

Lähetysteologinen Aikakauskirja

Journal of Mission Theology

Volume 3 1993

NEW AGE AND NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS
RYTTYLÄ (FINLAND) 10 - 13 MAY 1993



Edited by
TIMO VASKO

Institute of Mission Theology Division for Global Mission
P.O. Box 185, 00161 Helsinki, Finland

Lähetysteologinen Aikakauskirja

Journal of Mission Theology

Volume 3 1993

NEW AGE AND NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS
RYTTYLÄ (FINLAND) 10 - 13 MAY 1993



Edited by
TIMO VASKO

Institute of Mission Theology Division for Global Mission
P.O. Box 185, 00161 Helsinki, Finland

ISSN 0788-9518

CONTENTS

sivu

THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT IN FINNISH CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE Juhani Räsänen	1
LUTHERAN THEOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF REINCARNATION Timo Vasko	7
THE NEW AGE: PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ORIGINS Risto Saarinen	14
THE NEW TESTAMENT AND ITS CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY, COSMOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY Erkki Koskenniemi	19
DOCTRINAL ELEMENTS IN "NEW AGE" THINKING Raimo Mäkelä	30
WHY IS NEW AGE OF INTEREST TO FINLAND? Raimo Mäkelä	36
HELPING VICTIMS AND ITS RESULTS Marja-Liisa Somiska	41
RELIGIOSITY AND SUICIDE Hannu Sorri	46
FACING SHAMANISM Jorma Pihkala	48
THE SPIRIT POSSESSION CULT IN ETHIOPIA Urpo Kyyhkynen	54
ELEMENTAL COSMOLOGY, ESOTERIC SOTERIOLOGY AND THE NEW MISSIOLOGY Johannes Aagaard	59
WORLD'S RELIGIONS - A STATISTIC	86

Juhani Räsänen

THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT IN FINNISH CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

The coming of the modern New Age Movement (NAM) to Finland can be dated to the shift of the decade from the 1960's to the 1970's. It began to take the form of a loose movement during the first years of the 1970's among people that had been brought together through first the Ufoaika (UFO Time) and later the Ultra magazine. The substance of NA -thinking was most evident in the activities of the Oraansuojelijat -Association. First the association started a vegetarian restaurant in Helsinki and in 1976 a magazine called Uuden Ajan Aura (Aura of the New Age) was founded. Oraansuojelijat has had a significantly wider spread effect than its small core membership team would indicate. An example of this is its connections with the green movement (environmental activist -movement). In Finland a phenomenon comparable to American popular NAM has been e.g. a popular book Kuolemaa ei ole (There is no death) which was written by Rauni-Leena Luukanen in 1982.

Although the importance of the media in the spreading out of New Age in Finland has not been surveyed it is evident that especially magazines have been a significant channel for it. New Age has not in fact remained the property of a few devoted people but has spread widely among the common people in various forms. This can be seen e.g. in the fact that belief in reincarnation has significantly grown in the country (Heino 1992).

THE BOOM OF ANTI - NEW AGE CHRISTIAN BOOKS

The first descriptions of NA-type rereligiousness can be found in Finnish Christian literature already at the beginning of the 1970's (ref. Teinonen 1971). New Age became more common in the late 1980's although it was seen in theological literature as early as 1982. It became common knowledge through the revivalistic Christian(* anti-New Age book-wave in the years 1988-89. The effect of the book-wave was also visible in the secular press which clearly became more critical towards NAM.

The book-boom created a reaction among those theologians that do not count themselves as revivalistic christians (revivalistics). The critique claimed for example that NAM was a weapon of the conservative christians (conservatives) and a media of condemnation against everything that didn't please them. On the one hand the mere existence of NAM was disputed while on the other hand revivalistics were criticized for bringing NAM into the country through their strong anti-New Age public controversy. The critique also hit the revivalistics and conservatives and their attitude of seeing a conspiracy behind NAM. It was debated whether New Age was a movement or not.

The rise of active debate also birthed theological research work which was aimed at NAM. This made the scholars partakers in the debate and further polarized the controversy between rationalistically thinking theologians (rationalistics) and revivalistic christians and conservatives. With only a few exceptions the official church didn't react to NAM until the fall of 1992. It was then that archbishop John Vikström in an evening paper took a stand that mainly aligned with the views of the revivalistics.

It was clear that one of the main concerns expressed in the debate was that of the revivalistics and conservatives who were worried about the effects of NAM in our country and its threat to both Christianity and the western culture. Often the rationalistics seemed to be stimulated by these views although they were also motivated by pure research aspects.

THEMES OF THE DIALOGUE

In a more detailed analysis of the dialogue a comparison was made between the views of the participants on New Age as a concept its ideal background and persons who had become authorities within the movement. This comparison also included conceptions on the religious-ideological nature of NAM (e.g. the movements view of divinity and man), NAM's attitude towards Christianity and statements on how Christians deal with NAM.

The main characteristic of New Age was regarded by most to be the expectancy of a new age. The Age of Aquarius was understood to parallel the concepts of New Age. With minor differences in details it was seen that behind NAM one could find both eastern religions (hinduism, buddhism and taoism) and western occultic-esoteric tradition (e.g. theosophy).

Views on persons that have had an impact on NAM were also shared. Such names are e.g. C.G.Jung Teilhard de Chardin and Jiddu Krishnamurti. Marilyn Ferguson and Shirley MacLaine were referred to by most as persons of influence within NAM.

The NA perception of divinity was understood from different Christian perspectives to be panteist. God in NAM was seen as "an impersonal power" "energy", "initial energy", and so on. The basic problem of humanity was found to be related to man's consciousness and in his becoming aware of his own divinity or godliness. Salvation in NAM was seen as the development of consciousness to ever higher levels in a chain of reincarnations.

Views on what brought about the uprising of NAM differed significantly from each other. The rationalistic view understood that behind the genesis of NAM were purely reasons related to history of religion and ideological, social psychological and sociological reasons. According to the spiritual view the rise of NAM has its roots in the above mentioned reasons and in the work of Satan and his demons or in the work of Satan and his demon alone. This also seemed to be the dividing line regarding the conspiracy-theory. All revivalistics interpreted the conspiracy to be a fact of life. However the conspiracy was almost always given a purely spiritual meaning: it was seen as Satan's plan and not as a human plan. Those that held a rationalistic view were critical of the conspiracy-theory.

Views on New Age as a "movement" and its degree of organization varied and did not coincide with the above mentioned divisions of opinions. Those with an understanding of a loose movement saw New Age as a loose ideal or "collection of crisscrossing ideas" while

those with a view of a tighter organization saw New Age as an organized movement whose headquarters are in the United States.

The effect of NAM on Christianity was seen as purely negative by revivalistic Christians: they saw NAM to be anti-Christian in nature. The rationalistics saw the effects of NA as ambivalent or even positive. Revivalistics saw signs of New Age edging its way also into the Church. To them this was indicated by the increase of respect for liturgy and tradition and the decrease in the significance of the sermon, centering on ceremonialism and the revival of mysticism. As an extreme example of the above New Age theologians were seen infiltrating themselves into the church teaching reincarnation and the law of karma.

The Christian attitudes towards NAM were divided into a passive, analytical and searching view that is critical of the condition of the church and on the other hand into an active evangelizing attitude. Those with the active view also held the opinion that people in the NAM should be dialogued with and that they should be offered counselling ministry.

CONCLUSION

In Finland theologians reacted to tendencies preceding New Age like e.g. theosophy as early as the beginning of the 20th century (ref. Pietilä 1910). An important and debated study on anthroposophy - *Salatiede päivänvalossa* - (Occult sciences in day-light) was published by Osmo Tiilikä in 1937. New Age -type phenomena began to enter the Christian dialogue in the mid 1970's when e.g. TM-meditation and yoga were seen as part of New Religious Movements. It was not until the beginning of the 1980's that NA was commonly being conceived as an independent movement.

Among the scholars especially Harri Heino has fairly early been aware of NAM (ref. Heino 1982). In revivalistic literature it was Leena Huima's book *Vesimiehen lapset* (The Children of Aquarius) that first dealt with the subject in 1985. In the Christian press the debate gradually sprung up after the mid 1980's. The debate in

the press had its peak with the boom of anti-New Age books in the years 1988-89. The book-boom can be regarded as significant because it aroused the interest of some theological scholars and because after this critical NA -awareness became more evident in the secular press.

Although characteristically the Christian debate has been more like dialogue of monologues it has shown that Christians as a whole are alert for new phenomenons in both the society and the religious field. At the same time it should be noted that e.g. secular New Age -research work in Finland has been practically non-existent.

Further studies should in more detail analyze the contents of the New Age concept and its relationship to other new religious movements, the motives of people having been converted to New Age thinking and the nature of such religious experiences. The encountering of New Age requires from Christians both scientific research and evangelizing dialogue and counselling ministry ...speaking the truth in love... (Ef.4:15).

(This article is based on the author's Pro Gradu -study of the same subject in the University of Helsinki.)

REFERENCES

- * "Revivalistic Christianity in this article refers to various post second world war religious movements within both the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church and to some extent within the Pentecostal and Free Churches. It has been influenced by Pietism and newer Anglo-Saxon Christianity.

(A complete bibliography of the Pro Gradu -study is available from the author.)

Heino, Harri

1982 TM -liikkeen uskonnolliset ulottuvuudet. Kirkon tutkimuslaitos. Sarja A N:o 40. Tampere.

1992 Jälleensyntymiseen uskovien määrä lisääntymässä.
-Aamulehti 5.10.92.

Huima, Leena

1985 Vesimiehen lapset. Juva.

Luukanen, Rauni-Leena

1982 Kuolemaa ei ole. Espoo.

Pietilä, Antti J.

1910 Teosofia liikkeenä, oppina, uskontona. Jyväskylä.

Teinonen, Seppo A.

1971 Uskonnot nykyhetken maailmassa. Porvoo.

Tiililä, Osmo

1937 Salatiede päivänvalossa. Jyväskylä.

Ultra -lehti 1974 -

Uuden Ajan Aura -lehti, 1976

Timo Vasko, Th. D.

LUTHERAN THEOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF REINCARNATION

In the Western world reincarnation - a belief in rebirth - mostly has another sense than in the areas in Asia where Hinduism and Buddhism originated and exert their influence. Originally the cycle of reincarnation was, and in Asia still is, seen as a negative punishment from which one needs liberation and escape. In Western countries structural change in reincarnational thinking, generalized but divorced from its original context, is visible in that it is linked to an optimistic belief in progress and is presented as a positive and life-affirming doctrine, by which it is hoped to reach ever higher in life.

Lutheran theology is based on the basic documents of undivided Christendom and on the Lutheran confessions. This material is also the basis for engaging in controversy with regard to the problem of reincarnation. Thus incarnation, reincarnation and rebirth should not be confused.

Incarnation is a central Christian concept, by which is meant the incarnation, that is, the becoming man, of the Word of God, the Logos, in Jesus Christ (e.g. John 1:1-14). Incarnation, however, differs radically from reincarnation. In Western countries the Latin word *reincarnatio* is often translated as "re-embodiment", "becoming flesh" or "rebirth". In scholastic Latin the term was not used; it is of later origin. For instance, in Hindu thought the emphasis in reincarnational thinking is on each new form in which someone or something is believed to be reborn again and again. On the whole speculations about reincarnation have been a universal phenomenon since ancient times. There are many different ideas of reincarnation and they may diverge considerably. Reincarnation is discussed in many contexts - Hinduism, Buddhism, western philosophy, so-called "new religions", parapsychology, etc.

The Christian attitude towards reincarnation has generally been one of either total indifference or outright rejection. This may be

explained by the fact that the Bible does not contain material relating to reincarnation. For example, such Greek concepts as *metempsychosis* and *metempsychosis*, the transmigration of souls, do not occur in the New Testament. For this reason the view widely held up to this day that due to the influence of the fifth ecumenical council (Constantinople 553 A. D.) the Bible and early Christian literature was retrospectively purged of all material on reincarnation cannot be true. At Constantinople the concept of the pre-existence of the soul, held by the followers of Origen, was rejected, that is, the view that souls were in existence before they were united with the body. They did not deal with the problem of reincarnation.

It must be stressed that Christian faith does not contain any ideas that form part of reincarnational thinking. Reincarnational ideas have the following principal features: according to the law of karma, present-day life is the consequence of previous forms of existence. Karma, one of the basic concepts of Hinduism and Buddhism, means action, work and consequences of action, bound up with the delusion of self and self-interest. The conditions of life and a person's fate depend entirely or substantially on the person concerned. They produce the consequences of karma, that is, reincarnation. The consequences originate in either this present life or else the next reincarnation or reincarnations. In fact, the law of karma is supposed to keep the entire world process in motion. Thus belief in reincarnation denies the central Christian view that God and his power are part of all reality. Reincarnational thinking does not take into account the unity of man, that is, the whole formed by the spirit, soul and body of man, but disparages the corporality of man as a "prison" or as merely a temporary residence of the soul. This emphasis is found not only in the religions of India and South-east Asia and their modern European derivatives but already in Plato and Gnosticism. The basic and crucial difference is that reincarnational ideas deny salvation and atonement through the life, death and resurrection of Christ. God in Christ has reconciled all men by his once-for-all sacrificial death. Man cannot save himself. The idea of karma is thus totally excluded and is in total contradiction to christocentric (Christ-centred) salvation history. The uniqueness

of life and thus the view that human life can be lived only once gives the Christian view of man the substance for protecting, honouring and appreciating this unique life.

In discussing reincarnation the Lutheran Christian engages in controversy with, for instance, Hindu, Buddhist and theosophist thought. It is to be noted that in India belief in reincarnation does not appear until the *Upanishads*, which are the final and latest group of the *Vedas* (the oldest *Upanishads* derive from the 6th century B.C.). In essence reincarnational thought is linked with so-called cyclic thought, the concept of *karma* and the doctrine of *atman*. The latter means the divinisation of man, immutable and enduring personality, the inner self. On this basis there occurs in Hinduism the idea that man's individual core of being (*jiva*) migrates. *Jiva* is surrounded by a bodily covering of rough and fine material (*kosha*). The birth cycle (*samsara*) of *jiva*, which includes suffering, continues from one incarnation to another. As for the caste system, which is officially forbidden but still functions in practice, a person's social status is determined by *karma*, that is, the consequences of his actions in a previous life. In this context the concept of "salvation" could be understood as an aspiration to a better reincarnation and finally liberation from this cycle (*moksha*). The goal would furthermore be to attempt by various means to nullify the *karma* accumulated from previous lives. This happens by acts of atonement, meditation, respecting the *guru* and by other means. Attempts are made to lessen the influence of initiated *karma* and to avoid the rise of *karma* in the future. When the influence of *karma* ceases, the cycle of rebirths also stops.

The Lutheran Christian also engages in controversy with Buddhist thought, which does not include belief in God or gods. In Buddhism *karma* maintains the process of conditional birth (*pratitya-samutpada*), which should be extinguished. In Buddhism this happens in particular after receiving insight - a personal nucleus migrating from one existence to another does not exist. It is in fact a migration of souls without a soul. Only continuity of consciousness is enduring, but its identity cannot be further defined. In death a person disintegrates into impersonal elements

of existence. Both in Hinduism and in Buddhism present-day life forms part of the cosmic primary process and the unending potential cosmic process. Former and future forms of existence, which include animal and spirit forms in addition to the human form, are determined by each other. Also, many Hindu divinities are subject to the process of *samsara*. However, both in Buddhism and Hinduism there are schools of thought which regard the cycle of rebirth as a mere illusion of the unilluminated spirit and thus relativize it. In Buddhism, alongside reincarnational thinking, e.g. *maḥāyāna*-Buddhism there occurs the idea of *bodhisattva*. *Bodhisattva* is in fact an illuminating being in which an illuminating mind (*bodhicitta*) awakens to help other beings to be illuminated by returning voluntarily, not compelled by karma, to earthly life. In Buddhism the main aim in helping is the profound realization of vacant nature. *Bodhisattva* can help to save other beings by transferring karma merit to others. For instance, in Lamaism the Dalai-Lama is honoured as *tulku*, in other words, a reincarnated dead person or even a reincarnated *bodhisattva*.

