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In the early 1990s, British tabloid newspapers created an image of New Agers as gangs of unkempt, drug-crazed travellers living in old buses parked illegally on other people's property, in the vicinity of places like Stonehenge and other ancient 'spiritual' sites. In the USA, on the other hand, the New Age will forever be linked with Hollywood actress Shirley Maclaine and her TV mini-series, *Out on a Limb*, which portrayed the New Age not as a concern of social drop-outs, but as the playground of the rich and the famous, searching for a spiritual dimension to life because they already had everything else. Younger members of the British royal family have also been known to connect with this kind of spiritual search – and there is not a major city anywhere in the world which does not host a regular exhibition related to 'mind, body and spirit'. Here, the makers of witch's broomsticks rub shoulders with the saffron-robed devotees of ISKCON, while crystal healers stand alongside students of ancient Coptic Gnostic texts, tarot card readers, specialists in past-life recall, Kirlian photographers, channellers of spirit guides, aficionados in extra-terrestrial intelligence, and therapists of every conceivable variety – to mention only a tiny sample of what is typically on offer. Nor are these things confined to large urban centres, for most small communities boast their psychic fairs, while one of the surprising growth industries of the last two decades has been the unprecedented spread of metaphysical bookstores.

Definitions

It is easy enough to describe and document all this activity. But what makes these things 'new age'? In her history of the Findhorn Community, Carol Riddell describes life there as 'a spiritual supermarket, with all kinds of different "products" on the shelves to sample'.¹ She provides a bewildering list of what these 'products' might include: Buddhism, Hatha Yoga, Ta'i Chi, Sufism, Transcendental Meditation, organic food, past-life therapy, *A Course in Miracles*, as well as various elements from the Christian tradition. She goes on to indicate that 'all this makes up what has been described as the "new age" movement'.² What she describes is a mere drop in the ocean compared with what is more widely on offer. Indeed, the sheer diversity of all this led one recent writer to conclude that the New Age is 'a cluster of related ideas, teachings and groups, not altogether coherent, most of which would identify with this title'.³

Such a description is so vague as to be almost worthless, which

is why others question whether the New Age really is an identifiable entity at all. Just to complicate the picture even further, some of those who once happily used the term would now prefer to discard it. Carol Riddell again is typical:

*We are now a little wary of this description, which was once eagerly embraced by the Findhorn Community, because in popular thought it has become connected with the sensation seekers ... whose interest lies less in seeking spiritual transformation than in dabbling in the occult, or in practising classical capitalist entrepreneurship on the naïve.*⁴

Among scholars, some regard it as the outcome of Eastern religions being adapted into Western culture. Others trace it back to the counter-culture of the 1960s, transposed into a different key as hippies reach mid-life. For yet others it is part of a revivalist movement within the traditional Western esoteric circles inspired by people like Swedenborg, the Transcendentalists, or Helena Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society.⁵ All these understandings contain elements of truth. But none of them alone can explain the amazing rise to prominence of the New Age; and it is in any case far more eclectic and more all-embracing than any or all of its apparent forerunners. Part of the difficulty of definition is related to the analytical categories within which Western scholarship has traditionally operated. We do not find it easy to imagine how anything so apparently diffuse and disorganized could also be so successful. But the truth is that there is no central organization behind the New Age, there is nothing to join, and no one way of actually being a New Ager. The movement has been variously described as a 'metanetwork', or a network of networks,⁶ or a SPIN (segmented polycentric integrated network),⁷ while Wittgenstein's notion of 'family resemblance' can also be invoked.⁸ Just to make things even more complex, the New Age is also very definitely a 'movement', in the quite literal sense that it is always on the move. Things are constantly changing, as spiritual searchers keep looking in new places, which means that almost any definition we might produce can, with perfectly good reason, be challenged by others whose experience of the phenomenon has been different. Diversity is one of the key identifying factors of the New Age, and for that reason alone the search for a single theological perspective that will be shared by all New Agers is doomed to failure.

