responsibility for the injustice in question. But questions of distributive and compensatory justice are never easy.

In quoting a selection of issues one can easily move into areas of industrial ethics, like those arising over the status and power of trade unions, or in connection with industrial espionage. However, I am trying to keep some distinction between them. Problems of ethics in industry have had their own organs of discussion for some time whilst business ethics is a relatively new field. The examples given suggest that conflicts of interest and loyalties arise, as we would expect, in a business context as much as in others.

They can be dealt with on different levels. However, there is one level which must be set aside here. That is an ethical criticism of the fundamental basis of capitalism. Some traditional Christian socialist criticisms have been of this nature. Competition has been held to be unchristian. Profit has been thought of as a dubious criterion. Hence the market itself, in which both play a key role, is suspect. These criticisms have lost their force among many who held them,

especially as it has become clear that the Marxist theories have no alternative effective way of running an economic system hidden beneath the distorted Communist power structures. Both economically and politically Marxism is discredited. Much has been written on this, and I have contributed to it; and I am not going to repeat it here.[4] Obviously if the basis of capitalism is unethical, unless business ethics admits this, it is tinkering with an inherently unsatisfactory structure. My own view is that there is a fundamental difficulty in the pure theory of the free market; it treats labour, which is a personal factor of production, in the same way as it treats land and capital which are impersonal factors of production.[5] Persons should not be treated as things. But this can be corrected by social policies in the political realm if we regard the market as a useful tool for some important human purposes. It is a neat device for settling a range of fundamental economic problems of production and distribution, but there are many areas with which it cannot deal; we must not give it a pseudo-divine status, nor bolster it by an ideology which turns market relationships into a complete philosophy of human relations in public life. This said, there is nothing basically unethical about profits and competition. We can return to the different levels at which business ethics can be discussed.

The first is that of good public relations. Business goes along with non-commercial concerns of its customers. Consumer pressure is not easy to build up, but it can build up and, if the cause is good, is worth the effort of building it up, if it is proportionate to the significance of the cause.[6] The Body Shop has done well out of its stance against animal experiments in the area in which it trades (though it is not alone in this and has suffered in the current recession). Growing consumer pressure is pushing for catalytic converters in car engines, and has induced the Government to accelerate the use of lead-free petrol by a tax advantage. Carrying this kind of reasoning further many companies realize that a good reputation is part of the value of their product. Perrier withdrew all its bottled water for a time after some of it had been contaminated with benzene. A further step is to realize that it pays to behave well to your employees, or suppliers, or to take an interest in the communities where your works or retail outlets are. Marks and Spencer have a good reputation for their treatment of their employees and for firm but fair dealing with their suppliers.

All of this 'honesty is the best policy' type of ethical reasoning is useful as far as it goes, but something deeper is needed. For one thing the market by no means always rewards virtue. And there is always the 'free rider', the firm which works at a minimal ethical level, and will cut corners on the assumption that its competitors, or most of them, will not. Most companies probably get along reasonably well by conforming to the letter of the law and not practising fraud or overcharging (even if they can get away with it), or paying below minimum wage rates. This raises the question of the role of codes of practice and of law in business ethics. But before discussing this we need to stress a commitment to certain basic moral convictions which need to underlie business ethics, and operate at a deeper level than those we have mentioned. This is the basis on which the new journal *Business Ethics* operates.

Philosophers are continually discussing whether indeed such a basic morality can be established and on what basis. It would take us too far to survey this now.[7] Most people assume, however, that there is one and that without it human society could hardly persist. We count on most people following it most of the time. Some, indeed, give the minimum adherence to it that they can get by with. Some give not even that (and many of them will find themselves in prison). Those who infringe it generally give lip service to it. Groucho Marx hits this off in his saying 'The secret of life is honesty and fair dealing; if you can fake that you've got it made'. The free rider again! Behind any such ethical basis there is a view of the nature and significance of the human person which it presupposes. In other words there is a faith. Vardy says his is: 'People matter'. What possible bases are there for such a faith?

A secular humanist faith will say that people matter because they are rational beings and this gives them a special place in the chain of being. (Their relation to 'nature' is a separate issue.) Or they will say that people matter because of a fellow feeling for those of the same species. Vardy himself brings in God only in the last chapter to make clear his basis. Christians hold that people matter because, in the well-known phrase, they are made in the image of God. They are also remade through the work of Christ. Humans are sinful, but they have not lost their dignity in the sight of God, nor their responsible freedom in moral matters.

Christians therefore have strong grounds for the conviction that people matter, but they do not have a blueprint for the social and political order, or for business ethics as part of it. They cannot bypass questions of justice as fairness by talk of love of neighbour. But their faith provides a strong challenge to improve the state of affairs they inherit in the light of the radical nature of God's way of ruling the world as disclosed in the life of Jesus. They need a firm theology of civil society. It will be built in Christian experience down the centuries, for the ones presupposed by the various New Testament writings are related to the context of the Christian Church at that time and cannot simply be transposed into the twentieth century. In my view there is much cogency in the Lutheran 'two realms' theology, properly understood.[8] Like other theologies it is easily corrupted.

A main Christian task, then, in business ethics as in civil society, is to fortify a common morality and to seek allies in promoting it. In a plural society it will mean seeking in what ways other religious faiths and philosophies support it, and working with adherents of them where they do. That is why those who stress *in this context* the distinctiveness of Christianity are not helpful. An example is Brian Griffiths, who was head of Mrs Thatcher's 'Think Tank' in Downing Street. He is well aware of the unsatisfactoriness of the possessive individualistic philosophy which has usually gone with capitalism (as distinct from its institutions), but thinks it is a satisfactory economic system if operated by Christians.[9] The unreality of this is evident.

Because of the powerful stimulus to greed and corruption to which market forces lead, some strong regulatory instruments are needed in addition to the

force of basic moral commitment. A conference on the resurgence of capitalism at Lancaster University in 1991 had the appropriate sub-title 'Riding the Tiger'. What, then, of the role of codes of practice and of law?

Codes of practice need to be reasonably specific. It is not sufficient to issue rotund statements about observing the spirit and not just the letter of the law, or on aiming to contribute to the well-being of the community. These are merely a public relations puff. How are conflicts of interest to be handled? For instance that of the shareholders, the managers, the employees, the customers and the neighbourhood? What about the taking of bribes where, for instance, they are routine in business, as in Saudi Arabia? (In my experience this is the one issue that really worries Christians.) What about accepting gifts from a customer? What of the whistleblower at odds with his or her firm? In the USA some ten per cent of major corporations have set up an independent ethical ombudsman as a channel for whistleblowers. But I do not know how well they have worked. Some twenty per cent have ethics committees at board level, and some have regular ethical audits on the conduct of the corporation. Such codes of practice can be a help to 'good' people in making good decisions; they may also restrain 'bad' people from assuming that everything is ethically permissible if the firm benefits financially, or that they are acceptable if other people do it. At least it may induce in them second thoughts.

Law is the most rigorous way of enforcing ethical standards. But by comparison it is inflexible and cumbersome. Nevertheless there is a necessary place for laws. Usually they are imposed after great scandal in which many people have suffered. They must be able to be enforced or law is brought into disrepute, and that means carrying general consent. What, for instance, should it do about the tobacco industry, which is compensating for a decline in business in economically developed countries by pushing its products in developing ones? Prohibit it? Tax it heavily? What would be the likelihood of evasion, as in the case of Prohibition in the USA? In general, law involves inspectors and court cases, often complex and legally expensive. The use of law involves a nice political judgement. It certainly cannot be ruled out, and there has in fact been a big increase in financial regulating in the last decade, and there is more to come. Backing is needed in the use of law at every level from self-interest upwards. Chlorofluorocarbons are a case in point. The damage they cause to the ozone layer, once discovered, was quickly appreciated, and governments in the West began the process of limiting by regulation their production. A prominent ally in the USA has been the du Pont corporation, the biggest producer of chlorofluorocarbons, because it thinks it is well ahead in the process of producing a cheap substitute.