Today the Lutheran Christian also meets theosophical trends in which reincarnation plays a significant rôle. During her Indian period Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), who founded the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875, absorbed influences from Brahmanism, Hinduism, yoga and Buddhism. Reincarnation and the law of *karma* became the main tenets of theosophy. It is interesting to know that Blavatsky's successor, Annie Wood Besant (1874-1933) propagated her organization in various countries in Europe, but eventually Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), the general secretary of the German branch, resigned and founded anthroposophy, the doctrines of which also included reincarnation. It is still characteristic of theosophy that a person's salvation follows his or her own efforts. A moral life and self-education affect one's future lot. In theosophy the law of *karma* is regarded as the foundation of ethical world order. In this system one has ultimately to atone for oneself. In theosophy there is no real concept of god or relationship with God. The human soul is considered divine; it aims, after many stages, to reach the divine source. The origin of theosophy is outside Christianity and has a Christian character only when combined with similar features and borrowings, such as in

Gnosticism. This procedure does not make them a form of Christianity, however.

The Christian emphasizes that life is entirely under the sovereignty of the Triune God. Man himself has no capacity for achieving eternal life. Life - both this life and life in eternity - is received as a gift from God. "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself". (John 5: 21, 26). Man is not a reincarnating soul, for man does not have life in himself. Only the Triune God has life in himself. Only God is a life-giving Spirit (1Cor. 15:45). In union with Christ man begins to live eternal life here and now. "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24). In man's only resurrection after death Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will raise every human being: "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28-29).

As for existence after death, Christianity and reincarnational thought share the view that death is a certain terminal point. But while Christian hope includes belief in resurrection, the continuance of life after death in a once-for-all resurrection from the dead, submitting to God's judgment and participation in the life and immortality of God in eternal life or else ending up in a state of eternal damnation, in the concept of reincarnation life continues according to the law of *karma*, changing several times from one form into another. Here, with an eye on central basics of Christian faith, we reach other perspectives which are irreconcilable with reincarnational views: man's life and death are unique events; they cannot be repeated. "It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Man is subject to sin and cannot free himself from it by various attempts at becoming perfect but only as a gift through the saving grace of God, who receives us in Jesus Christ (Jn. 3:16). Christianity is

resurrection faith based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Here and now in this life man can live a new life through faith in Christ (1 Cor. 15:12-20). Man cannot live his life again and so decisions in this life have an eternal dimension. The concept of reincarnation denies eternal damnation, which, according to Christianity, is reality. The possibility of once-for-all bodily resurrection is out of the question in reincarnational thought, with its stress on life free from the body and the material. However, the Christian Church has always confessed. "We look for the resurrection of the dead" (Niceo-Constantinopolitan Creed 381 A. D.) and "I believe in the resurrection of the body" (Apostles' Creed).

The concept of new birth or regeneration (*palingenesia*, *anagénnesis*) is sometimes confused with reincarnation, although they are not connected. Regeneration is, however, such an important Christian word that it cannot be overlooked in this connection. In the New Testament regeneration is spoken of in three contexts. First of all, arising from the Old Testament background and referring to the creation of new heavens and a new earth (e.g. Isa. 65:17), the New Testament tells of the renewal of the world in the end times. "Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, at the birth of a new world, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel'". (Mt. 19:28). Secondly, regeneration occurs in the sense of entering a new relationship with God. This "being born of God", in which the work of the Triune God is the subject, appears in several passages. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has begotten us to a new life and given us a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Pet. 1:3, 23; cf. Jn. 1:13; 3:3, 7; 1 Jn. 2:29). Thirdly, new birth happens in baptism. "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit'" (Jn. 3:5; cf. Tit. 3:5).

From this we reach the conclusions that new birth and salvation are an act of God, not man's own act. It is an event affecting the whole man and his whole life. The Triune God commits himself to the word and sacrament (baptism), through them regenerating a person. Physical age is of no significance in this connection. The Lutheran confessions also use the word regeneration in the broader sense of justification and forgiveness and of consequent renewal. According to the Augsburg Confession man is given the free gift of righteousness for Christ's sake through faith (CA IV). Sometimes regeneration has been defined as one stage in the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*).

Finally, as a sign of the times connected with this problem in present-day Finland, I refer to an article in the column "Young People's Post" (in the newspaper "Helsingin Sanomat" 5th December, 1992) signed "A pardoned sinner": "Ten stars in scorpion 74, I have been a so-called searching soul" all my short life, I have sought the truth. I have tried every way to God. I have practised yoga and meditation, even been enlightened. But when I got to know the "enlightened" me, I had to be honest and say that after my experience I was not one bit a better person. The same old filth. Today I cannot imagine myself saying that I am part of god (as I believed), for the god which consists of the same kind of enlightened ones as myself cannot save anyone. This honest self-examination dissipated the entire thought structures of reincarnation and karma. If in this reincarnation I cannot improve myself, it will not happen in a thousand reincarnations. But the seeker will find the truth, if it will do. The truth about oneself, that one is a sinner, and about God, who accepts the sinner as his own, because Jesus has given his life to pay the atonement for sins. But receiving grace is the hardest thing in life. In his selfishness man wants to save himself by his own efforts. Although this is probably the experience of a young person, it well expresses, and in a wider context too, the Christian experience of reincarnation.

Risto Saarinen, Th. D.

THE NEW AGE: PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ORIGINS

Since my Finnish presentation at the Ryttylä Congress for the most part consisted of historical materials easily available to the English-speaking reader, I shall only give a brief summary of my paper (with reference to the English sources, see ch. 1.). In the final part of my address I made a "thought experiment" which in my view helps us to understand certain aspects of the Christian reception of the New Age. Since this experiment is entirely my own construction and not published elsewhere, it perhaps deserves to be outlined here (ch. 2.).

1. Identifying the Traditions

In my presentation I emphasized the theosophical background of many New Age groupings. I believe that the "Chronology of the New Age Movement" published in J. Gordon Melton's New Age Encyclopedia (London: Gale 1990) adequately describes the relation between theosophy and the New Age. It should be remembered, however, that the Finnish theosophists, for example, have mixed feelings about the New Age: on the one hand they reject it as superficial, but on the other hand they participate in some activities organized by New Age networks.

I further related the theosophical tradition to the larger context of the Western esoterical tradition, i.e. such movements as hermetism, alchemy, cabbalism, masonry, and the Rosicrucians. In some of my Finnish publications (e.g. in the book Jumalakuvakirja, published in 1991 by the Research Center of the Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran Church) I have surveyed the modern critical research on these important ideological trends. The English reader can find adequate information in, e.g., the Dictionary of the History of Ideas.

Having briefly described the main contents of these traditions, I touched upon three methodological problems concerning our understanding of the historical roots of the New Age. Firstly, we must learn to distinguish between "holy history" as described by the movements themselves, and the results of the critical research. Today critical research admits the important role esoteric teachings have played in our cultural history. But exaggerations of the "hidden influence" of esoterics (e.g. Gnostics, Templars or masonry) on all kinds of phenomena deserve to be shown to be false. As far as political history and church history are concerned, the role of these movements has been only marginal; but in the history of the arts and literature they have exercised a considerable influence.

Secondly, I argued that the New Age ought to be understood as a Western phenomenon which only selectively adopts Eastern elements. If we examine the background of the movements listed in Melton's afore mentioned Encyclopedia, we find that most of them are of European and American origin and get their inspiration from earlier Western esoterics. I am prepared to admit that the influence of India, of Hinduism and Buddhism, is considerable in many modern New Age circles. But I also want to stress that it is the old European esoteric paradigm Ex oriente lux which lurks behind the renewed interest in Indian religious traditions.

Thirdly, I emphasized that we cannot judge a given neo-religious movement by its doctrinal basis alone. The concrete cult, ethics and style of leadership are often much more relevant factors than is the metaphysical doctrine taught by the sect. The naive gnostic esoterics taught by the Scientology Church, for instance, shares much of the doctrinal content of the non-authoritarian New Age movements. The total commitment required by Scientologists but sharply rejected by others is not, however, based on any difference in doctrinal content but on differences in practice. I further think that no "drug effect" can be established in the sense that after having begun with some mildly neo-religious ideas a person sooner or later turns toward the most obsessive superstitions. History teaches that people's interest in religion does not function in that way.

2. The New Age and Christianity - A Thought Experiment

The span of different Christian attitudes towards esoteric and theosophical movements extends from enthusiastic approval (e.g. in some Renaissance circles and in the radical Pietism of the 18th century) to fierce attacks (e.g. witch-hunts and the American anti-cult movement). The attitude of large churches and their leaders has been marked by indifference and tacit tolerance, whereas both the enthusiastically positive and aggressively negative approaches have normally been adopted by Christians already themselves marginalized within their own mainstream church.

The reception of the New Age by Finnish Christians is no exception to this general rule. During the 1980s, a number of books hostile to the New Age were published by Finnish Neo-Pietist and Free Church activists. The contents of these books were borrowed from American evangelical anti-cult writings. The Finnish mainstream clergy and the general public were somewhat puzzled by the books, since most ordinary people had never heard of New Age neo-religiosity. Of course there were already in Finland movements such as Ananda Marga and Summit Lighthouse, but virtually nobody in the church had ever been in contact with them. Even after the New Age movement was identified in Finland in the late 1980s, the Christian confrontation has mostly been conducted by the Neo-Pietists, whereas the great majority of mainstream Lutherans have remained indifferent.

My "thought experiment" argues that these empirical attitudes towards the New Age have a theological background. I claim that "pietist" or "evangelical-revivalist" theology is to some extent commensurable with the New Age, whereas "mainstream Lutheran" theology is incommensurable with it. Of course, the word "commensurable" does not indicate any consensus; it means that confrontation is possible since there are common topics and a common discussion level. But if one does not share any common topics, one simply does not understand what one's opponent is saying; one remains indifferent because one's theology is incommensurable with that of one's opponent.

The thought experiment consists of five dogmatic issues: eschatology, death, salvation, sanctification, and ecclesiology. In regard to all of these, a comparison can be made between three ideal types, i.e. "New Age", "Pietism" and "mainstream Lutheran".

1. In regard to eschatology, pietists traditionally stress the chiliast or millennialist view, i.e. that before the end of the world there will be a New Era, a better future when Christ rules with the righteous. Mainstream Lutherans have rejected chiliasm, since it was condemned in the Augsburg Confession (art. 17). The idea of immanent chiliasm connects pietistic eschatology with the New Age movement.

2. As for the theology of death, Luther's criticism of the doctrine of purgatory led to speculation concerning the conscious existence of the human soul after the death of the body being rejected by the mainstream Lutherans. But in Pietism the doctrine of the immortal soul has prompted the supposition of an intermediate state between death and resurrection. This intermediary state to some extent corresponds to the idea of the migration of souls in the New Age movement.

3. Concerning salvation, individual conversion is central to pietism, whereas mainstream Lutheranism preaches that salvation begins in baptism and continues in the lifelong religious education. The idea of conscious individual conversion (as opposed to institutionalized education) is shared by the New Age movement.

4. The steps or stages towards salvation are often described by the Pietists in terms of sanctification, whereas Lutheranism in general regards the person as "righteous and sinful at the same time" and remains critical of the view of gradual sanctification. In the New Age, the idea of the deification of individuals through contemplation and new consciousness bears an analogy to the Christian idea of sanctification.

5. The Pietists stress the primacy of a small community of born-again individuals (ecclesiola in ecclesia), whereas official Lutheranism has adopted the view that no distinction should be

drawn between baptized members of the church. In the esoteric tradition, too, new consciousness is normally limited to a small elite which is distinguished from the ignorant majority.

These five comparisons should be taken with a grain of salt, since they of course simplify the complex dogmatic issues. I nevertheless think that there exists, in metaphorical terms, a theological territory occupied by both Pietists and New Agers but inaccessible to mainstream Lutherans. Within this territory, discussions concerning the expectation of a better future, new consciousness, individual commitment, sanctification, and the separation of a small group from the world are essential for the ideological self-understanding of the group. Of course, pietists and New Agers do not agree with each other; but the Pietists demarcate their boundaries rather aggressively just because they occupy the same domain as the New Agers. Mainstream Lutherans, however, seem to belong to a totally different theological continent.

At the Ryttylä Congress my thought experiment was received critically by Finnish Pietists and evangelicals. They stressed their commitment to "traditional" Lutheran orthodoxy and claimed that their criticism of the New Age movement has nothing to do with their own theological identity but is simply a response to the present-day challenge of the new religious movements. I defended my thought experiment by holding that it can be understood as an implicit mentality, conditioned by the 300-year history of Finnish Pietism, in which today's explicit theology only represents a part of the implicit heritage which carries the movement through history. I further referred to the historical connections between Pietism and esoteric traditions.

Erkki Koskenniemi, Th. D.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND ITS CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY, COSMOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Some backgrounding aspects for the New-Age-discussion

The original theme for these Bible-studies was to show, how the origins of the New-Age-movement appear in the New Testament. There is, however, several grounds, which make it impossible to me to response to this challenge. The definintion of the whole modern movement is unclear, and allthough at least some groups seem today to be eager to recognize their ancestors in ancient movements, supposing a continuous history of the New-Age-movement would need a wide argumentation, which is here not possible.

The aim of these studies is to offer backgrounding aspects for the New-Age-discussion. Allthough a continuous history of a movement, here understood somewhat vaguely as appearance of oriental thought and religiosity in the modern western world, is not supposed, the modern phenomen actualicizes clearly some theo-logical, cosmological and anthropological doctrines, which were current in the mission-field of the early Church. No doubt it is useful to study as well the Old-Testament background of the Christian belief as the pagan teaching which the first Christians saw impossible to combine with the apostolic faith.

Some theological aspects

1. Atheism.

The theoretical atheism was in the ancient world rare, though not unknown.¹ Of far more importance was the practical atheism,

¹ Denial of the gods might mean atheism in the modern sense or a distaste for pagan mythology compatible with deep religious faith, see W.K.C. Guthrie "Atheism", Oxford Classical Dictionary, 2. ed. Oxford 1968, p. 138.

especially that of the Epicurean school: The gods neither pay attention to men nor need their service. The Epicureans, who are mentioned by Luke, shared the view of the Lucan Paul that gods don't live in temples (Act 17). The preaching of Paul led to a confrontation, but the Epicurean atheism is neither here nor elsewhere directly criticised in the New Testament.

2. Polytheism

The polytheism in the Greco-Roman world in the time of apostles had little to do with the ancient Homeric pantheon. Philosophical schools with various rationalistic speculations on divinity, sanctuaries with a cult of a single god or goddess and new, exotic cults from the eastern parts of the Mediterranean had made the religious world heterogen and flexible. Foreign cults were adopted in western parts of the Roman Imperium and the new gods were partly identified with national cults. Thus, for example, Jupiter was identified with Zeus and (Jupiter) Ammon. The Jewish cult of God was thought to be an odd form of the cult of supreme god. There was certainly no meaning of a sacrilege, when Antiochos IV Epifanes sacrificed to Zeus in the temple of Jerusalem, but the Jewish reaction of the syncretistic cult was the Maccabean revolt.²

In the criticism of the polytheism the New Testament follows the line of the Old. The cult of pagan gods shows the blindness of the nations (Rom 1). Their power depends on the service of man - they are not gods by the nature (Gal 4:8).³ The Thessalians rejected the idols and started to wait for Christ (1 Thess 1:9-10). The critique of the Lucan Paul (Acts 17), in accordance with the cited passages, shows, that the first Christs were atheists with a single exception: They served the only God, the Creator.⁴

² On the Maccabean revolt see Uriel Rappaport, "Maccabean revolt", *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 4 (1992), 433-439.