Cultural change

In reality, the various threads that go to make up the New Age tapestry are held together not by a common ideology, but by a shared perception of the nature of contemporary cultural change. In essence, the New Age is a form of postmodernity, and as such it is part of the questioning and redefining of the values and methods inherited from the European

Enlightenment that has swept through all areas of intellectual reflection in the last twenty years or so.⁹ The New Age's answer to the dislocation and collapse now facing the world is that the only way forward will be through a massive transformational shift in consciousness, of cosmic proportions. As with many critiques of modernity (including Christian ones), the New Age is itself a product of the same world-view with which it expresses dissatisfaction, though unlike other critiques it also unashamedly searches for solutions in what can only be described as a 'pre-modern' world-view, based on a pre-scientific, essentially mythological epistemology.¹⁰

There are many ways of articulating this understanding, but something along the following lines would be typical:

Our present predicament can be traced mostly to mistakes made by western thinkers in the course of the last 500 years, which in turn was rooted in the west's love affair with the rationality of the Greeks. This philosophy has led to the marginalization of human and spiritual values, and an unhealthy preoccupation with a mechanistic, rationalist, reductionist worldview. There has been a profound loss of spiritual perception, and to resolve the present crisis that trend needs to be reversed. The recovery of spirituality must be a top priority. Traditional western sources of spiritual guidance will, however, be of little help in this process: the Christian church is inextricably bound up with the old cultural establishment, so much so that the defective Enlightenment worldview was, in effect, little more than the logical outcome of classical Christian beliefs and values.

The relationship between Christianity, Enlightenment and Western culture is not quite that simple, of course.¹¹ But in the New Age, as in postmodernism more generally, image and perception are everything, and once something is believed by a sufficient number of people, it becomes irrelevant whether or not it is historically accurate or literally true. For better or worse, therefore, Christianity (in its classical Western form) is increasingly perceived as part of the problem, and for that reason it cannot also be part of the solution: if spirituality is to be restored to today's world, it will have to come from somewhere else.

New Age reference points

It is pointless to try to construct a detailed route map that will guide us through all the intricacies of New Age spirituality. As we will see, the New Age can hold together beliefs and practices that, on conventional definitions of rationality, would be regarded as incompatible, logically contradictory and mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, it is perfectly feasible to identify some fundamental compass points that can provide a general sense

of direction through the New Age maze, without being prescriptive about the actual path that any given New Ager might actually follow. My proposal is that there are four dominant polarities through which transformational philosophies and experiences are presently being pursued within the New Age.¹²

Non-Western world-views

That is, the traditional world-views of Eastern religions. An attractive, if superficial, view states that, if the cause of our present predicament rests in things that are modern and Western, then the way to resolve it will be to seek solutions in things that are ancient and Eastern (or at least, non-Western in the traditional sense). On this basis, many Western people are committing themselves to Eastern spiritual paths, particularly – but not exclusively – Buddhism, albeit in a Westernized form. Shirley Maclaine expresses a popular opinion when she comments that

*this New Age is the time when the intuitive beliefs of the East and the scientific thinking of the West could meet and join – the twain wed at last.*¹³

First-nation beliefs

Long before white Westerners settled in the Americas, or Australasia, these lands – and others like them – were home to ancient nations. The environmentally friendly lifestyles of these people were brutally suppressed, and their spirituality was devalued by Western imperialists who labelled it ‘primitive’ and ‘unscientific’. But with the benefit of hindsight, it seems that Western people could have learned much from the traditional lifestyles of aboriginal peoples. Could it therefore be that by reaffirming these values that were previously discarded, the world’s peoples together might find new ways to take us forward into the future? In the process, white Westerners might also expiate some of the guilt they now feel for the behaviour of their forebears. This has become a major concern within the New Age.

Creation-centredness

Long before the spread of classical ‘Western’ values, articulated through the categories of Greek philosophy and spread by the power of Christendom, Europe itself was home to a different, arguably more spiritual, world-view. Should Western people not therefore be looking for answers within their own heritage, by the rediscovery and appropriation of the kind of world-view that inspired and motivated their own distant ancestors? This concern accounts for the burgeoning interest in neo-paganism in its many forms, which is one of the fastest-growing aspects of New Age spirituality in northern Europe today.¹⁴

Person-centredness

Many of those who today are searching for new ways of being

have no interest at all in anything that could be called 'religion'. The development of psychotherapies of various kinds – not least the rise of transpersonal psychology – is providing this kind of 'secular' person with access to the same kind of transformational experiences as mystical religious traditions offer, without the initially unwelcome baggage of religious dogma.¹⁵ Hence the popularity of transformational video and audio tapes, bodywork and other therapies – often supported by claims that modern physics and mathematics are somehow 'proving' the value of all this in some kind of scientific sense.

