

**WORLDVIEWS IN TRANSITION:
A STUDY OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT IN
SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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*This thesis is dedicated to
my mother*

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SUMMARY

In recent years the New Age movement has attracted much attention in our society and the reaction to it has often been one of fear and confusion. The purpose of this exploratory study is to provide empirical data on the movement in an unbiased, non-judgmental way. The qualitative research approach, and more specifically the phenomenological method, are utilised in order to arrive at some understanding of the phenomenon and what it means to its adherents.

Firstly, a framework comprising vertical historical streams (the alternative tradition in the west, the eastern philosophies, humanistic and transpersonal psychology and the new physics) from which the movement issues, and horizontal levels which represent different layers of the movement (the commercial, the level of personal empowerment, social transformation, and the rebirth of the sacred), is established in order to give context to the seemingly contradictory data on the New Age movement.

Secondly, central concepts concerning the spiritual dimension of the movement are isolated and explored in unstructured interviews with carefully selected participants. Next, the vision and expectations of a New Age are explored and the New Age worldview with regard to the concept of God, an holistic cosmology, anthropology and theodicy is investigated. This is followed by discussions of the central issues of direct knowledge as opposed to dogma and doctrines, and the important goals of personal, social and planetary healing and transformation.

From these data an ideal-typical South African New Ager is constructed, providing the reader with an instrument with which to identify manifestations of the movement. Reasons for the movement's growth are found in disillusionment with modernity and the subsequent spiritual reawakening and paradigm shift that followers are experiencing. It is concluded that the core of the New Age movement represents a popular manifestation of the constructive postmodern worldview that is espoused by leading thinkers of our time.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

*Never judge a man till you have walked
a mile in his moccasins*

American Indian saying

The New Age movement permeates western society and no-one has been left untouched. Whether one realises it or not, many of the central themes of the movement are woven into popular television programmes, films, books and music. Signs of the movement's influence are consequently not limited to the religious scene, but can be detected in many different sectors of our society such as education, science, medicine and business administration. The term 'New Age' covers a vast array of different groups and services which, on the surface, have little in common. Bookshops reflect some of these interests and conduct a brisk business in books on the occult, eastern religions, unlimited human potential, ecology and encounters with aliens from outer space. Advertisements for courses and seminars on meditation, spiritual healing, astrology and Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs), abound. People are talking of a 'paradigm shift'¹ in which new meaning is apparently given to concepts such as God, humankind, creation, truth, good, evil and death. This has a direct impact on peoples' worldviews and life-styles.

The movement has for the past few years attracted much interest from the general public, religious leaders and theologians, not only in the United States and Europe, but also in South Africa. In general, emphasis has been placed on peripheral practices and in some Christian circles the reaction to the movement has been one of alarm and fear. In South Africa a significant number of speakers (primarily religious leaders) have appeared on the scene who will address any gathering on (mostly) the dangers of this new movement. The fact that most of these speakers have not researched the subject in depth contributes to the general confusion and the sense that the idea of the 'New Age' is surrounded by a great deal of misinformation.

It is against this background that this empirical study of the movement was undertaken in order to come to an understanding of the essence of the phenomenon and to correct some of the prevailing myths.

1.1 FORMULATION AND DEMARCATION OF THE PROBLEM

The New Age movement represents a new religious factor in South African society and without a thorough, in-depth empirical study, the nature of the movement cannot be known and its religious significance at the macro level (that is the whole of South African society), as well as at the micro level (individuals and their behaviour within the society) cannot be understood.

Although a number of academic studies of the New Age movement in South Africa are in progress at present, none that I am aware of are of an empirical nature. The venture I have undertaken is therefore of an *exploratory* nature. The aims of this investigation are to explicate the central concepts of the movement and to attempt a *description* of the prevailing spiritual worldview within the movement by constructing an ideal-type South African New Ager (see 1.2.1 c). However, since one's views on aspects such as the ecological crisis, and health and healing, cannot be divorced from one's underlying spiritual assumptions, such topics have been included in the study. Furthermore, an attempt is made to come to an understanding of the significance of their alternative beliefs for the individuals concerned. This study therefore follows an ideographic or *qualitative* approach in which the emphasis is on individuals and the context in which they are situated. No attempt is made to generate an explanatory theory, although it is hoped that the constructed ideal-type will be tested (quantitatively) in later studies.

1.1.1 Clarification of key concepts

The concepts 'religion' and 'New Age' will be briefly considered in order to explicate the sense in which they are employed in this study.

a Religion

Many volumes have been written on the definition of religion and religious experience. For the purpose of this study, the following definition by Streng (1985: 2) will suffice. He defines religion somewhat succinctly as 'a means to ultimate transformation', but then elaborates:

An ultimate transformation is a fundamental change from being caught up in the troubles of common existence (sin, ignorance) to living in such a way that one can cope at the deepest level with those troubles. The capacity for living allows one to experience the most authentic or deepest reality - the ultimate.

Streng (1985) points out that this definition incorporates two basic elements, namely ultimacy and effective power. Ultimacy refers to 'the most comprehensive resource and deepest necessity of which a person can be aware', and effective power involves

symbols, techniques and social expressions as means of transforming life from inauthentic to authentic existence. By these means, 'the believer experiences and expresses ultimate reality as a power that transforms him or her to the core' (Streng 1985: 2).

This definition does justice to the different *dimensions* of religion. Streng distinguishes between the ultimate, the personal and the cultural.² The ultimate dimension involves that which people recognise as the source of life, wisdom and joy - that to which people give their loyalty as the pervading force of life. This will include the intellectual and philosophical aspects of religion as expressed in the belief system of the adherent. The personal dimension focuses on the meaning-giving function of religion and on the ethical aspect which eventually shapes one's life-style. The cultural dimension refers to the traditional religious institutions as well as to the other cultural forces such as history, economics and politics which influence religious expression. Furthermore, the cultural climate determines, to a large extent, the limits of one's religious search. In contemporary western society this allows individuals great latitude in generating their own values.

This study focuses on the ultimate dimension in so far as its aim is to describe the beliefs of the persons concerned. Of equal importance, however, is the meaning which people derive from these concepts and the effect this has on their attitudes towards life. For this study, the social or cultural aspect is considered of secondary import. Its influence in legitimising experimentation with alternative beliefs is noted, but no attempt is made to investigate the relationship between certain cultural aspects such as economics or politics and the New Age movement. Nevertheless, the movement's negative assessment of modern society and the role of organised religion in alienating individuals receives limited consideration.

Streng's definition further implies that religion is a dynamic *process* and not an achieved static position. In religious matters one can never claim to 'have arrived'. One's present position on matters of belief is interwoven with many other factors in one's existential experience. The insights of today will probably be amended tomorrow in order to accommodate new experiences. In this way the belief system of the individual is constantly being adjusted and is in a continuous process of growth. It was expected that this process would probably be quite evident in the biographies of the participants in this study.

While the New Age movement is usually regarded as an alternative group which opposes established views of society, one can, however, also view the movement as being part of a process of cultural transition. Such a view would emphasise the far-reaching implications the movement could have on the future of religion. However, this aspect of the problem falls outside the limits of the present project, and will have to receive attention in future.

Streng's definition is also *inclusive* and does not limit religion to theistic perspectives without, however, being so broad as to become meaningless. This is important, since this study has to accommodate widely varying religious views and has therefore to create a space for the inclusion of nontheistic religious traditions.

Before concluding the discussion on the term 'religion', it should be noted that the different *types of religious experience* are of cardinal importance to the understanding of the New Age phenomenon. Smart (1971), in *Reasons and faiths*, distinguishes between the numinous and the mystical experience. In the *numinous experience* one is overwhelmed by the transcendent Other, who is revealed to humans. Humanity's only appropriate response is worship and obedience, which follows on the experience of fascination and terror which is evoked by the revelation. In this experience the duality of God and humankind, and of God and nature, is emphasised. In contrast, the *mystical experience* is an experience of union with the Real. This experience is usually described as being inexpressible and beyond full description. The mystical experience is interpreted in many different ways, depending on the mystic's religious and cultural milieu, but the essential feature of the experience is absorption into Ultimate Reality.

Ellwood (1973a: 24ff), following on Johnson and Weber, proposes a similar typology when he distinguishes between two views of reality.³ He suggests that although it is an oversimplification to do so, one could divide the religions of the world into two major types according to methods of communication. In the western religions the emissary or prophet, as the agent of a personal God, holds a central position in the tradition. He or she is the messenger of a transcendent God who acts in world history and who has given humankind dominion over nature. The response of the individual to this 'wholly Other' is one of devotion and obedience. In the east, on the other hand, the central figure of religious tradition is a prophet of the exemplary style, who manifests a life-style which followers strive to emulate. In this tradition the central figure represents the ideal to which humans aspire, an ideal of ultimate wholeness which is experienced when the individual realises the indivisibility of the monistic cosmos. Here the response from the individual is one of wonder and amazement.

These traditions have been reconciled to some degree in Christianity, but as Ellwood (1973a: 43) points out, the first would probably prevail if conflict arose. Since antiquity there has, however, been a minority in the west which has rejected the dominant numinous, emissary tradition, and accepted a worldview that is characterised by the mystic, exemplary style of the east. These individuals were often in direct conflict with the dominant religious tradition of the times, and many were persecuted for their views. There were also a number of mystics within the church, whose views approximated to those of the alternative tradition. These individuals

regarded themselves as part of the church tradition but their mystical experiences drew them relentlessly towards the alternative tradition (see 3.3.1). The many new religious movements in the west, including the New Age movement, can be seen as the contemporary manifestation of this alternative tradition. A number of scholars have emphasised the continuity between the new spirituality, of which the New Age movement is a part, and the alternative tradition which includes Gnosticism, Renaissance thought, and the occult tradition (Ellwood 1973a; Raschke 1980; Roszak 1976; Melton 1988). This does not, however, account for the tremendous growth of the tradition in the twentieth century. For an indication of the reasons why this tradition has virtually exploded into such a significant movement, one would have to investigate the precursors of the movement, and consider the social factors that were instrumental in its birth. Although such an investigation falls outside the scope of this study, some attention is given to this matter in chapter three, which deals with the historical roots of the movement.

b New Age movement

To define the New Age movement would be to preempt the findings of this study. Nevertheless it is clear that this is an umbrella term which is used to describe a plethora of groups and services with widely differing agendas and beliefs. The unifying factor seems to be a vision of a New Age in which humankind will undergo a 'quantum leap' in its evolution. The movement is not an organisation which people can join and it has no creed that everyone should confess. It is a remarkably fluid phenomenon that confounds all attempts to capture it in fixed constructs. It will, however, become apparent that after some investigation a loose and subtle pattern does emerge from the chaos, and certain key elements are distinguished as insights of the movement (see 4.4).

1.1.2 Religion in contemporary society - context of the enquiry

The New Age movement forms part of the broader issue of religion in contemporary society. As we shall see, the New Age movement is primarily, but not exclusively, a western phenomenon⁴ and the role of religion in contemporary western society is therefore pertinent. It should be noted that no specific data are available on the South African situation. The white population of South Africa is, however, in many ways influenced by American trends and seems to follow the same general direction in its development. The South African religious situation is also closer to its American counterpart than to the European situation where the role of religion is much less significant (Walls 1987: 76ff).⁵ In view of the absence of South African data, a discussion of the religious trends in America over the last two decades gives, at least, some pointers as to the factors having a bearing on religious developments in this country.

Assessing the status of religion in contemporary society is fraught with problems. Religion is interwoven with other social phenomena and the interaction of different social forces is reflected in the religious arena. Over the years scholars have noticed an apparently recurring pattern in religious activity. A time of heightened religious activity is often followed by a time of decline before something sparks another phase of revival. Predicting these changes has, however, proved to be quite difficult. What has become evident is that religious movements tend to proliferate in times of social change and turbulence (Beckford 1986; Wuthnow 1986; Anthony & Robbins 1981). One of the main characteristics of modern technocratic society is change, and change is at present the central factor in South African society. If this observation with regard to religious proliferation is correct, then South Africans could expect major changes on the religious scene in the years to come. The relevance and the role of the New Age movement in South Africa's unique situation were therefore given attention during the data-gathering interviews for this study. The response of New Agers to this topic is discussed in chapter four (4.3.2).

It is worth mentioning here that in South Africa the New Age movement is almost entirely confined to the white population, although some groups do have small numbers of black members.⁶ The Asian community is rather better represented, but their membership is restricted to the eastern groups with which they are traditionally associated. Whereas New Age groups such as those represented in this study are only infrequently found within the black population, it is noteworthy that the many Independent Churches in Africa exhibit several characteristics in common with the New Age movement.⁷ This is a matter that deserves further research, especially if one considers that the neo-orthodox Christian groups also share many common features with New Age groups .

To return to the discussion on contemporary society, it is apparent that in recent years the term 'modern' has become laden with derogatory implications. It is no longer a term of admiration or a synonym for 'contemporary'. *Modernity* is now regarded as a worldview which has developed from people's infatuation with science, and as characterised by rationalism, individualism, materialism and secularism. It has become increasingly apparent that modernity, with its negative forces, has failed to satisfy some of the deepest needs of humankind. In some circles there is a clear vision that what humanity needs for survival on this planet is to transcend modernity and to enter into a *postmodern* world in which the destructive features of the modern world will be left behind. There is no consensus on what the postmodern worldview constitutes, but certain broad trends are obvious. These include an emphasis on communalism, global awareness, religious tolerance, feminism and anti-materialism.⁸ In the course of this report it will become clear that there are many similarities between most of the basic tenets of constructive post-modern thought and those of the New Age movement, which could therefore be viewed as a postmodern phenomenon in itself.

In traditional society the symbols that influenced and directed society were closely integrated, and individuals were at home in a unified world where their identities were defined by family and occupation, and religion was steadfast and unquestioned. With the advent of modernity, which included the process of secularisation, the increased provision of advanced education, social and geographical mobility, greater affluence, the destruction of traditional family structures and pluralisation, the stable identity of individuals became severely threatened.

Peter Berger and his co-authors (1974) give an excellent description of the process which has thrown modern humans into a semi-permanent identity crisis. They claim that as a result of the interaction between different social and economic forces in modern society and the human consciousness, humans have undergone a secularisation of consciousness.

Following Berger et al's (1974) exposition, it is clear that the problem of modern society is a problem of meaning. As objective structures crumble, individuals have no choice but to turn inwards to the depths of subjectivity. It is to their own resources that they must turn to find meaning and security for their existence. They have constantly to review their value structures and consequently become dependent on affirmation and reaffirmation from different reference groups. Berger (1973: 82) very aptly describes this as a 'loss of home'. This spiritual 'homelessness' is an intrinsic feature of modern society.

Thomas Luckmann (1967) also describes the effects of modernity on people, and makes the astute observation that the privatised and personal religions that people create (which he terms 'invisible religion') do not reflect a decline in religion, but rather a change in its form. This results in a decline in church-oriented religion, but not in religion per se. Self-expression and self-realisation are key features of this new religion of the private sphere.

Having established that there is some consensus on the view that modernity has caused a spiritual loss of home and has privatised the religion of modern humans, it remains to be seen how they have reacted to this identity crisis. Smart (1989: 135ff) distinguishes three major reaction patterns, namely reaffirmation, experimentation and syncretism. The latter two possibilities are evident in the New Age movement and convergence, dialogue, tolerance and ecumenism are all concepts with which most New Agers identify strongly. As opposed to this the trend in many evangelical and fundamentalist groups has been towards reaffirmation and the rejection of other religions. On the whole it seems as if the religious trends in contemporary society are towards polarisation, and one fears that the centre cannot hold. In order to contextualise the New Age movement we turn now to a brief review of the reaction patterns identified by Smart.⁹

Certain sectors of society have reacted to the unique problems of modern pluralistic society by *resistance* to other religions and a reaffirmation of old, traditional values and doctrines. In Christian societies, the liberal movement in Christianity has also come in for severe criticism from such groups. The growth of evangelicalism and fundamentalism, and of conservative, culturally defensive movements, can be seen as reactions of resistance to the process of secularisation in modern society. The negative reaction to the New Age movement in American as well as in our own society usually originates in these groups.

On the other hand some sectors of society have reacted to the forces of modernity by veering towards religious *convergence*. Ecumenical movements such as the World Council of Churches have given expression to this reaction. Interreligious dialogue and what Smart (1989: 136) calls 'soft non-relativism' has been a result of this inter-cultural contact. Converts of different religions are more inclined to learn from one another and while not accepting the doctrines of other traditions, there is a marked improvement in the tolerance shown towards each other.