³ The idols were not Gods "by the nature, *fysei*", but by "*thesei*", by a convention of men, see Jukka Thurén, *Galatalaiskirje ja Filippiläiskirje*, Hämeenlinna 1993, p. 68.

⁴ The Christians were regarded as atheists, *Mart. Polyc.* 9.

But there is also another line in the New Testament, partly side with side with the first one: The idololatriy is not only unreasonable and inept, but also cult of demons. The "throne of Satan" in Rev. 2:13 points to a Pagan temple. Although the pagan gods ar not real (1 Cor 10:19), their servants offer to demons (1 Cor 10:20-21) and are in possession of superhuman powers (1 Cor 12:2).

In spite of the variation in the argumentation the main line is strong enough: The cult of pagan gods is strictly forbidden and closes the door of the Heaven (1 Cor 6:9; Gal 5:19-21; Rev 21:8)

3. Magic

Magic has been practised in the ancient world as long as we can see.⁵ While it once could be understood as a form of "lower religiosity" and as typical for lower classes of the society, going to develope towards the "higher religions", the modern research as well as modern experiences show the weakness of this Darwinistic view.⁶ As well masters of literature (Theocrit, Vergil) as Caesars (Septimius Severus) had a strong intresting on magic. A part of it was strictly forbidden and sacrilege, a part was exciting and suitable for all - but drawing the line between these parts was too hard for many and became even harder during the first centuries AD, the golden age of the magic.

The New Testament shows, that the first Christians gave no place for magic in their parishes. The magical books were burned in Ephesus (Acts 19:17-20) and the practice of magic is strictly forbidden in Gal 5:20; 2 Tim 3:13 and Rev 18:23; 21:8).

⁵ The archeological evidence shows the practice of the magic already in the Cretan culture thousands of years B.C. On the evindence and develope of magic see Koskenniemi 1993, 224-226.

⁶ On evolutionism see James Waller - Mary Edwardson, "Evolutionism", The encyclopedia of religion 5 (1987), 214-218; on the problem of defining magic David E. Aune, "Magic in early Christianity", Aufstieg und Niedergang des römischen Reichs 2.23.2. (1980), 1507-1550, esp. 1514-1516.

4. Denying the Son of God

Although there also was pagans, who served one single Divinity, but denied Jesus Christ,⁷ the critique of the New Testament runs against Jews. Especially the Johannine literature draws the line clearly. Who doesn't listen to the Son send by the Father is not from God (John 8). According to 1 John is Christ the real God and denying that means idololatry (1 John 5:20-21).⁸ 2 John tells to close the doors in front of the false teachers, and Rev speaks about the people, who says that they are Jews but are not (3:9).

Seeking New Testament material for the dialogue with the New Age-movement we hardly can stress enough the exclusiveness of the Christian belief in the New Testament. It has often been an overlooked article in the modern mission-theology, but for the first Christians Christ was not only a way, but the only way to the salvation.

Some cosmological aspects

In the pre-Christian ancient world, like world-wide, the all has been understood in two ways. The *monism* sees the all as an one, undivided unity, the *dualism* separates it in a way or other in two parts. Both ways were common in the mission-field of the apostolic age. No doubt it is useful to study shortly the main lines of the Graeco-Roman thought and the early Christian response to them.

⁷ Some Greek philosophers, ex.g. Xenophanes, criticized strongly the anthropomorphic view on Gods and served one, invisible Divinity as the only Divinity. Also Platon and Aristoteles knew a supreme Divinity, but no one Pagan writer denied the existence of lower divine beings, see Gerhard Rubach, "Monotheismus", *Der kleine Pauly* 3 (1979), 1416-1417.

⁸ See the comment of Horst Balz, *Das Neue Testament Deutsch* 10 (1980), 210.

1. The monism and dualism in the ancient world

The **monism** had a strong position in the very early beginnings of the Greek philosophy. The Jonian nature philosophy in Asia was by its nature monistic. There is no authentic scriptures of the early philosophers, and the early tradition has shaped the short sayings we have. Thus Thales himself hardly saw the water an ontological element, of which the world consists, nor did he himself say, that the all is plenty of deity, but these thoughts were soon attributed to him.⁹ Certainly his followers Anaximander and Anaximenes seeked an element, of which the whole world consists, and Empedocles went on in this way.¹⁰

In the hellenistic and imperial period the monistic system were taught by the very strong Stoic school. In this view, there was a series of worlds, being once exhaled out by Divinity and going to be inhaled in and destroyed in fire (*ekpyrosis*) by him again. The ideal life for a man was to live *kata fysin*, in accordance with the nature, because in the pantheistic view the divinity was nature and nature was divinity.¹¹

Also **dualism** appears in the Greek philosophy with the first literary sources. About Pythagoras himself we only can see the shadow of the giant, but what we can reach is the later Pythagorean tradition. While Pythagoras himself certainly taught reincarnation, the reflexed ontological dualism and doctrine on the body as a prison of the soul seem to be of later origin.¹²

⁹ S. Heinrich Dörrie, "Thales", Der kleine Pauly 5 (1979), 644-645.

¹⁰ Anaximenes found the air, Anaximander the *apeiron*, Empedocles four elements, earth, air, fire and water. S. Heinrich Dörrie, "Anaximenes", Der kleine Pauly 1 (1979), 339-340, "Anaximandros", Der kleine Pauly 1 (1979), 339 and "Emepedokles", Der kleine Pauly 2 (1979), 258-260.

¹¹ On the Stoic system see Thomas Schmeller, "Stoic, Stoicism", The Anchor Bible Dictionary 6 (1992), p. 210-214 and Heinrich Dörrie, "Stoa", Der kleine Pauly 5 (1979), p. 376-378.

¹² S. Heinrich Dörrie, "Pythagoras" und "Pythagoreer", Der kleine Pauly 4 (1979), p. 1264-1270 and 1270-1272.

The most important form of the ontological dualism in the classical Greece was Platonism. The separation of the divine soul and earthen body has since the *Phaedo* of Plato been one of the main problems in the western philosophy.

Not only the dualism of the Greek philosophies but also the eastern religiosity influenced the Mediterranean. Especially the Persian Zoroasterism with its strong division between God and Satan, good and evil, light and darkness, heaven and hell forced ex.g. the exiled Jews in Babylon to react on the new teaching.

In the mission field of the first Christians the dualistic view was also taught by Gnostics. The roots and the date of origin of the Gnosticism has been lively discussed without unanimity, but it seems to be a adulterous child of Jewish wisdom and pagan religiosity, in Christian period with strong Christian influences, and we have little evidence on a pre-Christian Gnosis.¹³ Being already in the ancient world a heterogen movement the Gnosticism is hard to define today, but there is no reason to speak about "Gnosticism" without two important elements, namely without strong dualistic separation between body and soul and without *gnosis*, the knowledge, who leads the soul to the freedom.

2. Old testament

It is not possible to draw here a representative picture of the rich Old Testament cosmology, but there is no difficulty to find the main line: There is a separation between the Creator and the Creature, and the whole created All serves the Creator. The Psalmist doesn't hesitate to sing to Sun like Pagan poets to Sun-god in Psalm 19 - but the psalm starts with words "The heavens declare the glory of God" and ends with a praise of the Torah,

¹³ On the history of research see Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, Darmstadt 1975 (Wege der Forschung 262) and Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, London 1983. Shorter views on theme Herbert Marwitz, "Gnosis, Gnostiker", *Der kleine Pauly* 2 (1979), p. 830-839 and Kurt Rudolph, "Gnosticism", *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 2 (1992), 1033-1040.

because no man can understand the praise of all without the help of the Scriptures.¹⁴ The Creature is not a part of Divinity, and together with God's people it praises the Creator (Ps 148). This is neither monism nor Platonistic dualism, but belief on God the Creator.

The youngest parts of the Old Testament show clearly the reflexion of the Jews on the Persian dualism. The answer on the reality of evil and on the fight between God and Satan was found in the allmighty of God.¹⁵

3. The monism and the New Testament

Surprising enough, there is no detailed section against the monism in the New Testament. In the contrary, the Lucan Paul could use very Stoic and pantheistic words in his Areopagean sermon (Acts 17) and cite without any critique the words of the Stoic Aratus (v. 28-29). Why? There is only one answer: The monism, though strong in the classical antiquity, was not an actual heresy in the early Christianity. Because of the strong, Old Testament background the belief on God the Creator was for the first Christians self-clear. That's why the Lucan Paul could in his criticism against the idololatri use some Stoic slogans in meaning to make his critique understable. Such an overcoming of a border is by ex. g. idololatri, which was an actual heresy, in the New Testament wholly unthinkable.

4. The dualism and the New Testament

If the monism seems to have been far enough to be harmless, the fight against gnostic dualism was characterical for the history of

¹⁴ See Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Die Psalmen*, 6. Aufl. Neukirchen-Vluyn 1989, p. 297-307. *Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament* 15,1

¹⁵ See ex.g. Carol A. Newsom, "Angels (Old Testament)", *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1 (1992), p. 248-253.

the early Church.¹⁶ The Johannine literature shows the course of history in one Christian tradition.

The Gospel of John doesn't draw a sharp line against the Gnosticism: On the other hand there was verses which made John the favorite Gospel of the Gnostics, esp. the prologue (1:1-18). On the other hand, a Gnostic teacher could hardly say that God loved the World, *kosmos* (3:16). These parallel sayings show that the Gnosticism was not an actual heresy in the Church who read John. The situation is totally changed in 1 John who rejects the consequences of the Gnostic cosmology by the Christology. 2 John gives only one solution to the disagreement with the Gnostic teachers: The doors are to be closed in front of them.

Some anthropological aspects

1. Forbidding sexuality and marriage

Because of its dualistic cosmology the Gnosticism could not recognize the good Creator behind the creation. To be born in the world doesn't mean a happiness, but a misfortune, because a glimmer of light went to the prison in the body. The worst in a human being was his sexuality, not only because of affects, but especially because of the birth of a new child. 2 Tim 2:8-19, which seems so odd in the eyes of many modern readers, tells surprising much about a confrontation with a heresy.¹⁷

Reading the text rises many questions. Who says, the woman has to be a sovereign ruler over her husband (*authentein*)? Who tells, that Eve was created at first and first then Adam? Has some said, that Adam was betrayed and not Eve? And what means "by the birth of the child"?

¹⁶ For example the stressing of the universal aspect Colossians is to be understood against that background, see Werner Georg Kümmel, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 21. Aufl. Heidelberg 1983. 300-302.

¹⁷ Exegesis by Jukka Thurén, "Keskukselua herättänyt rajoitus alkukristillisessä kirkkojärjestyksessä", *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 81 (1976), p. 307-317.

A Nag Hammadi text named *Apocryphon of John* shows a Gnostic view on prehistory of the mankind and it contents a clear program for women. According to that text there was in the beginning no world nor mankind. Adam and Eve were spiritual beings. Eve was created first and ruled over Adam. A creator-demon named Jaldabaot betrayed Adam, who seduced Eve who became pregnant. After the sin had so brought the first men into world, Adam started to rule over his wife. The original good order was soon forgotten, and now the daughters of Eve have to restore it, rule over their husbands and stop the sexual life. So - but only so - a woman becomes a being of a high rank.

Maybe the writer of 2 Tim never saw the *Apocryphon of John*, but his text seems to be an answer to the Gnostic teaching. Adam was created at first, Eve was betrayed and the women in parishes should not pay attention to the Gnostic teachings. By getting married and bearing children ("through childbearing") a woman showed her belief in God the Creator. Bearing children doesn't bring salvation, but the confessed belief who took shape in her action ("if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety").

Marriage and sexuality are defended also in 1 Tim 4:1-5 and seems to have been a usual topic in the confrontation with the Gnostics. In the history of the Church has the line between the heresy and the belief on Creator seldom been drawn so sharply as in Pastoral Epistles. The fruits of this theological work have no doubt much to offer for the modern discussion.

2. Denying the resurrection of the body

A well known unanimity concerning the resurrection of the body divided the views of the Sadducees and Pharisees. Whereas the Sadducean party could not find the resurrection in the Tora, their only source of belief, the Pharisees could find it by Isaiah (26:14) and Daniel (12:2). Soon before the Christian mission the belief on the Resurrection, a indispensable part of the Apostolic belief (see 1 Cor 15!), was a well-known - and contempered - article. The Pagan religiosity could understand the eternity of

the soul and the reincarnation, but any speech of the resurrection of the soul was pure foolishness.

3. Humiliating an man, created by God

Confessing God the Creator of every human being the early Church had to confront and attack many very different views. From that point the Apostolic belief attacked homosexuality (Rom 1), and waited for a new Creation, already visible in a baptized man (2 Cor 5:17). Although it is not possible to describe all the reflections from the basic view, one consequence need to be mentioned: A man, created by God, may not be humiliated or pressed. Neither poverty (Jac 2:1-7) nor a low social status (1 Cor 11:17; Philm) form to a man a ground to be contempted and rejected. And although man and female members of the Church have different duties, their equality is clear expressed in Gal 3:28 and 1 Peter 3:7.

4. Man and sin

At least since Hesiodos' view of different ages running one after other,¹⁸ a pessimistic view on the future of mankind is documented in the Greco-Roman Culture. Also the heterogen Jewish belief could contain elements like the supreme punishment. In spite of that the Christian teaching on man and sin meant a novum in the classical antiquity.

According to Paul in a Christian goes a fight between his "old self" and "new self". The old self, a man without God's saving grace, has been buried in the baptism and is buried with Christ (Rom 6). The "new self" means his new status as Christian, redeemed by God. Christian life is that a Christian draws consequences from his new status, "puts off his old self and puts on the new self" (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10). This anthropological pattern causes thousands of consequences every day.

¹⁸ Erg 106-201.

The most part as well of the western as the eastern Christianity have interpreted Rom 7 pointing to the man **before** his conversion, and today a strong majority of exegetes argue for this view. In spite of that, I see no reason for a Lutheran theology to revise its classical interpretation, that Rom 7 points to a Christian **after** his Christianization.¹⁹ The life in this world means for a Christian fight against sin (Gal 5:16-17), to which Paul hopes an end (1 Cor 15:54-57).

Gathering reflections

The confrontation of the New-Age-Movement means for the Christianity of our time a challenge, which is partly a didactic one: How to teach the members of Church the Christian view in a modern world? In my opinion we should now concentrate us to three basic truths of the Christian belief:

- 1) There is a division between the Creator and the Created. Neither is our God a part of the earth, nor is the earth a part of Divinity. The Divinity is not to be found inside of a man, but in the Bible and Sacrament.
- 2) The main problem in the relationship between man and God is not a lacking knowledge or a defective understanding of strange powers, but sin and blindness.
- 3) Christ is not only a way but the only way to God and salvation. Giving up the exclusive nature of the apostolic faith means opening doors for the New Age -movement.

¹⁹ A new, careful and important study on theme by Timo Laato, Paulus und das Judentum. Anthropologische Erwägungen. Åbo 1991, esp. p. 137-184.