The unique forms of New Age spirituality emerge from the interweaving of these different and ostensibly unrelated threads. But while diversity is a key empirical hallmark of the New Age, not all New Agers are equally supportive of the attempt to construct an eclectic world-view from such widely assorted materials. David Spangler and William Irwin Thomson are typical of those who welcome the self-conscious merging of different traditions:

*"... This new planetary sensibility or culture will be less a thing and more a process that nourishes our creativity and wholeness and provides sustenance for building the bodies of tomorrow ...we are reimagining our world. We are taking hunks of ecology and slices of science, pieces of politics and a sprinkle of economics, a pinch of religion and a dash of philosophy, and we are reimagining these and a host of other ingredients into something new: a New Age, a reimagination of the world ..."*¹⁶

Others are less convinced by this approach. Starhawk writes disdainfully of people who are spiritually starved in their own culture and 'unwittingly become spiritual strip miners damaging other cultures in superficial attempts to uncover their mystical treasures'.¹⁷ Carol Riddell sounds a similar warning:

*It is as if we were in a market place with many stalls offering goods. Some people go to one stall to buy, others go to another. We support each other constantly, but the path of inner transformation is ultimately a personal one. However much we may share with others, each of us has a unique path to the Self.*¹⁸

Wider connections

It is not necessary here to consider every possible connection there may be between aspects of New Age thinking and the wider world of spirituality. Rather, I wish to single out two examples to show how the New Age deals with those spiritual traditions it embraces, and then to make some comments about issues of power and its wider sociological significance.

Observers with a sense of Christian history will instinctively think of Gnosticism when they encounter the New Age. As part

of the wider spiritual renaissance, there is indeed a revival of Gnostic ideas today, and even the emergence of self-consciously Gnostic 'churches'.¹⁹ Carl Gustav Jung, whose insights are highly valued in many New Age circles, himself owed a debt to his study of ancient Gnosticism,²⁰ and one of the leading New Age journals is called simply *Gnosis*. Observing all this, Ted Peters describes the New Age as 'perennial gnosticism', because 'The new age is reminiscent of gnosticism in the ancient Roman Empire both in what it teaches and in its competitive position *vis-à-vis* Christian orthodoxy'.²¹

There are indeed some sections of the New Age which adopt what is in effect a Gnostic world-view. Sir George Trevelyan, the 'father' of the British New Age, makes this connection explicit and traces his own spiritual lineage back to ancient Gnosticism, as mediated through the Knights Templar, the Cathars and Albigenses, Rosicrucianism and freemasonry. Moreover, he invokes the familiar Gnostic notion of spiritual hierarchies, and sees no hope for humankind apart from a final escape from material existence into the world of spirit.²² Those New Agers who specialize in channeling messages from spirit guides and extra-terrestrials, and speculating about the lost continents of Lemuria and Atlantis or legends of Arthurian Britain, would also share this highly dualistic outlook, in which salvation can only be found through the intervention of beings from other worlds.

Because of its frequently bizarre manifestations, this dualistic New Age has often attracted media attention. But it is only one part of the whole movement, and arguably not the largest or most significant part. Many other New Agers reject such dualism, and instead adopt a monistic world-view, in which there is an essential unity between all things, both spiritual and physical. They might share a starting point with Gnosticism (human alienation as a result of people being trapped in some form of existence which inhibits the full expression of their true nature), but their answer to it is quite different. Gnostics adopted a Platonic view, seeing the human predicament as a metaphysical imprisonment of the spirit, whereas to monistic New Agers Platonism is the root cause of the problem, and enlightenment comes not through escape from this material world, but very much within it, as people attune themselves to the spiritual powers that are all around them, and of which they are already themselves a part. Far from being world-denying in an anti-materialistic sense (like Gnosticism), this part of the New Age is strongly world-affirming. Here, dualism is not the answer to the human predicament, but a part of the problem, as it sets up confrontations between people and the environment, between women and men, between different races, and so on. On this view, the West's basic problem is its love affair with dualism, and the sooner it is discarded, the better.