Experimentation with new forms of religion is another reaction to the spiritual homelessness of today's secular and pluralistic society.¹⁰ Wuthnow (1986: 1) cites evidence to show that by 1975 as much as 5 percent of the adult population of the United States and Canada had participated in some new form of religion. Although no detailed statistics are available for South Africa, Oosthuizen et al (1988: 25), after studying the available statistics, conclude that the growth of the category which in the census is termed 'Other Churches', suggests a measure of disillusionment with the conventional churches.¹¹

The 1970s saw a broad-based surge in religion in America that affected not only the growth of the new religions but also the growth of the evangelical/fundamentalist groups. This trend was echoed in South Africa during the eighties, although the new movements never enjoyed as strong a following in South Africa. By the mid-1970s, new religions had become a highly conspicuous feature of the religious scene in America (Robbins 1988: 5) and was eliciting reaction from conservative religions with the formation of many anti-cult movements. A number of factors, such as recruitment techniques, aggressive fund-raising methods, scandals, and not least the suicide and murder (there were many children among the dead) of 900 members of the People's Temple in Jonestown, Guyana, led to a decline in the following of many of the new movements.

The New Age movement seems to have stepped into the vacuum created by the demise or decline of many of the new religious movements. These new religions had introduced many of the components that were to form the basis of the New Age movement (eg the eastern philosophies, the human potential groups and the

Ancient Wisdom traditions). However, a number of older traditions (eg Transcendentalism, Spiritualism, New Thought and the Theosophical tradition) also contributed to the creation of the milieu in which the New Age movement could develop (see chapter 3). The stage was evidently now set for the emergence of a new movement which promised spiritual transformation and a golden age of peace.

1.2 METHODOLOGY AND NATURAL HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

1.2.1 Methodological considerations

a Personal background

I first came into contact with the New Age movement in 1981 when a good friend in Canada sent me a copy of *The Aquarian conspiracy* by Marilyn Ferguson (1980). This book was, at the time, enjoying much public acclaim in Canada. However, my first attempt at reading the book failed dismally. It was obvious to me that this was just one more movement to which my dear, 'gullible' friend had succumbed. Six years and a Master's degree in religious studies later, I picked up the book once more and found it compelling reading.

At this juncture I should perhaps mention that I am a Christian in the Protestant tradition, and that I have an inclusive perspective in religious matters. I have found that contact with other religious traditions has enriched my own faith and I do not feel threatened by religious views which differ from my own. Also, owing to the fact that I myself had experienced a spiritual quest which lasted seventeen years of my adult life and led me on many byways through agnosticism, atheism, nihilism and eventually back to a Christian commitment, I felt deep empathy with the participants in this study who related the tale of their search to me.

While engaged in reading for the Master's degree, I was appointed lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of South Africa and was given responsibility for the section of the course which dealt with Contemporary Religious Movements. The course dealt mainly with secularisation and ideologies, but touched only briefly on new movements. Towards the end of 1988 I decided, with the approval of the head of the department, that the course should be adapted to include the phenomenon of new religious movements in greater detail and I subsequently started writing a new study guide on this subject. In the course of my research I came across frequent references to the New Age movement. At about this time I first became aware of the magazine *Odyssey* (which incidentally has been published since 1977) and I realised that the New Age movement was flourishing here in South Africa as well. In my opinion this vibrant new religious manifestation justified further investigation by anyone who was concerned with the future of religion.

b Operationalisation of the term 'New Age'

In order to effectively *demarcate* the field of study, the following guideline was employed in identifying followers of the movement: groups and individuals who subscribed to the notion that a new era is dawning in which humankind will undergo some kind of transformation, were considered to be suitable subjects. Participants would not have to agree on why this was going to happen, or how it was going to happen, or when it was going to happen, or on what humans could or should do to expedite this event. They would not even have to identify with the movement as such. If they (a) concurred with the notion of humanity being at a crucial point in its history, *and* (b) agreed that presently there are indications of a transformation of consciousness, they were considered eligible for inclusion.

c Interpretive strategy

As mentioned earlier, this study is exploratory and descriptive. The approach adopted is the qualitative approach (Taylor & Bogden 1984, Burgess 1984, W J Schurink 1988a and 1988b, E Schurink 1988) and more specifically the grounded theory approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967). This is combined with the construction of an ideal-type as conceptually developed by Becker and defined by McKinney (1966), and utilises the phenomenological method in its execution.

(i) Qualitative research

As the term 'qualitative research' indicates, this approach centres on qualities of human behaviour and the emphasis is on the holistic nature of social behaviour (Mouton 1988: 1). Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 5ff) summarise the characteristics of qualitative research as follows:

- Qualitative research is inductive.
- In qualitative methodology the researcher looks at settings and people holistically; people, settings, or groups are not reduced to variables, but are viewed as a whole.
- Qualitative researchers are sensitive to their effects on the people they study.
- The qualitative researcher tries to understand people from within their own frames of reference.
- The qualitative researcher suspends, or sets aside, his or her own beliefs, perspectives and predispositions.
- For the qualitative researcher, all perspectives are valuable.

- Qualitative methods are humanistic.
- Qualitative researchers emphasise validity in their research.
- For the qualitative researcher, all settings and people are worthy of study.
- Qualitative research is a craft.

(ii) *Grounded theory*

Glaser and Strauss's (1967) approach involves the discovery of theory from data which are systematically obtained from research; a theory is allowed to emerge, as it were, from the empirical data which have been gathered and analysed. Although it is not the aim of my study to generate an explanatory theory, but rather to construct a set of characteristics, this approach (as further developed by Westner 1987) is considered appropriate since it strongly emphasises induction and openness to the data. Furthermore, its insistence on the inextricability of data collection and data analysis, in order to evoke categories of investigation, is deemed appropriate for this study. This project can therefore be viewed as an initial step in a process that could eventually lead to theory formation.

In the grounded theory approach, Glaser and Strauss strongly urge researchers to consciously free themselves from preconceived theories about the subject to be studied. Following this instruction to free oneself from preconceived theories is, of course, not that simple. In the preceding discussion of the concept of religion and its role in contemporary society, a certain degree of underlying theory is already implied. For instance, the acceptance of Streng's definition of religion, which distinguishes between two basic elements in religion, namely ultimacy and effective power, implies a certain theoretical perspective on religion. However, the data will not be understood if such a theoretical or interpretive framework within which to situate the data is not adopted. This underlying interpretive framework thus enables one to understand, but not necessarily explain, the phenomenon. Only an explicit theory which has emerged from the research data themselves can explain the phenomenon satisfactorily. Theory can therefore be seen to operate on two different levels, and the demand to free oneself from theories does not imply that one should attempt to work without an interpretive framework at all. Glaser and Strauss do, however, urge the researcher to approach the phenomenon without preconceived notions and explanations, but to allow new explanatory theories to emerge from the research data themselves.

(iii) *The 'ideal-type' as heuristic model*

Following Max Weber's formulation of the ideal-type in social analysis, McKinney (1966: 3, 25) defines the constructed type as a:

purposive, planned selection, abstraction, combination, and (sometimes) accentuation of a set of criteria with empirical referents that serves as a basis for comparison of empirical cases.

The constructed type represents a set of characteristics that are distilled by means of reducing diversities and complexities of a phenomenon to a generally coherent level (McKinney 1966: 5). It is a construct that combines both typical and average with unique and significant characteristics. The aim of such a construction is to order raw data into a normative system that can be employed for comparative and predictive purposes. Such a constructed ideal-type is a simplification and therefore a distortion of the concrete, and consequently most individual occurrences will deviate from the theoretically conceived type in some respects. Measuring the empirical occurrences against the constructed ideal-type will most probably yield nothing but deviations, but according to McKinney (1966: 23) these deviations are relative to each other, as well as to the ideal-type, and thus the constructed type serves as a heuristic and comparative model.

Ultimately, says McKinney (1966: 26), the Becker-McKinney model of constructed type is an ideal-type which is firmly grounded in actual situations that are empirically discoverable. It is furthermore a conceptual device which represents an attempt to advance concept formation in the social sciences from the stage of description and empirical generalisation to the construction of theoretical systems. The aim of this study is, however, more modest: to produce a pragmatically constructed ideal-type which may eventuate in hypotheses or theoretical insights.

(iv) *The phenomenological method*¹²

The phenomenological method is employed for the execution of the study. This in itself presupposes a number of underlying theoretical assumptions about the nature of humans, the religious phenomenon and the scientific study of religion.

The decision to use individuals as the unit of analysis (see 1.2.1 e) for the study was guided by the phenomenological principle of intentionality. This refers to the fact that experience is always a person's experience and that in endeavouring to understand religious experience, humans are more important than belief systems. This principle emphasises not a study of God *an sich*, but rather God-as-experienced by a specific person or group. In this way the researcher attempts to penetrate to the deepest meaning of religious action. It should be noted that this principle does not

preclude the scholar of religion from studying the metaphysical aspect of the religious phenomenon, but in Religious Studies this aspect will be studied in a broader perspective than a traditional theology would employ.

Theology (whether Christian, Muslim, Hindu or any other) is the study of God. It focuses on a given religion and its scripture and tradition, which is usually considered to be normative. Krüger (1988: 211) defines Christian theology as:

the effort, intentionally continuous with the Christian tradition, to articulate rationally faith in God and the implications thereof.

In contrast, Religious Studies examines religious phenomena and religious experience from a multi-religious perspective and without the assumptions and evaluations of theology. Furthermore, it does not reduce religious phenomena to either psychological, sociological or any other factors. If and when the researcher of religion evaluates the phenomena under consideration, this will be done with reference to general criteria, such as inner consistency and accordance with facts.

This study is not a theological study from a Christian perspective, but a study in the phenomenology of religion in which I strive to describe all relevant perspectives from within, and refrain from judgments and evaluations of truth claims.

In this study some attempt is made to expose patterns in religious beliefs that span both time and culture, in order to come to an understanding of the meaning of these beliefs. This is done in accordance with the phenomenological principle that the meaning of a religious phenomenon for the individual believer will become apparent in a search for, and comparison of, patterns in religious life. The latter aspect (exposure of patterns) is, however, regarded as a peripheral exercise and not as a major goal in the study.

Furthermore, in accordance with the phenomenological postulate that religious phenomena are unique and *sui generis* and cannot be reduced to other human forces, this study does not reduce the religious experience of participants to psychological or social forces. This does not deny the influence of the psyche or of society in the religious life of the individual. In this study, however, the aim is to establish the meaning of the religious phenomenon for the individual concerned within an interpretive framework that does justice to the uniqueness of the religious phenomenon.

Another assumption of the phenomenological orientation which is considered of prime importance for this study is the acceptance of the necessity for researchers to participate sympathetically in the intention of the observed, while bracketing their own preconceptions, beliefs and biases, in order to come to a true understanding of

the meaning of the religious phenomenon. This does not imply that phenomenologists believe whatever is believed by the people involved, but that they attempt to enter the world of the observed and try to believe *as* they (the observed) believe. Of primary importance is the hermeneutical principle that the persons or groups involved should validate the description of themselves. This principle was explained to the participants in the study and this probably accounts for the fact that not a single person who was approached declined to be interviewed. It is, however, also true that adherents of belief systems are not always fully conscious of their motivations, and often the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon will exceed the adherents' self-understanding.

Much has been written on the question of whether bracketing is at all possible.¹³ It would be naive to suppose that researchers can detach themselves from all their preconceptions and biases merely by deciding to do so. It is therefore suggested, not that researchers should suppress these biases, but rather that they should bring them to light by acknowledging them. The sensitive phenomenologist will do much introspection in an attempt to recognise prejudices and to ensure that they do not distort the findings of the research. There is, however, no reason why one's own preconceptions cannot be aired in an atmosphere of mutual respect. This could enable those who are being observed to clarify and elaborate their beliefs in such a way that the researcher's subjective views could be put to constructive use. When exploring others' religious beliefs and experiences in this way, one should also be open to new perspectives. If one denies the possibility of a change in one's own views, it is unlikely that one is entirely open to the subject. Only when the risk of change is accepted by the researcher, will the possibility of an adequate description open up.

Lastly, this study does not address the truth claims of the movement. This accords with the phenomenological method, which does not permit the making of value judgments. Religious studies can, however, be conducted on different levels, as Krüger (sa) points out. He distinguishes seven levels of religious enquiry, namely:

- (1) conceptual clarification
- (2) establishing the 'facts', and description
- (3) understanding the human meaning
- (4) establishing explanatory patterns
- (5) critical investigation into religious truth
- (6) religious thought
- (7) spirituality or mysticism.

This study covers only the first three levels of the above model while touching on the fourth.

d Temporal limitation and context

It has been remarked that one could keep up with the New Age movement, or one could write about the movement, but that one could not do both. I have found this to be true. This will therefore be predominantly a *synchronic* study which reflects a sampling of the movement as it presented itself in South Africa during 1990, the year in which the interviews were conducted, although some updating has taken place subsequently.

Furthermore, the important historical roots of the movement will also receive attention. The movement developed out of a specific milieu which laid the foundation for the appearance of the movement during the 1970s. This *diachronic* dimension will be dealt with in chapter three.

The elements of older traditions present in the new movement (eg certain gnostic elements, astrology, Hermeticism and magic) are noted, although they are not exhaustively explored. In addition, the beliefs which are held by South African New Agers are investigated in order to establish their links with American and European parent organisations or traditions. Clear variations or deviations from the parent tradition or organisation are noted. This gives some indication of the adaptations, if any, in the belief profiles of these South African New Agers.

e Unit of analysis

As indicated, the unit of analysis is individuals. When studying religion and religious experience, one cannot rely solely on observation for relevant data. The only appropriate way of obtaining the necessary data is by communication, and interviews with individuals were therefore used as the mainstay of the data-gathering activity for this study. Interviewees were selected from the different groups representing the various subsections of the movement, such as, inter alia, the Christian, Hindu and Spiritualist traditions, the human potential groups, and the syncretistic groups. Participants were not asked to speak on behalf of the movement as a whole, or even on behalf of their different groups, but were asked to speak only for themselves. Information on participants' life histories, beliefs and attitudes towards life forms the basis from which the conclusions of this report were extrapolated.

To summarise, this study is of an *exploratory* and a *descriptive* nature and focuses on the *spiritual dimension* of the New Age movement, with the aim of constructing an ideal-type South African New Ager. It explores the intellectual, emotional and ethical aspects of participants' spirituality, while the social dimension is of secondary import. The study is *synchronic* in that it limits itself to a very restricted time span,

and *diachronic* inasmuch as it attempts to situate the movement within a wider historical context. The *phenomenological method* is employed and only the first steps toward theory formulation are taken. Furthermore, the unit of analysis is *individuals* and data-gathering was undertaken by means of in-depth *interviews* with a selected group of New Agers.

1.2.2 Natural history of the project ¹⁴

As is typical of qualitative research, this project was executed in a series of phases. It is, however, important to note that qualitative research is generally cyclic (Taylor & Bogden 1984: 16-18) and that decisions which directed the research had to be taken continually throughout the duration of the project. Only the major phases and decisions are discussed in order to explain how the stages of the research evolved.

To summarise briefly, the first phase was geared towards *isolating central concepts* to be discussed in the subsequent research phases. This was accomplished by consulting a few outstanding sources on the movement, which generated a set of major topics for investigation. During the course of research a *literature survey* of the movement as a whole was undertaken.

In a second step these topics for investigation were *confirmed* by analysing the written documents of a number of New Age groups. The basis of selection was that these groups either accepted the New Age label, or fell within the definition of the New Age movement decided on for the purpose of this study (see 1.2.1 b).

The third phase of research comprised thirty *interviews* with selected interviewees. An initial representative group of individuals was selected for interviews and the theoretical sampling method applied in order to establish whom to approach for subsequent interviews. This meant that interviewees were asked to suggest prominent individuals with whom further interviews could be conducted. In addition to these individuals, specific persons were chosen in order to explicate certain aspects of the movement.

Some *participant observation* was undertaken, although this did not figure strongly as a data-gathering activity. It was, however, deemed necessary in order to imbibe the atmosphere of the groups.

The next stage involved the *analysing* of the data, after which the report was written. Finally, for *validation* purposes, a few participants were approached with a request to comment on the descriptive sections of the final report.