Raimo Mäkelä

DOCTRINAL ELEMENTS IN "NEW AGE" THINKING

1. Who really knows what the "New Age" is all about?

The big formal and external problem of the so-called New Age (NA) concerns its definition. The NA phenomenon seems to be varied, not uniform. It has been argued that there is a world-wide, centralized and well-led underground organization behind it. However, at least until now this has been difficult to prove. Instead, NA is more a line of thought and experience, a trend and a tendency than a clear, systematic organization.

Therefore it is difficult for critical outsiders to catch the main points of NAM (= New Age Movement) and easy for insiders to defend the movement, because they can always refute all detailed criticism and charges against it by saying that the target of the critics is wrong. Therefore, NAM is also able to mask itself and find its way to the most diversive connections, even into the Christian church. In any case, NAM is widely spreading, infiltrating and networking. Its adherents experience a sense of belonging together and support and encourage each other by exchanging information in many ways. Even if there were no external organization, yet there is a certain internal coherent view of reality and life with its practical applications, and this fact justifies speaking of a movement that can be defined in its main ideas.

Therefore, it is also justifiable to turn the point-of-view of especially the Christian criticism upside down: Within a certain, relatively wide frame of reference (excluding of course e.g. Communism and Islam), everything deviating from the Christian faith in certain main points belongs to NA thinking, although many details are very varied and multiform. The view of reality, God, Jesus, man and ethics is essential here.

The ancient ancestress of NA, the Gnosticism from the time of the early church, can be defined in the same way. NA is historically seen as a modern, western rebirth of old Gnosticism.

2. View of reality and concept of god belong together and imply each other

Nihilism says: There is nothing. There are, however, two basic forms of nihilism. Absolute nihilism argues: Really nothing exists. Not many people have actually thought like this, and in practice it is very difficult, if not impossible to defend such a view. Instead, more common is relative or partial nihilism: Something exists (e.g. world, nature, man, matter), but the existence of something else is denied (e.g. spirit, God).

The concept of god corresponding to nihilism is atheism: There is no god. Atheism is a rather rare belief in humankind generally and has become a belief of the masses relatively late, beginning in the Age of the Enlightenment and reaching its climax in Communism.

The monistic view of reality says: There is only one (principle, basic and constitutive factor). One(ness) is all, everything is one (and not many). However, there are of course many different forms of monism. One main distinction is between materialism and spiritualism: only matter resp. spirit exists and matters. Outwardly, materialism and spiritualism seem to be the extreme opposites, but under the surface they are similar views of reality. Both presuppose only oneness.

The concept of god corresponding to monism can be atheism: There is no place for any "god" different from the solely existing matter resp. spirit. It can also be and most often is pantheism: God is everything and in everything. Everything is divine. There is no distinction between the divine and the "other" reality: "God" is only a religious name for the reality, which may be used if needed or omitted if superfluous. Thirdly, even deism can reflect a monistic world view: God is a separate initiator and abandoner of the so-called creation, which then exists without him, with no need

or knowledge of him. Theism - a belief in a personal God - can also be based upon monism.

Pluralism assumes that the basic reality is many (constitutive factors and principles) and multiple, multiform, manifold and diverse. There is no real coherence.

In religion pluralism manifests itself both in polytheism, which assumes and perhaps worships many gods, and in atheism: there is no god giving any existence, coherence, meaning and value to the manifold reality.

3. The New Age view of reality is all-unity

The basic, unifying tenet of NA is its philosophically monistic and religiously pantheistic view of reality. Its paradigm is very old: one and all in Greek to hen kai pan are the same. There is neither real separation nor real distinction nor difference between beings. If there seems to be such, it is only a sick, unreal illusion. Thus we are neither allowed nor able to try to distinguish between subject and object, reality and fantasy, God and man, God and nature, nature and man, man and woman, good and evil, right and wrong etc.

In terms of world view, NA can be defined as spiritualism = immaterialism = spiritualistic or immaterialistic monism. As such it must be critical of and reject the Biblical view of reality. The two are incompatible.

4. Why all-unity as a world view does not correspond with reality?

If we say: "One is all" and: "All is one", we use concepts - all and one - which are at any rate different and diverse. If they mean the same, no different and diverse concepts are needed. The same is true of concepts like God and man and all the so-called transcendental pairs: true - untrue, good - evil, right - wrong, beautiful - ugly. As transcendental words their content is empty:

everybody fills them with a content he himself puts in them. Yet in every language they are totally unambiguous words: Everyone understands what is meant by good and its contrast, evil, even if all would totally disagree upon what is good and what is evil.

If only oneness is real, then what is the differentiated external world? Is it only an illusion? If the world is not real, but an illusion, then also all knowledge about the world and all activities in the world must be illusions. Science and politics can have no real basis then.

If only oneness is reality, we cannot distinguish between fact and fantasy. Laotse asked: "If I, when sleeping, was a man dreaming to be a butterfly, how can I know that I, being awake, am not a butterfly dreaming to be a man?"

A monistic view of reality easily leads to abandoning the value of both the person and the individual. D. T. Suzuki says: "The goal of Zen is not incarnation but excarnation." Alan Watts thinks that the Eastern answer for personality is not so much solution as dissolution. These thoughts are compatible with NA thinking and actually represent it.

In fact, we experience hegemony and dominance on the one side and secondariness and subordination on the other side. It shows that our experience does not say that all is one and one is all. There is always someone or something dominating - if not man, then woman, if not God, then man, if not good, then evil. A complete balance does not nor cannot exist.

We also experience a deep distinction between good and evil, if not in our evil towards others, then in their evil towards us. Francis A. Schaeffer tells in his book *The God Who Is There*: "One day I was talking to a group of people in the digs of a young South African in Cambridge. Among others, there was present a young Indian who was of Sikh background but a Hindu by religion. He started to speak strongly against Christianity, but did not really understand the problems of his own beliefs. So I said, 'Am I not correct in saying that on the basis of your system, cruelty and

non-cruelty are ultimately equal, that there is no intrinsic difference between them?' He agreed. The people who listened and knew him as a delightful person, an 'English gentleman' of the very best kind, looked up in amazement. But the student, in whose room we met, who had clearly understood the implications of what the Sikh had admitted, picked up his kettle of boiling water with which he was about to make tea, and stood with it steaming over the Indian's head. The man looked up and asked him what he was doing and he said, with a cold yet gentle finality, 'There is no difference between cruelty and non-cruelty.' Thereupon the Hindu walked out into the night."

Not all people appreciate themselves, either. We can cause ourselves harm, too. There are self-reproach, self-punishment, sense of one's own worthlessness, i.e. one's evil towards oneself, which is experienced as bad or in any case as pain (masochism).

The world is not a balanced place to live in, but it causes us many problems which we feel and think we should be able to solve in practice.

Finally, the notion of all-unity does not accept the Biblical revelation of God's trinity and all its dimensions and implications.

5. The Christian view of reality is 'tri-unity' = Trinity

According to God's self-revelation the ultimate reality is distinctive unity. This unity is in God himself: God is both one and three at the same time within himself. There is a clear distinction between God's unity and trinity, but there is no separation between them.

The distinctive unity also exists in the world. The world is created by God outside himself but with him being continuously present in the world. God is neither the world nor a part of it. He is simultaneously outside the world and inside it, and the world is face to face with God. The world consists of matter and spirit

at the same time. They are not the same thing. You can and must distinguish between them, but you cannot separate them from each other.

The structure and state of man are in some sense similar to those of the world: man is facing God as his image, as nature (matter, body) and spirit (soul) at the same time. The body is very valuable: it will be resurrected, too.

Jesus Christ is both God and man, i.e. God-man (Theanthropos). His divine and human natures are 'unconfused', immutable, indivisible and inseparable, but distinctive.

Distinctions belong to the nature of God himself and his work. Everything has been created to be distinctive and to reflect the distinction in God's own being.

Separations are due to man's fall and sin. There is an absolute separation between God and Satan. Through and because of man's fall there is a gulf and a chasm between man and nature, man and man, man and woman, man and society, man and his self, man and God. The ultimate separation was between God and his only Son in his suffering and death under God's wrath instead of man, which was deliberately chosen by God himself, not by man. Good and evil, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly are separate things but in relation to each other.

In the sinful world God rules simultaneously with his law and his Gospel. There is a distinction between them: they are 'unconfused'. But they are also inseparable.

He who believes in Jesus Christ as his Saviour is at the same time sinful in his own nature and righteous in his faith in Jesus until the end of his life on earth. His sinfulness and righteousness cannot be separated from each other in his person, but they are distinct matters in him.

Raimo Mäkelä

WHY IS NEW AGE OF INTEREST TO FINLAND?

1. What is 'New Age' about?

'New Age' is a comprehensive, holistic view of reality: nature, man, health, psyche, community, society, politics, education, economics, religion, godhead, spirituality.

'New Age' is a monistic view of reality: all is one and the same with no real, essential difference, distinction or separation.

'New Age' understands all-unity to be spiritual, feminine and motherly in the end.

'New Age' view of reality has also a religious dimension: in the end man is divine.

The practical 'New Age' attitude towards life is hedonistic: pleasure is to be accepted and sought.

'New Age' is not (only) philosophy, but also a way of life.

'New Age' has eastern origins and images.

'New Age' is absorbing a western way of life without losing its basically eastern nature.

'New Age' is revitalizing old folk religions and cults.

'New Age' is syncretistic and tolerant towards different religious thought within its own frame-work, but intolerant towards intolerant religiosity.

'New Age' is born-again Gnosticism.

'New Age' is human and religious.

2. Why would and should 'New Age' not be of interest to Finland?

Finland has had a relatively long theoretically materialistic, naturalistic and in part atheistic heritage from Marxism and also partly from the labour movement with German roots.

Finland has also exhibited the attitude of western capitalism, i.e. practical materialism.

In addition, we have a strong rationalistic tradition since the Enlightenment.

Especially the older generation has a very strong experience of poverty, suffering, anxiety and war. To a great extent, this has characterized life in practice and led to emphasize realism and the positive value of work.

The heritage of the Christian faith and the Lutheran church has had a deep influence upon the view of reality, the concept of God and morality.

The Christian and Lutheran view of reality reckons with creation (out of nothing), the beginning, meaning, purpose, the end, judgement, a personal God; and a personal relation between God and man.

The Christian and Lutheran concept of God reckons with a personal God, providence, the Bible, and perhaps a sense of grace and forgiveness.

The Christian and Lutheran morality reckons with a sense of a sharp difference between right and wrong, the obligation to do good, love towards one's neighbour, the obligation to work, God's ten commandments (honouring authorities, accepting even strong limitations in sexual behaviour, honouring other people's property). These moral principles have also led to distortions: legalism and perhaps an over-emphasized sense of duty and guilt.

These are at least some main factors that as such have not been preparing the soil for 'New Age' thinking. However, at the same time some of these factors have been working to an opposite direction, too, so that people have wanted to find something new to replace the old.

3. 'New Age' is a partly welcome reaction and contrast to the old

'New Age' offers a holistic view of reality instead of a fragmentary one.

'New Age' claims to give a whole view of man replacing a split one.

'New Age' emphasizes emotion and art instead of reason and science.

'New Age' favours and supports women, the feminine and the motherly instead of men, the masculine and the fatherly.

'New Age' prefers romanticism and pleasure (la dolce vita) to realism and self-denial.

'New Age' thinking and life-style are antinomian, not legalistic.

'New Age' is open to supersensual, transcendental experience instead of mere and limited immanentism.

'New Age' regards nature as divine and sacred instead of exploiting it.

'New Age' encourages a return to nature instead of urbanization.

'New Age' makes man divine instead of the incarnation of God in one unique God-Man.

In 'New Age' the religiosity of man replaces the unique and once-for-all propositional revelation of God.

There is an old ground for 'New Age' in Finnish folklore and popular belief, spell, charm, nature healing, magic, e.g. in Kalevala.

4. Social changes also produce a good soil for 'New Age'

The world is at the same both dwindling and widening culturally because of modern technology, especially communications technology. Very different people and persons with very different cultures, ideas, thoughts, views, religions, life-styles and experiences are able to encounter each other.

There is much and increased contact between East and West in culture and religion both commonly and personally.

Modern western culture is very complicated and chaotic.

The modern western society is urban and remote from nature, natural life and personal human relationships.

The modern western society is affluent.

In the area of thinking truth has died.

The influence of the Christian faith has strongly decreased in traditionally Christian countries and cultures.

5. The change in theology and in the church is a prerequisite for 'New Age'

In theology and in the church there is no more a thought of God's transcendental personal reality. Theology has become atheistic.

In theology and in the church the authority of God's propositional revelation, i.e. the Bible, is neither acknowledged nor accepted anymore.

In theology and in the church there is neither a theoretical idea nor a practical sense and experience of the reality of the radical evil and a personal Devil.

Academic theologians and church leaders and members have no more personal or common experience of the reality of a living personal God.

Marja-Liisa Somiska

HELPING VICTIMS AND ITS RESULTS

1. Who are the 'Victims of Religion'?

Victims of religion are persons who have been caught up in the sphere of influence of religious organizations and who by participating in their activities have fallen into emotional or economic difficulties. Secondary victims are close friends and relatives of the person who has become involved with the organization.

The 'Victims of Religion' has been in operation since 1987 and the 'Victims of Scientology' since 1991. 'Support for Victims of Religion' was registered as an association at the beginning of this year (1993). It includes former members of Christian-based and Hindu-based groups and of ideologically uncommitted alternative medicine and therapy movements. At present there are approximately 100 members, and over the years several hundred people have contacted the link-persons of the support organization. One of the largest groups comprises victims of scientology, the association having approximately twenty members. The association meets about once a month in Helsinki on the premises of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission and offers the victims a forum for discussion of current issues. In addition, the association arranges lectures and engages in dialogue between the various movements and gives religious consumer education concerning the risks related to religion.

The personal experiences of victims of religion show clearly that religions can serve varied interests: personal exercise of power, a sense of community, strict commitment and financial exploitation. Common factors involved in subjugating victims' minds can be found in the personal stories of victims in a short book to be published in the autumn by the "Religion and Mental Health" working group. In many cases victims have told that they were subconsciously so confused and at the mercy of ready-made opinions and strict

dogmatism that under pressure they were not able to rely on their own judgment and power to break the circle. Only gradually did most realize that they had made a wrong choice. The victim perceived that the religious group does not allow room for personal development and growth. If one nevertheless obtained the approval of the group by adapting, one gradually lost a grip on one's very self. This has caused problems. The human mind naturally possesses a sense of worth and pride in one's infallibility. When one has to admit one's errors and disappointment to oneself and one's close relatives and friends, one's self-esteem is under great strain due to the fear of being branded and rejected. Personal support and help is essential in such cases, enabling a person to grieve, and helping the person in need to get onto his or her own feet and later help others. Those who have experienced the same fate are best able to understand one another without doubting the reality of others' experience. This happens only too often when a victim in distress turns for help to a professional or to the authorities. He or she is not understood or believed, and freeing oneself from the destructive group becomes more difficult or is unsuccessful. He or she cannot manage alone without support. In particular ex-scientologists find it difficult to protect themselves from public disgrace. When one is brought to financial ruin one's mental health is also seriously threatened. This is psychological fraud contrary to the happiness and freedom marketed by scientology, and in addition it offends against human rights.