In conclusion, how can the Church exercise the pastoral care of those continuously involved in the difficult decisions with which business ethics deals? First by helping them to realize that ambiguities and trade-offs are inherent in ethical decision-making. It is true that clear-cut issues do crop up from time to time: the right decision is clear even if costly to implement. The choice is whether to take it or fail morally. Usually, however, it is a case of balancing

factors and choosing what on the most plausible interpretation of the available evidence seems the best option. There can be no more certainty than the nature of the situation allows. Many Christians have a lurking suspicion that there is a clear 'Christian' answer if only the Church would teach it, or if they themselves were sensitive enough to find it. So they suffer from a continuous spiritual debility. But not only are there the problems of getting at the empirical data of an ethical issue, and also of assessing the data, but also of assessing risks, evaluating their likelihood and the legitimacy of taking them. We are each likely to have worked out on the basis of our experience broad moral considerations to bear in mind (principles is probably too formal a term), but in particular cases these may conflict and point in different directions, so that we have to assess priorities in the case. All this involves an art of discernment. Christian teaching can help us by criticizing false or inadequate ideologies, and Christian worship and prayer can give us a deeper vision and confidence, but neither can usually give us a clear-cut answer to these detailed questions. Church guidance had best remain at a middle level between basic theological affirmations and detailed policies. If it can do so (and complexities may be such that it is not always possible) it can suggest the general direction in which to go whilst leaving each of us as a citizen in our jobs to work out the details.[10]

Here we would be much helped by reflection with other Christians, and others whose information and perspective can be drawn upon. There is nothing to equal corporate reflection in helping us to become more articulate and discerning in relating the insights of the gospel to the world of business, and to the wider context of social and political policy in a plural society. Such groups can be of many kinds. They can consist of Christians (and possibly others) in the same kind of jobs; or in different ones; from one church tradition or ecumenical; from one congregation or from several. Clergy would be one element but not dominant. Of course such groups involve time and effort. Many who spend their days in difficult decision-making want to leave it behind when they leave work and not be troubled further. They may appreciate what are sometimes called the consolations of faith but not its challenge. We need to be helped out of such an attitude.

The need is to avoid two dangers. One is a general moral gospel radicalism, cast in personal terms which people cannot relate to their collective responsibilities in their jobs, which leaves them with a perpetual uneasy conscience, and without the means of mitigating it. The other is a bland gulf between worship and work in which strength is drawn from worship but it does not illuminate work. This is a common difficulty which draws much criticism.

We need a robust faith to live amid the ambiguities of ethical decisions. There will be failures and disappointments and we must learn from them. There will be successes, which must not make us complacent. In this situation the Church can give a strong back-up to the growing attention to business ethics, both by its own members and by the general public.

Ronald Preston

NOTES

[1] *Summa theologiae* II, II, question 66.

[2] Cf Connor, James L. (ed): *Ethical considerations in corporate takeovers* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990).

[3] *Business morality*, pp 92ff.

[4] Cf *Religion and the persistence of capitalism* (SCM Press, 1979); *Religion and the ambiguities of capitalism* (SCM Press, 1991).

[5] John Paul II stresses this in his encyclical *Laborem exercens* (1981) but it is not so clear in his two later social encyclicals *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1988) and *Centesimus annus* (1991).

[6] Cf *Morality and the market (1981): Consumer pressure for corporate accountability* (Routledge, 1990).

[7] Such a discussion has been particularly stimulated in the 1980s by Alasdair MacIntyre in *After virtue* (Duckworth, 1981) and two subsequent books; see the response of Jeffrey Stout in *Ethics after Babel* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988).

[8] Cf K. H. Hertz (ed): *Two kingdoms and one world* (Minneapolis, 1974).

[9] Cf *Morality in the market place* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1981) and *The creation of wealth* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1984).

[10] Cf Appendix 2, 'Middle axioms in Christian and social ethics' in Ronald H. Preston: *Church and society in the late twentieth century* (SCM Press, 1983). The Letter of Pope Paul VI *Octogesima adveniens* (1971, in the series from *Rerum novarum* of 1891), suggests something like this, following some passages in *Gaudium et spes*, the Pastoral Constitution of Vatican II (1965).

TRADITIONS OF SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

The Real Presence
A Quaker Perspective on Spiritual Direction

> The contribution to this discussion by the Society of Friends is the more valuable because it has been made, not by thinkers along the lines of theology and psychology, but by disciples along the lines of experience. The Society of Friends has been a 'Holy Experiment' in spiritual guidance and has supplied abundant verification of its reality, and rich material for judging of the conditions which are necessary for its exercise.[1]

THESE WORDS FROM THE ENGLISHMAN, William Charles Braithwaite, at the turn of the twentieth century in the Swarthmore Lecture at London Yearly Meeting (a British Quaker plenary gathering) goes far in setting the context for understanding the Quaker perspective on spiritual direction. In the first instance, Quakers would prefer the language of 'spiritual guidance' to the more authoritiarian language of 'direction'. This preference stems from the Quaker understanding: all persons have spiritual worth in the eyes of God. This does not ignore the fact that some are spiritually more gifted in certain areas than others and, hence, more likely to be able to provide 'guidance'.

The second observation sees the foundational aspect of Quaker spirituality and, consequently, spiritual guidance, to be primarily *experiential.* For Quakers theology and doctrine are secondary to the primary experience of God and God's work in us. This observation leads explicitly to the title of the essay, namely, Quakers understand spiritual guidance in sacramental terms. 'For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them' (Mt 18:20). This text is the *locus classicus* of the Quaker understanding of the 'real presence' and how that is manifested in spiritual guidance.

This sense of 'gathering' lies at the heart of the Quaker experience of worship as well as spiritual guidance. In this gathering the divine Spirit comes to be present – sacramentally, there is a *real* presence. Indeed, the gathering itself – the two or three – is the real presence; this is the incarnational extension of God's continuing, graceful revelation. One has a sense for this when we hear the words of seventeenth-century Quaker apologist, Robert Barclay.

> The divine strength that is communicated by meeting together . . . and by waiting in silence upon God is very evident. Sometimes a person will come in who has not been vigilant and whose mind is restless, or who comes in suddenly from the rush of worldly business and therefore is not

> gathered with the rest. As soon as he retires inwardly, the power which has already been raised in good measure by the whole meeting will suddenly lay hold upon his spirit. In a wonderful way it will help to raise up the good in him and will give birth to a sense of the same power. It will melt and warm his heart in the same way that a man who is cold feels warmth when he approaches a stove, or a flame takes hold in some small combustible material that is nearby.[2]

This is a doctrinal statement to be sure – but, more importantly for Quakers, it is an experiential knowing. In a contemporary way the novelist J. D. Salinger in *Franny and Zooey* captures this sense of real presence.

> 'But most of all, above everything else, who in the Bible besides Jesus knew – *knew* – that we're carrying the Kingdom of Heaven around with us, *inside*, where we're too goddam stupid and sentimental and unimaginative to look?'[3]

Quaker spirituality affirms that we all have this kingdom of heaven within. This is a universal human phenomenon because of God's creative act. Indeed, the ministry of Quakerism can be summed up in the well-known words of George Fox, seventeenth-century founder of the movement. In his Journal Fox admonishes those who know God that 'you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one . . .'[4]

These words from George Fox provide the final observation to be noted. The key theological assumption for Quakers offering spiritual guidance is 'there is that of God within every one'. Concretely, this provides the spiritual guide with an optimistic basis from which to operate. God has already been creative in providing every human with 'divine access'. The guide's opportunity is to be present to help the other make the 'connection' with God and, then, to live more deeply and abundantly in that connection.

In Quaker language spiritual guidance is the process of assisting another to be in touch with that of God (waiting), listening to what that divine 'voice' would say (watching), and, finally, obeying the direction God would have that person move (walking). This essay uses these three aspects to chart the process of spiritual guidance as Quakers understand and practise it – waiting, watching and walking. For each of these three aspects of the process there are four characteristics: posture, discipline, mood and result. When this process of spiritual guidance effectively leads a person, he or she will come to that purity of heart – as described by Kierkegaard – or will be 'centred', as Quakers would designate it. To be centred is to be brought off the world's ways by knowing and following God's way.

Waiting

The Quaker spiritual guide begins optimistically with the assumption that the other has 'that of God within' – often called the 'Light within' or 'the inward

Christ'. The first aspect of spiritual guidance is *waiting* for the Light. The twentieth-century Quaker genius, Thomas Kelly, opens his devotional classic, *A testament of devotion*, with these words:

> Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself.[5]

Spiritual guidance begins in waiting – waiting because most people are so busily living lives unaware of this amazing inner sanctuary. The spiritual guide helps another interrupt busyness and dizziness in order to find this inner treasure. In a paradoxical sense the first word of the spiritual guide is 'stop!'

This spiritual advice resonates with contemporary feminist knowings. In *Women at the well* Kathleen Fischer says 'the first step in spiritual direction . . . is helping a woman notice key experiences and bring them to speech. Its goal is discovery and awareness.'[6] 'Waiting' is exactly about discovery and awareness. The posture of waiting is self-evident – but important. As Quakers understand it, waiting is waiting – this is radically different from inactivity. As the spiritual guide helps the other to wait, what she or he does is assist the other to a place of discovery and awareness. Usually, this means to stop being or doing what normally characterizes us so that God can enter our picture. This posture is a person attentive for what will come. This posture is *openness*. This posture is really a form of prayer.

Quakers have a number of ways of talking about prayer in this sense of 'waiting'. However, it is also instructive to see how the Quaker perspective aligns itself with much of contemporary spirituality. For example, in *Exploring spiritual direction* Alan Jones quotes an unpublished work of Richard Norris which describes prayer as a form of concentration. 'Prayer is a situation in which a person is *con-centrated* upon, pulled together in utter attentiveness to, the "other".'[7] Waiting is this prayerful concentration. Quakers understand this as a process of 'centring', of coming to the discovery and awareness of that of God within. Braithwaite observes 'truth was perceived with the help of the retirement of soul and waiting upon the Lord'.[8] Key to this 'centring' is silence – that hush before the divinity. As waiting is not inactivity, Quakers do not employ silence for its own sake, but rather because it is instrumental – it is the 'space' humans make for God's voice.