The research design was open and flexible and the necessary decisions about specifics of the study evolved during the research process. Although it was not

envisaged that the study would culminate in an explanatory theory, the project did generate a number of conclusions which indicate specific areas for future research (see chapter 8). Each of the above-mentioned stages will now be elaborated upon.

a Literature survey

Throughout the duration of the project (July 1989 to December 1992) innumerable books, articles and pamphlets were studied. Initially very little emphasis was placed on this aspect of the work, since I believed it necessary to enter the field with as few preconceived ideas and biases as possible. Serious research on the available literature was only started towards the end of 1990 when the interviews had been completed.

At the outset of the project I found the magazine *Odyssey* very useful. The different articles in the magazine gave me an indication of New Age interests and I decided to enlist the aid of the editor of this magazine, Ms Rose de la Hunt. She was friendly and helpful but it was quite apparent that my knowledge of the movement was still very superficial. She suggested certain books for further reading and promised further assistance should I require it. The reading programme eventually covered many areas, such as the work of academics such as J Gordon Melton, Robert Wuthnow, Theodore Roszak, Robert S Ellwood, Dick Anthony and Thomas Robbins; and works by New Agers themselves, like Marilyn Ferguson, David Spangler, Gina Cerminara, Eileen Caddie, Shirley MacLaine, Whitney Strieber, Alice A Bailey and Edgar Cayce. I also explored subjects of interest to New Agers such as the 'paradigm shift', the new consciousness, the human potential movement, transformative techniques, parapsychology, spiritualism, astrology and spiritual healing.

The major part of this survey was carried out during and after the period in which the interviews were conducted. The information obtained through the reading programme therefore did not influence the first and second phases of the project, namely isolating basic concepts or confirming them through content analysis of New Age documents. Much of the literature was studied on the recommendation of various participants. The results of the literature survey will be discussed in chapter two.

b Isolating central concepts

Although many books on the movement were consulted, at the time (towards the end of 1989) when the key concepts for research were isolated, only Marilyn Ferguson's (1984) *The Aquarian conspiracy* was used. This book has a very high status among New Agers as well as among scholars in the field (Verkuyl 1989: 18; Melton 1986a: 111) and it was considered an adequate source for this phase of the project. Ferguson's discussion of the spiritual adventure was analysed and all the statements in that chapter were reduced to categories of interest. Statements such

as: 'One can only grasp it by experience' were taken to indicate that the epistemology of New Agers warranted attention, while 'we all have an innate capacity for mystical experience' was taken to indicate that the anthropology of New Agers should also be researched. The following primary categories were isolated in this way: the God concept, anthropology, cosmology, epistemology, psychotechnologies and a New Age vision. A few additional categories were also identified, namely ethics, organised religion, social awareness, and good and evil. It should be reiterated that the primary objective of this exercise was to decide on suitable topics for discussion during interviews with New Agers.

c Confirming concepts by content analysis of New Age documents

The next step in the project was to gather information on as many as possible new (or old) groups in South Africa which subscribed to the idea that a New Age is dawning and that humanity is on the verge of a quantum leap in its evolution. This step was undertaken in order to ensure that the topics isolated in the first phase were, in fact, representative of the issues South African New Agers regard as important.

Once again the magazine *Odyssey* proved extremely useful. At the time (the latter half of 1989) the magazine had a distribution of about 6 000, with 2 000 copies going to subscribers and the rest being sold at various outlets throughout the country. A wide variety of human potential groups, New Age churches and other religious groups advertise in the magazine, which also carries advertisements for many schools, institutes, academies and societies, all offering courses in various fields of interest. Letters requesting information were sent to all the groups which could conceivably be geared towards spiritual growth.¹⁵ Eventually, eighty-five percent of the groups responded to this request, although some replied too late to be incorporated into this phase of the project.

Another valuable source of information was the First National Festival of Mind and Body, held in Johannesburg on 12 and 13 August 1989. Further festivals were held in Cape Town and Durban before the end of that year. This event (now held annually) gives New Age groups the opportunity to distribute information on their beliefs and activities.

The information received in reply to my written requests and the documents collected at the festival were analysed in order to decide whether any additional topics were to be added to the list of topics distilled from Ferguson (1984). The groups involved in this stage of the project were: *The Academy of Future Science*; *the Adhara Star Institute*; *The Aetherius Society*; *Ananda Kutir Yoga Society*; *Ananda Marga Tantra Yoga*; *Church Universal and Triumphant (The Summit Lighthouse Study group)*; *Association for Creative Thought*; *Emerson Academy of Metaphysics*;

The Dharma Centre; College of Esoteric Science; Universal Temple Spiritual Church; Ernest Holmes Centre for Religious Science; ECKANKAR; Inner Space Workshop; Institute for Astro-psychology; Liberal Catholic Church; Rainbow's End; Raja Yoga Centre; The School of Truth; Sri Sathya Sai Organisation; Radhasoami Satsang; The Theosophical Society; and the Church of Scientology. This list includes some groups which did not reply to our enquiry but whose pamphlets were collected at the festival. It should be noted, however, that these organisations are not necessarily those from which the interviewees were chosen.

This analysis yielded the same major topics as those identified during the first round, but a number of secondary categories were established, namely scriptures, world peace, prosperity, ecology, health and healing, the spiritual hierarchy and UFOs. After careful consideration it was decided to include all the additional topics in the final list as each of them emphasised some aspect which was important to some of the groups. The final list of topics for the interviews was, therefore:

(1) Primary topics

- the God concept, including the spiritual hierarchy
- anthropology
- cosmology
- epistemology
- a New Age vision
- methods of transformation

(2) Secondary topics

- social service and awareness
- ethics
- organised religion
- good and evil
- scriptures
- funding
- world peace
- prosperity
- ecology
- health and healing
- UFOs

It was decided that interviewees would be asked to explain what the term 'New Age movement' meant to them and it was hoped that in the process they would cover the primary topics. If, however, they neglected to refer to any of these primary topics, they would be asked to elaborate on them as well. With regard to the secondary

topics, it was decided that participants' views on these would be noted if they were offered, but that information on these would not necessarily be solicited.

It was further decided to ask interviewees to comment on the role of the New Age movement, if any, in resolving the unique problems of South Africa. Three additional questions were also included, namely:

- 'What was done in order to attract people to the groups?'
- 'Who were the persons who had most influenced the interviewee through their writing or through direct contact?'
- 'Why did the interviewee consent to the interview?'

The second of these questions was the same as that asked by Ferguson of the respondents in her research for *The Aquarian conspiracy*. In contrast with Ferguson's work, the replies given to the question in this project consistently referred either to relatives (my mother, my grandmother) or to teachers (my first astrology teacher, the leader of our group). Despite some prompting, in which I suggested that participants might want to name an author or a well-known personality, replies remained at the personal level. I gained the distinct impression that most of the participants (but not all) were not acquainted with the works of the individuals most frequently named by Ferguson's respondents. This might be interpreted as flowing from the different selection strategies used in the two projects, or it might indicate that the movement in South Africa differs from its counterpart in the United States with regard to the occupations and professions of New Agers. My personal impression is that this discrepancy probably reflects the different selection strategies. In this study no effort was made to select only prominent, well-known or professional individuals. If Ferguson had attempted to draw representatives from all the major components of the New Age movement, her sample might also have included people who were not conversant with the most recent advances in the fields of humanistic and transpersonal psychology. Nevertheless, in future research some attention should be given to how the movement in South Africa differs from its counterpart in the United States.

d Participant observation

Towards the end of 1989 I started attending meetings and gatherings of different groups in order to acquire firsthand knowledge of the organisations. I continued to do so at various intervals for the duration of the project (July 1989 to December 1992). It was not envisaged that this activity would play a major role in the final data to be analysed, but it was thought to be imperative in order to experience the dynamics of the groups. Although existential understanding, which implies a shared commitment between the observed and the researcher, was not possible in this study, insider understanding, which requires at least personal participation by the

researcher, was aimed at. I therefore underwent (inter alia) numerological and astrological analysis and reflexology, and as I was suffering from a bout of shingles on my forehead at the time, agreed to a 'healing session' in which 'my aura was cleansed'. These activities are all of great importance to certain groups in the movement and my participation contributed significantly to my understanding of the people concerned (see 1.2.2 h).

e Selecting participants for unstructured interviews

The New Age movement, internationally as well as locally, obviously consists of many diverse components, such as groups in the Ageless Wisdom tradition, the occult tradition, the eastern and Semitic religions, the mystical tradition, the psychic spiritualist tradition, the human potential movement, and the holistic health movement. It was envisaged that all these components should be represented when selecting persons for interviews, since the qualitative research strategy emphasises the importance of a holistic and comprehensive description of the research subject. Prominent individuals within the movement were also included even though their contributions resisted categorisation. All interviewees were asked to suggest further persons whom they believed should be included in the study. It was interesting that many participants expressed the view that there was not really any one person in their field who could elaborate on what they had contributed - sometimes because they were in fact the leading figures in their fields, and knew it. (It should not, however, be concluded that these people represented only the upper echelons of the movement. Some of the participants were in fact individuals who were not professionally trained and who operated small, home-based courses which they themselves had designed.) Nevertheless, a number of the later interviews were conducted on the specific recommendations of earlier interviewees.

Because the New Age movement appears to include adherents from all the major religious traditions of the world, it was decided that a New Ager from the ranks of each of these world religions should be approached for interviews. Thus individuals who regarded themselves as New Agers and as members of a specific religion, such as Christianity or Hinduism, were sought. This eventually posed several problems. For example, the individual who was selected to represent the Hindu tradition flatly denied that the Raja Yoga group to which he belonged formed part of the Hindu tradition, as did the person representing the Transcendental Meditation movement. However, several of the other participants had belonged to groups in the Hindu tradition in the past and their views, as expressed during the interviews, had obviously been influenced by this tradition. This tradition was thus ultimately not neglected in the study. Furthermore, the chosen representative of the Jewish tradition, who teaches a course on the Kabbalah, professed an eclectic belief that included teachings of all the religions of the world. The tendency to incorporate different tenets of different religions into one's worldview proved to be exceedingly

common among participants. It became clear that a significant number of the participants had belonged to a variety of groups in the past and some were at present involved with more than one school or religion while belonging to none.

Representatives of the esoteric tradition, the psychic and spiritualist tradition, the pseudo-science groups, the human potential groups and healing groups were also chosen from groups that had earlier been contacted for information. Other individuals represented the syncretistic groups while some did not fit well into any one of the above categories - primarily because they fitted into all of the above categories. For instance, some participants belonged not simply to one or two groups but were active in quite a number. Their interests also spanned many diverse fields, probably on account of the networking¹⁶ that is an important aspect of the activities of New Agers. A hypothetical New Ager could conceivably be a member of the Arcane School, be a student of *A course in miracles*, frequently visit Findhorn in Scotland, practise Transcendental Meditation, and be registered as a spiritual healer. Such a person would therefore not fit into any specific category, because he or she would fit into most of them.

The Church of Scientology (Dianetics), which is active in South Africa, presented some complications. Scholars are not agreed on whether to include it in their discussions of the New Age movement; Melton (1990: 145) does, while Roszak (1976), in his much broader study, does not. I would suggest that, strictly speaking, it cannot be categorised as a New Age group since it does not expect a new spiritual age to dawn in the near future, unless of course many more people should turn to Scientology for guidance. Nonetheless, it shows a marked resemblance to some of the human potential groups and a representative was interviewed in order to obtain more information. It was found that the group presented a good example of the human potential movement and shared beliefs in concepts such as reincarnation, past life memories and the power of the mind, and in unorthodox psychotherapy, with other groups in the New Age movement. Eventually the information from this interview was included in the final analysis, often presenting the rare dissension on the topic concerned (eg the person concerned had no specific vision of a new age and professed to a dualistic concept of God).

The representative of a Krishnamurti group also denied ties with the New Age movement, but felt that there was presently a noticeable new spiritual awareness among many people. This organisation advertises in New Age publications and shares many of the main tenets of the movement and was therefore considered acceptable for inclusion.

Individuals who were obviously prominent in the movement were incorporated even where someone from the same tradition had already been included. Although persons were chosen to represent certain components of the New Age movement, it

was stressed during the interviews that participants were not required to speak for their organisations, or for the New Age movement as a whole, but only on their own behalf. This accorded with the decision to select individuals, not groups, as the research unit. Furthermore, some of the participants did not subscribe fully to the official beliefs of the groups to which they belonged. It is particularly noteworthy that, with one exception, none of the interviewees represented traditions in which they had been raised as children.

In deciding whom to interview, my outsider standing proved to be an advantage. In my ignorance I chose a few participants who would not have been included by prominent insiders. These participants represent a faction within the movement (comparable to the first and second level of Spangler's typology of the movement - see 2.2) with which the more serious exponents do not wish to identify. It was, however, important that this faction be included in the study as it forms an integral part of the movement as a whole.

f Profile of the participants

Thirty interviews were eventually conducted, one of which was conducted on my behalf by a contact person. This particular interview was taped and was accompanied by a book which the participant, who was the head of the organisation concerned, had written on the subject of the coming New Age. Ambiguities were cleared up through a number of long telephone conversations and the exchange of numerous letters with this participant. Later the contact person (a senior representative of the organisation) and the interviewee himself visited me in Pretoria and I have subsequently been provided with tape recordings of many of the group's meetings.

All participants were white. As mentioned earlier it became quite clear that the New Age movement in South Africa is predominantly a movement among the white people of this country. A very small number of black people were present at only two of the meetings I attended. One participant was the leader of a group with a large contingent of Indian members. This group also had branches in Indian suburbs of the country, and one other group had a small branch in Soweto.

There were twenty female and ten male participants. The average age was forty-nine, the youngest participant being twenty-one and the oldest seventy-five. Thirteen of the participants were married, nine divorced, two widowed, and six single. All the participants had been involved with New Age groups for more than three years and many were leaders of the groups they represented or held important positions in their groups. This probably accounted for the relatively high average age of the participants. The high average age highlighted an important facet of the movement. On a number of occasions participants assured me that they had been active in the

movement 'for the last thirty years'. Considering that scholars, critics and adherents concur that the contemporary manifestation of the movement can be dated to the 1970s, it is obvious that these people could not have been part of the New Age movement thirty years ago, and that they were referring to a precursor which had fed into the contemporary movement. On closer investigation it became clear that these individuals had been active in the Theosophical tradition for many years. As will become obvious in due course, the Theosophical tradition forms the backbone of the movement in South Africa and many people who were part of that tradition now consider themselves New Agers.

Twenty-two participants were raised in the Christian tradition: seventeen in Protestant churches, four in the Roman Catholic church and one in the Greek Orthodox tradition. Fifteen of these reported that their parents were 'not at all devoted' to their religious affiliation, while seven felt that their parents were 'very devoted'. Five participants derived from the Jewish tradition (of which only one was evaluated as having 'very devoted' parents), four from the Theosophical tradition (three of these were also from the Christian tradition and none had parents who were evaluated as 'devoted'), two grew up in atheistic homes and one in a home where the parents were members of the Church of Scientology ('very devoted').

Four participants had not completed their schooling, while eleven had completed matric or the equivalent but had not undertaken any further training. Three were in possession of technical diplomas, four had read for bachelor degrees and one had obtained an honours degree. Two participants held honorary doctorates from institutions in esoteric education, one was a medical doctor and two held PhDs from South African universities.

Twenty-four participants were English-speaking and six Afrikaans-speaking. The Afrikaans-speaking group included two persons of Dutch descent, and it was interesting that no-one in this group was able to conduct the whole interview in Afrikaans. They could obviously not express themselves in Afrikaans because English was the language in which their group meetings were conducted and in which the relevant literature was available.

g Planning the course of the interview

It was decided that in order to establish a comfortable and non-threatening environment, the interviewer would start the interviews with a description of the aims of the project and an explanation of the theoretical perspectives and methodology employed in the project. It was hoped that rapport could be established and any fears about the researcher's motives could be laid to rest. Participants would be assured of anonymity, although the names of the organisations to which they belonged would have to be used in the final report. During the interviews it became

apparent that some of the participants preferred not to be anonymous, but it was explained that too many other people were involved and that ensuring anonymity was, in fact, standard procedure in projects such as these. Biographical details would be taken down and then the respondents would be asked to explain how they became members of their particular group.