Recently victims of religion have been contacted by victims of religions based on Hinduism and by victims of therapy religions. Those who join such groups are offered the opportunity through rituals and cults to make direct contact with the reality of the beyond through powerful experiences and sensations. Such experiences are achieved under the leadership of gurus in a state of trance or in some other context in which the balance of soul and body is put to the test. People involved with such groups experience great distress and pain and many tell that they were filled with evil spirits when they all unawares invited demonic powers into their inner being through repeating the mantra during meditation. They have further told of their experiences of the powers of darkness dwelling in them and of having entirely lost the

joy of living. In addition, their families or close friends have told of being the target of the same kind of attack by spirits. Then the help offered by the 'Victims of Religion' is that of listening, being present and understanding the person in distress. Many have tried every possible means, from pastoral counselling to healing meetings and mental health clinics, without receiving any substantial help.

The new religions apply methods to newcomers and members by which their minds and wills are subjugated and controlled. The outsider and uninitiated find it very difficult to understand the strange features and influences related to techniques of mind control. Losing money is a concrete matter and understandable to everyone, but when one talks of the human mind, of taking possession of it and controlling it, to many it seems incomprehensible. This method has been studied by Steven Hassan in his book "Combatting cult mind control". In order to help such a person in distress, one must know the group and the methods it uses and believe the person without making him or her feel guilty and without expressing doubts. The victims' organization is an important provider of first aid. By contrast, the help which the victim needs in rectifying psychological or financial problems is provided by advising people to turn to their lawyers and mental health clinic. The religion and mental health working group has issued an initiative that a consultative bank composed of representatives of religious groups should be founded as part of the Finnish Mental Health Society. This bank can organize the provision of a support person for those coming for help to the mental health clinic or health centre, or provide further information on religious matters for doctors and nurses. An internal "grumblers'" telephone for religious groups is necessary, in the view of the working group, to enable people to give vent to their oppressive and bottled up feelings.

The resources of the victims' support association rest on the shoulders of two to five people. I myself answer telephone messages left on my answering machine at home, I send the victims the material they request and I keep in contact with other members. The work is sometimes very hard after one's daily job without any financial support. Telephone, postage, books, translation material

and other bills remain to be paid. The victims' organization cannot continue to function for long without financial resources and the help of others. Such co-operation, e.g. with the local church and those in charge of the crisis service, should begin immediately. Help should be obtained in spreading information: literature and translations. It would be fruitful in future to arrange various lectures and discussions on the subject at universities and open colleges, and on television broadcasts, to inform young people and the elderly through church work, etc. Religion has been replaced by the substitutes of the new religions, and people easily clutch at them when they are in urgent need. For this reason we need 1) religious consumer education, which tells beforehand of the risks involved in religion and 2) dialogue between the different new religions.

The victims' organization has maintained contact with the corresponding organization in Sweden - FRI. The field of work is sufficient to initiate co-operation with corresponding organizations elsewhere. Today our existing insignificant resources are insufficient to help people in their distress, but we need a dialogue centre on the Danish model to work with.

There will be sufficient tasks to occupy us. In my opinion, it is important to warn of the dangers where people can be damaged psychologically and financially and to ensure by means of legislation that such activities are prevented. Every doctor can be brought to account for what he does in his work as a doctor. For this reason it must be made possible to intervene in those cases of injustice caused by the methods of the new religions (e.g. scientology) which entirely lack a scientific basis.

The victims' organization has furthered the spread of information on new religions and offered a friendly gesture to those in urgent need. That we help people to return to normal life and be rehabilitated demands co-operation from all quarters. In human life there is no greater task than relieving the distress of a neighbour. In his parable of the Final Judgment Jesus sets up as the only yardstick of life that of how a person has related to his

suffering neighbour. This is the most important and greatest task we share. Let us make sure it succeeds!

Hannu Sorri, Th. D.

RELIGIOSITY AND SUICIDE

According to the latest WHO figures suicide mortality in Finland was the second highest in Europe (27,5 per 100.000 inhabitants). The National Suicide Prevention Project was started since 1986 based on that situation.

In the research phase of the Suicide Prevention Project all suicides in Finland during a period of one year (1,397 in number) were investigated by the psychological autopsy method. Comprehensive case reports on each suicide were written by the interviewers in order to summarize factors influencing the suicide process. The material in this study consists of case reports, notes left by the persons committing suicide and data provided by the questionnaires.

Based on the definition of religiosity designed for the study the cases were divided into two groups: religious (245 in number) and non-religious (1,152 in number). In comparing the groups it was discovered that religiosity was linked to other factors affecting suicide, such as socio-economic and psychological stress. The stress experienced by religious people was even greater than that of others.

The religiosity of the religious group was analyzed from the perspective of integration into a religious community and the effect of religiosity on the suicide process. A four-dimensional classification was created for describing the differences in religiosity in these respects. The classification consists of the following sub-groups: (1) subjects seeking help in a religious community (79 in number); (2) subjects in conflict with a religious community (55 in number); (3) religious people without any community (84 in number) and (4) subjects who renounced their childhood religious background (27 in number).

Individual differences in integration into a religious community correspond mainly to differences in the influence of religiosity on the suicide process. Religiosity seems to have a preventive effect upon suicide. The concept of integration into a religious community does not, however, cover every protective influence of religiosity upon suicide.

The basic significance of religiosity as related to suicide seems to be an attempt to cope with suicidal tendencies and stress connected with mental disorders. In difficult mental disorders the content of religiosity seems to change and to have a stressing side-effect.

Religious communities differ from each other in the matter of providing protection from suicide. The support provided by small religious communities with close-knit membership seems to be important to those in danger of committing suicide. This is apparent in the active part taken by those seeking help and by those in conflict in the activities of Protestant minorities, such as Pentecostals, Free Church and Salvation Army. They have also had many contacts with the Jehovah's Witnesses and the revival movements in the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

On the other hand, in the cases studied there was a tendency to drift into internal conflict with small religious communities.

The special significance of the Evangelical Lutheran Church has been to offer pastoral support to those in danger of committing suicide.

Jorma Pinkala

FACING SHAMANISM

1. THE PHENOMENON

Shamanism is a very very old thing and it can hardly be called an New Age (NA) phenomenon, but the recent revival of shamanism belongs indeed to the NA. The basic experience in shamanism is that a spirit takes its abode in a shaman either momentarily or continuously. It includes also so called spirit trips where the spirit of an shaman is said to leave his body. In both cases many different kinds of supernatural things like healing and fortune telling may take place.

The forces that shamans can use to benefit or harm other people may be ancestor spirits, nature spirits, gods etc. If those spirits are treated in an improper way they may cause evil and damage. But on the other hand using proper techniques like prayer, drum-beating, offerings, chanting, trans etc shamans can localise the spirits and use them to help people who come to them with their problems. Shamans function also as guides to dead spirit in leading them to their resting places in the spirit world.

Ordinary people do not make any sharp distinction between shamans and the forces they can intermediate. So shamans can exert remarkable religious power over those who seek help from them. Most leaders of Japanese new religions are typical shamans. Even their political power may be alarmingly great.

Shamanism is found in very many different forms among all world religions and regional religions. It is very flexible and can be take nearly any kind of robe to wear. In addition to its basic forms in animism it is utterly common in eastern religions, but can be found also as a underground current in Islam. A shaman may put on Christian clothes, too.

In Finland you find it in an imported revitalised old form and among folk healers and among radical prophet groups that claim to be Christian.

According to the Bible the forces and spirits that shamans communicate with are demons. That is why shamanism is strictly forbidden in both Old and New Testament. It has been one of the oldest and strangest fortifications of Satan throughout the ages.

2. THE CHALLENGES

2.1. Death

Shamanism represents at least three major challenges to missionary work and Christianity. In every religion and every culture human beings are afraid of death because the conscience of man demands punishment for the wrong he has committed in his life. Shamanism tries make people free from that fear in such a way that they need not repent sin and return to God. A shaman guides the dead spirit to the land of death and can function as a intermediary between the dead spirits and living people. The world of death is seen as a part of the universe around us and trough specific rites the relationship between both sides can be maintained and felt real and close. So it can be claimed that death does not exist at all.

This attractive challenge must be faced with clear an definite teaching about the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not only come to save our souls and to give teaching about the eternal existence of souls after death. He came to destroy the death itself by His bodily resurrection. The unique but so much neglected message of Christianity is the bodily resurrection of Jesus in time and space.

2.2. Felt needs

Because the spirit world is close it can exert strong influence on daily life. Especially in the times of crises shamans can provide

fortune telling so that people can manipulate their future for their own benefit. So by the help of shamans people try to control their own fate. (The function of Christian prophesy is to show that Christ is in control even if things seem to go wrong.) When shamans heal sick or provide people with means to succeed or grow in creativity, people begin to feel that there is no need whatsoever for the Creator God.

The biblical message about the Creator who gives what we need must be emphasized when we face shamanism. On the other hand we must keep in mind that Jesus did not come to be a Bread King but the Bread of Life. He does not only fulfil our material but also spiritual needs. Though shamanism looks like very spiritual thing its main interest is seems to be in material needs.

2.3. Truth replaced by workability (ability to function)

Though shamans perform quite lot of tricks and use placebo healing, an unbiased observer can hardly deny that there is tremendous amount of supernatural experience in shamanism that cannot be explained by scientific methods. These real healing and other experiences offer the proof for those religious systems that form the context to shamanism. They give demonstration that supernatural forces exist and work according to the wishes of people in need. The interpretation of these phenomena may vary depending on the larger framework where they take place (in Shinto the interpretation is that Shinto spirits are real etc) but it does not matter so far as the workings are genuine. Most new religions have their proof in shamanistic experiences. So truth has been replaced by workability.

Against that background Christians must proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Truth. Truth is a Person. The miracles of Jesus were not the final proof. He Himself is the Proof. He is the Jonah's sign. Our job is not so much to prove that Christianity is true than proclaim Him that can convict and convince and conquer man into His kingdom. His truth penetrates into the heart and finds a point

of contact where Jesus must be faced even in the case He is rejected.

3. BIBLICAL ENCOUNTER

Because shamanism is as old as sin, we have several biblical examples how to deal with it in different situations. In the context where Jesus spoke about Jews as the children of the devil (John 8:44) He gave also His program to face and conquer evil forces: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (31-32) The Gospel, the word about crucified and resurrected Christ, is the power of God and no evil forces can resist it. But the application of this word of truth has depended on the particular circumstances it has faced.

3.1. Correcting unbiblical world view

When in Lystra God had healed a crippled man through Paul's word, local people interpreted that miracle according to their shamanistic and magical world view (Acts 14:11-18). So the first job Paul had to do was to correct their distorted view about reality. He had to take his hearers to the Creator who had shown His love to these people in creation and in supporting their lives.

God's deeds can be easily rejected by misinterpreting them and relating them in a false way. That is why pre-evangelism, where wrong models of interpretation are shown and corrected, is a must in all missionary ministry.

It is fairly easy to show the problems in shamanistic world view. But simultaneously we may be quite blind to the problems in our own world view. Actually the western theology has been one major factor in opening channels to the flood of NA movements in the West. The reason has been its unhappy "marriage" with humanistic and scientific world view. It has explained away the part of biblical world view that speaks about angels and demons as an

created but supernatural part of God's creation. According to the Bible there are demons and human beings can contact them. The NA has marched this part of reality into the minds of Westerners. Its interpretation is utterly false but the NA still speaks about a part of reality that the Churches and mainstream theology has neglected. We must correct our own world view to biblical one if we are to face the NA movement.

3.2. Manifesting the wrong motives

Special means must be used when shamanism is combined with biblically rooted heresy. In his first missionary journey in Cyprus Paul faced a false Jewish prophet and occult witch Elymas (Acts 13:6-12). In the power of the Holy Spirit Paul declared Elymas's heart's condition and caused him to become blind for a while. So it was not enough to preach the positive gospel. Both the heresy and the motive behind it had to be pointed out with the power of the Holy Spirit.

3.3. Power encounter

Throughout in the biblical revelation we face some kind of competition between the manifestations of shamanistic powers and the power of God. In order to gain open ears and eyes to the Gospel message, which only can save people, signs and manifestations are needed even today. The decisive difference between the shamanistic manifestations and Gospel signs is not so much that the biblical ones look more spectacular or more numerous. The difference is the quality of them. They make bound people free. Paul made the slave girl in Phillip free. (Acts 16:16-18)

In Ephesus the fact that shamans were not able to use the name of Jesus in magical way lead already baptized Christians to repent their hidden magical practises and burn their magic books in an open way. (Acts 19:11-20) The story tells us that there may be a great amount of hidden shamanism and magics even among Christian

believer's ranks. Half hearted Christians are obstructing God's work. Public repentance can bring forth a revival like in Ephesus.

3.4. Joy, patience and love

In strongly shamanistic circumstances, where there are a lot of power manifestations from the darkness, the Christian joyful patience in the middle of utter hardships may exert strongest possible influence upon unconverted people. When Paul and Silas were in prison after being beaten in Phillip they sang praises and worshipped Jesus and showed genuine love towards their tortures. (Acts 16) That was the sign that even most hardened hearts could not resist and led them to hear the Gospel. This world has replaced biblical love by seeking all kinds of emotional experiences, but its heart is thirsting after real love. The Gospel is the message of God's love and when it produces visible and recognisable love, even this New Age cannot resist its attractiveness and its saving power. The Christian answer to seeking who are seeking in darkness is truth about God's love in Christ.

Urho Kyyhkynen

THE SPIRIT POSSESSION CULT IN ETHIOPIA

I have worked as a missionary in Ethiopia from 1970 until 1984 and have visited Ethiopia and Tanzania almost annually in my present position as mission secretary. The following is largely based on personal experience.

The Difference Between Africa and Europe

I came into contact with the worship of Satan for the first time in the summers of 1967 and 1968 while engaged in evangelism in West Berlin. Already at that time there were 200 spiritualist groups there.

In a room painted black people sign with their own blood a contract of giving themselves over to Satan. Christians working among them say that whenever one of them wanted to believe in Christ as his Saviour, it was necessary to form a special prayer team to pray for him constantly for two to four months. He was also to be accompanied by a Christian, because left alone he would at once try to commit suicide.

In the beginning of the 1970s I met Satan worship in Southern Ethiopia among the Gudji, Borana and Sidamo tribes, especially in unreached areas. Demonic possession was quite common and usually so easy to recognize that even children could do it. In most cases deliverance from evil spirits took place approximately in 20 minutes, sometimes it could take few hours. The church was not able to help in all cases.

Ethiopians get involved in satanism out of ignorance. In Europe, on the contrary, people have usually far greater chances of hearing the gospel and the involvement in occultism is a conscious decision made by a person who has had some kind of Christian influence. I

believe that involvement in occultism makes Christian counselling more difficult in Europe than in Africa.

Ato Djilo, Sidamo, Kebre Mengist 1972

Almost every Sunday some Gudjis came forward after the service. With uplifted arms they said: "Seitanin, syraun, mangedunim hullu ikedallehu..." (I renounce Satan, etc.). Once a blind man and his wife came forward. As they confessed their faith and denounced Satan, the husband's knees trembled. After a while I put my hand on his forehead to check if he had a fever, and immediately compulsive movements started: the upper part of his body and arms swayed the man having no control over them. At the same time he cried in a voice full of fear and moan: "Ayayaya..."

The chief elder and the evangelists started to pray for him and said that the man was possessed by nine demons. Having prayed they commanded the demons by saying: "Bä Ijeesus sim, hiid!" (in the name of Jesus, leave). After a while Wolde Marijam Urdi, an evangelist, translated from Gudji-Oromo into Amharic that six demons had left, but three refused saying that they were called Nora, Rudji Radjilli and Muhamed Djinni (Mohammed Satan, demon) and that they would not leave, they had a family and had nowhere to go.

