

THE INVERTED SPIRITUALITY AND POLITICS OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

BECAUSE THE NEW AGE ADEPTS extol each other's writings, speak at the same workshops, and share board memberships in the same organizations, it's fair to assess their teachings as a group. (If this is "guilt by association," it's an association that they have created for themselves.) As a group, the works of Helena Blavatsky, Alice Bailey and her followers, Teilhard de Chardin, Robert Muller, Barbara Marx Hubbard, and Neale Donald Walsch are a comprehensive anti-Gospel. These writers oppose the human dignity and liberty that derive from God creating mankind in His image (Gen. 1:27). Those who read New Age and Theosophical books with a discerning eye will find that these writers make clear their intentions for us all, just as Hitler did with *Mein Kampf* and as the Communists have done since Marx and Lenin. This time, let us heed the warning!

For public consumption, the "prophets" of the New Age announce a glittering future of human ease, freedom, power, and spiritual unity. In 1946, Teilhard de Chardin foresaw the technology of the 21st Century, including genetic engineering and nanotechnology. He said that "the release of nuclear energy, overwhelming and intoxicating though it was," was "simply the first act, even a mere prelude" in "a series of fantastic events" which would lead us to such feats as

vitalisation of matter by the creation of super-molecules. The re-modelling of the human organism by means of hormones. Control of heredity and sex by the manipulation of genes and chromosomes. . . . The arousing and harnessing of the unfathomable intellectual and effective powers still latent in the human mass. . . . Is not every kind of effect produced by a suitable arrangement of matter? And have we not reason to hope that in the end we shall be able to arrange every kind of matter, following the results we have obtained in the nuclear field?¹

Other New Age teachers have echoed this hymn to Prometheus, giving it a spiritual slant. Blavatsky said, "The majority of the future mankind will be composed of glorious Adepts."² In the mid-1990s, Robert Muller said, "from all perspectives—scientific, political, social, economic, and ideological—humanity finds itself in the pregnancy of an entirely new and promising age: the global, interdependent, universal age; a truly quantum jump; a cosmic event of the first importance that is perhaps unique in the universe: the birth of a global brain, heart, senses and soul to humanity."³ Barbara Marx

1. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "Some Reflections on the Spiritual Repercussions of the Atom Bomb," in *The Future of Man*, translated by Norman Denny, Harper & Row, 1964, p144 (this essay collection is cited below as *The Future of Man*).

2. H.P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*, Vol. II—*Anthropogenesis*, Theosophical University Press, 1999 reprint of 1888 ed., p446

3. Robert Muller, "Foreword: Preparing for the Next Millennium," in Joel Beversluis, ed., on-line version of *A Source Book for the Earth's Community of Religions*, <http://www.origin.org/ucs/doc.cfm?e=0&ps=2&edit=1&fg=3176&fi=1089>, printed 06/22/04.

Hubbard likewise said, “We stand upon the threshold of the greatest age of human history.”¹ Neale Donald Walsch’s “God” proclaimed, “The twenty-first century will be the time of awakening, of meeting The Creator Within. . . . This will be the beginning of the golden age of the New Human.”²

Nevertheless, the New Age promise of utopia is a lie. Blavatsky, Alice and Foster Bailey, Walsch, Muller, Marx Hubbard, and their New Age colleagues have barely concealed their hatred for God, their rejection of human tradition and morality, and their contempt for most of humanity. For the majority of us, these New Age teachers promise death.

For the spiritual elite, these New Age prophets promise power, secret knowledge, and membership in the “spiritual hierarchy.” Teilhard de Chardin proposed that when mankind reaches “a critical level of maturity,” the race will “detach itself from this planet and join the one true, irreversible essence of things, the Omega point. A phenomenon perhaps outwardly akin to death: but in reality a simple metamorphosis and arrival at the supreme synthesis.”³ Alice Bailey said that followers of her path will find that “each contact with the Initiator leads the initiate closer to the centre of pure darkness.”⁴ She urged her followers on toward the “Great Renunciation,” “the final great transference, based upon the renunciation of that which for aeons has connoted beauty, truth, and goodness.”⁵

In his apocalyptic novel *That Hideous Strength*, C.S. Lewis described the nature of this same temptation for Mark Studdock, who had sought initiation into an inner ring of scientific magicians: “Here, here surely at last (so his desire whispered to him) was the true inner circle of all, the circle whose centre was outside the human race—the ultimate secret, the supreme power, the last initiation. The fact that it was almost completely horrible did not in the least diminish its attraction.”⁶ Studdock’s final initiation—if he went that far—would involve worship of “macrobes,” spirits with far greater power and intelligence than any man. As his tempter described the macrobes, Studdock was simultaneously horrified and enticed: “These creatures . . . breathed death on the human race and on all joy. Not despite this but because of this, the terrible gravitation sucked and tugged and fascinated him towards them. Never before had he known the fruitful strength of the movement opposite to Nature which now had him in its grip; the impulse to reverse all reluctances and to draw every circle anti-clockwise.”⁷

Bishop Swing, the founder of the URI, has said, “A United Religions will either have a distinct spiritual momentum far beyond its own cleverness or it simply will not be.”⁸ The macrobes, or beings worse than them, are the darkness at the end of the road, after the “distinct spiritual momentum” of the New Age movement has reached its goal.