In addition to a posture of waiting there is a discipline in waiting. The discipline is *patience*. Patience as a discipline of waiting gives the temporal dimension to the space of openness. Madame Guyon, another seventeenth-century spiritual genius, is wonderfully similar to George Fox when she prays: 'And yet – oh, Child Almighty, Uncreated Love, Silent and All-containing Word – it is really up to You to make Yourself loved, enjoyed and understood'.[9] The spiritual guide enjoins the other to be patient so that this Word will be spoken and come to be loved, understood and enjoyed.

Waiting also has its particular mood. The mood is *expectancy*. If waiting were inactivity, there would be no expectancy. But Quaker spiritual guidance proceeds with the assumption that God will speak, that we will come to know first-hand the divinity and the divine will. Our waiting is the expectancy for this continual birthing process. Spiritual guidance cultivates this expectancy – what Kelly calls

> the secret of a deeper devotion, a more subterranean sanctuary of the soul, where the Light Within never fades, but burns, a perpetual Flame, where the wells of living water of divine revelation rise up continuously, day by day and hour by hour, steady and transfiguring.[10]

Finally, expectancy brings its birthing, its result. The result of waiting is that *it happens*. 'It' means the Light within dawns in our discovery and becomes present in our awareness. Into our openness comes that divine Voice. Our spiritual eye is given morning light to see. Our spiritual ear is given waves to connect with this divine Sound. It happens. The waiting is finished. With light to see, spiritual guidance now moves the other to the second phase: watching.

Watching

Watching is a further step to engage the God who is giving sight and sound, who is letting us touch, feel and know the divine presence. Once more, Robert Barclay gives the Quaker words to this focused attention – attention beyond waiting. Although Barclay's words are descriptive of worship, they are also applicable to spiritual guidance.

> From this principle of being silent and not doing God's work until actuated by God's light and grace in the heart, the manner of sitting together and waiting upon the Lord together came about naturally . . . each one made it his work to retire inwardly to the measure of grace in himself, not only being silent in words but even abstaining from all of his own thoughts, mental images, and desires. Thus watching in holy dependence upon the Lord . . . it is his power and virtue that they thereby come to enjoy.[11]

If waiting enables us to discover that my life as 'story' proceeds more meaningfully with God, then watching is the process of coming to learn my story with God in it.

Watching assumes a different posture from waiting. The posture of watching is *attentiveness*. The spiritual guide helps the other 'pay attention'. In contemporary expression Alan Jones says 'the friend of my soul keeps the other constantly in focus. Indeed, he or she is the sign of the otherness which I need if I am to be released from the cell of my own sweating self.'[12] This posture of attentiveness enables me to keep focused on God, literally, to be 'in tension' with that divine presence. This is the spiritual language of connection. Connection suggests the requisite discipline of watching.

This discipline of watching is *courage.* It takes courage to 'hang in there'. Learning how our story is connected with God's desire for us takes courage. Spiritual guidance helps us know that we are not God – and helps us wait for and, then, watch who God turns out to be. Idolatry does not take courage; discipleship does. It is nothing less than a call to the simplified life, to spiritual maturity. Kelly eloquently says watching for God is

> the beginning of spiritual maturity, which comes after the awkward age of religious busyness for the Kingdom of God – yet how many are caught, and arrested in development, with this adolescent development of the soul's growth. The maker of this simplified life is radiant joy. It lives in the Fellowship of the Transfigured Face.[13]

These words for the stage of watching are words of hope – words demanding courage that we can grow into the radiant joy. But, this clearly marks a change in moods.

At the watching stage the mood shifts from expectancy to *excitement.* Because it is happening, we are excited. There is a vibrancy and vitality because the movement is discernible, the concentrated prayer is yielding us its concrete results. The fresh winds of the divine Spirit are blowing and we know it. In my own work on Quaker spirituality I affirmed:

> . . . the Spirit moves freshly within and one can feel it, know it and obey it. With this image comes a sense of energy and dynamism. In fact, spiritual stagnation or stasis is not possible. The call of God is a call to be pilgrim, to be on a journey, to move. The Spirit and the Spirit's guide offers a sense of direction, but one must move.[14]

The mood of excitement is present because of the movement of God's Spirit within. And the excitement is already pointing to the result.

The result of watching is that we learn that our story in God's presence is really a call – a call to move, to become a *pilgrim* on the journey with the divine presence. This journey is described by the seventeenth-century Quaker mystic, Isaac Pennington, with these tender words:

> Now to the soul that hath felt breathings towards the Lord . . . and in whom there are yet any true breathings left after his living presence . . . I have this to say: Where art thou? Art thou in thy soul's rest? Dost thou feel the virtue and power of the gospel? . . . And dost thou feel the life and power flowing in upon thee from the free fountain? . . . The gospel-state is a state of substance, a state of enjoying life, a state of feeling the presence and power of the Lord in his pure Holy Spirit . . . It begins in a sweet powerful touch of life, and there is a growth in the life.[15]

The spiritual guide, then, is one who commences the journey with us, joins us as one of the pilgrim people walking and living in the gospel-state. Watching for

the Light brings God into our story and this, in turn, brings us into the gospel-state. And perceptibly, the watching puts one in movement and this commences the third phase of spiritual guidance: walking.

Walking

Earlier, reference was made to the classic passage in Fox's journal which Quakers traditionally use to understand ministry and spiritual guidance.

> And this is the word of the Lord God to you all, and a charge to you all in the presence of the living God, be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them. Then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one; whereby in them ye may be a blessing . . . Then to you the Lord God will be a sweet savour and a blessing.[16]

These words articulate the dynamism of the third phase of spiritual guidance, namely, walking in the Light. Indeed, Fox would have everyone walking cheerfully – able to share the story they have discovered and learned. This means through spiritual guidance the other now is able to 'live' his or her story. As Nemeck and Coombs put it, 'the lived experience is an irrefutable criterion. Ultimately, the authenticity of any direction is proven by living it out.'[17]

The posture of walking is self-evident. Through spiritual guidance one enables the other to arise and move – to walk on into her or his life accompanied by God. Indeed, the posture is closely linked to the discipline of walking. The discipline is now one of *urgency*. Whereas spiritual guidance commences with a sense of expectation, walking always leads to a sense of urgency. As one is guided by God, there arises an urgency to get on with God.

This urgency is sustained by continuing in prayer – staying 'in touch' with the voice who guides. In a contemporary way Alan Jones elaborates:

> Prayer is an adventurous descent into that mind (of Christ) where, by the power of the Holy Spirit, our self-consciousness is transfigured into Christ-consciousness. It is inevitably a way of sacrifice and self-surrender . . . It is a creative way of poverty, chastity, and obedience – poverty because it means being truly poor before God; chastity, because it involves a single-minded devotion to him; obedience because our single-minded attention will be manifested in specific acts of love.[18]

Quakers would feel comfortable with the sentiments of these words. There is a favourite phrase Quakers employ to describe what Jones has called 'prayer as continuation' and that is: 'mind the Light'.

To mind the Light brings the one guided into a place of poverty, chastity and obedience. The guide helps the other simplify her or his life (poverty). Thomas Kelly suggests simplifying life is an inner problem not an external problem.

> Life is meant to be lived from a Center, a divine Center . . . There is a divine Abyss within us all, a holy Infinite Center, a Heart, a Life who speaks in us . . . But too many of us have heeded the Voice only at times. Only at times have we submitted to His holy guidance. We have not counted this Holy Thing within us to be the most precious thing in the world.[19]

The Quaker spiritual guide assists the other to be centred and to live 'centred' – and that will be a simple life.

At the same time a centred life will be a 'pure life' (chastity). The pure life comes from minding the Light. And this pure life leads naturally and easily to an obedient life. The obedient life is the one being lived attentively to the Spirit and 'walking in the newness of life', as Paul puts it. The Peace Pilgrim says it in a Quaker way.

> For light I go directly to the Source of light, not to any of the reflections. Also I make it possible for more light to come to me by living up to the highest light I have. *You cannot mistake light coming from the Source, for it comes with complete understanding so that you can explain it and discuss it.*[20]

There is no doubt from the words of Peace Pilgrim that the dominant mood from the centred life is *joy*. Walking in the Light leads to enjoyment.

Finally, in a mood of joy the one being guided gets results – *homecoming*. The spiritual guide is really one who assists another on their journey home – home to God, the Source of the voice who calls us and walks with us. The Quaker perspective on spiritual direction is always an experience of 're-union'. The guide is someone who experientially knows something about the journey and is herself or himself willing to assist another to discover and develop their own capacity to know and love the God who is calling them home.