It was envisaged that participants would be allowed the freedom to talk on the aspects which they themselves deemed important and that I would ensure that the major topics were covered during the course of the interview. Secondary topics would only be dealt with if the participant felt they were important. After a number of interviews one of the secondary topics (good and evil) was raised to major topic status because of its significant influence on the God concept. An additional secondary topic was also included after a few interviews, namely transformative experience, since many of the participants related such experiences and assigned major significance to these events in their lives.

h Personal experience of the fieldwork and interviews

In practice, the careful planning sometimes proved of no avail. Often the interviewee would start talking about important matters before I could even ask whether a tape recorder might be used. In order not to lose the information a hasty request for permission was interjected and the person was allowed to carry on. Matters such as anonymity, project aims and biographical details were then dealt with at a later stage.

After a number of interviews I became aware that the people whom I interviewed were in a very real way participants in the research. They were not respondents to be questioned or actors to be studied, but participants in a joint endeavour to arrive at the truth. Very often the interview became a discussion rather than a question and answer session. This allowed participants to elaborate on and explain their views and sometimes to clarify their views for themselves. When participants floundered and were at a loss I sometimes offered choices by explaining different options. This might have resulted in a distortion of the data, but since much care, patience and time were given to probing these views, participants were accorded every opportunity to verbalise their beliefs. When they arrived at an articulation of their views only after I had helped them by offering choices (as with some of the discussions on good and evil), this was recorded in the report.

I was often asked about my own views and did not feel I could refuse to give an honest answer. This sometimes meant revealing some of my own beliefs and feelings, which I thought people appreciated. Since my own view on religious beliefs is that no-one knows the absolute truth and all our views are evolving with our experiences, this disclosure of my present thinking could not have influenced the

participants' responses. Indeed, in giving of myself during the interview I found that rapport was deepened and much was gained in trust between the interviewee and myself. It was therefore not surprising that some participants (and I) separated only reluctantly and with a distinct hope that the contact would be renewed. A few of these people have in fact stayed in contact by mail and have continued to send relevant material for inclusion in the study. For this I am also very grateful.

On only two occasions did I feel bored and detached during interviews. I could not really explain the lack of rapport other than by attributing it to my possible lack of understanding of the participants' reasoning. Considering that good rapport was established with a person who claimed to be physically immortal and another who claimed to be an extra-terrestrial, neither of which claims I could identify with, I do not have a more adequate explanation for the failed rapport of the two (more mundane) interviews mentioned.

I found the participants to be intelligent, sincere people of high integrity. Contrary to the expectations of many of their critics, none was in any way out of the ordinary in appearance. No-one wore eccentric clothes, jewellery or any other paraphernalia (although the white Indian garb worn by the Raja Yoga participant might be considered out of the ordinary). As a group the participants would not have struck one as different from a gathering of, for instance, academics, churchgoers or any other group.

On the whole I was not perturbed by the eccentric and unconventional beliefs I encountered, since I learnt long ago that from the point of view of the student of religion, there are in essence no weird beliefs, only ones with which one is unfamiliar. Some Christian beliefs are no less outlandish than some New Age beliefs when they are examined from an outsider's perspective. Therefore I did not feel threatened or insecure when participants testified to unusual beliefs. I have to acknowledge that at times I was somewhat amused, as when I was informed that I had been an important knight in Camelot and that whenever there is dire spiritual need I reincarnate in order to 'bear the Light' - a piece of information I shared with some relish with my dumbfounded colleagues.

At no time did I gain the impression that any of the participants were deceitful or devious. In fact, during one interview when I was feeling quite ill, the care and concern with which the participant offered to perform a healing session were obviously so well intentioned that I did not feel I could refuse. The procedure, in which my 'aura was cleansed', did leave me with mixed feelings. The academic part of me was intrigued and although I was asked to close my eyes, it was this part of me that managed to observe the activity of the healer. Another part (under the influence of my Calvinistic upbringing) felt uncomfortable and was thinking 'if they could see me now!' as I sat barefoot on a small stool while the healer performed sweeping arm

movements over what I presumed was my aura. But ultimately the feeling that dominated and stayed with me long afterwards was the comfort I took in the genuine concern and care that another human being was showing me and the gratitude for it that I felt.

On the whole I felt enriched and privileged to have met these people and to have shared this experience with them. I am unstintingly grateful to everyone for the time they gave me, for their openness in sharing their deepest thoughts with me and for the genuine interest they showed in my work.

i Analysis of interview data

All interviews were summarised on cards according to the different topics as soon as possible after conducting them. Source references were noted together with all the statements that were recorded. A report on each interview was also written as soon as possible after the interview. This contained principally my impressions of the participant and comments on the rapport between the participant and the interviewer. Any reluctance on the part of a participant to answer certain questions or confusion about certain topics was also noted.

Once all the interviews had been conducted the card index was systematically analysed and tables were drawn up with all the information on each of the different topics. These tables reflect statements people made about the relevant topics together with a reference in the appropriate columns to show which of the thirty participants had made the statements. The conclusions which could be drawn from these tables would reflect not *how many* of the participants agreed with a particular statement, but rather the *minimum number* of participants who agreed with it. For example, some of the participants might not have made a certain statement themselves but would agree with it if they were asked about it. Thus, many participants claimed that 'God is love', while others who did not say so themselves would agree with the statement.

These tables, together with the card index, form the basis of the report which follows.

j Validation

In line with accepted validation procedures in qualitative research (Denzin 1989: 205), three participants (carefully chosen for their high standing and their broad and penetrating knowledge of the movement) were asked to comment on certain parts of the final report (two received only chapters 4-7 and the other, on her own request, read chapters 1-7). They were encouraged to comment on and criticise the descriptions of New Age thinking and practices. The only reason why they were not

presented with the full report is because they all had limited free time in which to study the report. For their full comments, see appendix 2.

k Note on references

The primary sources of data comprise tape recordings of interviews, and files with documents which were either written by the participants themselves or were presented by participants as important material which expressed their own beliefs. Reference to these sources is made in the following manner. An example such as T4:1B:230 refers to the tape of the fourth interview, first tape, side B, counter number 230, and F5:3:4 refers to the file on interviewee number 5, the third document on the file, page 4 of the document.

Secondary sources of data are the tables which were drawn up in order to summarise the statements on the various major and secondary topics. Reference to these is made as follows: (IT 7), where IT refers to the interview table, and 7 refers to the subject, in this case, the status and role of Jesus.

In several instances, many participants agreed with a statement, but only one reference will be provided as an example. However, the interview tables (IT) contain the information on precisely who these participants are.

l Layout of report

The report comprises the following: chapter *two* involves a literature survey, while chapter *three* deals with the historical roots of the movement. Chapter *four* contains a discussion of the vision of a New Age and what this signifies for the participants. Chapters *five* and *six* describe the predominant New Age worldview with reference to the concept of God and cosmology, and to anthropology and theodicy. Chapter *seven* deals with the central concepts of knowledge, healing and transformation. This is followed by chapter *eight* in which the characteristics of the constructed ideal-type New Ager will be summarised, followed by an indication of further necessary research and a brief discussion of the probable future of the movement in South Africa.

Notes

1 The term 'paradigm shift' was first used by science historian, Thomas Kuhn, in his book *The structure of scientific revolutions* [1962] (1970). This term referred to a conceptual framework within which a group of scientists explored reality. In time the term was broadened, and Fritjof Capra (1990: 11) defines it as the totality of 'the thoughts, perceptions, and values that form a particular vision of reality.' It is in this

sense that New Agers claim a paradigm shift is taking place.

2 Other scholars have isolated different but related dimensions, eg Smart [1969] (1981a: 15ff) distinguishes between the ritual, mythological, doctrinal, ethical, social and experiential dimensions; Schmidt (1980: 82) distinguishes between the conceptual, ritual, personal and social dimensions; and Krüger (1982: 65-6) between the objective dimension, which includes concern, the ideal, the primary source of salvation and the notion of transcendence; and the subjective dimension, which includes the ambivalence of religious experience and the totality of religious experience.

3 Other scholars who postulated parallel typologies of religious experience are Friedrich Heiler (1923) who distinguishes between 'mysticism' and 'prophetic piety', and Peter Berger (1979) who in turn designates the two types of experience as 'confrontational' and 'interiority'.

4 Rosalind Hackett (1989) observes that the African Independent Churches in Nigeria has been strongly influenced by groups like the Rosicrucians, the Aetherius Society, Swedenborgianism and ECKANKAR.

5 In a very recent article J Gordon Melton (1992:3ff) reports that his research has revealed that Europe has far more new religions (per million persons in the population) than the US, and that about a third of all the religious bodies currently operating in Europe are non-conventional religions - mataphysical, esoteric and Asian.

6 Oosthuizen (1992) remarks that 'the Black community, deeply religious and not easily moved by other than Christian orientated movements, will not produce many New Agers'.

7 See G C Oosthuizen's (1992) very interesting article on the similarities between the Black Zionist and New Age groups. Canadian scholar of religion Irving Hexham (1991) explored the possible Theosophical influence on the rise of the African Independent Churches, but with limited success. He sees a possible link in the work of Johanna Brandt (see 3.4.1) some of whose work was translated into African Languages.

8 For various expositions of constructive postmodernism, see the series on Constructive postmodern thought edited by David Ray Griffin and published by SUNY (eg *Spirituality and society: postmodern visions* (1988), *Sacred interconnections: post-modern spirituality, political economy, and art* (1990).

9 For an interesting discussion on reactions by members of mainstream traditions (denial, renewal, reform and radical reinterpretation) see Whaling (1987a: 41ff).

10 On the whole scholars agree that experimentation with new forms of religion is the result of an unfulfilled spiritual need. Sociologists Bryan R Wilson (1982) and Robert Wuthnow (1978), and historian of religion, Jacob Needleman (1978), suggest that these movements develop in reaction to a society which does not meet the religious needs of individuals. Theodore Roszak (1976) concurs and maintains that the emergence of these movements represents an evolutionary transformation of human consciousness. Colin Campbell (1982: 237) points out that before a new movement can flourish, there has to be 'a sympathetic population who already hold beliefs and attitudes which pre-dispose them towards acceptance of the distinctive teachings of the individual sects or cults'. Some scholars (Conway & Siegelman 1979), who have studied these movements, maintain that people are recruited by brainwashing techniques, and Streiker (1984) suggests that once a person comes into contact with certain new movements, manipulative techniques (but not brainwashing) will be utilised in order to influence and direct such a person's beliefs. Few scholars of the phenomenon accept this theory and some (Bromley & Richardson [1983] and Lifton [1969]) have criticised it.

11 Oosthuizen and his co-workers studied only the census figures for 1970 and 1980, since the 1985 census did not include information on religious affiliations.

12 In Religious Studies the term 'phenomenology' refers to two different endeavours. It refers, first, to a branch of religious studies which engages in categorising and systematising religious data. This is often referred to as 'phenomenological typology'. However, the term also came to denote a specific method of research which follows in the tradition of Edmund Husserl's (1859-1938) philosophy of human consciousness. Good expositions of this method can be found in Allen (1978) *Structure and creativity in religion: hermeneutics in Mircea Eliade's phenomenology and new directions*, and Smart (1973) *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge: some methodological questions*.

13 For discussions on 'bracketing', see Allen (1978: 101ff); Krüger (1982: 18); and Smart (1973: 20, 63ff; 1986: 211ff).

14 The term 'natural history' was originally coined by Howard Becker (1980: 37) and it implies that an account be given of the major steps in the research project. This information is seen to facilitate the project's scientific credibility.

15 This step coincided with a project that Unisa's Department of Religious Studies initiated at that time. The aim of the departmental project is to gather information on all new religious groups in South Africa in order to establish a national databank on new religions in South Africa.

16 Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps (1982) in their book *Networking* describe networks as organisations 'spontaneously created by people to address problems and offer possibilities primarily *outside* of established institutions'. They write:

Networks are composed of selfreliant and autonomous participants - people and organizations who simultaneously function as independent 'wholes' and as interdependent 'parts' (Lipnack & Stamps 1982: 7).

Since all members of a network are autonomous, many different perspectives are presented, each with its own agenda. However, the cooperation within a network stems from the fact that there are some common values and goals.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE SURVEY

*Some Books are to be Tasted,
others to be Swallowed,
and some few to be Chewed and Digested.*

Francis Bacon

2.1 THE AIM OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter does not conform to the usual format of the literature survey in academic theses, which generally considers only scholarly literature on the research phenomenon. At the outset of this project there was little overseas literature in this category and virtually none by South Africans. In the interim the literature on the movement has proliferated but there remains a lack of objective scholarly work on the movement.

In view of the exploratory nature of the work on this movement it was decided to provide a comprehensive bibliography on the New Age movement which would situate the movement in a broader intellectual context. Accordingly, titles on all issues that are related to the New Age consciousness are included, in addition to academic works. The review comprises:

- (1) literature on the New Age movement by authors who consider themselves New Agers
- (2) literature on related topics by individuals who predate the genesis of the New Age movement
- (3) books on the many different issues of concern to New Agers, sometimes by authors who do not consider themselves New Agers
- (4) descriptions and evaluations of the movement; this category is subdivided into three sections, namely:
 - (a) books and articles by researchers in the field of religious studies and sociology of religion, from a scholarly and objective perspective

- (b) critical literature from either a scientific or humanist perspective
- (c) critical literature from a Christian perspective, some well researched, but much of it constituting flagrant misrepresentations

2.2 NEW AGERS ON THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

In the first category there are books on the essence and nature of the New Age movement, written by leading exponents of the movement. In this category, David Spangler (*Revelation: The birth of a New Age*, 1976; *Towards a planetary vision*, 1977; and *Emergence: The rebirth of the sacred*, 1984), and Marilyn Ferguson (*The Aquarian conspiracy*, 1980), are particularly apt representatives. Other significant works in this category are by the influential New Age pioneer Sir George Trevelyan (*A vision of the Aquarian age*, 1984); Gina Cerminara, who attacks organised religion on epistemological grounds in *Insights of the age of Aquarius* (1973); and acclaimed journalist and author Ruth Montgomery (*Aliens among us*, 1985; and with co-author Joanne Garland, *Ruth Montgomery: herald of a New Age*, 1986).

David Spangler, who was long associated with one of the most important New Age communities - Findhorn Community in Northern Scotland - is probably the most eloquent exponent of the New Age movement. For him the New Age signals the rebirth of the sacred in western society. Among New Age authors he takes a refreshingly sober view of the movement as a whole and often criticises the search for psychic experience and the narcissistic excesses of some of the groups. In an introduction to *The New Age catalogue*, a volume published by the editors of the magazine *Body, Mind & Spirit* which promotes books and other 'tools' of the New Age (eg Tarot cards, crystals, runestones), Spangler (1988: introduction) defines the New Age as follows:

The simplest answer for me is that it is the condition that emerges when I live life in a creative, empowering, compassionate manner. It manifests when I recognize and honor both the intrinsic wholeness of my world and the value and importance of everything within it. ... I find it in the never-ending quest to understand the nature and purpose of a God who is not just (or even primarily) the inner divinity on which so many New Age writers focus but the evocative Other whose very differences impel me to reach beyond myself and participate in the larger communion and community life. ... I understand the New Age as a metaphor for being in the world in a manner that opens us to the presence of God - the presence of love and possibility - in the midst of our ordinariness.

He goes on to insist that the New Age deals with issues of planetarisation, in which one becomes aware of humanity's common destiny; ecological restoration; and social justice. For him the New Age is not to be identified with pagan religions, eastern philosophies, the occult, channelling, crystals, reincarnation, psychic phenomena, or prophecy. It is therefore ironic that this introduction is followed by 244 pages of information on books and groups that deal with precisely these matters.

Spangler (1984: 78ff) offers an extremely useful distinction between different levels of the movement. He suggests that there are four marked levels in the movement.

- (1) At the first level, the term 'New Age' is used as a superficial label in a commercial setting. Consumer products and services are marketed as 'New Age' in order to appeal to a certain sector of consumers, and commercial interests overshadow the ideal of promoting the advent of the New Age.
- (2) At the second level, which Spangler calls 'the New Age as glamour', one finds groups and individuals who are 'living out their own fantasies of adventure and power, usually of an occult or millenarian form' (Spangler 1984: 78). He states that this level is populated with 'strange and exotic beings, masters, adepts, and extraterrestrials' and that here one finds emphasis on psychic powers and occult mysteries as well as conspiracies and hidden teachings. He also calls it the 'realm of the true believer' where individuals often surrender their will and creativity to powerful leaders or glamorous causes. The term 'New Age' is used freely by extremely visible and vocal exponents, and this is therefore often the level which receives the most media attention.
- (3) The third level represents the section of the movement that is primarily concerned with transformation. Spangler (1984: 79) points out that on this level 'the idea of an emerging culture is usually seen in social, economic, and technological terms rather than spiritual ones, and the term 'New Age' itself is rarely used.
- (4) For Spangler, however, the heart of the New Age (in his later works he does not capitalise this term) is represented on the fourth level where the New Age is perceived as 'an incarnation of the sacred'. He says (1984: 81):

Transformation is seen as the maturation of a spirit within humanity and within Gaia, maintaining continuity with the past but giving it a new fulfillment in expression.