Shirley Maclaine, who is representative of this monistic side of

the New Age, highlights the dynamic of what is going on here, when she claims that in ancient times 'Christian Gnostics operated with New Age knowledge and thinking'.²³ In other words, the New Age provides the controlling agenda, arising from its essential character as a product of modernity, in particular its spin on the Western doctrines that materialism is a good thing, and that individual freedom and choice are the best ways to exploit material existence. Insofar as ancient Gnosticism shared some aspects of that, then it can be claimed as an ally which will give an ancient image to what is in essence a contemporary movement.

Much the same comment may be made about the way the New Age appears to promote ideas drawn from Eastern spirituality. For example, reincarnation is popular in many New Age circles, but it would be a mistake to see this as evidence that the New Age is a form of Indian philosophy transferred to the West. For the nature of New Age reincarnation has little in common with either Indian metaphysics or ethics. In the New Age, even reincarnation can be presented as a matter of individual human choice. People are here in the form they now have because they have chosen it in accordance with their own cosmic intentions, and for their ultimate spiritual development. In the words of J.L. Simmons:

*the decision to be reborn is self-determined by each being ...The rebirth is planned ...Such plans include the circumstances of birth and a blueprint outline of the life to follow, so that certain experiences might provide the opportunity to learn certain lessons.*²⁴

Opinions like this have nothing at all to do with traditional Eastern spirituality: they are the product of the culture of modernity, with its emphasis on personal responsibility, individual choice, and the underlying philosophy which projects an unrealistically optimistic view of human nature with no limits at all to human potential.²⁵

As we approach the millennium, it is obvious that the New Age is the product of competing Western world-views, and whenever materials from other traditions are utilized, they are consistently cut loose from their original contexts and ransacked for whatever spiritual insights they may seem to offer. For that very reason, there is also a sociological side to the rise of the New Age which will help to identify other reasons for its current popularity. One of the most unexpected places where it is taken seriously is in the training of top business executives. A management course written by two professors at Stanford University describes its rationale as follows:

We look within to find our own individual self and universal source. That source has been called the inner self, the Self, the hidden mind, the divine spark, the Divine Ego, the Great I Am, God, and Essence. Some say that the very purpose of human existence is to get acquainted with

*your own essential qualities and express them in your daily activities. Whether it is the purpose of life or not, it is a fine definition of personal creativity: living every moment from your essence.*²⁶

These authors then proceed to offer advice about assorted spiritual techniques and therapies that, they claim, will put modern executives in touch with spiritual realities, including overt instructions on how to contact disembodied spirits allegedly from other worlds. Nor is this an isolated example: the phenomenon of New Age business courses has been well documented elsewhere.²⁷ So what do ambitious business executives, homeless New Age travellers, high-profile members of the British aristocracy, and countless multitudes of visitors to New Age festivals have in common? The answer, perhaps, is deceptively simple: they are all struggling with the discontinuities of Western life at the end of the twentieth century, the loss of power by Westerners in general, and the loss of power by significant minorities in particular. In his book *The Interruption of Eternity*, Carl Raschke observed that throughout history such forms of esoteric spirituality have arisen in response to a loss of social power and prestige. In this context, the disinherited (at both ends of the social spectrum) retreat into

*a self-enforced pariah mentality, expressed in both their contempt for legitimate authority and their creation of a closed symbolic universe which only those with the proper credentials can penetrate ...the safekeeping of magical lore reflects a vicarious exercise of power which in reality has slipped away from them.*²⁸

This is why there are superficial resemblances between the New Age and earlier movements like Gnosticism: both may be understood as responses to the breakdown of the prevailing culture, which in this case was the same culture. Ancient Gnosticism arose as a response to the collapse of the Greek world-view as it had been applied and exploited by the pragmatism of Rome; the New Age is a reaction to the collapse of the same essential world-view, this time mediated through the Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and the imperialistic expansion of Western nations. More than 50 years ago, Aldous Huxley argued that when material revelation becomes problematic there has been throughout the history of the West a tendency to revert to what he called 'the perennial philosophy' and search instead for an essentialist, idealist (and therefore timeless) way of understanding the meaning of life.²⁹ When combined with further traumas for Western culture related to rapid globalization, the spoiling of the environment, and the manifest failure of the Enlightenment vision, we can see that the New Age has always been a movement just waiting to happen.