As scripture readings and prayers continued, my own faith started to waver, but the Ethiopians went on. After a three-hour struggle there was peace on the man's distorted face and the contorted body started to relax. He was free, but very tired.

We took the man to his grass hut, where we found plenty of equipment used in Satan worship: sacrificial dishes with honey and corn, a bell that was used in calling Satan, etc. He gave everything else to the evangelist but an object looking like a poker.

A week later the man was possessed again, when he came to the service. This time a demon left rather quickly. When questioned about having giving up all his equipment, he confessed having

retained one. From that day on this man, the famous *gallicha*, who was understood by the believers to be the high priest of Satan and who had lost his eyesight in Satan worship, walked 26 km every Sunday supported his wife to get to the service. No order could have caused this - God had given this man, who had sacrificed hundreds of chickens, goats, sheep, calves and other animals to Satan, a desire to hear God's word.

Jesus' ministry in the New Testament gives an accurate description of Ethiopian cases of demon possession. Not one of the cases I witnessed differed from those in the Bible.

The Effect of Deliverance from Demons in Ethiopia

"A survey undertaken in 1981 among congregation elders in the Central Synod of the EECMY (Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus) reveals that 54 out of 89 elders interviewed gave "orthodox and *gallicha*" as answer to a question about religious background prior to joining the EECMY. As a result of its tacit acceptance of traditional beliefs orthodox christianity offered the converts little help in parting with the spirits. The real confrontation came with the introduction of evangelical christianity. The *gallicha* was everywhere seen as the centre of pagan resistance. Any *gallicha* converted or disappearing was noted as major victory for Christ in the area." (Bakke)

"To be set free from evil spirits is most often mentioned as a cause for church growth in Central and South Ethiopia Synods and ranks second in Western Synod. The believers experienced Christ as more powerful than Satan." (idem.)

The Spirit Possession Cult in South Ethiopia

"The possessing spirits are normally known as *Shetana* (sing. *Shetani*). They are thought to have influence on daily life occurrences like childbirth, health and the fertility of cattle. They have no fixed appearances but are detected indirectly. Sudden

illness, drowsiness, possession resulting in a supposed conversation between the spirit and the possessed, combined with strange movements of the body, may indicate the presence of *shetana*. A lasting sickness or difficult dreams are often seen as indications that *shetani* wants to possess a person.

The *shetana* are thought to be dangerous and they are highly feared. People therefore generally postpone their entering into special relationship with the spirits, but find in the end that there is no other way. They know that it may give them the desired results, but they are well aware of the cost. The benefits are obtained only by total submission. It is well known that the spirits have inflicted great trouble on individuals by their excessive claims. They are unreliable and ever increasing their demands. If these are not met, their victims will be punished severely.

A *gallicha* will normally be consulted and asked for advice concerning the right steps to be taken. He is known to possess a powerful spirit which in such cases will ask leading questions about the person and his past life. These serve to convince the person about the presence of *shetani* and to enhance the power of the *gallicha*. The client will now be taught how to arrange spirit sessions, *hayata*, and what kind of gifts should be brought to the *shetani* and the *gallicha*. Such sessions are led by the *gallicha* and usually take place at night. Interviews recorded from persons who have participated indicate that these sessions are rather sinister and gloomy.

It seems that it is primarily the ability of *gallicha* to fall into trance that gives him a particular place in the society. Such individuals are not peculiar to Sidamo; they are found throughout Ethiopia, but their wideness seems to have increased in Sidamo through contacts with Islam." (Bakke) (NB. The name of the last evil spirit in Ato Djilo was Muhamed Djinni, Mohammed Satan.)

"Their standing is now as a rule founded on the fear they are able to create among the people, as they are generally speaking poor farmers, inadequate public speakers and often accused of cowardliness.

Informants have given numerous reports about *gallichas* who are believed to have great power, even to the extent of taking life." (Bakke)

"The brother of my father is a *gallicha*. His *shetani* killed my father's children. If my father did not give a cow, bull, sheep or goats, his *shetani* would punish my father." (Wondimu, 84)

"Whereas an individual can be characterized as a slave of *shetani*, the relationship between the *gallicha* and the spirit is more like a partnership. The spirits serve *gallicha*, they help him to enhance his own position. His authority is not in any way seen as inherent in him. It rests on the power of the spirits." (Bakke)

Conclusion

In Africa witchcraft and being possessed by evil spirits is clearly decreasing due to a revival. In Europe and other western countries occultism and the worship of Satan grow rapidly as christian teaching decreases and as neo-paganism gains more ground while the various forms of the New Age movement rediscover the darkness of the past centuries as their new light.

Literature:

Johnny Bakke, Christian Ministry, *Studia Missionalia Upsaliensia* XLIV, Doct.diss. at Uppsala University, 1986.

Kurt Koch, *Selessorg und Occultismus* (Christian Counselling and Occultism).

Kurt Koch, *Christian Counselling and Occultism*. Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Urpo Kyyhkynen, Missionary, Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus 1970-1984 Africa Secretary 1984-, Finnish Lutheran Overseas Mission.

Johannes Aagaard¹

ELEMENTAL COSMOLOGY, ESOTERIC SOTERIOLOGY AND THE NEW MISSIOLOGY

This paper is the essence of three presentations given at the 1990 Hayama Seminar. The task, as formulated in the title, is so vast that it ought to result in a rather heavy book. As a paper, it omits by necessity a number of in between considerations, but it is hoped that this paper will introduce some perspectives on the relationship between cosmology and soteriology and the consequences for a new missiology.

A new missiology is much needed. The present scope of missiological thinking does not include the mandate for mission to the great world religions in their contemporary reality. Because of their expansion throughout the world as new religions movements under the "rainbow" umbrella of the New Age, the missionary obligation of the people of God has changed radically within a single generation. In the evangelization of the world, however, this recent generation has bypassed its most urgent task by evading the issue of the New Age religions.

Will it be possible to arouse this missionary vision now? Will a new missiology come into being in order to respond to this new situation? Time will show.

The Cosmological Approach

While soteriology has been at the center of contemporary theology for the last two generations, and ecclesiology has been in focus the last generation, cosmology has rarely been taken seriously. It has been taken for granted that the natural sciences, especially modern physics, have taken up the interpretation of our world or

¹ Professor of Missiology and Ecumenics at The Theology Faculty, University of Aarhus, Denmark. Dr. Aagaard is also chairman of The Dialog Center International, Katrinebjergvej 46, 8200 Aarhus N, Denmark.

cosmos, while the church is left with the questions of salvation. As a consequence, the Gospel has lost its points of reference and has become something "out" of the world. Even though political theology in its various forms has reacted against this otherworldliness, and even if the political dimensions of the Christian faith bring the reality of this world into focus, neither has touched upon the real issue - reality itself. What is real? What is this life all about? What is the nature of this world? How does it subsist? And how do we exist in it? A short restatement of this problem, as seen and understood by all world religions, is that the status (*stasis*) of this world is unsatisfactory. That is the starting point of all the great world religions.

In some religions the reaction against the status or *stasis* of this world is expressed by *ex-stasis* because the way out of human limitations is seen, as in charismatic movements within or outside Christianity, as the focal point. In other traditions the solution looked for is *en-stasis* since the focus is on interiorization, the entering into inner realities, as in various yogic traditions and in some Christian schools of meditation. The genuinely Christian approach, however, is found in the *ana-stasis*, the radical transformation of the resurrection, which means a total and holistic or catholic approach to reality. This approach is possible because of the sacramental nature of the Christian faith.

By definition, a *sacramentum* consists of *verbum plus elementum*. In this formula the necessary unity of soteriology and cosmology is fixed. A sacrament, or rather the sacrament, is the church itself, by which the divine word assumes human and elemental reality in our cosmos. That is why the church is called the *mysterion*, the mystery or secret which was and is prepared in creation in such a way the humanity only reaches its goal and consummation in the revelation of God, the three in one, manifested in Jesus Christ and fulfilled in the *parousia*, in which God will be all in all. God is not yet all in all, but already is in the celebration of that coming reality in our eucharistic fellowships, which is the people of God, the body of Christ and community of the Holy Spirit. This celebration is possible, or rather made possible, by the Holy

Spirit in the name and power of Jesus Christ when God's Word unites with God's elements!

The necessity of an elemental theology is therefore the heart of a genuine cosmological approach. By cosmology I do not mean cosmogony, for cosmogonies are many and vary from generation to generation. Modern science has its versions, and they, too, are relative, as is all scientific insight, but remain necessary for the time being. An elemental theology and a cosmology are not relative in the same way. As a part of creation, the elements will endure as long as creation endures, but they are not innocent creatures. In spite of being God's creation, they are perverted by human sin and *hubris*, pretending to be themselves creators and gods, while they were meant to be servants and friends and family members of humankind. Therefore, all the elements, too, in the last day will be annihilated by the transformative fire of the final judgment. That annihilation will be the eternal victory of God over all the perversions of the elemental reality.

The Elemental Approach

A neglected fact is that the elements represent the natural status of life, which we all share. "It is elemental, Dr. Watson," means that anyone could have reached the same conclusion that Sherlock Holmes did. In the same way, the meaning of life and of God's creative power is an elemental fact that all people at all times could realize. That observation is the basis of the argument of Paul's letter to the Romans and of his missionary theology, namely, that no one has ever gone astray and been lost because there was no other possibility! God has never let a single person down! The elemental relation to God was always there. Sin and damnation are never a result of the absence of the knowledge of God but of disobedience!

This elemental reality is shared by all nations in all generations from the day of the first creation until the present. We all share the same elements. In all religious philosophies the same elements are the basis of their speculations and are the carriers of their

insights and interpretations. All Japanese, Tibetan, Indian, Greek and European/American elemental approaches are basically the same.² This neglected fact is, as it was for many centuries, the given basis for a genuine natural theology. The need for a natural theology was never so great as it is today. But instead of using the natural elemental theology that is in all cultures, fake natural theologies are invented, thereby implanting foreign elements into the faith. The natural elements are the only means the can serve as the legitimate basis for a universal natural theology. All other elements are counterfeits and have led us astray.

The Natural Elements and Natural Theology

St. Francis' great hymn or cantata, "To the Sun," is a hymn to God the creator, a hymn in which the elements are participating in the praise of their originator. Earth as the mother, water as the sister, fire as the brother and air/wind/sky as the father are part of the cosmic chorus together with the burning sun, the silver moon, the gentle death and all things... lifting up their voices and singing the praise of "our God and king." This great Alleluia is the expression of the Christian faith in God as creator and savior. In this great Alleluia the elements are in their right position as members of the family of God, as servants of God. This is the beginning of the final consummation, in which God will be all in all, the goal towards which we are making pilgrimage. This pilgrimage is made possible by the supremacy of Christ, as Paul's letter to the Colossians proclaims. In Christ human beings become the opposite of the "elemental spirits of the universe." If in Christ we die to those elemental spirits of the universe, we are born into the new life in the freedom of the Gospel.

The natural elements are the elements of nature in so far as nature means the corrupted nature of this old world. But the natural elements are also the elements of the assumption of our human

² One strange exception is found in Chinese religious philosophy, where the elements vary but as a system are still fundamentally similar.

nature by God in Christ. *Assumptio carnis* means the salvation of us, our nature and our world in the form of a new creation. This means that the natural elements are the necessary and obvious basis of a genuine *theologia naturalis*, a natural theology by which we can communicate with all human beings and with nature as expressed in the animals, plants and "things" of our world.

Points of Contact and Points of Contrast

The communicate is a matter of language, not just verbal but also body language. A genuine natural theology can give us what we need, a language for communicating the Gospel, for translating soteriology into a meaningful cosmological frame of reference. This does not mean that a natural theology is another way of adapting or compromising the Gospel. Not at all. The opposite is the case. Points of contact that are found in a genuine natural theology are first of all points of contrast, because genuine dialog always takes place in a sincere and open-minded confrontation. This is very clearly seen in relation to the elements.

As stated already, all human beings know about the elements. Their elementary understanding and interpretation are a part of all the language of this globe. The elements, however, everywhere have developed into elementals! This is registered by Paul in the many texts in which he deals with *stoikeyia tou cosmou* and *exousiai*, expressions for the projection of the elements in the form of elementals. Paul describes this process as a perversion or a degrading status in which humankind worships and serves the creature rather than the creator (Romans 1).

There is no compromise, but there is a real confrontation in Paul's conclusions. He communicates because he has found points of contact in these points of conflict. He is understood, and he makes himself understood. What he describes in this first chapter to the Romans is probably the esoteric systems of his own time, the mystery religions in which the elementals were served and worshipped instead of the creator. In these esoteric cults, perverse sexual practices were made obligatory for the initiates. In Tarsus, for

instance, an important temple for homosexual rituals has been found. Paul thus speaks out of his own observations when he describes the degradation of humankind. Again, the nature of that degradation was religious by nature. The list of perverted conduct by which Paul finishes his first chapter of Romans is a list of conclusions that all have their premises in religious aberration - the divinization of the elements as elementals and the substitution for the liturgy of God the creator with the worship of the divinities of this world and this age.

In our contemporary world not much has changed. Similar esoteric and occult systems flourish. The text of Colossians is more relevant than ever. Also, today the ritual perversions lead people into ethical degradation. Today the divinities of this world, the elementals, have caught humankind in their clutches. And today the church must confront such cults and rituals, which blind people and lead them away from God their creator. This mission is in fact more relevant than ever, for such cults and sects are more numerous than ever in history.

The New Age as the Old Age

A surprising fact is that the so-called New Age is nothing but the Old Age *redivivus*! What we see now introducing itself as the new world is simply the old world in another version. It is of course out of the question to present in this paper the multitudes of the new religious movements, which nowadays are filling the earth and manipulating its people. A whole library already exists for that purpose. The common denominator, though, of all this religiosity in all these new religions is the New Age. It is, in its widest sense, simply "the rainbow movement," in which all colors are acceptable as long as they are alternatives to the old religions, especially Christianity.

The root causes of the New Age thinking are found in the theosophist schools of thought. Theosophy was born out of a hatred of Christianity. In fact, all the syncretic attempts to find the *religio occulta*, which is considered to be the center of all

religions, have been made to counter the Christian mission. In India the first theosophists contacted Dayananda Saraswati, the arrogant and militant Hindu guru, who created his Arian Society to finish off Christianity. In Sri Lanka they contacted Gunananda, who played the same role as Dayananda but in a Ceylonese-Buddhist setting. This anti-Christian bias is still felt in the New Age. Christians are welcome only in so far as they have given up all attempts to see God in Christ as a unique phenomenon in history. Christianity, as one of many religious options, is welcomed. But that of course is not Christianity any longer, but a New Age version of it.

The New Age is building itself up on the basis of an astrological fiction, whereby it is maintained that Christianity is the age of the fish(es) or Pisces, and the New Age is the age of Aquarius. Christianity as the old age of Christ is passing away, while the New Age as the age of Man is the coming age. This fiction, which has no basis in facts, is a typical piece of manipulation by the minds of superficial people. But it has caught fire. A New Age feeling has come into existence, which brings Christians into doubt.

In fact, the New Age is nothing but the Old Age come back. The Age of Aquarius is the age of the law, be it the law of Manu, the *dharma* of Buddha, the law of Moses or of Islam. And the Age of Pisces is the age of the Gospel, if there is any meaning at all in this astrological speculation. Such speculations are man-made, inventions of human imagination. But that does not make them less operative. We, therefore, cannot deal with them by ignoring them, but must put forward alternative visions without manipulating people into accepting something which is by nature a matter of faith as if they were scientific facts.