On this level the new age is fundamentally a spiritual event, the birth of a new consciousness, a new awareness and experience of life. It is humanity becoming more fully integrated with the being of Gaia, more

fully at one with the presence of God. It is a deepening into the sacramental nature of everyday life, an awakening of the consciousness that can celebrate divinity within the ordinary and, in this celebration, bring to life a sacred civilization. It is the new age as a state of being, a mode of relationship with others that is mutually empowering and enriching. Rather than spiritual *experience*, which is the focus one is more apt to find in the second level - that of psychic and spiritual glamour - this level centres upon the spiritual *function*, which is service: the giving of life, the nourishing of life, the upholding of life in its desire to unfold.

In the course of this report it will become apparent that these horizontal levels are all represented in the movement in South Africa. Together with the identification of four vertical streams that have fed into the movement (see chapter 3), this study supplies a grid or framework of understanding against which New Age phenomena can be placed in order to obtain a clearer image of the movement as a whole.

Twelve years after its first appearance, Ferguson's *The Aquarian conspiracy* (1980) still presents an excellent overview of the movement's concerns. The book covers all the different disciplines (such as psychology, medicine, education, economics, politics and science) which are affected by New Age thought. To Ferguson (1980: 385) the movement signifies 'an evolution in consciousness', a transformation which was 'anticipated by older prophecies in all the traditions of direct knowing - the death of one world and the birth of a new, an apocalypse ... the awakening of increasing numbers of human beings to their godlike potential.'

Although Ferguson's book is an excellent introduction to the movement, she concentrates mainly on her own field of interest, namely psychology and the development of the human potential, and consequently the occult tradition which fed into the movement through the Theosophical Society and its offshoots (such as the Arcane School of Alice Bailey), is not only neglected but totally ignored. Even a cursory exploration of the literature on the movement will reveal that this was indeed an important predecessor.

As part of her research Ferguson sent questionnaires to 210 persons 'engaged in social transformation in many different areas' (1980: 20), and received 185 responses. She does not indicate how these persons were selected, but some of the responses lead one to guess that her choice was arbitrary. When the respondents were asked to name individuals whose ideas had influenced them, those most often named, in order of frequency, were Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Carl G Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Aldous Huxley, Roberto Assagioli, and Jiddu Krishnamurti (Ferguson 1980: 420).¹ Since four of the seven authors were influential in the field of psychology, it might be assumed that Ferguson's choice of respondents reflected her own interest. Considering Jung and Huxley's interest in the occult, and

Assagioli and Krishnamurti's contact with Theosophy, one wonders why Ferguson's research ignores the occult and Theosophical input. One can only conclude that this negation is an indication of the many different perceptions of what the movement constitutes.²

2.3 SIGNIFICANT AUTHORS WHO PREDATE THE MOVEMENT

As indicated above there are authors who predate the New Age movement, but whose work has had a seminal influence on present New Age thought. Among the most important authors in this category are Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (*The phenomenon of man*, 1972); Carl Gustav Jung (*Psychology and the East*, 1982; *Modern man in search of a soul*, 1973); and Aldous Huxley (*The perennial philosophy*, 1950). Although they predate the movement, Alice Bailey and Edgar Cayce are two authors in the occult tradition who can be regarded as early New Agers. Bailey prophesied the coming of the New Age as early as 1946 (eg in *The reappearance of the Christ*, 1969; and *The externalisation of the Hierarchy [1957]*, 1958); and Cayce's work is available in numerous volumes which are still selling particularly well (eg *You can remember your past lives*, 1989).³ Other authors who predate the movement (and can therefore not be considered New Agers), but are highly regarded by New Agers, are Ludwig von Bertalanffy (*General systems theory*, 1968); Ervin Laszlo (*Introduction to systems philosophy: toward a new paradigm of contemporary thought*, 1972a; and *The systems view of the world: the natural philosophy of the new developments in the sciences*, 1972b); Abraham M Maslow (*Toward a psychology of being*, 1961; and *Religion, values, and peak-experiences*, 1987); Carl Rogers (*On becoming a person: a therapist's view of psychotherapy*, 1967); Lewis Mumford (*The conduct of life*, 1951; and *The transformation of man*, 1956); Gregory Bateson (*Mind and nature: a necessary unity*, 1980); and Joseph Campbell (*The power of myth*, 1988).⁴

The most influential of these is the Jesuit priest and paleontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). Teilhard postulated a 'Law of Complexity-Consciousness' whereby evolution is seen as an ascent towards increasing complexity and a simultaneous rise in consciousness. Evolution, having passed through the birth of the earth (geogenesis), and then the birth of life (biogenesis), is presently in the period typified by the birth of the mind (noogenesis). In Teilhard's vision this stage in the evolutionary process will culminate in an 'Omega Point' where humankind will unite in a single conscious entity. Teilhard (1972: 289) explains:

By its structure Omega, in its ultimate principle, can only be a *distinct Centre radiating at the core of a system of centres*; a grouping in which personalisation of the All and personalisations of the elements reach their maximum, simultaneously and without merging, under the influence of a supremely autonomous focus of union.

Teilhard's vision has much in common with general systems theory which has found many adherents in New Age circles. The central notion of evolution was also taken up by a number of New Agers, such as James Lovelock (1979, 1988) and Peter Russell (1982) in their different works on the Gaia hypothesis (see 5.3.2 b). Teilhard, as a Christian, however, believed that God was the source and controller of evolution, and consequently took an optimistic view of the ultimate outcome of the process. In contrast, both Lovelock and Russell hold that the development of higher states of consciousness by humanity is a crucial part of the evolutionary process.

Another extremely influential person who predates the movement and who is almost universally admired by New Agers, is Carl G Jung. Only one participant in this study claimed to have studied Jung, but the concept of a collective unconscious was referred to quite often. Jung's interest in astrology, alchemy, Gnosticism, the Kabbalah and UFOs must also have contributed to his high standing in the movement. However, it is his model of the psyche that has most often influenced adherents of this movement.

Jung postulated that the human psyche consists of three levels: the personal consciousness, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious. The core of the personal consciousness is the ego, or the sense of an 'I', and the personal unconscious consists of forgotten or repressed memories of the ego. The collective unconscious, on the other hand, is described by Jung ([1959] 1990: 90) as

a psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually, but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes.

These archetypes are universal forms of apprehension which are filled with great power and meaning, and which necessarily determine all psychic processes. The origin of the archetypes is shrouded in mystery and Jung ([1959] 1990: 101) says that if they 'originated' at all, how they did so is a metaphysical question and therefore unanswerable. The notion of a collective unconscious consisting of archetypes, although still largely ignored by the scientific community, reinforces the idea of the interconnectedness of humans, which is so prevalent among New Agers.

Jung furthermore described the human growth process which, ideally, culminates in the person becoming whole and integrated. This whole-making process he called individuation: a process in which the consciousness confronts the unconscious and a balance between the oppositions is established. This process varies greatly in different people, but the common factor is the confrontation of specific archetypes: the shadow, the anima/animus, and the Self.⁵ In assimilating the shadow, one recognises the dark aspect of one's personality; not only the dark side of one's personal unconscious, but also the archetype of the shadow which contains the evil of the

world. The archetype of the anima/animus represents the masculine and feminine characteristics which are latent in both sexes - therefore the integration of the anima into the man will represent the acknowledgement of feminine characteristics and the integration of the animus into to woman will acknowledge her male characteristics. Without this acknowledgement the person cannot become whole. Jung saw the Self as an archetype of transcendence and wholeness; an archetype that cannot be distinguished from the God-image. For Jung the Self is the totality of the human psyche, the inner guide, and is both the path and the goal of self-realisation. He writes (1975: 417):

there is little hope of our ever being able to reach even approximate consciousness of the self... . The self is not only the centre but also the whole circumference which embraces both consciousness and unconscious; it is the centre of this totality, just as the ego is the centre of the conscious mind.

These themes (especially the assimilation of the shadow, the integration of the anima, and the realisation of the higher Self) will be seen to surface again in the ensuing report in discussions on the Luciferian initiation (6.3.2 a), the focus on the feminist principle (5.2.2 c; 5.3.2 c), and self-realisation (6.2.2 a).

Another individual whose ideas have strongly influenced the movement is Aldous Huxley. In Ferguson's (1980: 50, 420) lists of the most influential individuals, he appears second on one, and fifth on the other. While his name was not mentioned by any of the participants in my own study, virtually all subscribed to his notion of a perennial philosophy. Huxley held that the mystical experience of unity formed the common core of all religious traditions. In his famous book, *The perennial philosophy* (Huxley 1950: 1), he explains that the *philosophia perennis* refers to:

the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being.

Huxley maintained that in its rudimentary form the perennial philosophy is present in the traditional lore of the primal peoples of the world, and that in a more developed form it is found in all the higher religions of our world. His book is a selection of writings from various religious traditions on key religious issues. This view has been criticised for minimising the exoteric, or outer differences (such as dogma) between religions as well as for underestimating the value and impact of particular expressions.⁶

2.4 LITERATURE ON ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE IN NEW AGE CIRCLES

In the third category there are books on the various topics of concern to New Agers. These books are written mainly by individuals who identify with the movement, although some would not describe themselves as New Agers. The following paragraphs include noteworthy contributions to the various issues that concern New Agers, and many of these publications boast sales of millions and are avidly read by New Age adherents. Since it is not possible to give cameos of all the works and their authors, the titles are given in full, since they often accurately describe the aim of the particular work.

- (1) A number of authors have written on the imminent evolutionary transformation of individuals and society. Among them are physicist Fritjof Capra (*The Tao of physics*, 1975; and *The turning point*, [1982] 1990); futurist Willis Harman (*Global mind change: the promise of the last years of the twentieth century*, 1988); United Nations consultant Donald Keyes (*Earth at Omega: passage to planitization*, 1982); and atmospheric biochemist James Lovelock (*Gaia: a new look at life on Earth*, 1979).
- (2) Authors who are concerned with the expansion of human consciousness include Charles Tart (*Waking up: overcoming the obstacles to human potential*, 1986); Jean Houston (*The possible human*, 1982; and with Robert Masters *Mind games*, 1972); Ken Wilber (*Up from Eden*, 1981; and *Eye to eye*, 1983); and John Randolph Price (*With wings as eagles*, 1987). Father Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle has written cogently on the arising new consciousness in *Living in the new consciousness* (1988) and Matthew Fox, Roman Catholic priest in the Dominican Order, has published several books on 'creation theology' that are highly regarded in New Age circles (for instance, *Original blessing*, 1983; *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's creation spirituality in new translation*, 1980; *The coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 1988; and with physicist Brian Swimme, *Manifesto for a global civilization*, 1982). Best-selling authors on spiritual growth are psychologists M Scott Peck (*The road less travelled*, [1978] 1990); and Richard Moss (*The I that is we: awakening the higher energies through unconditional love*, 1981).
- (3) Health and healing are of prime importance in the movement, and authors who have written on this subject include Louise Hays (*Heal your body*, 1982; and *You can heal your life*, 1987); Norman Cousins (*The anatomy of an illness as perceived by the patient*, 1979; and *Head first: the biology of hope*, 1989); and Chris Griscom (*Ecstasy is a new frequency*, 1987; and *Healing the emotion*, 1990).

- (4) The Gaia hypothesis, which underlies the ecological concerns of many New Agers, was first propounded by James Lovelock who was mentioned above. This subject is also ably expounded by Peter Russell in *The awakening Earth* (1982).
- (5) The revival of the Mother Goddess, earth religion and female power, features strongly in the movement in the United States, and this trend is aptly elucidated by Starhawk in *The spiral dance: a rebirth of the ancient religion of the Great Goddess* (1989), as well as in *The great cosmic mother: rediscovering the religion of the earth* (1987) by Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor, and *The feminization of America: how woman's values are changing our public and private lives* (1985) by Elinor Lenz and Barbara Myerhoff.
- (6) Reincarnation and karma are also issues of vital importance to New Agers: representative works are *The case for reincarnation (with a preface by The Dalai Lama)* (1984) by Joe Fisher, and *Reincarnation: a new horizon in science, religion, and society* (1984) by Sylvia Cranston and Carey Williams.
- (7) In this third category there are also vast numbers of books on numerous psychotechnologies. Examples of note are:
- (a) On channelling (previously referred to as 'mediumship' 'spiritualism' or 'revelation' - therefore the craft of the prophet, shaman and oracle): John Klimo's *Channeling: investigations on receiving information from paranormal sources* (1987). Channelled works include *Seth speaks* (1972) and *Psychic politics* (1976) by Jane Roberts; Helen Schucman's *A course in miracles* (1976); *Ramtha* (1986) as channelled by J Z Knight and edited by Steven Lee Weinberg; and *The sacred journey: you and your Higher self* (1987) by Lazaris as channelled by Jach Pursel.
- (b) On meditation: Ram Dass' *Journey of awakening: a meditator's guidebook* (1985); and *How to meditate* (1974) by Laurence LeShan.
- (c) On divination techniques: *The metaphysical handbook* (1985) by David and Lucy Pond; *Person-centered astrology* (1980) by Dane Rudhyar; *The tarot revealed* (1960) by Eden Gray; *The authentic I-Ching* (1987) by Henry Wei; and *I Ching: a new interpretation for modern times* (1974) by Sam Reifler.
- (d) On healing therapies: *Love, medicine and miracles: lessons about self-healing from a surgeon's experience* (1986) by Bernie S Siegel; *The Edgar Cayce hand book for health through drugless therapy* (1975) by Harold Reilly and Ruth Brod; and *Serenity: challenging the fear of AIDS: from despair to hope* (1987) by Paul Reed.

- (e) On creating your own reality: *The inner path from where you are to where you want to be* (1986) by Terry Cole-Whittaker; and *Master of life manual: metaphysics, brain/mind awareness and human potential principles to create your own reality now!* (1987) by Dick Sutphen.
- (f) On dream therapies: *The inner eye: your dreams can make you psychic* (1985) by Joan Windsor; and *Working with dreams: self-understanding, problem-solving, and enriched creativity through dream interpretation* (1979) by Montague Ullman and Nan Zimmerman.
- (g) On developing psychic powers: *Psychic energy: for achieving wealth, success and happiness* (1981) by Joseph Weed.
- (h) On UFOs and extra-terrestrials: Whitley Strieber's *Communion: a true story - encounters with the unknown* (1989), and *Transformation: the breakthrough* (1989); and Ken Carey's *The starseed transmissions: an extraterrestrial report* (1988).

Some of the most influential authors in this category do not regard themselves as New Agers, but have written on different issues of importance to adherents. One such esteemed author is Fritjof Capra. In *The Tao of physics* (1975) he demonstrates the apparent similarities between twentieth century discoveries in the field of quantum physics and the descriptions of the essence of reality by mystics of eastern religions.⁷ These similarities might, however, prove to be only similarities of verbal expression.

In *The turning point*, Capra (1990) argues that humanity finds itself in a world-wide crisis. This crisis has developed from people's attempt to apply concepts of an out-dated worldview (the mechanistic worldview of Cartesian-Newtonian science) to a reality that demands new perceptions. He writes (1990: xx):

I believe that the worldview implied by modern physics is inconsistent with our present society, which does not reflect the harmonious interrelatedness we observe in nature. To achieve such a state of dynamic balance, a radically different social and economic structure will be needed: a cultural revolution in the true sense of the word. The survival of our whole civilization may depend on whether we can bring about such a change.