Quakers know that when guidance no longer is offered nor practised, the energy and vigour of spirituality ebbs. In the words of Braithwaite, too often 'we prefer the security of stagnation to the dangers and glory of vigorous life'.[21] Spiritual guidance is a way out – away from the stagnations of life. And it is a way in – into the abundance of life promised by God. As Quakers understand it, spiritual guidance is a sacramental undertaking – when two or more people gather in the expectation that the living Christ will be in their midst – a real presence.

Alan Kolp

NOTES

[1] William C. Braithwaite: *Spiritual guidance in Quaker experience* (London: Headley Brothers, 1990), p 13.
[2] Dean Freiday (ed): *Barclay's apology, in modern English* (Elberton NJ: Dean Freiday, 1967), pp 252–253.
[3] J. D. Salinger, *Fanny and Zooey* (New York: Bantam Books, 1962), p 171.
[4] John L. Nickalls (ed): *The journal of George Fox* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p 263. Hereafter cited as Fox.
[5] Thomas R. Kelly, *A testament of devotion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1941), p 29.
[6] Kathleen Fischer, *Women at the well: feminist perspectives on spiritual direction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), p 9.
[7] Alan Jones, *Exploring spiritual direction: an essay on Christian friendship* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1982), p 106.
[8] Braithwaite, p 44.
[9] Jeanne Guyon, *Experiencing the depths of Jesus Christ* (Auburn ME: Seed Sowers Christian Books, 1975), pp xii–xiii.
[10] Kelly, p 31.
[11] Barclay, p 250.
[12] Jones, p 107.
[13] Kelly, p 73.
[14] Alan Kolp, *Fresh winds of the Spirit* (Richmond IN: Friends United Press, 1991), p 129.
[15] Isaac Pennington, 'Some directions to the panting soul', *The selected works of Isaac Pennington*, fourth edition, vol 2 (Sherwoods NY: David Heston, 1962), pp 219–220.
[16] Fox, p 263.
[17] Francis Kelly Nemeck and Maria Theresa Coombs, *The way of spiritual direction* (Wilmington DE: Michael Glazier, 1985), p 116.
[18] Jones, p 68.
[19] Kelly, p 116.
[20] Compiled by friends, *Peace pilgrim: her life and work in her own words* (Santa Fe NM: Ocean Tree Book, 1983), p 127.
[21] Braithwaite, p 74.

RECENT BOOKS

THEOLOGY. In the acknowledgements placed at the front of *The Christlike God*, the author, Bishop John V. Taylor, describes himself as 'little more than an anthologist'. The self-deprecating tone of that remark is deceptive, because Taylor's musings on God draw on a rich mixture of literary, biblical, theological and experiential sources. Moreover, one cannot read these pages without being struck by the author's wisdom and humanity. He would be an excellent spiritual director. But Taylor's self-description does send a warning to readers in search of theoretical consistency. However much we stress the mysteriousness of God, there has to be a difference between Christian faith and pious muddle. Drawing the kinds of distinction required is not Taylor's forte.

Angela Tilby's *Science and the soul*, based on her research for a TV series which she produced, is a book with similar strengths and weaknesses. It presents the bewildering variety of ways in which modern developments in fundamental physics are suggesting renewals in the theology of creation. Tilby's writing is clear, fresh and full of common sense, but again fails to deal with the speculative issues in a systematic way (and perhaps the time is not yet ripe). The topic cries out for someone to sort out the different but related contributions of physics, metaphysics and revelation to a renewed Christian theology of creation – a theology influenced both by modern science and by the subversive Christian understanding of God implicit in the ideas of Trinity and incarnation. When Tilby talks of 'the traditional Christian doctrine of creation' (p 230), what she is accurately reporting is in fact anything but Christian.

Peter Vardy's *The puzzle of evil*, like his previous books on what gets called the philosophy of religion (no Christian should use the word 'religion' lightly), is an energetic, sometimes passionate and always pedagogically excellent piece of work. The first part covers the approaches to the problem of evil standard in modern analytic philosophy (with the welcome addition of a generous, if in the end unsatisfactory, chapter on Aquinas). Here the thrust of the argument is sceptical. The second half attempts to reconstruct a credible, still recognizably Christian, alternative to what Vardy reads as the mainstream position. The two halves thus pull against each other, and often seem mutually contradictory. Vardy fails to distinguish two questions: whether the existence of evil disproves the existence of a creator who is the source of all power and goodness (not simply all-good and all-powerful); and the logically subsequent question of whether and on what basis human beings, caught up in remorseless evil, might still surrender themselves to that God in love and trust. The standard philosophical theodicies are answers to the first question, but are clearly inadequate if offered as the whole answer to the second question; equally, the defence of Christian trust which Vardy offers (invoking such considerations as the need for God's action in the world to be hidden if free love on the part of the creature is to be possible) depends on some version of the philosophical moves he has previously rejected regarding the existence of God. After all, if the

existence of evil is *incompatible* with even the existence of God, then talk of trusting God or loving God is simply nonsense. The reader has much to beware of, therefore; but this book remains well worth reading, and teachers will find it a godsend.

Francis A. Sullivan's *Salvation outside the Church?* is a clear, authoritative history of how Roman Catholic theologians have struggled to reconcile the doctrines of God's universal salvific will and the indispensable role of the Church in salvation. It is a measure of the book's achievement that Vatican II's positive approach to this question comes across as the fulfilment of tradition, rather than as a trendy modern innovation. Particularly valuable are Sullivan's presentations of inaccessible medieval and Renaissance theologians such as Albert Pigge (1490–1542 – the first theologian to speculate that Moslems' rejection of Christianity might not be culpable) and Juan de Lugo.

Finally, a welcome for the first of five volumes containing a reliable and critically edited English translation of Irenaeus' *Against the heresies*, perhaps the earliest work of Christian systematic theology. The project appears in the well established series, *Ancient Christian writers*. The original editor and translator of book 1 was Fr Dominic Unger, who died in 1982, and further work has been done by John J. Dillon, one of the series' general editors. The edition promises to become an invaluable reference resource.

Philip Endean SJ

IGNATIAN STUDIES. W. W. Meissner's *Ignatius of Loyola: The psychology of a saint* consists of a conventional Ignatian biography supplemented with psychoanalytic or psychological commentary and reflection. The psychological material is jargon-ridden and diffusely structured, but the content is groundbreaking, stimulating and largely convincing. Meissner sees Ignatius as one who lost both parents early, and who coped by adopting a macho self-ideal readily to hand in his surrounding culture. The cannonball at Pamplona thus shattered not only his leg but also his self-image, forcing a radical restructuring of his psyche. This process Meissner interprets in Freudian terms, arguing cogently that the tensions it unleashed continued throughout Ignatius' life. For example, he traces back Ignatius' ambivalence regarding authority issues in later life to a conflict between maternal and paternal identifications originating in early childhood, a conflict which his injury reopened. Meissner brings out underlying continuities between the pre-conversion and post-conversion Ignatius, and thus revives, albeit in a new form, the image of Ignatius as a soldier-saint. He also speculates that Ignatius' propensity to apparitions and visions may be related to what modern psychiatry has identified as an epileptic syndrome, symptoms of which can include aggressive behaviour, diminished sexuality and compulsive writing (particularly on religious topics).

In his preface, Meissner writes of the complex interplay between human motivation and needs on the one hand, and the concept of grace on the other. He tells us how his own life's path has been an effort to integrate the influences

of Ignatius and Freud. Nevertheless, this book juxtaposes, rather than integrates, the theological, the historical and the psychoanalytic. Sometimes Meissner writes as if a theological and a psychological approach should be contrasted, but in fact his psychological insights are focusing important questions and setting agenda for a future Ignatian theology. Again, whereas Meissner's historical writing is heavily dependent on standard secondary works such as those of Dalmases or Dudon, the questions he raises ought to stimulate some historian to become psychoanalytically literate and then approach the primary sources to bring out patterns of salience which standard hagiography ignores. Nevertheless, Meissner's book is an important contribution to Ignatian studies, and we can only hope that it becomes seminal. It does not quite achieve what it sets out to achieve, but it lays down an important marker.

Praying with Ignatius of Loyola is one of a series of volumes on medieval and modern figures in the Roman Catholic tradition. After a brief introduction to Ignatius' life and spirituality, Jacqueline Syrup Bergan and Marie Schwan offer a series of fifteen meditations on Ignatian themes such as obedience, union with Christ and friendship. This is neither an original work, nor an ambitious one, but it seems a perfectly competent example of its kind.

The practice of love is a collection of six essays written in India to celebrate the Ignatian jubilees in 1990–1991. Three are by Jesuits, three by women from outside the Christian tradition who work as academics and social activists under Jesuit auspices. For a First-World reader, the connections between the contributions are far from clear, and it seems likely that this book will communicate, if at all, only to those familiar with Indian Jesuit ministries.