In early 2003, the Vatican offered an incisive analysis of the origins and beliefs of the New Age movement, *Jesus Christ: The Bearer of the Water of Life*. The document warns specifically against the New Age ideas that are prevalent within the URI and among its utopian allies.

First, the New Age movement is not new; it is a revival of centuries-old anti-Christian traditions. The Vatican said,

1. Barbara Marx Hubbard, *The Evolutionary Journey: A Personal Guide to a Positive Future*, Evolutionary Press, San Francisco, 1982, p11.

2. Neale Donald Walsch, *Friendship with God: An Uncommon Dialogue*, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1999, p295.

3. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, “Life and the Planets: What is Happening at this Moment on Earth?,” in *The Future of Man*, pp122–123.

4. Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations: Volume V, A Treatise on the Seven Rays*, 1960, Lucis Publishing Company, p174.

5. *Ibid.*, p224.

6. C.S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength: A Modern Fairy-Tale for Grown-Ups*, Collier Books, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1946, pp259–260.

7. *Ibid.*, p269.

8. Bishop William Swing, *The Coming United Religions*, United Religions Initiative and CoNexus Press, 1998, p22.

When one examines many *New Age* traditions, it soon becomes clear that there is, in fact, little in the *New Age* that is new. The name seems to have gained currency through Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry, at the time of the French and American Revolutions, but the reality it denotes is a contemporary variant of Western esotericism. This dates back to Gnostic groups which grew up in the early days of Christianity, and gained momentum at the time of the Reformation in Europe. It has grown in parallel with scientific world-views, and acquired a rational justification through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It has involved a progressive rejection of a personal God. . . . A powerful trend in modern Western culture which has given space to *New Age* ideas is the general acceptance of Darwinist evolutionary theory; this, alongside a focus on hidden spiritual powers or forces in nature, has been the backbone of much of what is now recognised as *New Age* theory.¹

New Age is not a single, uniform movement, but rather a loose network of practitioners whose approach is to *think globally but act locally*.²

Against the claim by URI supporter Barbara Marx Hubbard that “We *are* gods!,”³ and against Neale Donald Walsch’s assertion that “You are not inferior to God, nor to anything at all,”⁴ the Vatican replied, “This exaltation of humanity overturns the correct relationship between Creator and creature.”⁵

Against the claims by supporters of world government that they are guardians of human rights and democracy, the Vatican replied, “The global brain needs institutions with which to rule, in other words, a world government. . . . there is much evidence that gnostic élitism and global governance coincide on many issues in international politics.”⁶

Against the proponents of “global spirituality” and a “global ethic,” the Vatican warned,

we are witnessing a spontaneous cultural change whose course is fairly determined by influences beyond human control. However, it is enough to point out that *New Age* shares with a number of internationally influential groups the goal of superseding or transcending particular religions in order to create space for a universal religion which could unite humanity. Closely related to this is a very concerted effort on the part of many institutions to invent a *Global Ethic*, an ethical framework which would reflect the global nature of contemporary culture, economics and politics. Further, the politicisation of ecological questions certainly colours the whole question of the Gaia hypothesis or worship of mother earth.⁷

Against the attempts to integrate some positive elements of *New Age* beliefs into Christianity, the Vatican warned,

The gnostic nature of this movement calls us to judge it in its entirety. From the point of view of Christian faith, it is not possible to isolate some elements of *New Age* religiosity as acceptable to Christians, while rejecting others. Since the *New Age* movement makes much of a communication with nature, of cosmic knowledge of a universal good—thereby negating the revealed contents of Christian faith—it cannot be viewed as positive or innocuous. In a cultural environment, marked by religious relativism, it is necessary to signal a warning against the attempt to place *New Age* religiosity on the same level as Christian faith, making the difference between faith and belief seem relative, thus creating greater confusion for the unwary.⁸

1. Pontifical Council For Culture and Pontifical Council For Interreligious Dialogue, “Jesus Christ The Bearer Of The Water Of Life: A Christian reflection on the “New Age,” 2003, section 1.3, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20030203_new-age_en.html, printed 02/3/03 (cited below as Vatican report on the “New Age,” 02/3/03).

2. *Ibid.*, section 2.

3. Barbara Marx Hubbard, *The Revelation: A Message of Hope for the New Millennium*, Nataraj Publishing, Novato, CA, 1995, p 312.

4. Walsch, *Communion with God*, p161

5. Vatican report on the “New Age,” 02/3/03, section 2.3.4.1.

6. *Ibid.*, section 2.3.4.3.

7. *Ibid.*, section 2.5.

8. *Ibid.*, section 4.