Capra combines Arnold Toynbee's theory on patterns in the rise and fall of civilisations with the Russian sociologist Pitrim Sorokin's theory of the cyclic manifestation of three cultural value systems.⁸ In line with Toynbee's theory, Capra demonstrates that several transitions of cultural values are coinciding at the present time. These

are the decline in patriarchy, the decline of the fossil-fuel age, and a shift in thoughts, perceptions and values (such as the change in the belief that the scientific method is the only valid approach to knowledge; the change in the mechanistic view of the universe; and the change in the belief in unlimited material progress) (1990: 11ff). Sorokin's theory postulates three value systems: the sensate, which holds that matter alone is ultimate reality; the ideational, which states that true reality lies beyond the material world; and the intermediate, synthesising idealistic value system, which represents a blending of the other two systems. Sorokin demonstrates that these three systems have occurred in predictable cycles in western civilisation. At present the sensate system that has been prevalent in western society since the seventeenth century is on the decline and western civilisation is in the throes of transformation. Capra holds that at this juncture cultural transformation is inevitable and suggests a model for change which is based on the Chinese *I Ching*, or Book of Changes. This model epitomises the peaceful transition which is possible, should it be adopted. Capra quotes a passage from the *I Ching* which summarises how peaceful the transition could be (1990: 16):

The movement is natural, arising spontaneously. For this reason the transformation of the old becomes easy. The old is discarded and the new is introduced. Both measures accord with the time; therefore no harm results.

Of the impending transition, Capra (1990: 14-5) writes:

The transformation we are experiencing now may well be more dramatic than any of the preceding ones; because the rate of change in our age is faster than ever before, because the changes are more extensive, involving the entire globe, and because several major transitions are coinciding. The rhythmic recurrences and patterns of rise and decline that seem to dominate human cultural evolution have somehow conspired to reach their point of reversal at the same time. The decline of patriarchy, the end of the fossil-fuel age, and the paradigm shift occurring in the twilight of the sensate culture are all contributing to the same global process. The current crisis, therefore, is not just a crisis of individuals, governments, or social institutions; it is a transition of planetary dimensions. As individuals, as a society, as a civilization, and as a planetary ecosystem, we are reaching the turning point.

He suggests that what is needed is a new holistic conception of reality. Such a new vision of reality would take seriously the 'awareness of the essential interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena - physical, biological, psychological, social, and cultural' (1990: 285). This new paradigm should, according to Capra, be based on the systems view of the world,⁹ in which reality is seen in terms of relationships

and integration. All living organisms, whether large or small, are integrated wholes and therefore living systems. These living systems form part of larger and ever larger wholes so that ultimately reality itself is viewed as one. These systems are not confined to organisms, but include social and ecosystems, which are all interrelated and interdependent.

Capra clearly fits into the third level of the New Age movement distinguished by Spangler, and although the only reference to the New Age movement in *The turning point* is a remark on the signs of exploitation, fraud, sexism and excessive economic expansion among some of the New Age organisations (1990: 462), Capra can be viewed as one of the most influential authors in New Age circles.

Another influential volume in this category is *A course in miracles* [1975] (1985). Helen Schucman, at that time a member of the Psychology Department at Presbyterian Hospital in New York and professor of Medical Psychology at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons, was the channel for this three-volume work, for which the true source is said to be the Biblical Christ.¹⁰ The work consists of a text, a workbook containing 365 lessons, and a manual for teachers. The course was transcribed over a seven year period by Schucman, with the assistance of William Thetford, the head of the psychology department at the hospital where she worked. After several visions and vivid dreams Schucman one evening heard a voice that commanded her: 'This is a course in miracles. Please take notes.' Despite her initial resistance and scepticism she transcribed the dictation and in 1975 the work was published without an author's name.¹¹

The voice declared that the aim of the volumes is 'to remove the blocks to the awareness of love's presence, which is your natural inheritance', and in the preface the message is summarised as 'Nothing real can be threatened, and nothing unreal exists'. According to the course, humans are trapped in the illusions of time, space, sin, pain, guilt, suffering and death. This has happened because humans have separated themselves from God and have forgotten their true nature - their divinity. The solution to this situation is to radically transform one's mind-set and to see differently. All that is not love is not of God and is ultimately not real. Sin and suffering are illusions and if humans would wake up from this nightmare of their own making, they would see that there is nothing but love - which is God. 'The sleep of forgetfulness' says the author 'is only the unwillingness to remember Your forgiveness and Your Love' (ACIM I 1985: 326). Through God's grace there is assistance for humans in this process - 'If it helps you, think of me holding your hand and leading you. And I assure you this will be no idle fantasy' (ACIM II 1985: 119).

The course has unleashed a flood of secondary literature which includes the bestseller *Love is letting go of fear* (1985) by Gerald G Jampolsky, and several works by Tara Singh (eg *How to learn from 'A Course in Miracles'*, 1985; and *Dialogues on 'A Course in Miracles'*, 1987).

Matthew Fox¹² is another author who cannot be described as a New Ager but whose work is important in New Age circles. Fox, a Roman Catholic priest, teaches a 'creation centred theology' as opposed to the 'fall/redemption theology' which has always been more prevalent in mainstream Christianity. He believes that humanity requires a new religious paradigm and that creation spirituality offers as much. Fox (1983: 255) maintains that:

Christians and others should not be afraid of terms like 'new age'. Newness is a divine attribute. Surely the human race is as idolatrous towards inherited and familiar institutions and patterns of living as it ever could be about new patterns. The 'new' can in fact prove to be quite old. For example, a 'new' theology of original blessing is in fact far more ancient than the familiar theology of original sin.

This tradition, says Fox, has always been a part of Christendom although in the past three centuries it has been almost entirely forgotten as religion. He traces the family tree of creation-centred spirituality (which often coincides with the mystical tradition (see 3.3.1 b ix) from its early roots in the Old and New Testaments to, among others, the Church fathers Irenaeus (c 130-200) and Cassian (c 360-420), John Scotus Erigena (810-877), Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Francis of Assisi (1181-1225), Mechtild of Magdeburg (1210-1280), Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Meister Eckhart (1260-1329) whom he calls the greatest spokesperson of this tradition, Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), Julian of Norwich (1342-1415), Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), John of the Cross (1542-1591), Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), George Fox (1624-1677); more recently, philosopher/scientists Alfred North Whitehead, Teilhard de Chardin, Fritjof Capra and Gary Zukav; theologians Albert Schweitzer, M D Chenu, Thomas Merton, Gerhard Von Rad, Rosemary Reuther, Edward Schillebeeckx and Claus Westermann; and 'New Age mystics' such as David Spangler, Jean Houston and Marilyn Ferguson (Fox 1983: 307ff). When one considers the number of individuals in this list who were condemned by the Church¹³ and the number of women (always a disdained group in the Church), one realises that this tradition has been repressed in western Christianity for a long time.

Fox's interpretation of creation-centred spirituality includes a realised eschatology, spiritual development through joy and celebration as well as through pain and suffering, an emphasis on silence, the rediscovery of the motherhood of God, humans as co-creators of God, God's creative energy which is inherent in human beings, and ultimate transformation.

The next author under consideration in this section is actress Shirley MacLaine who is variously described as 'chief evangelist' (Miller 1989: 159), 'self appointed spokesperson' (McGuire 1987: 7), and 'high priestess of the New Age movement' (Chandler 1988: 51).¹⁴ She authored a number of books on her spiritual development (*Out on a limb*, 1983; *Dancing in the light*, 1986; *It's all in the playing*, 1987; and *Going within*, 1991), all of which are much read by New Agers. These books relate the tale of her spiritual quest from its beginning in the early eighties, when she first became interested in metaphysical matters. They combine biographical details (with the emphasis on her various love affairs) with her metaphysical search, and provide tantalising reading matter for those to whom it appeals - which seems to be many, since these books have sold in excess of five million copies. The ideas propounded in these books are presented in such a fragmented manner that it is difficult to gain a coherent view of MacLaine's worldview. The following issues are among the many that receive exposure in her work: channelling, reincarnation and karma, astrology, pantheism and UFOs.¹⁵

Another popular author who is widely read by New Agers is psychologist M Scott Peck whose book *The road less travelled* [1978] (1990) remained on the bestseller list for five years. This book deals with the neglected spiritual dimension of people in contemporary society. Peck shows how human beings can never be whole and healthy without developing their spiritual dimension.¹⁶

We now turn to evaluations of the movement.

2.5 DESCRIPTIONS AND EVALUATIONS

2.5.1 Literature by scholars of religion and sociologists

In this category, there are a number of scholarly works that do not deal with the New Age movement specifically, but with the more general theme of new religious movements in contemporary society. These are on the whole either appreciative (Theodore Roszak's *Unfinished animal: the Aquarian frontier and the evolution of consciousness*, 1976; and Jacob Needleman's *Understanding the new religions*, 1978), or on the whole negative (J Gordon Melton's *Encyclopedic handbook of cults in America*, 1986a). A very recent publication is *New Age Almanac* (1991) by J Gordon Melton, Jerome Clark and Aidan A Kelly, which contains comprehensive information on all the various issues in New Age circles, presented in an objective and non-judgemental manner.

Cultural historian Theodore Roszak is a scholar who sees in the movement a positive development and, although critical of some aspects of the movement, he evaluates it positively. In his books *The making of a counter culture* (1970), *Where the*

wasteland ends (1973), and *Unfinished animal* (1976) he addresses the issues involved in the development of the subculture of the sixties and in the 'Aquarian frontier'. The 'Aquarian frontier' is a term coined by Roszak to encompass all the different expressions of discontent with modern society. This term therefore includes the different fundamentalist and charismatic movements which have sprung up in Christian circles in the west. Roszak is of the opinion that modern society has robbed people of their souls and he sees in the Aquarian frontier a reemergence of mystical sensitivity. In his searing attack on, and rejection of, technocracy, Roszak opens himself to criticism from fellow 'New Ager' Ken Wilber (1983: 217), who claims that Roszak's vision of a new society entails a regression, rather than a transcendence of modernity.

Jacob Needleman, eminent philosopher and scholar of new religious movements, is another who evaluates the contribution of eastern philosophies to western culture in a positive way. In his introduction to *Understanding the new religions* (1978) he points out that the new trend 'in its broadest sense, far from being an aberration, is a crucial aspect of the profound cultural change through which the American civilization is now passing. It is one of the key elements in a widespread reaching out for new values' (Needleman 1978: ix). In an earlier article Needleman (1973: 6ff) pointed out that western religions are vulnerable to correction by eastern philosophies in three ways. These are the west's exclusion of the mind in religious matters, the absence of religious techniques and methods in this tradition, and its underestimation of human possibility. Whereas Needleman agrees with New Agers that the exoteric religious framework is disintegrating, and that we are now 'between religions' and in an 'age of transition', he suggests that New Agers are over-optimistic and naive about the coming New Age (Anthony et al 1987: 339). The work of both these authors makes compelling reading and their scholarship cannot be faulted. It is, however, their subjective religious allegiance that is responsible for their (on the whole) positive evaluations.

Melton et al's *New Age almanac* (1991) is aptly billed as 'The one fact book you need for New Age understanding', including as it does exhaustive material, objectively and nonjudgmentally presented, on New Age groups, organisations, beliefs, practices, publications and celebrities. However, a serious flaw of this publication is that it lacks an index and its table of contents does not indicate page numbers for the often more than fifty entries in a chapter. Finding information in this volume is therefore difficult and frustrating. A book that has now become available in South Africa, *New Age encyclopedia* (1990) also by Melton, Clark and Kelley, contains almost exactly the same information as the *New Age almanac*, but is alphabetically ordered for easy access. This book has the following interesting subtitle - interesting in that it implies a positive evaluation: 'A Guide to the Beliefs, Concepts, Terms,

People, and Organizations That Make up the New Global Movement Toward Spiritual Development, Health and Healing, Higher Consciousness, and Related Subjects’.

Despite his objective approach to the movement, Melton, who has done sterling work on the new religions in the United States, states elsewhere that ‘while Christians can respect the beliefs of those who hold other faiths’ it must be asserted that ‘in the long run they have fallen short of the Divine for which the (New Age) movement seeks’ and that they will ultimately fail in transforming society (Chandler 1988: 320). No such evaluations are, however, found in the works by Melton which are under consideration in this study.

2.5.2 Evaluations by scientists and humanists

In this subcategory there are works by individuals and organisations who criticise the movement and the related subject of psychic phenomena from either a scientific or a humanist perspective. The most notable among the humanists is Paul Kurtz with his *The transcendental temptation: a critique of religion and the paranormal* (1986), and among the scientists, free-lance writer Martin Gardner with his *Fads and fallacies in the name of science* (1958) and *The New Age: notes of a fringe watcher* (1988).

Gardner’s *The New Age: notes of a fringe watcher* contains a collection of articles written over many years (with notes to update the information) for *Skeptical Inquirer* (‘a quarterly devoted to reporting and debunking fringe science’ (Gardner 1988: preface) on numerous issues such as psychic research, psychic surgery, channelling, the third eye, numerology, as well as on Christian fundamentalism and the American televangelists. Gardner exhibits a positivistic approach to life, and his zeal in exposing all paranormal claims borders on the vitriolic so that ultimately his work can hardly be distinguished from the hostile attacks of certain Christian authors.

Paul Kurtz¹⁷, editor of *The Humanist* (the journal of the American Humanist Association) sees psychic phenomena and interest in them as a form of religion, and since he regards religion as a harmful delusion, he concludes that belief in psychic phenomena has no place in society. Robert Basil has compiled a collection of sceptical articles in his volume *Not necessarily the New Age*, which he says offers ‘a thorough, rigorous, and fair analysis of the movement’ (1988: 9). When he concludes that ‘slippery and insistent, the movement can co-opt and disown single-issue movements easily; it can disguise itself in order to insinuate itself into mainstream institutions’ (1988: 28), it is obvious that a chance for a ‘fair analysis’ has slipped out of reach. From his analysis, it is clear that Basil’s negative evaluation is not confined to the New Age movement, but includes all traditions of faith. He writes:

And like these Christian claims, the New Age stress on faith in various 'metaphysical' claims falls apart at both ends: evidence for UFOs, 'psychic' powers, reincarnation, telekinesis, trance-channeling, and so forth is weak indeed, certainly no more conclusive than the evidence for Jesus' bodily resurrection; New Age belief grows from faith, not from evidence that the world at large can witness and replicate (1988: 18).

2.5.3 Evaluations from a Christian perspective

Lastly, there are authors from the ranks of Christian apologists and their work varies from well-researched but negative evaluations (Elliot Miller's *A crash course on the New Age movement*, 1989; Russell Chandler's *Understanding the New Age*, 1988; and J Verkuyl's *De New Age beweging: Kernbegrippen, beoordeling, uitdaging*, 1989), to fanatically rabid books in which the movement is usually equated with the demonic (Constance Cumbey's *Hidden dangers of the rainbow*, 1983; and *Dark secrets of the New Age*, 1987; and Texe Marrs' *Mystery mark of the New Age: Satan's design for world domination*, 1988). Other works in this category include Douglas Groothuis' *Revealing the New Age Jesus: challenges to orthodox views of Christ* (1990), and *Unmasking the New Age* (1986); Paul de Parrie and Mary Pride's *Ancient empires of the New Age* (1989) and *Unholy sacrifices of the New Age* (1988); and Dave Hunt's *The cult explosion: an expose of today's cults and why they prosper* (1978) and *Peace, prosperity, and the coming holocaust: the New Age movement in prophecy* (1983).

A scholar who launches a stringent attack on the new religious consciousness is Carl A Raschke (1980). Raschke contends that the new religions are 'mainly the cresting wave of forces that have been at work in western culture for at least two hundred years, primarily since the eighteenth century, though the seeds were planted over two millennia ago' (1980: x). He terms the new spirituality 'modern Gnosticism', which for him denotes not only the 'different underground religious communities, but also key attitudes on the part of certain intellectuals towards the nature of man, towards society and history' (1980: xi). These intellectuals include the German romantics, Friedrich Nietzsche, Carl G Jung and the Transcendentalists. Raschke theorises that the new religious consciousness can be viewed as a revolt against the course of modern history and is typified by a search for salvation in the sphere of eternity. He comments:

Their passion is not for a life lived within all the ambiguities of human time, but for salvation beyond the plane of the temporal, in *eternity*. The title of the book, *The interruption of Eternity*, thus suggests that there exists a significant way of looking at the world which seeks surcease from - a qualitative break in - the motion of time and history (1980: xi).

Raschke berates adherents of the 'new consciousness' for what he perceives as an escape from social responsibility, away from the 'struggle with the ambiguities, contingencies, and incalculable factors of historical existence'. Positive thinking and the development of individual potential is, according to Raschke, inadequate to deal with the complex issues that haunt modern society. He contends that the need is for individuals not only to look inward, but also to look outward if the present challenges are to be met. The sophisticated New Ager will probably agree with Raschke on the need for both an inward and an outward probe, but could quite rightly accuse Raschke of disparaging the inward search.