Jerome Nadal (1507–1580) was one of the most influential Jesuits in the exuberant first decades of the life of the Society of Jesus. He was the man whom Ignatius entrusted with the task of explaining the new Constitutions and spirit to the nascent Jesuit communities throughout much of Europe. But his brief also involved far more. For thirty years his life was a constant round of travel: visiting communities, sorting out administrative and personal problems, fund-raising, settling disputes, setting up new Colleges, reorganizing established ones and creating structures by which the Society of Jesus could function and expand. Yet, despite Nadal's importance, *Jerome Nadal S.J. 1507–1580: tracking the first generation of Jesuits* is the first substantial study in English of him and his place in early Jesuit history. William Bangert, Jesuit historian, left an almost completed manuscript of this book when he died and this has been edited and finished by Thomas M. McCoog, another Jesuit historian and friend of Bangert. Both these writers tell a story well, especially when, as so often among the early Jesuits, it involves enthusiasm, vision, ascetical extremism, bold apostolic action, open conflict, intrigue and immense creativity, all against a background of war in Europe and a Church in turmoil. This biography also succeeds in depicting the often chaotic character of the rapid growth of the Society of Jesus; in bringing out the tensions, confusions and clashes among the first Jesuits which an earlier hagiographical tradition had ignored; and in conveying an impression of the personality, teaching, energy and influence of

Jerome Nadal as he trekked across Europe. Historical writing about the first generation of Jesuits is at present undergoing a transformation, as the methods and criteria of contemporary critical histiography come more fully into use. This biography represents a stage in that process: it does not use unpublished archival material; at times it shows traces of the old hagiographical style; and its analysis of Nadal's spirituality and theology lacks a critical edge and uses the language and concepts of the pre-1770s. Nonetheless it is an important, very readable book which brings a neglected, shadowy figure into the foreground for the first time.

It is well known that an important element in the originality and ardour of the first Jesuits was the experience of making Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises. At the present time more people than ever before are involved in making or giving the Exercises. This is one of the factors which prompted Joseph A. Tetlow SJ to undertake a new translation and descriptive commentary in *Ignatius Loyola: Spiritual Exercises*. Tetlow's translation is lucid and happily breaks away from outmoded though hallowed phrasing for the sake of clarity and modernity. His informative introduction offers a brief sketch of Ignatius' life, a short history of the origin of the Exercises in Ignatius' experience and of their use in his ministry, a description of the kind of book *The Spiritual Exercises* is, and an account of different contemporary ways of making the Exercises. The commentary, interleaved between sections of the text, addresses those who make the Exercises. With a view to helping them to understand both the process and its presuppositions, it combines helpful historical information with a description of the present-day experience of making the Exercises. The book as a whole is a useful tool to accompany the Exercises, but the editor's decision to leave out three sets of Ignatius' 'Rules', on the grounds that 'they are no longer used', leaves it rather incomplete.

In John English's work on discernment, there has been a shift of focus over the years, from the individual to the communal. In the introduction to his new book, *Spiritual intimacy and community: an Ignatian view of the small faith community*, he emphasizes that, contrary to popular belief, the corporate dimension is central to Ignatian spirituality. His book represents the fruits of many years' experience of creating and developing Christian community in Canada under the shaping impetus of the Spiritual Exercises and it is intended as a handbook for others who undertake similar projects. The book begins with reflections on the contemporary desire for Christian community, it describes the process of establishing community and traces the means and the stages by which Ignatian community develops. In English's view, the main instrument of growth is communal discernment, and the book has valuable descriptions of communal consolation and desolation, of the similarities and differences between individual and communal discernment and of the changes that take place in the group's experience at different stages of growth. In a particularly illuminating section on the group experiences of desolation and of deceptive and authentic consolation, English highlights the growth of freedom in a community as a touchstone of decision-making and the signs of confirmation in a community's

experience. Moreover, each chapter is followed by practical exercises which offer a framework for creating and developing Christian community. This is a very helpful book and it comes at a most opportune moment in the context of widespread interest in Ignatian spirituality.

Philip Endean SJ, David Lonsdale SJ

REVISIONING THE CHRISTIAN PAST. *Spirituality and history*, by Philip Sheldrake, is a response to a widely felt need to provide something more than the traditional histories of spirituality, which tend to give *informational* background to the teachings of the major traditions, in an uncritical narrative form. Sheldrake seeks to identify the newer perspectives in historical writing and interpretation so that they can be integrated into a more contemporary history of spirituality. He argues that 'what happens' in history takes place within the value structures of a given society or culture, and that what is 'remembered' is highly selective and tends to favour the powerful and successful, rather than the marginalized or the failure. Spirituality is not exempt from the ambiguities of power, which can promote or obstruct change and creative experiment. What has been selected for attention has often been dominated by the perceptions and experiences of religious and social élites. So, for example, the experiences of the Béguines in late medieval northern Europe were down-played because they were a group of women who did not fit neatly into accepted patterns of either religious life or 'controlled' womanhood. Because of this they were often perceived as dangerous radicals. Contemporary spirituality should pay attention to 'the underside of history', to the voices of those whom the Christian tradition has neglected or silenced in the name of orthodoxy and uniformity. On the other hand the well-loved 'classics' must be placed within their historical and social context, read critically, and opened to ecumenical understanding and interpretation. For they belong to the wider Christian tradition, rather than to any denominational preserve. This book provides a demanding but stimulating approach to fundamental questions in contemporary spirituality.

The stripping of the altars by Eamon Duffy is a massive, scholarly confirmation of a thesis which has been proposed by a growing number of revisionist historians for some years: that the English people did not want the Reformation, resisted it, and were slow to come to terms with it when it was imposed 'from above' by Henry VIII and his successors. A more 'traditional' view of late medieval Christianity saw it as decadent, moribund and 'ripe for reform', since it no longer met the pastoral needs of the laity. Catholic and Protestant historians alike have seen the period as religiously in decline. But for some time now scholars working with primary sources have questioned the excessively dark picture of clerical incompetence, lay passivity, fiscal opportunism and lack of pastoral care. Duffy's book recreates the people's experience of late medieval Catholic devotion, the richness and vitality of its social and religious rituals, which were based usually on a sound rather than an impoverished theology. This strong and vigorous tradition was destroyed between 1530 and 1580, an

iconoclastic 'stripping of the altars' which was neither initiated nor desired by the majority of English Catholics. The dismantling of English parochial Catholicism was brutal, intolerant and discreditable. This is a remarkable and significant work of historical 'revision', which cannot be dismissed as a product of nostalgic longing for a Catholic past. And yet it does not adequately address the key question: why then did the Reformation happen, and why did it appeal to so many brought up in that late medieval world?

The answer is evident from a reading of another massive and scholarly work by Christopher Hill: *The English Bible and the seventeenth-century revolution.* The Reformation period and its aftermath are fascinating precisely because the 'closed' late medieval world could neither answer, nor adapt to, the challenges posed by the religious, historical and scientific questionings of 'Early Modernity'. The Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*, and the availability of the vernacular Bible, provided an alternative source of religious authority to that of the teaching tradition of the Church, visibly embodied in the papacy. Christopher Hill describes the Bible and its role between the Reformation and the Civil War. He argues that 'there are few ideas in whose support a biblical text cannot be found'. Royalists and Parliamentarians, conservatives and radicals, all found divine confirmation of the rightness of their cause in the English Bible. This was the word of God which spoke directly to the contemporary condition, and could provide a solution to all its problems, including the need for radical change. In an interesting appendix, Hill compares the seventeenth-century use of the Bible in political controversy, with its use by Liberation theologians today, who also speak of a 'world turned upside down, from the bottom, not from the top' (Gutierrez).

During the same period, in what was to become known as the New World, its indigenous civilizations were also unable to withstand the onset of modernity in the form of the *conquistadores*. The quincentenary of 1492 produced many studies of the history and development of Latin America. One of the most helpful is that edited by Enrique Dussel, *The Church in Latin America 1492–1992.* This work draws on the expertise of many of the contributors to an eleven-volume General History on the same topic, in process of publication in Spanish. This is an opportunity for the English-speaking reader to sample a little of this project 'from the underside of history' and from the viewpoint of the conquered peoples. Enrique Dussel is convinced that Liberation theology will only 'come of age' when it can articulate its own history and indigenous inheritance. This book attempts the task in a series of specialist essays which provide a chronological survey on a continent-wide scale (Part One), a regional survey (Part Two) and some selected topics (Part Three). This is contextual history and historical theology at its best, and is an excellent preparation for an understanding of the contemporary Latin American religious scene. For example the emergence of Base Christian Communities in Brazil should not be seen as an innovation but as a creative return to a lay tradition of popular Catholicism which preceeded the romanization of the Brazilian Church in the nineteenth century. The volume concludes with an impressive account of sources and bibliography.