The New Age religions are, indeed, not scientific facts. They are deeply rooted in the traditions of the various Yoga schools, the psychomental experimentations of Yoga. We will, therefore, take a hard look at some of the essential yogic presuppositions, which are operative in the theosophical thought-forms in the New Age projections. In the next section I shall give the main lines of the

New Age ideology by presenting some of the esoteric insights from theosophy and anthroposophy.

New Age Ideology: The Esoteric System of Theosophy

Charles Webster Leadbeater (1847 or 54 - 1934), known as "Bishop Leadbeater," was the second to Annie Besant as was Henry Steel Olcott, known as "Colonel Olcott," to Madam Blavatsky. Leadbeater, who has written a whole library about occult matters, has had a decisive influence on the so-called Liberal Catholic Church, the church of theosophy, and on the Freemasonry that is connected with theosophy, the so-called Scottish Rite, which is also active in France and in many parts of the world. Leadbeater is a good choice to represent theosophy, for in his way of thinking and in his world view/cosmology the theosophical dimension is found in a refined and reflected form that continues to influence the New Age movements.

Among his many books, the monograph, *The Chakras*, edited in 1927 and reprinted many times, can serve as a guide to his way of thinking. Behind his insights are found the scholarly works of Sir John Woodroffe, who already in *The Serpent Power*, published in 1918, under the pseudonym Arthur Avalon, began the translation of Indian Tantric texts on occult matters. But in Leadbeater's writings such scholarship is taken into the theosophical context, established by the above mentioned "mothers" and "fathers" and communicated by Leadbeater and his colleagues, such as Ernest Wood and Christmas Humphreys, who are all theosophical interpreters of original Oriental material.

Leadbeater puts forward his psycho-cosmogram on the basis of the Hindu yogic tradition called Laya-yoga, which he understands as a specific perspective on Hatha-yoga. He seems to evade this latter term, but he cites regularly from the Shiva Samhita, the Gheranda Samhita and the Hatha-yoga Pradipika, the three major Hatha-yoga texts. Although he seems to know, he minimizes the fact that the tradition from which he is developing his ideas is the Tantric tradition. The reason is probably the simple fact that both the terms Hatha-yoga and Tantra are loaded terms in an Indian context,

since the leading theosophists, including Leadbeater, did write and publish from the Indian center in Adyar, now a part of the city of Madras.

Leadbeater states the general principle of his psycho-cosmogram like this:

Each *chakra* is considered to be especially connected with one of the elements - earth, water, fire, air, ether and mind. These elements are to be regarded as states of matter, not elements as we understand them in modern chemistry. They are thus equivalent to the terms, solid, liquid, fiery or gaseous, airy and etheric, and are somewhat analogous to our subplanes and planes - physical, astral, mental, etc.³

In his cosmogram he also connects the elements and *chakras*⁴ with various forms and colors, Sanscrit letters, divinities, fairies, animals (*vahanas*) and various benefits.

In order to understand the theosophical meaning given to the system of elements and *chakras*, we first have to understand the theosophical doctrine of "the bodies," for the *chakras* are seen as points of connection at which energy flows from one "body" to another "body".⁵ The formula is in itself important: Man is a soul and owns a body, several bodies in fact.⁶ First of all, man has "the etheric double." Through this "etheric body" flows the streams of vitality, which keep us alive and make the use of the brain possible. The "etheric body" is the bridge from the physical world to the astral world. The *chakras* are to be found in the "etheric body;" and in spite of the often stated fact that this "etheric body" is invisible, the *chakras*, according to Leadbeater, can be seen, even if only by clairvoyance. The *chakras* are "saucer-like

³ The Chakras, 1969, p. 74.

⁴ Literally, "wheel," or center of psychic power (ed.).

⁵ The Chakras, p. 3.

⁶ The Chakras, p. 2.

depressions or vortices on the surface of the "etheric double."⁷ They are normally glowing dully; but when awakened and vivified, they are seen as blazing whirlpools, greatly increased in size and resembling miniature suns.

From The Primary Force (or simply The Force) comes the lifestream into our world, which enters individuals through "the open mouth" of each *chakra*. The Force itself is sevenfold like the colors of the rainbow, to which it corresponds. The rainbow, therefore, is the New Age symbol par excellence, and all its seven forms operate in each of the centers. This inrush of energy is what makes life possible.

There is an interesting detail, which may be more than a detail, in the *chakra* system of Leadbeater. There is no Swadhishtana-*chakra*, which should be situated close to the generative organs. Leadbeater does not deny its existence; but he makes it explicit that "the arousing of such a center would be regarded as a misfortune, as there are serious dangers connected with it."⁸ As a substitute Leadbeater and after him most theosophists operate with a "spleen center," a *chakra* which is situated "over the spleen." This center for him has to do with the remembrance of astral flights, levitation, etc. Because the Swadhishtana-*chakra* is missing in the system, the relevance of the sexual force in this connection is not understandable. Since in both Laya- and Hatha-yoga this is the master key to the whole manipulative yogic system, some ambiguity is introduced into the theosophical system. The "missing *chakra*," however, may find its most immediate explanation from the fact that this *chakra* is also missing in the Tibetan Buddhist system! It is a well-known fact that Madame Blavatsky, the founding mother of the theosophists, always claimed to have close contact with the masters from Tibet, and on this point an influence from the high North may be seen, whatever that may imply in the wider perspective.

⁷ The Chakras, p. 3.

⁸ The Chakras, p. 5. note.

The Esoteric System in Theosophical Freemasonry

Freemasons are a strange lot. Some are representatives of a sort of Christian deism; others, however, are clearly occult. Charles Webster Leadbeater, in *The Hidden Life of Freemasonry*,⁹ has revealed some of the inner processes of the ways in which the elements are dealt with in this type of Freemasonry.

In the chapter, "The Three Symbolical Journeys," the content matter is somewhat like a series of imaginative events. In fact, they are initiations! "They are invisible to the physical eyes, but nevertheless perfectly real, because they are made by thought."¹⁰

Through the first door one passes out of the physical world into the next stage of life in the lowest part of the astral plane, where he is presented to something to remind him of the bondage to sensual pleasure under which he has suffered, and the fear, hatred, malice or revenge which is the result of his former life.

At the second portal the candidate is introduced to the elements of earth and water, representing the solid and liquid subplanes of the astral world. Turning to the north, the candidate makes a suitable offering to the earth elementals; and turning south, he makes a similar offering to the water elementals. These nature-spirits gather around the candidate as his bodyguard on the continuing journey. The guardian of the candidate introduces him to the elementals as a blinded child of mortality, seeking immortality. This is made clear when he gives earth to earth, water to water, thus giving up his former belongings. If the candidate clings to the order of matter, he will not be able to continue on the spiritual journey. But if he is ready to shake off matter from his astral body, then he can pass to the higher levels.

At the third portal he is introduced to the elementals of the air and to the elementals of the fire, respectively, turning east and west. Once more he gives to the elementals what belongs to him, and

⁹ Adyay, Madras, 1926, cited according to the 1975 edition.

¹⁰ Adyay, p. 197.

he can then pass through as their friend. The act of offering to the elemental spirits is the act of giving up all adherence to matter, thereby purifying the astral body. Being trained while still alive, the mason after death can go through these portals rapidly to pass on to the heaven-world.

Somehow the offering to the elementals (of the four elements) is combined with worship by bowing down to the Devas of the N, S, E and W, to the zenith and to the nadir (opposite of zenith) and to the center, all in all, seven orders. The whole ritual takes place in the Masonic Temple and is part of the reenactment of the mysteries. In his description of "The Fittings of the Lodge," Leadbeater tells more about this part of the ritual:

At the initiation of candidates in the Co-Masonic Lodges... the four Rulers of the elements are invoked, and the consequences of that are very real and beneficial, little as many members of the fraternity may be aware of the fact." [These four Rulers are] "the four Devarajas... the four great orders of devas connected with the elements, earth, water, air and fire... [and these] great Rulers... are agents of the law of karma, which is always balancing and adjusting the affairs of man."¹¹

Those Devas are also called "Angels", and "the invoking of angelic aid" is a synonym for the offering to the elementals, who are organized in three elemental kingdoms, which are again combined in various ways with the lower and higher mental plane and the astral plane of mankind.¹² All these "powers" can be appealed to only by the rightly initiated official, who can virtually get support from "astral myrmidons," arranged by their Deva captain for the specific purpose in question. All the forces of the various planes are at his disposal at the right time.¹³

¹¹ Adyay, p. 79.

¹² Adyay, p. 132 f.

¹³ Adyay, p. 160 f. A myrmidon is an unquestioning follower or subordinate (ed.).

Theosophical Freemasonry is thus one of a large number of mystery religions which have appeared all over the world in this century. They are rooted in the classical religions of the East and in Western occultism, often in the form of theosophical and anthroposophical systems.

The Esoteric System of Anthroposophy

Rudolph Steiner, the founding father of anthroposophy and also "The Christian Community," is probably today the most influential of all the New Age masters. His thoughts or imaginations are accepted far beyond the limits of his own institutions. The main idea in his system is the gnostic idea that all matter was formed as a result of the descent of the spirit, but now - after the turning point - a respiritualization is taking place. Even matter can now be redeemed since the redeeming descent of Christ has happened.

The present cosmic embodiment Steiner calls "Earth," of which our earth is just one part. After Earth follows Jupiter, which is more spiritual than Earth and corresponds with "the spiritual water" of Moon. Similarly, Steiner goes on developing his psychocosmogram, including "spiritual air" and the various planets - all in a cosmic symmetry.¹⁴ The first of the macrocosmic stages Steiner calls "Saturn". In that stage very little differentiation has taken place. But gradually the etheric body was developed "on Sun," and the astral body "on Moon". Thus the physical, etheric and astral bodies of man have evolved out of and correspond to the physicality, ether and astrality outside of man.¹⁵

Man is thus composed of all nature and all elements, but through its "I" it is of the same essence as Christ himself, though at the same time individual. The role of Ahriman and Lucifer in Steiner's

¹⁴ See Geoffrey Athern, *Sun at Midnight*, The Aquarian Press, p. 107f.

¹⁵ *Sun at Midnight*, p. 109.

thinking cannot be described here.¹⁶ Their influence, however, meant that matter was condensed too much, and this became a real problem for the serpent, which coils back towards its own tail and reverses the "fall" into matter by the spiritualizing process, the Christ movement. Salvation thus seems to consist in transcending material identifications through finding the true "I" of the objective Spirit, an understanding of salvation in which the Oriental and the Christian parts mix according to Steiner's imaginative spirit.

Steiner is normally interpreted as a breakaway from the theosophical tradition, much more at ease with the Christian tradition, even if his gnosticism is not normally acceptable to the churches. A fuller analysis of his cosmological thinking, however, makes it necessary to revise that understanding. Steiner seems to be part and parcel of the general Hindu and theosophical orientation when it comes to cosmology and its consequences in soteriology. But it is correct that he has developed the theosophical concepts and ideas in a way whereby an ethical Christian dimension comes to the forefront.

His most important and most characteristic book is probably *Die Philosophie der Freiheit*, published in 1984, but in our context his book *Hvorledes erhverves kundskab om højere verdener*,¹⁷ is more to the point. I will consequently deal mainly with this book in the following.

According to Steiner, only people who have *klarsyn*, clairvoyance, can enter the worlds beyond the senses, but such people can communicate with those who do not have this ability. He gives some hints about the difficult schooling, which is necessary to develop the occult insights that he has received. He describes, for instance, the fire test, the water test and the air test, whereby

¹⁶ But see, for instance, his booklet, *Christ in Relation to Lucifer and Ahriman*. Spring Valley, New York, 1978, 40 pp.

¹⁷ Published in the periodical *Lucifer-Gnosis*, 1904-1905. Since I have been unable to find the English version, *The Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and It's Attainment*, 1904, I will refer to the Danish edition.

the candidate is trained and tested in order to secure genuine insight. Only after such tests can the candidate enter the temple of higher knowledge. Arriving in the temple, the candidate is served the drink of forgetfulness so that he is liberated from the lower memories. After that he is served the drink of remembrance so that he can keep the secrets in his soul in such a way that they become part of himself, whereby he breathes and sees with the soul and hears and speaks with the spirit.

The most important part of the training, however, seems to be the development of the *chakras*. To understand how this is done, one has to remember the nature of "the bodies." Apart from the physical body one can develop an etherical and an astral body. The etherical body, also called "the etheric double" in relation to the physical body, is in between the physical body and the astral body. The etherical body is more or less of the same size as the physical body, while the astral body is much larger and penetrates both other bodies. The main point in the training is the necessity of moving the etherical body by moving the *chakras*. The *chakras* are seen as organs of the etherical body, and by moving the organs, one moves the body. How to move the *chakras* is not directly explained, probably because it is part of the oral instruction. But somehow yogic exercises are presupposed, exercises in meditation and concentration whereby the etherical body is moved in all directions.

The *chakras*, as described by Steiner, correspond to the classical Hathayogic "lotuses" of the body, having respectively 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 16 and 2 leaves (like the phases of the moon). His description of the *chakra* with 6 leaves is interesting. Although he does not state that he speaks about the Swadhistana, the sexual *chakra*, he emphasizes the necessity of finding a balance between the sensual and the spiritual ability of man in order "to allow for sensuality." By developing this *chakra*, however, one reaches contact with powers of higher worlds, as they appear in the world of the soul.

At the other end of the spine the *chakra* with the two leaves seems to comprise both the eye *chakra* and the final *chakra* in one entity,

whereby one can reach contact with spiritual creatures. The means for that is the inner light developed in that *chakra*. Steiner considers this a real new birth, not just symbolically. Only when that happens will concepts like karma and reincarnation become experiential realities: and contact with the great initiates, the spiritual masters, will become a personal reality. The whole process is developed in order to open up the true worlds, the higher worlds, from where our own world can have its relative meaning and importance. This meaning is given only to the initiates and spiritually developed persons. All the others are dependent on the insights of these spiritual leaders.

It seems that anthroposophical cosmology depends on this way of imagination. The interest in aura reading for instance gets its explanation and meaning when one understands that each *chakra* develops its own color, depending on the speed it has. By deciphering the colors, one can see in what the *chakras* suffer, and healing can be sought for accordingly. It is a well-known fact that many of the modern healers are influenced by the Steiner way of thinking, and we see part of the reason in this understanding of the *chakras*. The healing process seems to be related to the ability of the lotuses to open up to the influences from the astral world and mediate this influence via the etherical body to the physical body.

Steiner refers to Buddha as the background of these imaginations, and he even maintains that understanding of the operation of the *chakras* comes from Buddha. In this respect, however, he is dependent on classical Hatha-yoga texts from the Middle Ages, more or less in the same way as Leadbeater.¹⁸

Yogic Presuppositions

It is important to notice to what degree Leadbeater and Steiner draw on the insights of Yoga, which can also be seen in the presentations of other occult "spirits" from the last generations. This brings us to a study of the yogic presuppositions that are

¹⁸ Steiner uses the form *chakram*, which could indicate his dependence on the South Indian tradition from Adyar.

found in the cosmology or world view of the New Age in general, In the following, an attempt will be made to get down to the operative issues of Yoga. This is important not only to understand the functional nature of the cosmologies of the New Age, but also to understand the nature of the worldwide Yoga movements, which constitute a distinct and important part of the New Age religions.

Some 15-20 years ago one could see the proliferation of the Marxist "cells" as the most important international trend in contemporary society. Today, a similar but quite different proliferation of Yoga classes can be seen as the decisive phenomenon of the contemporary development of society. Yoga is never taught without a yogi. If it is, there can be no real Yoga. Even though the participants in the Yoga classes may not know about the yogi hidden behind, they are still under his influence, directly or indirectly, not the least by means of the yogic ideology, which is taken into their bodies directly by means of the various exercises. The clarification of the ultimate meaning of these exercises may be reserved for a few "illuminati," but the yogic cosmology/worldview will gradually become part of the life-style of the participants.