Christian responses

Finally, we come to a brief survey of some Christian responses to the New Age. Considering the way in which the New Age has opened up the whole subject of spirituality and placed it firmly on the popular agenda, it is remarkable how few Christians have engaged with it at all. And when they have done so, they have frequently made two mistakes that have tended to undermine, rather than enhance, the Christian case.

First has been the tendency to adopt an uncritical approach which assumes that the New Age is some kind of monolithic movement that can be categorized rather easily. This undifferentiated approach has led some to suppose that lurking behind the New Age is a conspiratorial attempt to undermine Western civilization as we know it.³⁰

But if Western civilization is collapsing, it is because of inherent flaws in its own philosophical base, not as a result of any New Age conspiracy against it. Indeed, the New Age – however inadequately – is trying to ask where we go from here, given that the Western Enlightenment vision is no longer viable. As far as I can see, there is absolutely no evidence of any New Age conspiracy to undermine democracy or whatever, and on those occasions when New Age people do use triumphalist language they are to be viewed in the same light as Christians, who similarly claim from time to time that they will 'revolutionize the world with the gospel'.

Allied to this is the tendency of Christians to fail to take account of the different nuances that undoubtedly exist within the New Age. For example, it is widely taken for granted that the New Age has a monistic world-view, whereas in reality it quite clearly has at least two world-views, one monistic and the other strongly dualistic.³¹ These two strands do not share the same heritage: the one has historical connections to a creation-based spirituality which is either pantheistic or panentheistic and can be traced through Romantic poets such as Shelley, Blake and Wordsworth, while the other has more in common with the movements associated with people like Swedenborg, Mesmer, Blavatsky, Bailey and Cayce. To the outsider they might easily look like two entirely unrelated movements. There is certainly a significant discontinuity between them. This has been a major reason why some commentators dismiss the New Age as irrational and nonsensical. But a more productive understanding will locate these apparent contradictions in the New Age's foundational understanding of the nature of human alienation. For the experienced alienation of Western people today is not, on the whole, a cosmological or metaphysical phenomenon, but a cultural alienation. In this context, the ultimate expression of spiritual ignorance is critical scientific thinking, and it is from this that the human spirit must be set free.

This brings us to our second mistake and highlights a further weakness in many Christian responses to the New Age, which have tended to tackle it on a rational, analytical level.³² It is not that the New Age ought not to be subjected to such criticism, and in the face of an increasingly irrational intellectual Establishment, one of the things that Christians need to bear witness to today is the fact that we are creatures of reason, and that, notwithstanding all the mistakes that our forebears have undoubtedly made, the capacity for rational understanding is one of the fundamental marks of being fully human. But to engage with the New Age at this level only is a serious mistake, for to most New Agers, this methodology is one of the key contributory factors to the crisis in Western culture. Using the tools of modernity to address the New Age will get nowhere, for it is by definition immune to rational criticism. Indeed, having the courage to transcend the boundaries of conventional linear Western forms of perception and to discard the narrow confines of an over-reliance on rationalism is, for many, the ultimate expression of the kind of spirituality that will take us forward into the next century. Psychology professor Marilyn Ferguson expresses it eloquently:

*We live what we know. If we believe the universe and ourselves to be mechanical, we will live mechanically. On the other hand, if we know that we are part of an open universe, and that our minds are a matrix of reality, we will live more creatively and powerfully.*³³

We are on surer ground when we draw attention to the moral relativism of much that is in the New Age. But in the process of making an honest assessment of the flaws in the New Age, Christians also need to be prepared to face up to the weaknesses of the Church itself. The simple fact is that, while many aspects of the New Age prescription for the ailments of today's world may be nonsensical and meaningless, its diagnosis of the disease is too accurate for comfort. Dean W.R. Inge (1860–1954) is reputed to have observed that 'A church that is married to the spirit of its age will find itself widowed in the next', and that just about sums up where Christians today find themselves. Christian beliefs, spirituality and lifestyles have become almost exclusively focused on rational systems of thinking, with a consequent marginalization of the intuitional, the emotional, the relational and the spiritual.³⁴ There is a need to recognize those things that are right about the New Age analysis. But beyond that, there is also a requirement for a missiological engagement with the New Age that will effectively challenge some of its conclusions. It would take another article to begin to unpack specifically what this might involve. But it would certainly take seriously scriptural models such as that provided by Acts 17:16–34 (Paul in Athens), as well as basing itself on the 'style' adopted by Jesus. Identifying 'the unknown god' in today's burgeoning spiritual marketplace will be challenging for many Christians, and probably threatening, because it requires a confidence to move