There is enormous interest, both scholarly and popular, in the Shakers but the truth about them remains wrapped in a mist of myth and misconception. They were – and they remain, for they are not extinct – a religious group but they are honoured as much for their furniture as for their faith. It understandably exasperates the Shaker when he is admired less for what he stands for than for what he sits on. Where the religion of the Shakers has been acknowledged it has been either to highlight their eccentricities, such as insistence on perpetual celibacy, or to promote a romanticized image of their communal life (for which the Shaker chair becomes a potent and, at auction, extremely expensive icon). Neither of these approaches, the selective nor the sentimental, begins to do justice to the complexity of the Shakers' faith and culture or to the significance and importance of what they actually have believed. There has long been needed a comprehensive account of the United Society of Believers, as the Shakers should properly be called, a study which would demythologize without debunking. This need has now been fully met by Stephen Stein's *The Shaker experience in America.* It would be difficult to praise this book too highly. The source material available to the author, apart from that relating to the earliest and, regrettably, to the most recent chapters of Shaker history, is vast but his control of it does not falter. He succeeds not only in his graphic presentation of individuals, not least of Mother Ann the foundress of the Shaker movement and for generations of Shakers a second appearance of Christ, but also in his discernment and analysis of the pattern of the long sweep of the Shaker story as a whole. As befits its subject the volume, like a Shaker bowl, is itself a joy to handle.

Anne Murphy SHCJ, John Pridmore

THOMAS MERTON. Thomas Merton said that the grace of a Shaker chair is due to the fact that it was made by someone who believed that an angel might sit on it. This is well said but so is everything which Merton uttered. And here is the difficulty for all who write about Merton. They stumble in the footsteps of one who danced. Thus of the four Merton books recently received by this journal the most rewarding is that which allows Merton himself to speak with least interruption. *Thomas Merton: Spiritual master* is boldly subtitled *The essential writings.* The editor, Lawrence Cunningham, has brought together texts from every stage of Merton's monastic life and his principle of selection has been to reproduce representative passages which deal directly with the spiritual life and its implications. This anthology assembles a shorter number of longer pieces rather than a multitude of morsels and this is to the good for, notwithstanding his comment about the Shaker chair, the wisdom of Merton was not in his one-liners. In his perceptive introduction Professor Cunningham makes the important point that paradoxically Merton, whose writings were an unabating torrent, was reticent about his own spiritual experience. The epiphanies he does share are all the more precious. Merton's celebrated 'Fire Watch' is included here as is his account of the time out of time when before the great figures of the Buddha

at Polonnaruwa all at last became clear. To which point all the many paths lead.

The nearest we have to a definitive biography of Merton is Michael Mott's monumental *The seven mountains of Thomas Merton.* In *Silent lamp: The Thomas Merton story* William Shannon does not attempt to rival Michael Mott's achievement but, working with a broader brush, he provides what is nevertheless a lifelike portrait. Shannon's intention is to offer a 'reflective biography', a map of Merton's inner journey which was so much more important than the sequence of the external events of his life. The author concentrates on what he regards as the significant moments of Merton's life, those episodes or experiences which were spiritually formative, which shaped Merton's self-understanding as a Christian on his way home to God. This emphasis leads Shannon to an unusual arrangement of his material. The chapters are interspersed by chronologies which list briefly the events of the Merton story and then, even more briefly, note some of the events in world history of the period. We are thus at least reminded that during Merton's early years in the monastery there was a war going on. Shannon is anxious that we keep a sense of proportion about what happened to Merton at Polonnaruwa. Perhaps the *Asian journal* is telling us that a sense of proportion is exactly what Merton discovered there.

Merton's words, 'So I will disappear from view', are not his last but his penultimate words. He added the suggestion that everybody should have a Coke. So his last recorded utterance is not only an allusion to the exodus he must accomplish (if we wish Merton to mean what we want him to mean) but also an acknowledgement if not an affirmation of contemporary American culture. At the same time it is a remark in Merton's own voice whose cadences no commentator, however sensitive, has been able to emulate. Thomas King's *Merton: mystic at the centre of America* recognizes Merton's unique capacity to speak to his fellow-Americans in their own idiom and to touch the American heart as no other spiritual writer has done. All writers on Merton, not least Merton himself, draw attention to the contradictions of his life – the hermit who it seems invites the world to beat a path to his door, the lover of silence drunk on words, and so on. Less obvious but more important for an understanding of Merton are the continuities which give life a unity and it is to these that King turns our attention. He identifies four issues that consistently concern Merton however much his treatment of them changes: Self, Contemplation, Freedom and Other People. King considers themes at length, punctuating his discussion with abundant, but mostly very brief, quotations from Merton's writings. Merton, whose life's journey was 'in the belly of a paradox', resists systematizing but the impossible must sometimes be endeavoured and this short but concentrated study is a valuable introduction to Merton's thought.

Of this most recent wave of books about, or inspired by, Thomas Merton the one that doubtless would most have pleased Merton himself is Esther de Waal's *A Seven Day Journey with Thomas Merton.* The author invites us to make Merton our companion and guide on the path of prayer. Merton would have much

preferred we pray with him than that we organize international conferences or write doctoral dissertations about him, activities which Merton would have regarded, as he did the role of the sub-deacon at Mass, as 'pretty small potatoes'. Prayer is more important than anything else we do but in busy lives it is often the first activity to be squeezed out. Esther de Waal recognizes the pressure on our days and that the traditional retreat of an extended period away from it all is an impossibility for many of us. Nevertheless it is possible to withdraw and recollect without stopping the world and getting off. Esther de Waal sets out the pattern of a personal retreat in which I am invited to set aside a period of, say, an hour or so every morning for a week – that discipline at least I must undertake – during which, guided by Merton, I open myself to God. The book is illuminated by photographs taken by Merton himself, many of which we have not seen before. These are not decorative but functional. They teach us to be aware. We see the shape of a stone only by practising attentiveness, a disposition that is an indispensable condition of prayer. Few books about Merton, whatever their other excellences, are as useful as this one.

John Pridmore

MYSTICS AND MYSTICISM. The succession of books on Julian of Norwich being published throughout the English-speaking world is in danger of turning the great fourteenth-century woman mystic into an industry. The sad thing is that such books do not always lead the modern reader to Julian's own text in any effective way. Sheila Upjohn has already published two sets of extracts from the Long Text of Julian's *Revelations* in modern English. These have proved very popular. Thankfully, again as a service to the non-specialist reader seeking spiritual nourishment, Ms Upjohn has now chosen to translate an abridgement of the whole text rather than a further selection of brief extracts. *All shall be well* is arranged for daily reading – one section to a page. As the editor readily admits, the format necessitated some cuts. However, except in the case of a few chapters these are not extensive. *Sin shall be a glory*, by John Michael Mountney, uses Ms Upjohn's new translation as the basis for his presentation of a more healthy understanding of sin and of God's unconditional love. The primary focus is pastoral, rather than a study of the text as such, as is indicated by the author's choice of a psychotherapist as the contributor of the Foreword. Having said that, the quotations from Julian are many and lengthy. The author's intervening comments are brief and practical and, insofar as they are expositions of Julian's teachings, are essentially for people who are unfamiliar with the text. By contrast, Ritamary Bradley is an internationally respected academic authority on Julian's mysticism and on the complexities of the text. However, her recent *Julian's way* is, as the subtitle suggests, a 'practical commentary' rather than a narrowly technical one. Bradley presupposes *some* familiarity with the text and the book is essentially a commentary on it – although its aim is to expand our understanding of Julian's *wisdom* rather than of textual technicalities as such. It is, therefore, a relatively accessible book – arranged thematically – and should

prove suitable for students seeking a single-volume, reliable introduction to Julian's theology as well as for those using Julian as a companion on their own spiritual journeys.

I am afraid that I am one of those people who is very cautious about the overemployment of the notions of 'addiction' and 'co-dependence' in contemporary and spiritual literature. As a subtitle, 'Christian mysticism and the addictive society' does not encourage me – although something has presumably persuaded publishers that it will sell books. However, Jeffrey Imbach's main title, *The recovery of love*, is more promising and his treatment of desire, passion and intimacy in the context of spiritual growth has a great deal of insight and good sense in it behind the tendency to aphorism and one-sentence paragraphs. Imbach's relationship with the mystics he chooses, Julian, John Ruusbroec, Eckhart and, interestingly, Dante, is also, thankfully, non-abusive.

S. S. Hussey was Professor of English Language and Literature at the University of Lancaster for many years and is also a noted scholar of the English mystics and of medieval religious literature in general. *Langland, the mystics and the medieval English religious tradition* is a *festschrift* in honour of his retirement and includes, from the point of view of students of spirituality, a number of important essays on, for example, Julian, Hilton, Margery Kempe and the Ancrene Wisse. There are also five essays on Langland's *Piers Plowman* which further underline Langland's serious theological purpose. It is difficult to categorize the riches of such a technical collection in a short note. However it is worth noting the presence among the contributors of such well-known authorities on medieval English spirituality as Ritamary Bradley, J. P. H. Clark (editor of the recent Paulist Press volume of Walter Hilton), Marion Glasscoe and Edmund Colledge. Among the topics likely to be of widest interest are 'patience' and 'the goodness of God' in Julian, the Trinitarian theology of Hilton and the meditative and liturgical allusions in the English mystics, particularly Richard Rolle and Julian. The volume as a whole will be required reading for any serious student of English medieval spiritual literature but is not for a general library.