Raj-yogi and Hatha-yogi as the Masters of the Elements

Patanjalis Yogasutra with Vyasa's commentary has had a decisive influence on most sorts of yoga, probably for 2.000 years. The cosmology of the Yogasutras are therefore of fundamental importance for our theme. We will call this sort of Yoga Raj-yoga.¹⁹ In the commentary to III, 43 this conclusion is drawn:

Now from the Smyama [which is the one word for the three highest levels of the eight-step Yoga ladder] upon the appearance which exists in these five elements in their five respective appearances, the visibility of the manifestation of those appearances and also the mastery over them appear. There the yogin, after conquering the appearances of the five

¹⁹ The text used is by Bangali Baba, Yogasutra of Patanjali with the Commentary of Vyasa. Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1976.

elements, becomes the master of the elements. On account of that mastery, the elemental powers become subordinate to his will like the cows following their own calves.²⁰

And to III, 44 the commentary runs like this:

The Mastery... means that he becomes possessed of control over all the elements and elemental powers and is not subject to control over others. The Creative Power... means that creation, destruction and aggregation all depend upon his will... As he wills, so becomes the position of the elemental powers... the earth does not resist the working of the Yogi's body by its hardness; he can pass even through a stone. The sticky water does not wet him. The hot fire does not burn him. The air in motion does not carry him. His body becomes concealed even within the coverless ether and he becomes invisible even to the Siddhas [perfect beings].²¹

Here we have the key to a main trend in the New Age religions in which the will to secure "pan-determinism" is at the center. This is done by means of modern versions of this old Samayama scheme.

Hatha-yoga is the name of the medieval perfection of the older Raj-yoga. Because Hatha-yoga has developed the know-how of the classical yoga, to separate Hatha-yoga from Raj-yoga is meaningless. The heart of Hatha-yoga is to inform or instruct about the ways and means for developing mastery over the elements and the elementals.²² In *Shiva Samhita* the way of concentration is "the five-fold dharana forms of concentration on Vishnu, by which the command over the five elements is obtained" (III. 63). This is

²⁰ Bangali Baba, p. 89.

²¹ Bangali Baba.

²² In this context I shall mainly use texts from *Shiva Samhita* and use the edition translated by Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu, 3rd. ed., 1979. But similar interpretations can be found in *Gherand Samhita*, while *Hatha-yoga Pradipika* is somewhat different, since it seemingly ignores the elements.

simply done by concentrating successively on the *chakras*. Thereby the elements cease to cause any harm to the great Yogi (III. 64).

Below we shall in some detail see how this approach is realized and what the five-fold *dharana* implies. When the yogin in this way "conquers the six wheels," that is, the *chakras*, he also conquers "all elements and the elementals" (III. 78) and in fact also conquers death.

This is enough as a short presentation of the specific Hatha-yogic approach at this stage. Now we need to turn to see how that approach becomes reality and mythology as one and the same thing.

Cosmology and Mythology in Hinduism

In analyzing *Shiva Samhita* as an operative text today, there is no doubt that the cosmological emphasis of the text is transformed into mythology by means of Kundalini symbolism. The goddess Kundalini dwells at the root or the bottom of the spine. She is like a serpent and sleeps like one; but she is the power, the *shakti* of the divinities.²³ Cosmologically, Mother Kundalini is the mother of the three qualities (*gunas*), *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*, which are constitutive of the totality of what exists. A passage from *Shiva Samhita* gives a clearcut presentation of the sort of micro-cosmogram which is operative:

When the *avidya* [illusions] has an excess of *tamas*, then it manifests itself as *Durga*, and the intelligence which presides over her is called *Isvara*.

When the *avidya* has an excess of *sattva*, it manifests as *Laksmi*, and the presiding intelligence is *Vishnu*.

When the *avidya* has an excess of *rajas*, it manifests as *Saraswati*, and the presiding intelligence is *Brahma*.

²³ *Shiva Samhita*, V, 57ff.

The fact that all the manifestations are by female deities, while the male deities preside over them, is important. But both dimensions are there and are part and parcel of the same divinities included in the cosmological totality. They are "creations," that is, they are finite. They do not exist in the real sense of this word, but come into being as manifestations of the *gunas* and as "children" of *avidya* (illusion).

Outside this illusionary world is found only the One, the great and glorious One that manifests everything. That One alone, in the real meaning of the term, "is". That One is Param Brahman or Shiva. Everything which has come into being is therefore on the way back to the One which alone is. The eternal return is the model. The Kundalini, which is catching its tail in its own mouth,²⁴ is the great symbol of this eternal return by means of the "Serpent Power."²⁵ We cannot here describe the whole set up, which makes that return possible in the yogic physiological scheme,²⁶ but the occult physiology is included in the following analysis even if it is not made explicit.

At any rate, the functional aspect of this cosmology is the possible arousing of Kundalini - of its being forced into the spinal cord (*Sushumna*) with all the risks of a wrong arising - of aiming at a regular ascent from *chakra* to *chakra* until the final solution in *Sahasrara*.²⁷ Passing through the *chakras*, all the powers deposited in the *chakras* are released and given back to the meditating subject, who thereby becomes more powerful and divine.

²⁴ Shiva Samhita, V, 57.

²⁵ Lit., "1000-spoked," lotus of 1000 petals, the topmost *chakra* (ed.).

²⁶ Shiva Samhita, II, 8f, 12f.

²⁷ At this point the techniques of the semen-mystique, the transformation of the semen into soma, elixir, amrit, etc., and the techniques whereby this is realized should have been presented.

The aim of these manipulations is the achievement of power, control and command over everything else and everyone else.²⁸ The major instrument for this purpose is the yogic physiological syndrome as such, all the techniques combined into the One powergame. But more important than any other technique is the combination of *pranayama* (controlled breathing) and *mantra-jap* (continuous repetition of mantras). Both are related to sexual repressions. By such means persons are put under control, deities are brought under dominion, and the meditator becomes the lord of the world and the vehicle of all power.

The result of this overwhelming power is found in the exercise of the *siddhas* (supernatural powers) which play such a dominant role in both the older Patanjali-yoga and in the medieval Hatha-yoga texts (for instance *Shiva Samhita*), as well as in the New Age religions. But such *siddhas* are only results. On his way to total power the yogi should gradually become divine, equal to Brahma and Vishnu and Shiva, and this aim is in fact found beyond such powers in the final dissolution into the One, Param Brahman or Shiva.

The relation to the divinities is thus an important part of the struggle for power. The attitude to the gods and goddesses is similar to the attitude to the elements and the elementals and has to do with mastering them. The various divinities are made manageable first of all by means of yogic manipulations. The yogic subject is on his or her way towards the ultimate divinity or rather towards the ultimate divinization, and on that way the gods and goddesses can be either hindrances or assistances to one's realization. They thus have to be pacified and made instrumental to one's own purposes.

The final aim, however, is the dissolution or fusion into Shiva/Param Brahman/the One. In spite of this ultimate aim the factual emphasis in the yogic exercises is on the stations on the road to that aim, symbolically realized by means of the arousal of the Kundalini.

²⁸ Shiva Samhita, V.

The hypothesis of this presentation includes the thesis that all this mythology is the decisive carrier of nearly all New Age phenomena. As a consequence of this basic reality of the New Age, we are in fact - if the hypothesis holds water - set in a very peculiar situation as missiologists.

Mission to the Lost Sheep

Churches either are growing or dying; hence church growth is an important and necessary dimension of the life of churches. In fact, churches are growing. At the beginning of this century, by far the largest part of Christianity was found in the northern hemisphere, but now it is turned upside down. By far the majority of Christians are now found in the southern hemisphere. But church growth is not the only form of mission. Mission is also, and not the least, the breaking out of the old and the breaking into the completely new *oikoi*, new worlds of human life and reality. That does not happen just by growth, for growth means an enlargement of what already exists. Mission in this second sense requires something new to come into existence, as when the Christian churches came into existence in the Hellenistic world by Paul's mission, while the growing church is more in the line of Peter, the apostle of church growth.

The new world of the New Age and the new religious movements needs a new type of mission, which implies a breaking out and a breaking into a world that is quite different from the present world of nearly all the churches. This need is most clearly seen when one deals with the multitudes of young people who as rucksackpeople are on the move all over Asia. Because this mass movement, comprised of many hundreds of thousands of young people, cannot be reached by the existing churches, a new mission has to be formed and has been formed by the Dialog Center International (DCI) - an organization based in Aarhus, Denmark, with an international committee and staff - that trains and sends volunteers to India, Nepal and Thailand.

Since in all Asian cities one finds international English speaking congregations, in which people congregate from many nations and denominations, the DCI has become an international English speaking

mission to the young people who belong to the mass-movement of travelers and pilgrims to Mother Earth. The DCI serves its population in prisons, hospitals, or psychiatric clinics, those who are "shipwrecked" and in real trouble. But the DCI also serves the ordinary youngsters who flock to the Hindu or Buddhist *ashrama* or monasteries, where they are Hinduized or made Buddhist without ever really registering what happened to them. In such a process someone necessarily serves as a catalyst. Although the DCI neither can nor will hinder people's becoming Hindus or Buddhists, the DCI in dialog with such people will promote an awareness about the real issues that are at stake in such a process.

The DCI is a Christian movement. As such, the DCI is obviously trans-confessional or even post-confessional, including without difficulties Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, and all the variations from main-stream Christianity in the same teams and missions. Its volunteer are genuine missionaries, who take their Christian stance as a presupposition to understand what happens within the various religious and new-religious movements that offer themselves to the international youth-culture and its many representatives on Khaosan Road in Bangkok, in Thamel in Kathmandu, at McLeod Ganj in Dharmasala, on the beach in Goa, in the temples of Bodh Gaya, or in all the other places where the same sort of people convenc and assemble on their eternal traveling. The DCI wants to be a Christian presence in all such places and a clear-cut Christian witness to all those who search for the meaning of life.

The DCI also wants to promote a serious feed-back to the Christian congregations at home and in the country of their service, for this mission to a new culture and a new people is highly relevant for the life of the growing churches, which tend to become centered on themselves and their specific world. The DCI consequently has chosen always to work in and with the churches, but never under the churches. That is an article whereby its mission stands or falls.

A New Missiology

Since 1961, when the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council were united, church and mission have gradually integrated. "The whole church with the whole Gospel to the whole world" was the theme for the WCC in the early sixties and was picked up by the Lausanne movement in the eighties. To a large extent today missionary societies have accepted the concept that their job is to assist churches in their mission as growing churches. In the same way, the Lausanne movements has accepted church growth as a special interest, but on a massive scale.

The church has become the center of missiological thinking that theoretically adheres to the *missio dei* theology, but has in fact focused upon an ecclesiology that has church growth at the center, following the Petrine model. There is nothing wrong in that if, at the same time, the Pauline model is also functioning; that is true, however, only in rare cases. When it does happen, it occurs with a "bad missiological conscience" and more by instinct than by deliberate planning. A new missiology is, therefore, needed as a supplementary model for contemporary mission, not as a substitution of it. The newness is found especially in the following areas.

1. It deliberately promotes free missionary engagement anywhere in the world in and with but not under the existing churches. This mission is loyal and fair to the mission based on church growth (Paul in relation to Peter) but is not bound by it.

2. It deliberately takes up as its target populations the centers of the great world religions, the "Arecpagus," so to speak. First of all, this new missiology calls a spade a spade and discards the cosmetic descriptions of the world religions for their factual and contemporary realities. In other words, the hard and often brutal face of human religions must be confronted without as well as within Christendom. Religion has to be recognized as the worst and the best products of human civilization; for the triune God is at work within all religions, not just as an affirmative, but also as a confrontative presence. *Religionskritik* is thus the most

important form of critique and the necessary basis for all religious dialog.

3. The new missiology is comprehensive in its factual engagement. It will not choose between the WCC or the Lausanne approach. Neither is the whole; and beyond both, new missionary mass movements, such as Youth with a Mission, Youth for Christ, Operation Mobilization and similar movements, are factual expression of the missionary zeal that was and is the expression of the Christian specificum.

4. The new missiology is consequently a typical inter-missiology, which is inter-racial, inter-national, inter-confessional and inter-religious. Such a missiology by nature transcend the trenches built by people to protect themselves, who have, in fact, trapped themselves.

5. This new missiology can become a real challenge only if and when it tries out in praxis its own theories, because missiology can never come to life as a mere spectator. It has to be an actor as well. Doing missiology, therefore, is as important as doing theology. Some modern missiologists seem to believe that the purpose of missiology is to study and reflect on "third world theology." But that is a fatal mistake unless the missiology in question comes out of the third world. The so-called first world needs more than any other part of the world a genuine missiology related to its own praxis, as well as to missiology in general.

Because the situation of the mission to the first world has become most critical, a conscious effort in its own right is needed. The sad fact is, however, that nearly all financial and personnel resources from the first world go to the third world. Few resources are available for inventing and realizing mission to the populations in the northern hemisphere. There are many excellent missionary societies, but they have no mandate - or believe, at any rate, that they have no mandate - to be missionaries at home. The actual organizations that operate at the home-base have missed the vision of mission to the factual contemporary world with its

religious upheavals, first of all in the form of the New Age and other new religious phenomena.

On the other hand, the missionary societies are not able to operate freely in the areas to which they are bound by tradition and history, for they have "given over" their authority to the "sister churches." Today the societies are just handmaids of the churches. Although this upside down dependence has necessary and fine dimensions, as a whole it has come to mean an incredible immobilization of the world-wide mission of the church and a tragic degeneration of many classical ventures and model projects. The nationalization of the Christian world mission, and that is what it has come to mean, has done away with the necessary international perspective of world mission. The missions that have pledged to operate in mission only under the local churches are thereby seriously hampered, and in such ways that do not serve the genuine interests of the local churches.

An example will illustrate the dilemma. Often, when excellent personnel leave their country as refugees, they cannot serve their home church; that is part of the dilemma. They offer their service to other churches abroad; but because these churches are identified with their specific bases, they will normally not be able to welcome such offers. The refugees will then try the missionary societies, whose staff will welcome the offer, but will soon have to withdraw any positive response. The reason is that the "sister churches" with whom they cooperate and under whom they work will not accept such foreigners on their staffs. They may welcome Western staff but not staff from churches very close to themselves! Hence, the mission societies cannot act as they want to act to engage the refugee in their mission because they are vetoed by the local churches, who will not offer a good position to such a foreigner.

Therefore, it is not factually correct to say that missions today do not make a distinction between "home mission" and "foreign mission." Missions today are more entrenched than ever in national and confessional or denominational ghettos. All over the world there are, for instance, more Lutheran churches and missions than

ever! The churches of the southern hemisphere are even more denominationoriented than the churches in the northern hemisphere.

The most striking feature of present day missions and missiology is its nearly total neglect of the factual world missions of the world religions. The world missions of Christianity and those of Buddhism and Hinduism in various forms bypass one another! They practically never meet and are ignorant about one another. This is the most urgent task of inter-missiology: to bring the parallel missions together in an enlightened dialog, in which both parties acknowledge and challenge one another in honesty and with the will both to learn and to teach.

Between the Scylla of syncretism and the Charybdis²⁹ of fundamentalism, a sound inter-missiology can steer the ship towards its real goal: the *parousia* and the Kingdom of God.

²⁹ The Charybdis is a whirlpool on the coast of Sicily opposite the rock Scylla on the Italian coast.