The theologian J Verkuyl has studied the movement in the Netherlands and highlights the differences between New Age beliefs and Christian teachings. Although his rendition of some of the core elements of the movement is accurate, he neglects some vital aspects. For instance, in a discussion of the origin of the movement no mention is made of the Theosophical tradition or the Bailey teachings.

This category contains, in addition, polemical literature by Christian apologists who have attacked the movement in a way that can only be described as fanatical. These works are obviously directed at the conservative and fundamentalist sectors in Christianity. Some of these books have gained popularity in Christian circles in South Africa, and I have heard their virtues extolled by speakers addressing audiences on the dangers of the New Age movement. Books that fall into this category are Constance Cumbey's *Hidden dangers of the rainbow* (1983) and Texe Marris' *Dark secrets of the New Age: Satan's plan for a one world religion* (1987).¹⁸

Cumbey's book is the most popular in this group and is widely read. However, to the objective reader she is obviously obsessed with the supposed conspiratorial plot of the New Age to install the anti-Christ and to take over the world. In her enthusiasm to expose the 'world plan' she focuses on the work of Alice Bailey, who foretold the second coming of the Christ, and of Benjamin Creme, who in 1982 proclaimed that the Christ is already in the world and will soon be revealed. These individuals are, however, representative of only one stream of the movement and their views cannot be ascribed to the movement as a whole. Other Christian authors who have studied the movement have agreed that Cumbey's alarmist accusations are unfounded (Miller 1989: 193ff; McRoberts 1989: 102), as well as slanderous and false (Verkuyl 1989: 49).

The volume by Texe Marris (1988) is also misleading. Although the book is advertised as being based on 'an in-depth investigation of the movement', serious doubts as to the accuracy of this statement arise when the author states that:

the New Age movement has undeniably taken on the definite form of a religion, complete with an agreed-upon body of doctrine, printed scripture, a pattern of worship and ritual, a functioning group of ministers and lay leaders, and an effective outreach program carried out by an active core of proselytizing believers (Marrs 1988: viii).

Anyone who has undertaken even a very superficial investigation of the movement will agree that the movement is exactly the opposite. It is not solely a religious movement, it has no agreed doctrine or scripture, there is no uniformity in worship or rituals, and there are no ministers who are accepted by the majority of adherents. Christian critics of the movement who reject the conspiracy theories include Melton (1986a: 108); Chandler (1988: 17); Miller (1989: 15); and Verkuyl (1989: 8).

Among the critics of the movement is an interesting group who have centered on the infiltration of the New Age movement into the 'church'. Hunt and McMahon, in *The seduction of Christianity* (1987), do not pursue the more obvious cases of 'New Age' influence such as the Roman Catholic priests who are in dialogue with Zen (eg Father Enomiya-Lasalle and Father Steindl-Rast), the 'creation spirituality' of Dominican priest Matthew Fox, or even the process theologians who usually hold a panentheistic view of God and the world. Rather, Hunt and McMahon prise out New Age teachings and techniques in the evangelical movements. The belief in one's divine right to health, happiness and prosperity, the use of creative visualisation techniques, the 'new gospel of self-esteem', the pervasive influence of psychology, and positive thinking all come in for scorching criticism from these authors. Miller (1989: 188) remarks that those responsible for introducing these beliefs and practices, however well-intentioned, 'all appear to be biblically erring Christians, not maliciously conspiring New Agers'. Given this description of the New Ager, Miller's stated objective, namely to evangelise New Agers, might prove to be difficult.

The studies which have been undertaken in South Africa have been carried out, in the main, by religious leaders who have attempted to give guidance to their flock (Geyser 1990; Koornhof 1990; Buitendag & Van der Merwe 1991; Malan 1989). One publication (*Die 'New Age'-beweging. The 'New Age' movement* by B J van der Walt, S Fowler and J J Venter 1990), deserves mention. This information piece comprises three separate articles on the New Age movement, and while they cannot cover this vast phenomenon in the limited space (the longest article is 32 pages), all three at least demonstrate familiarity with some of the important writings of the movement. While all three are critical of the movement their treatment demonstrates a sober approach and certainly does not fall into the fanatical and alarmist category of the work of Cumbeys and Marrs.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the various categories of literature on the New Age movement and has provided the student of religion with a starting point for further research.

Notes

1 Ferguson (1980: 50, 420) refers to these persons twice in *The Aquarian conspiracy*, but the sequences differ. On page 50 Teilhard is again the most frequently mentioned, but now he is followed by Aldous Huxley, Carl Jung and Abraham Maslow.

2 As we shall see in the next chapter, Carl G Jung's interest and research in alchemy, Gnosticism, astrology, UFOs and the I Ching are well documented (Jung 1968; Jung 1974, vol 10; Jung 1987) and Aldous Huxley's interest in demonism and psychedelically induced altered states of consciousness is obvious in his books (1952; 1972). Roberto Assagioli was the psychiatrist who developed Psychosynthesis, (*Psychosynthesis: a manual of principles and techniques* [1965]) a system in which the spiritual development of the patient is emphasised (to be discussed in chapter three). Later he founded his own organisation, the Meditation Group for the New Age, which has its headquarters at Meditation Mount in Ojai, California. Campbell (1980: 155) points out that Assagioli represents a link between Theosophy and the human potential movement, and suggests that Theosophy has had an influence on at least one sector of humanistic psychology. Jiddu Krishnamurti also had strong ties with the Theosophical Society, which he, however, broke in 1929 (see 3.3.1 b xxii).

3 Edgar Cayce (1877-1945) was the best-known clairvoyant of the twentieth century. While he did not write much himself, he gave thousands of psychic discourses of which more than 14 000 were stenographically recorded and have been preserved by the Association for Research and Enlightenment (ARE). The ARE is a non-profit, open membership organisation which is committed to spiritual growth, holistic healing, psychical research and its spiritual dimensions; and more specifically, to making practical use of the psychic readings of the late Edgar Cayce (1989: 275). Other volumes on Edgar Cayce's teachings include topics such as: dreams, diet and health, ESP, Atlantis, the Dead Sea scrolls, mysteries of the mind, stones and crystals.

4 For an interesting comparison between New Age holism as expounded by Joseph Campbell and Albert Schweitzer's mystical concept of 'reverence of life', see Mason (1992).

5 Jung did not capitalise the 'Self', but in order to distinguish it from the self as the ego, most other authors do.

6 For a discussion of the common core theory, see Knitter (1985: 37ff). For a lively discussion between process theologian David Griffin and Huston Smith, adherent of the perennial (or as he calls it, the primordial) philosophy, see *Primordial truth and postmodern theology* (1989) a volume edited by Griffin and Smith. Whereas both agree that it is imperative that we move beyond the modern worldview, and both feel that the other's position is far superior to any version of the modern worldview, they differ sharply on certain fundamental issues, eg the relationship between God and the world; and the status of the mind's criteria in forming a worldview.

7 Other authors who have written on the similarities between the insights of the new physics and those of mysticism are Gary Zukav in *The dancing Wu Li masters* (1979), Michael Talbot in *Mysticism and the new physics* (1981), Amaury de Rien-court in *The eye of Shiva* (1981), and Ken Wilber in *Quantum questions: mystical writings of the world's greatest physicists* (1984).

8 See Arnold Toynbee's *A study of history* [1960] (1972); and Pitrim A Sorokin's *Social and cultural dynamics* (1937-41).

9 For expositions on systems theory see Laszlo's *Introduction to systems philosophy: toward a new paradigm of contemporary thought* (1972a) and *The systems view of the world: the natural philosophy of the new developments in the sciences* (1972b) and Von Bertalanffy's *General Systems Theory* (1968).

10 See *Journey without distance: the story behind 'A Course in Miracles'* (1984) by Robert Skutch.

11 Schucman, a professed atheist, claimed not to have understood the events that had led up to the writing, nor the process of writing, or the authorship of the work (Skutch 1984: 134). And Judith Skutch (Klimo 1987: 41) who eventually published the work noted:

Those of us intimately associated with Helen Schucman over a long period of time until her death in 1981 were all aware that Helen's egoic rational mind was incapable of writing this material. I really feel that the part of Helen that was connected to the All received it in a form that was needed for today.

However, well-known psychologist Ken Wilber (Klimo 1987: 42) opines:

Now, I'm not saying that there was not some transcendental insight involved and that Helen probably felt that it was certainly beyond her day-to-day self. I think that's true. But there's more of Helen in the *Course* than I first thought. She was brought up mystically inclined. At four she used to stand out on the balcony and say that God would give her a sign of miracles to let her know that he was there. Many ideas from the *Course* came from the new thought or metaphysical schools she had been influenced by. It's not all pure information, there's a lot of noise that gets in. I found also that if you look at Helen's own poetry, you're initially very hard pressed to find any difference between that and the *Course*.

12 Matthew Fox was ordained a priest in 1967 and completed his doctoral studies in 1970 at the Institut Catholique de Paris. Here he was introduced to creation spirituality in the Catholic tradition by church historian M D Chenu. In 1977 he founded the Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality (ICCS), which later became affiliated with Holy Names College in Oakland, California. His appointments to the Institute soon attracted official attention. These included a yoga instructor; an Episcopal vicar who had become a Zen Buddhist; Starhawk, a Wiccan priestess and national leader of the Neo-Pagan movement; and Buck Ghost Horse, a Native American shaman (Melton 1990: 179). In July 1984 Cardinal Ratzinger, head of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (and therefore chief theologian of the Roman Catholic Church) ordered an investigation into Fox's activities and theology. A committee of three theologians studied his teachings for a year and declared that they could find no heresy. Not satisfied, Cardinal Ratzinger's office undertook its own investigation and in 1988 Ratzinger ordered the Master-General of the Dominican Order to take immediate punitive action against Fox (Melton 1990: 180). Before agreeing to a period of silence in August 1988, Fox released a pastoral letter to Cardinal Ratzinger and the Church in which he argued that he was being silenced for political reasons. However, to demonstrate his continued good faith he complied with the punishment. Before going into silence he and his supporters published a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* and other newspapers, protesting his punishment. The year of silence (which his Order and the Holy Names College allowed him to use as a sabbatical for recuperation and meditation) ended on 15 December 1989 (Melton 1990: 181).

The programmes at the ICCS include certificate, sabbatical and master's degrees in Spirituality and Culture as well as courses in Geo-Justice (creation spirituality and planetary peacemaking) and Spiritual Psychology.

13 Thomas Aquinas was condemned three times before he was canonised, John Scotus Eriugena was condemned twice, and Meister Eckhart was condemned after his death in 1329. Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake in 1600.

14 Shirley MacLaine's book *Out on a limb* was televised in a popular five-hour mini-series that was viewed by millions and which 'sparked an unprecedented interest in metaphysical subjects (Miller 1989: 159). (This series has been screened by numerous New Age organisations in South Africa.) Jon Klimo (1987: 42), a psychologist who has studied channelling, writes:

Critics and fans alike concur that MacLaine has done more than any other single person in recent times to soften the ground for people to believe and participate in things they once avoided for fear of being thought 'flaky'.

15 For critique on MacLaine's books see: Martin Gardner's (1988) 'Isness is her business: Shirley MacLaine', in *The New Age*; James W Sire's (1988) *Shirley MacLaine and the New Age movement*; and Henry Gordon's (1988) *Channeling into the New Age: the 'teachings' of Shirley MacLaine and other such gurus*.

16 M Scott Peck has another best seller, *A different drum* (1990) to his credit. In this work he deals with ways in which social transformation can be brought about. His latest book, *People of the lie* (1990) deals with evil. He arrives at the conclusion that evil is a real threat and that there are in fact people who are possessed by evil forces. These insights might owe something to the fact that he has converted to Christianity since writing his previous books.

17 Paul Kurtz was responsible for the 'Objections to Astrology' statement that was signed by 186 scientists and published in *The Humanist* in 1975. The statement asserted that astrology has no scientific foundation, and that the undersigned thought the time had come 'to challenge directly, and forcefully, the pretentious claims of astrological charlatans'. Melton (1990: 284) points out that scientist Carl Sagan declined to sign the document on the basis that the tone of the statement was authoritarian, and that such statements often do more damage than good. He quotes Sagan: 'They never convince those who are flirting with pseudoscience but merely

seem to confirm their impression that scientists are rigid and closed-minded' (Melton 1990: 284).

Soon after the statement's favourable reception in the media, Kurtz established an organisation called 'The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal' (CSICOP), which in time came to publish the *Sceptical Inquirer*, a popular magazine committed to debunking all paranormal claims. The committee itself commissioned a research project in order to falsify French psychologist Michel Gauguelin's (1983) astrological claim that statistical studies have proved that more world-class athletes were born when the planet Mars was rising or transitting than at other times. The expected results were obtained and published in the *Sceptical Inquirer*. In time it became known that the results of the Mars test had in fact confirmed Gauguelin's claim, but that the researchers had distorted them in order to arrive at the desired conclusions. The controversy received enough attention in the press and scientific journals for CSICOP to eventually acknowledge that 'errors had been made'.

CSICOP was again embroiled in controversy when leading member, and famous conjurer 'The Amazing' Randi, engineered a hoax in which physicist Peter Phillips of Washington University was fooled by two young magicians who posed as metal-bending psychics.

For an elaboration on the various sceptical organisations and the related controversies, see Melton (1990: 284ff), Basil (1988) and Gardner (1988).

18 Other books in this category are: McGuire (1987); Walter (1990); Hunt and McMahan (1987); and Matrisciana (1985).

CHAPTER THREE -
HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

*The greatest discovery we have made
on the Aquarian frontier is how much there is
to be re-discovered.*

*Theodore Roszak
(1976: 81)*

To say that there is nothing new in the New Age movement has become a cliché. Exponents and critics alike emphasise, with a great deal of justification, that much of what passes as 'New Age' today has in fact been around for a long time.

When one considers the obvious similarities between some components of the New Age movement and other older traditions, it comes as no surprise that different authors find the roots of the movement in different places and times. Some popular authors and pseudo-researchers have, for instance, linked the historical origin of the movement with the serpent in Eden (Knuteson 1985: 5; Groothuis 1988: 17); with Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus (Jannie Malan video); in Sumeria, India, Egypt, Chaldea, Babylon and Persia (Walter 1990: 15), and in a supposed Babylonian mystery religion (Marrs 1987: 24; Gardiner 1991: 15).¹ Several scholars have pointed out that the historical roots of the movement can be found in, among others, ancient Gnosticism (Raschke 1980: x); in the Renaissance with its rediscovery of Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and the Kabbalah (Roszak 1976: 9); and in an 'occult/metaphysical religion, a persistent tradition that has been the constant companion of Christianity through the centuries' (Melton (1990: xxii)). Some scholars have also sought the origin of the movement in the sociological, psychological and religious needs of the individual; thus Webb (1988: 54), for example, posits that the movement has its roots in the occult desire for 'liberation' from the human condition; Raschke (1980: x) maintains that the origin of the movement is to be discovered in Gnosticism, which to him represents a search for salvation in the sphere of the timeless; and Melton (1986a: 107) sees the movement as developing out of a great spiritual hunger which is prevalent in western society. Regarding the con-

temporary manifestation of the movement, most scholars, adherents and critics concur that the New Age movement had its genesis in the 1970s in America (although the highly influential Findhorn Community was founded in Scotland during the 1960s). However, all will concur with Raschke's (1980: x) assessment:

I maintain that the 'new religions' and their psychotherapeutic surrogates are mainly the cresting wave of forces that have been at work in Western culture for at least two hundred years, primarily since the eighteenth century, though the seeds were planted over two millennia ago.

3.1 THE AIM OF THIS CHAPTER

In view of this confusion and the multifarious roots attributed to the New Age movement, the aim of this chapter is to situate the New Age movement in a broader historical framework. It is my contention that without this historical perspective the present movement cannot be fully understood.

As has already been indicated, the methodological approach is phenomenological inasmuch as New Agers themselves are allowed to make the connection with older traditions. This applies to New Age authors, both local and from abroad; the participants in this study; and documentary evidence collected from local groups and individuals in the course of this project. Observations by scholars who have identified similarities and connections between the New Age movement, on the one hand, and ancient and more recent precursors, on the other, are also incorporated.

In addition, the nature of the relationship between the historical and contemporary manifestation is explored. It will be seen that some New Agers claim a direct connection with the ancient sources, while others are more cautious and therefore propose only indirect links with antecedents. It is also true that not all groups in the movement identify with all the precursors to be discussed. An attempt is made to show whether the assumed link is to a major or a minor part of the contemporary movement.