Philip Sheldrake SJ

WOMEN'S VOICES. The books in this section come from a wide range of perspectives. The first two are collections of essays by a number of women contributors. *Refusing holy orders: women and fundamentalism in Britain* is dedicated to the organization 'Women Against Fundamentalism' and is edited by two of that organization's founders, Gita Sahgal and Nira Yuval-Davis. Contributors reflect on 'fundamentalist' (they do not agree on a definition of fundamentalism) movements within Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism in Britain. They look at the effects of these movements on various aspects of women's lives – issues include Muslim education for girls, abortion, domestic violence, the relation of fundamentalism to the New Right and Moral Majority. The questions raised are complex and will challenge much of our thinking and assumptions about multiculturalism and inter-faith dialogue.

The voice of the turtledove: new Catholic women in Europe, edited by Anne Brotherton, is a rather different book. The contributors write from the perspective of eight different European countries but focus in each case on women in, or in relation to, the Roman Catholic Church. As one might expect, the book tends to reflect the experience of women dissatisfied with or critical of a male-dominated institution. However, the general tone is far from negative and the book is a useful documentation of the herstories of various Catholic (and other) women's networks in Europe. My one major disappointment was that the book did not seem to grapple with issues of *European* identity – but perhaps that is for another collection.

The ministry of women in the Church is a collection, newly translated, of essays by the Eastern Orthodox theologian Elisabeth Behr-Sigel. The author began life as a Lutheran and after a theological degree was for a short time in charge of a small Protestant church between the Vosges and the Alsatian plain. Further studies led her to the Orthodox Church where she has played a significant part in ecumenical dialogue, including participation in the WCC's Community of Women and Men in the Church project which culminated in the Sheffield Consultation of 1981. The paper she presented at the gathering is reproduced here. This collection of essays covers a broad range of issues relating to women and Christianity including an interesting chapter on the question of women and priesthood.

Aotearoa/New Zealand seems a long way off, and perhaps not a lot of notice is taken by the outside world of what goes on there. But it has the advantage of a small population (about three million) which has in recent years, one way or another, had to gather itself together and reflect on its identity as never before in its history. It is not surprising that the churches there have in some ways discovered their own voices: they do not speak of things never before heard of, but they speak like people meeting in a house rather than a stadium. *Made in God's image*, 'a project researching sexism in the Catholic Church in Aotearoa (New Zealand)', is well worth reading; perhaps less inspired is the second volume, the theological reflection of the NZ Catholic Bishops' Conference on the Report. There is a sense of 'bringing into line' which speaks of fear rather than honest appraisal, let alone encouragement. But the subject matter is enormously important and it is hard to contain these unmanageable hopes and fears.

Changing women, changing church, edited by Marie Louise Uhr, is a collection of essays and short articles published as a tribute to Patricia Brennan, Foundation President of the Australian Movement for the Ordination of Women. The contributors, women and men, are mostly from Australia but include Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and John Selby Spong. Some of the essays are fairly academic; others are more personal reflections. The breadth of topics covered – names for God, the spirituality of the desert, sexual stereotyping in the Church, the portrayal of women in the lectionary, priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, homosexuality and the gospel, to name only some – indicates that the movement to ordain women to the priesthood has far wider concerns and

implications than those of a 'single-issue' campaign. Nor is it an exclusively Anglican movement: several of the contributions in this collection are by Roman Catholics.

'. . . the presence of women pastors is already beginning to change the face of Catholicism.' So concludes Ruth Wallace in her book *They call her pastor: a new role for Catholic women.* This serious sociological work is the result of the author's study of twenty 'priestless' parishes in the United States administered by women. The study includes profiles of the women pastors, issues of gender and 'pastoring', styles of leadership, parish structure, systems of support, and a chapter on 'Constraints, Conflicts and Tensions' (mostly in relation to the institutional Church). Quotations from interviews with both the women pastors and those in their congregations appear throughout the text. The general impression one is left with is summed up by one of the author's concluding observations which concerns 'the creativity of women pastors in transforming constraints into opportunities'.

Wives of Catholic clergy ranges more widely than its title might suggest. Though the questions of women's ministry and of clerical celibacy no doubt have their points of connection, it is not immediately obvious why a book about clergy wives should have a chapter on the history of women in ministry. In fact the Church history chapters, with their rather anachronistic use of developed Catholic terminology, are not very satisfactory; but the author's real concern, as a Jesuit sociologist, is with the contemporary scene in the Roman Catholic Church in the USA; with married priests and deacons as much as with their wives, or with the women who increasingly express their desire for ordination to the priesthood. To this British reader he gives a vivid picture of the variety and complexity of relationships with the Church of resigned priests and their wives (whether married validly in the eys of the Church or not), of convert clergy and their wives, and of un-resigned priests with their various kinds of heterosexual partnerships (he nowhere touches on the question of homosexual clergy). It all combines to give a not absolutely discouraging view of American Catholics struggling to come to terms with the sexism and clericalism of 'Holy Father Church'.

Hannah Ward, Jennifer Wild

LITURGY. *The study of liturgy* is a work of welcome revision to an already popular and well established liturgical text book. Previous editions enabled both student and scholar to get to grips with the five major elements of Christian liturgy; initiation, eucharist, ordination, office and calendar. Each of these subjects is treated from an ecumenical and historical viewpoint tracing their origin from a scriptural base up to the present day situation. As the editors suggest, there are other pastoral rites which they cannot cover, mainly for limitations of space; however they do draw attention to a wider bibliography. In this revision a new section sets the pastoral and theological concerns of liturgy into a wider context. It is a timely reminder that liturgical studies cannot be

isolated from the experiential dimension of life – a warning that all students of theology would do well to heed! 'When the church retreats into cultural sophistication, it betrays the God who has created each culture capable of growing into praise' (p 585). By reason of its wide scholarship and ecumenical concerns this book keeps liturgical study on the right path and should continue to be a mainstay for furture generations.

Kenneth Stevenson is a well known figure to all students of liturgy. His easily read books have provided many helpful insights into the historical and theological richness of worship. In his most recent work, *Worship: wonderful and sacred mystery*, we are introduced to a selection of articles that cover three main topics, eucharist, marriage, and ashes and light. Within these areas we are led in Stevenson's own indomitable style to discover such delights as 'A theological reflection on the experience of inclusion/exclusion at the Eucharist', 'The origins of nuptial blessing', 'Origins and development of Ash Wednesday' and 'The ceremonies of light: their shape and function in the paschal vigil liturgy'. I found this a book which opened up new horizons and posed new questions. It is a work that repays constant examination, a work to dip into as well as read straight through. With its refreshingly challenging look at some common areas of concern this book should stimulate the reader to discover more about the worship that shapes his or her life.

The banquet's wisdom: a short story of the theologies of the Lord's supper takes us back to a time when unity in diversity did not mean 'insurmountable obstacles' in the way different Christian families saw each others' faith and liturgical practice. In order to trace present day obstacles towards eucharistic celebration between the various denominations, Gary Macy takes us through fifteen hundred years of pre-Reformation 'unity in diversity'. As he puts it, 'There are risks inherent in any attempt to interpret the Christian past. Yet it seems that a diversity of approaches, a kind of historical pluralism, will not only allow us to uncover more varied aspects of our multi-faceted past, but will also serve as a system of checks helping historians uncover the biases with which they approach their task' (p 13). It is a brave attempt to assert that pluralism in worship does not betoken chaos in theology, at least in some parts of Western Christianity! I found this book immensely helpful in isolating the various strands of changing thought about the Eucharist and for giving the reader a glossary of persons, which helps put some flesh to otherwise isolated names. The uncovery of bias and the acknowledgement of a deeper history than that sometimes taught is to be commended. I recommend this book to all those who wish to know something of their Christian history as well as to discover something of the richness that can be found once we begin to appreciate the gifts of one another's liturgical traditions.

One of the great stocking fillers for all engaged in pastoral liturgy is a book of prayers for different occasions. Any new book containing a selection of material both old and new is always a welcome addition both for those involved in active worship and those who wish to deepen and widen their own devotional life. *Bread of tomorrow: praying with the world's poor* has a wide selection of material to be

taken alongside an active concern for the poor of the world. This is a collection of poems, meditations and prayers which lead us through the structure of the church year. Their wide-ranging appeal should serve to inspire and help any group or individual concerned with the struggle of poverty and injustice in our world. It is a work that will keep us 'traditionally recognising the place we stand in . . . facing the complexity and ambivalence of where we are placed, as Christians living in the rich world who want to pray in solidarity with the poor' (p 4). A powerful and moving book, it should help us make the connections we need.

Enriching the Christian year is a companion to the three publications of the Church of England's Liturgical Commission, *Lent, Holy Week, Easter, The promise of his glory* and *Patterns for worship*. These arose from the demands for diversity of service material occasioned by the new possibilities for worship authorised by the ASB (*Alternative Service Book 1980*). This book attempts to 'plug the gap'. It includes material from the other books, consciously retrieving older forms of the *Book of Common Prayer* and the 1928 Service Book together with additions drawn from the Roman Missal and other sources. Though its main task is to encourage a wider use of texts within the Church of England, the division of each chapter into three parts, texts employed at any service, material specifically for the Eucharist and provision for morning and evening prayer will help recommend it as a resource book for all who have to prepare liturgies for various occasions.