well beyond the safe boundaries of current church perceptions, which in turn is likely to open those who do it to criticism from others within the Christian community. Australians Ross Clifford and Philip Johnson are among the few genuine trail-blazers in this direction, and their book *Sacred Quest* deserves to be more widely known than it is, pointing the way forward to effective engagement with the New Age, and at the same time posing hard questions for the Church that could yet lead to the emergence of a way of being Christian that will be so attuned to the realities of contemporary culture that there will be no need for New Age spiritual searchers to look any further. For it is a simple fact that I have never yet met a New Ager who could not potentially be a Christian, if the gospel were presented in a way that they were able to hear.³⁵

- ¹ Carol Riddell, *The Findhorn Community: Creating a Human Destiny for the 21st Century* (Findhorn: Findhorn Press, 1990), p. 222. Findhorn is on the Moray Firth in north-east Scotland, and is arguably one of the most important New Age centres anywhere in the world.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 63.
- ³ Denise Cush, 'British Buddhism and the New Age', *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 11/2 (1996): p. 196.
- ⁴ Riddell, *Findhorn Community*, p. 64. Others wish to distance the serious New Age search for a new paradigm of reality from the populist or 'glamour' New Age, which concerns itself with things like the channelling of spirit guides, crystal healing, and similar phenomena. Cf. David Spangler, *The Rebirth of the Sacred* (London: Gateway, 1984), p. 79.
- ⁵ 'New thought and the New Age', in *Perspectives on the New Age*, ed. J.R. Lewis and J.G. Melton (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 15-29.
- ⁶ Elliot Miller, *A Crash Course on the New Age Movement* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), p. 14.
- ⁷ Cf. Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (London: Paladin, 1982), pp. 231-41; Michael York, *The Emerging Network* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), pp. 324-34; Michael York, 'The New Age in Britain today', *Religion Today* 9/3 (1994): pp. 14-21.
- ⁸ L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Reflections* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), pp. 65-78.
- ⁹ On postmodernity more generally, see Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality isn't What it Used to Be* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990); David S. Dockery, *The Challenge of Postmodernism: an Evangelical Engagement* (Wheaton, IL: Bridgepoint, 1995); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).
- ¹⁰ Cf. Paul Heelas, 'The New Age in cultural context: the pre-modern, the modern and the post-modern', *Religion* 23/2 (1993): pp. 103-16.
- ¹¹ Though there is more than a grain of truth in the New Age analysis. Cf. the comment of David Bebbington: 'It is extremely hard to resist the conclusion that the early evangelicals were immersed in the Enlightenment. They were participating fully in the progressive thought of their age' ('The Enlightenment and evangelicalism', in *The Gospel in the Modern World*, ed. M. Eden and D.F. Wells (Leicester: IVP, 1991), p. 76).