The Vatican further warned against the anti-Christian aspect of the New Age movement:

New Age offers an alternative to the Judaeo-Christian heritage. The Age of Aquarius is conceived as one which will replace the predominantly Christian Age of Pisces. *New Age* thinkers are acutely aware of this; some of them are convinced that the coming change is inevitable, while others are actively committed to assisting its arrival. People who wonder if it is possible to believe in both Christ and Aquarius can only benefit from knowing that this is very much an 'either-or' situation. 'No servant can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn' (Luke 16:13). Christians have only to think of the difference between the wise men from the East and King Herod to recognise the powerful effects of choice for or against Christ. It must never be forgotten that many of the movements which have fed the New Age are explicitly anti-Christian. Their stance towards Christianity is not neutral, but neutralising: despite what is often said about openness to all religious standpoints, traditional Christianity is not sincerely regarded as an acceptable alternative. In fact, it is occasionally made abundantly clear that 'there is no tolerable place for true Christianity', and there are even arguments justifying anti-Christian behaviour.¹

These present-day warnings repeat prior Catholic teachings against politicized idolatry. Against the German idolatry of race and nation in the Third Reich, Pope Pius XI wrote in 1937:

Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power, or any other fundamental value of the human community—however necessary and honorable be their function in worldly things—whoever raises these notions above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God; he is far from the true faith in God and from the concept of life which that faith upholds.²

The same warnings could apply to any movement that exalts any "fundamental value of the human community"—such as peace or environmental preservation—"above their standard value and divinizes them to an idolatrous level."

If the teachings of the New Age authors discussed above are put into practice for the whole society, we can expect that they will be enforced with zeal, for everyone. The spiritual leaders of that time will proclaim the virtues of spiritual unity and mass consciousness-change; they will forget their earlier advocacy of tolerance and "unity in diversity." In his 1920s investigation of occult movements, René Guénon predicted the same, based on the beliefs and behavior of the spiritists of his own time: "if they had the power they would impose their own ideas on all alike; for in practice no one is less tolerant than those who feel a need to preach tolerance and fraternity."³ Those who follow these "spirits of the age" will find slavery, not freedom.

The popularity of the New Age movement is evidence of spiritual famine in America and other affluent nations. As Kenneth Woodward wrote for *Newsweek* in 2001, "What makes these bad best sellers noteworthy is what they tell us about the spiritual marketplace. Millions of seekers are looking for religious nourishment, but they can't tell authentic loaves of bread from the congealed mush put out by self-serving hustlers."⁴ As a common saying goes among Evangelical Christians, "the cults are the unpaid bills of the Church."

Thus, a Christian response to the spread of this delusive form of spirituality needs to be twofold.

1. Ibid., section 6.1.

2. Pope Pius XI, *Mit Brennender Sorge*, (Encyclical on the Church and the German Reich), March 14, 1937, section 8; http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_14031937_mit-brennender-sorge_en.html, printed 02/23/03.

3. René Guénon, *The Spiritist Fallacy*, tr. by Alvin Moore, Jr. and Rama P. Coomaraswamy, Sophia Perennis, orig. ed. 1923, English ed. 2003, p 237 (cited below as Guénon, *The Spiritist Fallacy*).

4. Kenneth L. Woodward, "Platitudes or Prophecy?," *Newsweek*, August 27, 2001, as printed on 08/24/01 from *MSNBC.com*. No longer on the Net.

First, the Churches need to acknowledge and repent of their own failure to offer seekers the Gospel. Next comes ministry to the followers of the New Age movement—and to the movement’s leaders, as well. The spiritually starved souls who follow New Age and Theosophical teachers are, each and all, people whom Christ loves and for whom He died and rose again. Christ desires that all be saved. It is a spiritual work of mercy to warn the people involved in these movements that they are rushing heedlessly toward the edge of a spiritual cliff, and to counsel those who seek aid. It is also essential to intercede in prayer on behalf of the leaders of the New Age movement, and their followers, that God might have mercy on them, and grant to them the graces of repentance, conversion, and true faith.

As may be obvious, I have offered the foregoing critique of the New Age movement from the perspective of a traditional Christian. However, the co-optation of religion by the spiritual scavengers of the New Age should be of concern to traditional believers in other faiths. As René Guénon said in 1921, traditional Hindus are “natural allies in this struggle. . . . Beyond the more particular reasons that Hindus have for profoundly detesting Theosophy, it is no more acceptable to them than to Christians . . . or, in a general way, than it is to all who adhere to a truly traditional doctrine.”¹

To conclude, I would reiterate the warning against the New Age movement that René Guénon offered in the early 1920s:

What we see in all this, and more generally in spiritism and other analogous movements, are influences that incontestably come from what some have called ‘the sphere of the Antichrist.’ This designation can also be taken symbolically, but that changes nothing in reality and does not render the influences less ill-omened. Assuredly, those who participate in such movements, and even those who believe they direct them, may know nothing of these things. This is where the greatest danger lies, for quite certainly many of them would flee in horror if they knew they were servants of the ‘powers of darkness.’ But their blindness is often irremediable and their good faith even helps draw in other victims. Does this not allow us to say that the supreme craft of the devil, however he may be conceived, is to make us deny his existence?²

1. René Guénon, *Theosophy: History of a Pseudo-Religion*, tr. by Alvin Moore et al., orig. ed. 1921, rev. ed. Sophia Perennis, 2001, p295.

2. Guénon, *The Spiritist Fallacy*, p276.