Robin Gibbons

MORAL THEOLOGY. In *New directions in moral theology: the challenge of being human*, Kevin Kelly discusses major and complex issues in some depth but in a very easy to read style. He deals, for instance, with the problem of disagreement among Christians – including Christian pastors and teachers – regarding major ethical issues in a gentle and respectful way which helps the reader to put such matters into perspective. He goes on to discuss at some length the role of experience in moral matters, and then provides us with a most enlightening chapter devoted mainly to the work of feminist authors, the main thrust of which is to point out that moral theology cannot be fully human without the full participation of women. Kelly also deals with the question of what is specifically Christian in moral theology, with sin and forgiveness, and finally he treats us to a balanced discussion on the role of the moral theologian in the Roman Catholic Church today. This book is clearly the fruit of a great deal of research and careful thought. The author, moreover, able as he is to draw on his experience in the pastoral field, is no mere theorist. That, it seems to me, adds to the book's value and readability.

Margaret P. Battin confines herself to a narrower sphere in *Ethics in the sanctuary: examining the practices of organized religion*. In recent years, enthusiasm for professional ethics has spread from the world of medicine to various other spheres, including law, business, education, engineering and journalism, but, notes Battin, organized religion has somehow escaped this kind of attention.

'Inasmuch as the ministry, priesthood, or pastorate – called "divinity" in earlier periods – has traditionally been counted among the principal professions, this is a startling omission.' Battin therefore turns her own attention to that sphere. Given the special nature of the subject, she is careful to establish a special methodology. Although such an inquiry could be extended to other religious groups, the author confines her study to the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the concrete examples she deals with being taken from various mainline Christian churches and some of the so-called fringe groups. Issues dealt with include confidentiality (with the Roman Catholic practice regarding the confession of sins being part of the discussion), high-risk religion (faith healing, serpent handling, refusal of medical treatment), and paternalism and the ethics of converting people. This is a philosophical work, not a book on moral theology, and the author is careful to maintain the role of one not committed to defending or promoting any particular group. I found it to be an interesting and thought provoking study.

As one would expect, Denise Lardner Carmody's *Virtuous woman: reflections on Christian feminist ethics* has a quite different theme. The author describes the book as a reflective theological essay on the current state of Christian feminist ethics in which she tries to work out what an ideal Christian feminist ethics would stress, value and try to achieve. She comments on the writings of numerous feminist authors as she investigates a variety of issues, including, of course, the old but far from resolved problem of partriarchy. Social ethics (including black and Latin American dimensions of women's subjugation), sexual ethics, and ecclesiastical issues (including resistance to women in official circles) are all discussed at some length. The book most certainly provides food for thought. When discussing the supposed connections among priestly ministry, celibacy and maleness, for instance, Carmody states that 'in effect, most first-world Catholics have repudiated their current leaders as impoverished in sacramental faith, unethical in sacramental practice'. A little further on she adds that, in pressing for the ordination of women, feminists are helping the community of Christ become its better self. Throughout, it seems to me, the author is anxious to emphasize that the crucial word in the title of the book is *Christian*. Indeed, in her preface, she states that she wants Christian feminist ethics to be more Christian than what she tends to find. Carmody notes that being oppressed in one way does not stop one from being an oppressor in another. Some white feminists may, for instance, be racist. Her ideal feminism, therefore, takes the experience of women 'as a lens through which to illuminate the sufferings of all oppressed people'.

The stated underlying theme of Richard Holloway's *Anger, sex, doubt and death* is the author's increasing conviction 'that the Christian gospel, beneath the moralistic accretions that have characterized it, is about the unconditional grace and forgiveness of God'. Unfortunately, however, it must often seem that the Good News is not good news for sinners. This is the case not least because the God preached about by many people speaking in the name of Christianity over the centuries has been and is an angry one. In a chapter dedicated to the

subject of anger, largely this supposed divine anger, the author points out that, to be good news for us, the Christian message must be good news for us in our anger, our lust, our doubt and our dying. 'It must meet me there and be good news for me there, because that, I suspect, is where I shall remain.' This could be said to set the tone for the rest of the book. Bishop Holloway goes on to devote a chapter to each of the three other subjects mentioned in the title: sex, doubt and death. To these he adds an epilogue in which he declares that the Gospel really is good news. The book is attractively written, and the author bravely tackles some of the most fundamental issues facing Christians in a thoughtful and thought provoking way.

Bernard Hoose

THEOLOGY

Sullivan, Francis A.: *Salvation outside the church?*, Paulist Press, $12.95, pp 224
Taylor, John V.: *The Christlike God*, SCM Press, £9.95, pp 306
Tilby, Angela: *Science and the soul*, SPCK, £12.99, pp 275
Unger, Dominic J. (trans): *St Irenaeus of Lyons: against the heresies*, vol 1, book 1, Paulist Press (Ancient Christian Writers Series), unpriced, pp 300
Vardy, Peter: *The puzzle of evil*, Fount, £6.99, pp 205

IGNATIUS AND IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY

Bangert, William: *Jerome Nadal SJ*, Loyola University Press, unpriced, pp 401
Began, Jacqueline and Schwan, Marie: *Praying with Ignatius Loyola*, St Mary's Press, £4.99, pp 117
D'Costa, Gregory et al: *The practice of love*, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, unpriced, pp 304
English, John: *Spiritual intimacy and community*, DLT £9.95, pp 207
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Tetlow, Joseph A.: *Ignatius Loyola: Spiritual Exercises*, Crossroad, $11.95, pp 177

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Dussel, Enrique (ed): *The church in Latin America*, Burns & Oates, £40.00, pp 501
Hill, Christopher: *The English Bible and the seventeenth-century revolution*, Allen Lane, £25.00, pp 466
Sheldrake, Philip: *Spirituality and history*, SPCK, £15.00, pp 238
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THOMAS MERTON

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King, Thomas M.: *Merton: mystic at the center of America*, Liturgical Press, £10.99, pp 150
Shannon, William H.: *Silent lamp: the Thomas Merton story*, Crossroad, $22.50, pp 304; paper back SCM Press, £10.95, pp 304
de Waal, Esther: *A seven-day journey with Thomas Merton*, Eagle, £8.99, pp 114

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Bradley, Ritamary: *Julian's way*, Fount, £7.95, pp 231
Imbach, J. D.: *The recovery of love*, Crossroad, $9.95, pp 156
Mountney, John Michael: *Sin shall be a glory*, DLT, £5.95, pp 104
Phillips, Helen (ed): *Langland, the mystics and the medieval English religious tradition*, Boydell & Brewer, £35.00, pp 289

Upjohn, Sheila: *All shall be well*, DLT, £7.95, pp 192

WOMEN'S VOICES

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Brotherton, Anne: *The voice of the turtledove*, Paulist Press, $12.95, pp 217
Fichter, Joseph H.: *Wives of Catholic clergy*, Sheed & Ward, pp 191
New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Commission: Cheyne, Christine (researcher): *Made in God's image*, JPD, NZ$15.00, pp 95
New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Commission: *Made in God's image (Part II) – a theological reflection*, JPD, NZ$6.00, pp 24
Sahgal, Gita and Yuval-Davis, Nira: *Refusing holy orders: women and fundamentalism in Britain*, Virago Press, unpriced, pp 244
Uhr, Marie Louise: *Changing women: changing church*, Crossroad/Columba, £6.99, pp 154
Wallace, Ruth A.: *They call her pastor*, State University of New York Press, $16.95, pp 204

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Macy, Cary: *The banquet's wisdom*, Paulist Press, $12.95, pp 212
Morley, Janet (ed): *Bread of tomorrow*, SPCK/Christian Aid, £6.99, pp 207
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MORAL THEOLOGY

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Holloway, Richard: *Anger, sex, doubt and death*, SPCK, £5.99, pp 115
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Bannon, Edwin: *Refractory men: fanatical women*, Gracewing, £9.95, pp 219
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SIGLA

OLD TESTAMENT

Gen	Jg	Neh	Cant	Hos	Nah	Bar
Exod	Ruth	Est	Isai	Joel	Hab	Tob
Lev	2, 2 Sam	Job	Jer	Amos	Zeph (Soph)	Jud
Num	1, 2 Kg	Ps	Lam	Obad	Hag	Wis
Deut	1, 2 Chr	Prov	Ezek	Jon	Zech	Sir (Ecclus)
Jos	Ezr	Qoh (Eccl)	Dan	Mic	Mal	1, 2 Macc

NEW TESTAMENT

Mt	Jn	1, 2 Cor	Phil	1, 2 Tim	Heb	1, 2, 3 Jn
Mk	Acts	Gal	Col	Tit	Jas	Jude
Lk	Rom	Eph	1, 2 Thess	Phm	1, 2 Pet	Apoc

Exx	*The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola.*
MHSJ	*Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu.*

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