- ¹² See my 'Christian theology, New Agers and the spiritual search of Western culture', in *Rutherford Journal of Church & Ministry* (1Jan 1994): 20-25; 'Christians, New Agers, and changing cultural paradigms', *Expository Times* 106/6 (1994-5): pp. 172-76, reprinted in *Mission Focus Annual Review* 4 (1996): pp. 13-21.
- ¹³ Shirley MacLaine, *Going Within* (London: Bantam, 1990), p. 99, a view put forward with some vigour (and scientific insight) by Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982); Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life* (London: HarperCollins, 1996).
- ¹⁴ For an informed account of neo-paganism, see Graham Harvey, *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism* (London: Hurst & Co., 1997). There is a good deal of debate as to whether this really is a rediscovery of the past, or whether it is not an imposition on the past of a modern agenda. See, for example, discussions of the allegation that Christianity (= 'patriarchy') displaced an original goddess-centred matriarchal culture: Mary Jo Weaver, 'Who is the goddess and where does she get us?', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5/1 (1989): pp. 49-64; Sally Binford, 'Are goddesses and matriarchies merely figments of feminist imagination?', in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, ed. Charlene Spretnak (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982): pp. 541-9.
- ¹⁵ Though there is a great deal of religious baggage associated with transpersonal psychology: cf. R.S. Valle, 'The emergence of transpersonal psychology', in R.S. Valle and S. Halling (eds), *Existential-Phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology* (New York: Plenum Press, 1989), pp. 257-68.
- ¹⁶ David Spangler and William Irwin Thomson, *Reimagination of the World* (Santa Fe: Bear & Co., 1991), p. xvi.
- ¹⁷ Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 214.
- ¹⁸ Riddell, *Findhorn Community*, p. 63, italics mine.
- ¹⁹ On Gnostic 'churches', cf. my *What is the New Age Saying to the Church?* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 86-94. For wider connections, cf. R.A. Segal (ed.), *The Allure of Gnosticism* (Chicago: Open Court, 1995).
- ²⁰ Cf. June Singer, *Seeing Through the Visible World: Jung, Gnosis and Chaos* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990); R.A. Segal, *The Gnostic Jung* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).
- ²¹ Ted Peters, *The Cosmic Self* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), pp. 55, 56.
- ²² George Trevelyan, *Operation Redemption: A Vision of Hope in an Age of Turmoil* (Walpole, NH: Stillpoint Publishing, 1985).
- ²³ MacLaine, *Going Within*, p. 30.
- ²⁴ J.L. Simmons, *The Emerging New Age* (Santa Fe: Bear & Co., 1990), pp. 69-70.
- ²⁵ This understanding of reincarnation also raises some frightening moral spectres: cf. my *What is the New Age Saying to the Church?*, pp. 127-34.
- ²⁶ Michael Ray and Rochelle Myers, *Creativity in Business* (New York: Doubleday, 1986), p. 9.
- ²⁷ Cf. Rachel Storm, 'Disciples of the New Age', *International Management* (March 1991): pp. 42-5; Richard Roberts, 'Power and empowerment: New Age managers and the dialectics of modernity/postmodernity', *Religion Today* 9/3 (1994): pp.3-13; and my *What is the New Age Saying to the Church?*, pp. 168-201.
- ²⁸ C.A. Raschke, *The Interruption of Eternity* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1980), p. 42.
- ²⁹ A. Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper, 1944).

- 30 For examples of this approach, see Constance Cumbey, *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House, 1983); Alan Morrison, *The Serpent and the Cross* (Birmingham: K & M Books, 1994).
- 31 I myself failed to note this distinction in my 1991 study of the New Age, and assumed that monism was one of its universal characteristics (see *What is the New Age Saying to the Church?*). For a corrective, see Paul Greer, 'The Aquarian confusion: conflicting theologies of the New Age', *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 10/2 (1995): pp. 151-66. The same is true of the propensity of Christians to see the New Age as an occult movement. While some traditionally occult practices are undoubtedly followed by some New Agers, this is a tiny proportion of the entire movement (I would estimate that less than 10 per cent of it falls into this category).
- 32 An example of this approach would be Douglas Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986), and *Confronting the New Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988).
- 33 Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, p. 146.
- 34 For more on this, see my *Faith in a Changing Culture* (London: Harper Collins, 1997).
- 35 Ross Clifford and Philip Johnson, *Sacred Quest* (Sutherland, NSW: Albatross, 1995). Though some have labelled him a 'New Ager', I would personally place the work of Matthew Fox in this category too. He lacks the prophetic edge of Clifford and Johnson, and has a wholly inadequate sense of Christian history, but he is genuinely searching for a way of articulating Christian faith that will meet the needs of postmodern culture: cf. Matthew Fox, *Confessions* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), *Original Blessing* (Santa Fe: Bear & Co., 1983), 'Spirituality for a new era', in Duncan S. Ferguson (ed.), *New Age Spirituality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), pp. 196-219. For a critical assessment, see Richard J. Bauckham, 'The New Age theology of Matthew Fox: a Christian theological response', *Anvil* 13/2 (1996): 115-26; also my article 'Matthew Fox', in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, ed. Trevor A. Hart (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997). The debate about 'post-evangelicalism' inaugurated by Dave Tomlinson is also wrestling with some of the same fundamental issues: cf. D. Tomlinson, *The Post-Evangelicals* (London: Triangle, 1995); Graham Cray et al., *The Post Evangelical Debate* (London: Triangle, 1997); and David Hilborn, *Picking up the Pieces: Can Evangelicals Adapt to Contemporary Culture?* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997).