The first part of this chapter explores the myth of the Golden Age, and the following section comprises an investigation into the history of the various tributaries of the movement, namely the alternative religious tradition in the west, the eastern philosophies, the humanistic and transpersonal schools in psychology, and what is popularly known as the 'new science'. The discussion of the alternative religious tradition is divided into sections corresponding to the various components of the tradition through the ages, and includes a chronological history of the movement from the early nineteenth century, when the popular movements of Sweden-

borgianism, Mesmerism and Transcendentalism laid the foundation on which movements such as Spiritualism, New Thought and Theosophy created the structure from which the New Age movement arose in the early 1970s. A brief detour is also made in order to explore the counter-culture of the sixties in the United States. To conclude the chapter, the unique South African roots of the movement are also examined.

3.2 THE MYTH OF THE GOLDEN AGE

Since antiquity the vision of a Golden Age of harmony, peace and justice has been one of the most widespread and recurrent themes in the religions of the world. Eliade (1954), in *The myth of the eternal return*, distinguishes two cosmological models which coincide with the two worldviews proposed by Ellwood (1973a) (see 1.1.1 a). First, there is the perception of history as locked in an eternal cycle or spiral of recurrence: of birth, destruction and rebirth. Second is a perception of history as moving along a linear time frame, from a paradise lost in the remote past to a paradise regained in an equally remote future.

The cyclic time concept is prevalent in virtually all the primal traditions of the world as well as in the religions of the east. In the primal traditions this concept probably evolved as a result of the observance of the natural cycles of growth and decay, day and night, and life and death (Eliade 1954: 86) but did not develop into the sophisticated cosmologies of the eastern religions.

In the Hindu cosmology the universe is conceived of as a great repetitive cycle of creation, destruction and recreation. A creation phase lasts 4 320 million years and comprises four distinct ages of unequal duration: the *Kṛta Yuga* which is the longest, the *Treta Yuga*, the *Dvapara Yuga* and the *Kali Yuga* which is the shortest (Eliade 1954: 112ff). These ages are always inaugurated by an *avatar*, or divine incarnation of Vishnu. The *Kṛta Yuga* signified the Golden Age of the great cycle, but humanity is presently caught up in the *Kali Yuga*, which is the Iron Age or the age of darkness, and as the last in the procession of the ages, it is inevitably the worst of the different stages. According to this vision of the ages, there is little to rejoice in, since the future Golden Age lies in the very distant future and the present age holds only continued and escalating chaos and destruction. In Buddhism the same doctrine of cyclic time was accepted with a number of adaptations (Eliade 1954: 115). Here, too, a future Buddha, Maitreya, is expected to bring about the final age of the great cycle. The Buddhist view of cosmic evolution holds no more hope for an imminent Golden Age than the Hindu tradition. This myth of periodic renewal is also found in the Hellenistic traditions from the pre-Socratic to the Neo-Pythagorean philosophies (Eliade 1954: 119).

Some time during 630 to 550 BCE in ancient Persia, there evolved a linear view of human history and although it became dominant in the later traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, vestiges of the cyclic time concept were to linger for many centuries. The development of the linear view is attributed to the prophet Zoroaster who was the founder of the religion to which he gave his name. Under his guidance there developed a conception in which good and evil were caught up in a cosmic battle that would eventually culminate in an eschatological triumph of good, after which the Golden Age of peace would be inaugurated. During the Babylonian captivity this concept was probably carried over into Judaism and from there to the later Semitic traditions of Christianity and Islam. Here the longing for paradise and the reconciliation of the divine and the human, were embodied in the notions of messianism, apocalypticism and millenarianism.

Among the many millenarian and apocalyptic movements which have surfaced in western Christendom, Joachim of Fiore's (1145-1202) view warrants some attention.² Joachim distinguished three great ages in history, namely the Age of the Law (Father), the Age of the Gospel (Son), and the Age of the Spirit (Holy Spirit). Joachim taught that humanity was poised at the eve of the Age of the Spirit and that this age would be characterised by great spiritual growth. Love and harmony would reign and there would be no more war or strife. These teachings were in time condemned by the Church. It is noteworthy that contemporary descriptions of the New Age vision coincide with Joachim's teachings in almost all respects.

Taken at face value none of these models offers much hope of an imminent New Age, since all are linked to vast time scales. Nevertheless, all these traditions present humans with the possibility of liberation from the terror of time. In the Indian traditions the human condition can be abolished by transcending this consensus reality in an experience of *moksha* (in Buddhism, the attainment of Nirvana). Similarly, in Christianity the individual can be reborn into the Kingdom of Heaven which is already present and accessible in the here and now. Although the participants in this study frequently referred to this metaphysical liberation, it does not explain their preoccupation with a much more concrete idea of an imminent new age in historical time. For this we have to seek the answer in the occult component of astrology (see 3.3.1 b xiii and 4.2.1).

3.3 FOUR MAJOR PRECURSORS OF THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

No religious group originates in a vacuum and even a cursory review of the components of the New Age movement reveals many of its predecessors. This study of the movement has revealed four major streams that have fed into the present movement: the alternative religious tradition in the west, the eastern philosophies,

humanistic and transpersonal psychology, and twentieth century discoveries in physics.

3.3.1 The alternative religious tradition in the west

The alternative religious tradition should not be viewed as an alternative to Christianity, but rather as an alternative to mainstream orthodox Christianity. Krüger (1988: 218) compares the Christian tradition to an old, rich river which meanders through many lands, 'sometimes stagnating, sometimes cascading, sometimes dividing, sometimes joining, all the while giving and receiving, collecting miscellaneous things and depositing immense riches as well as debris'. This analogy allows for the many variations in interpretation and emphasis that Christians through the ages have given to the message of Jesus. An example of this is given in chapter two (2.4) in the discussion of Matthew Fox's creation-centered spirituality for which he claims an ancient ancestry. He shows that this tradition has always been present in Christianity, although it has at certain stages been suppressed by the ecclesiastical authorities.

In chapter one (1.1.1 a), as well, we saw that there have always been two major spiritual worldviews, which Ellwood (1973a: xiv) describes as (1) a view which is grounded in revelation within history and emissary communication, and (2) a view grounded in cosmic wonder and communicated by the exemplary personalities. On the whole, the first would adequately describe the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, while the second would point to the eastern and shamanic perspectives. The most significant characteristic of the first is dualism. God the Creator is seen as distinct from humans, nature and the universe. The whole of creation is subject to God's will, which is revealed through specially appointed prophets at various times in history. Knowledge of God is gained by studying the revelations which have been communicated by humans who were inspired by God to do so. By contrast, the second worldview is characterised by continuity between God and the whole of creation. God's presence within humans as well as within nature and the universe is emphasised, and knowledge of God is therefore to be gained by turning within. Direct and unmediated knowledge of God and Reality can be gained by the experience of the interrelatedness of all that is, and by the mystical experience of unity with God.

The two major worldviews seem to converge in the lives of some mystics although it is at best an uneasy merger. In the west the different teachings and techniques for obtaining the salvific knowledge of the *second* worldview was, nevertheless, taught by various individuals, schools and societies throughout the ages - and collectively these form the alternative tradition. It contains ideas and practices which have existed on the fringes of Christianity ever since its inception. As we shall presently

see, many of the individuals who propagated these ideas were, in fact, not only Christians, but monks and priests in the Church. These attempts at a synthesis of the two worldviews distinguished above were, more often than not, crushed by the Church, and during the ages this tradition sometimes went underground only to appear again at a later date.

In addition to certain elements of the mystical tradition, the alternative religious tradition also includes the Ancient Wisdom tradition, and many of the components of the occult tradition. The ideas and practices that are prevalent in this tradition include a belief in the sacredness of the cosmos and of life; the interrelatedness of God, humankind and the universe; the inner divine spark within all humans; the evolutionary process that leads humankind back to its source; the soteriological potential of knowledge; universal salvation; reincarnation; the primacy of inner intuition and experience in contrast with external authority, whether of revelation or tradition; continued revelation from the divine dimensions; and the acceptance of responsibility for one's own development and salvation. These teachings have recurred again and again through the ages and are today all found in various New Age organisations. New Age spokesperson Marilyn Ferguson (1980: 46) writes:

The themes of transformation have emerged with increasing strength and clarity over time, gathering impetus as communication expanded. At first the traditions were transmitted intimately, by alchemists, Gnostics, cabalists, and hermetics. With the invention of moveable type in the mid-fifteenth century, they became a kind of open secret but were available only to the literate few and were often suppressed by church or state.

Ferguson (1980: 46) then refers briefly to some individuals whom she considers to have stood in this tradition, - Meister Eckhart, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Jacob Boehme and Emanuel Swedenborg. Another popular New Age author, John Randolph Price (1987: 1) claims that a secret school of higher learning exists in the world today. He writes:

... students and graduates of the School (can be found) throughout the pages of world history - in the esoteric societies of ancient Egypt, Persia, and Greece; as Qabbalah initiates; among the Hindu and Buddhist Mystics and the Gnostics of early Christianity; in the inner circle of Mohammad and the initiates in the Arabian Mysteries; as the alchemists of the Middle Ages; the soldier mystics of the Knights Templar; in the roots of the Rosicrucian Order; in the tradition of Freemasonry; among the Transcendentalists of the 1800's, and the Esotericists and New Thinkers of the Twentieth Century (Price 1987: 1).

Most of the organisations and individuals mentioned by these authors, together with others mentioned by participants in the study, receive attention in the discussion which follows. This section explores ideas, concepts and practices (as well as the individuals who introduced them and societies in which they were harboured) in the alternative religious tradition, which are related to the New Age movement in any way, in order to place the contemporary manifestation within its historical framework. The New Age movement will be seen to represent the latest manifestation of this tradition, in which there is a continued striving towards a convergence of the two worldviews examined here. The discussion is, of necessity, concise.

a Clarification of the terms 'occult' and 'esoteric'

Before embarking on this venture a diversion is necessary to clarify the terms 'occult' and 'esoteric'. Since the claim is made that the occult tradition has for more than two thousand years formed a major part of the alternative religious tradition in western culture, some attention should be given to the clarification of the conceptual confusion that envelops terms such as 'occult' and 'esoteric'.³

The term 'occult' is defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary as 'kept secret, esoteric, recondite, mysterious, beyond the range of ordinary knowledge; involving the supernatural, mystical, magical'. Sociologist Edward A Tiryakian (1972: 498ff), in his highly regarded paper *Toward the sociology of esoteric culture*, differentiates between 'occult' and 'esoteric'. He understands 'occult' as not only knowledge of the esoteric laws of nature, but also practices, techniques or procedures which are employed for empirical results. 'Esoteric', on the other hand, refers only to the religio-philosophic belief systems that underlie occult techniques and practices. This distinction is accepted by Mircea Eliade (1976: 48) in an article on the occult in the modern world. Galbreath (1983: 17), however, rejects this distinction and points out that while 'occultists' and 'esotericists' may have different views on the merits of engaging in magic rather than in meditation, the notion of a purely abstract knowledge divorced from personal development and personal participation is alien to them both. He suggests that

Modern occultism pertains to matters that are 'hidden' or 'secret' in one or more of the following senses: (1) extraordinary matters that by virtue of their intrusion into the mundane world are thought to possess special significance (e.g. omens, portents, apparitions, prophetic dreams); (2) matters such as the teachings of the so-called mystery schools that are kept hidden from the uninitiated and the unworthy; and (3) matters that are intrinsically hidden from ordinary cognition and understanding but are nonetheless knowable through the awakening of hidden, latent faculties of appropriate sensitivity. ... Occult matters ... are widely regarded, often by critics and adherents alike, as

not fitting into, and perhaps also directly critical of, the prevailing interpretations of science, historical scholarship, and 'common sense' (Galbreath 1983: 18-19).

Following Galbreath, no distinction will be made between the terms 'occult' and 'esoteric' in this report. As an antonym for 'esoteric', many participants in this study used the term 'exoteric' to refer to the external or dogmatic teachings of a tradition.

b The alternative tradition through the ages

(i) The shaman and the magus

Before exploring the alternative religious tradition through the ages, consideration should be given to two categories of individuals which Ellwood (1973a: 49) regards as of supreme importance in the history of the esoteric tradition, namely the shaman and the magus. Scholars of religion (Eliade 1964; Thorpe 1988) contend that shamanism is a worldwide phenomenon originating in the inherent religious nature of humankind. The characteristic terms employed by scholars in their quest to define shamanism are summarised by Thorpe (1988: 52ff) as including: the healed healer, the ecstatic, the spirit medium, the diviner, the one who offers sacrifice, and the one who retrieves lost souls. The cardinal point, however, is that all the above functions must be employed for the well-being of the shaman's fellow human beings. The first of these terms implies that the shaman is one who has suffered a disorienting illness and, as a result, perceives him or herself as being called to a position of healing mediation between the spiritual realm and the social group. This mediation is accomplished by communication with the spirit realm through ecstasy and trance-like states of altered consciousness which may or may not be self-induced.

A number of authors (Hunt & McMahon 1988: 254; Gardiner 1991: 75; Chandler 1989: 113; McLoud 1989: 66-7 [Christian critics]; Ellwood 1973a: 11; Nelson 1969: 44 [scholars of religion]) have alluded to similarities between the activities of the traditional shaman and some New Agers, especially the New Age healer (see 7.3). On the whole, New Agers are not unduly perturbed by the analogy since the archaic consciousness whereby humans experienced themselves as totally at one with the universe is respected and often revered in these circles.

With regard to the magus, Ellwood (1973a: 49) points out that the magus is the old shaman, revamped to flourish in the context of the civilised world.⁴ The characteristic traits of the magus, according to him (1973a: 51), include: an unusual birth; strange and deep intellectual powers in childhood; extraordinary travel, often in Asia; magical powers; teachings on intricate and subtle spiritual-physical forces and planes within the One; unique intuition; a band of disciples and invisible attendants;

and unpredictability. These figures are not necessarily moral or ascetic by ordinary standards and quite possibly indulge in drink and luxury. A final trait is that such a person does not seem to age in the usual way. Ellwood (1973a: 50) summarises:

While some genuine saints and mystics may have had comparable experiences, the magus is neither a saint, nor a saviour, nor a prophet, nor a seer. He is a shaman-in-civilization. Like most shamans, he is part fraud, part showman, part myth, and part extraordinary ecstatic. The magus's story is always half legend, even in modern times, but the plot, like all real myths, follows a similar line.

Some charismatic philosophers who were active in groups such as the Pythagoreans, Hermeticists and Neoplatonists exemplify the magus. Other individuals of this type were people such as Paracelsus, Cagliostro, Saint-Germain, Gurdjieff and Madame Blavatsky, all of whom are revered by certain sectors of the New Age movement.

In considering some of the leading figures in the alternative tradition, it will become clear that many fall into this category and that these individuals have often wielded great power over many followers.

(ii) Ancient Wisdom

We now return to a discussion of the alternative religious tradition in the west. Some participants in this study claimed that there existed an ancient wisdom⁵ which in the past was the treasure of only a few, but is today available to everyone (although one might still be expected to join a secret society in order to obtain such knowledge). These references to an ageless or ancient wisdom, relate to a body of teachings which was supposedly known to ancient civilisations but which was subsequently lost. According to a participant in this study, the ageless wisdom is

... the true Tree of Life, and is to be found at the heart of all the great world religions. Poets, musicians, artists, creative thinkers of all schools of metaphysical thought, have come under the influence of the Spirit of Divine Wisdom. All the great world Teachers have been adepts of the Ageless Wisdom, although each one has specialised in some particular aspect of it, according to his own experience (F30:2:93).

Parts of this body of teachings, it is said, were rediscovered by individuals like Renaissance philosophers Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola and Giordano Bruno, and parts of it have been kept guarded by secret societies like the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons through the ages. The Theosophical Society,

founded in 1875, was to become one of the main vehicles for introducing the Ancient Wisdom tradition to the twentieth century. Campbell (1980: 28) explains that the term *theosophy*, which means divine wisdom, was in common use in the seventeenth century and referred to occult and mystical speculation associated with the Kabbalah and the writings of occultists such as Agrippa, Paracelcus and Fludd. However, it was also applied to the thinking of Protestant mystic Jacob Boehme. It was furthermore a revival of a Greek word and therefore, claims Campbell, had by extension been applied to ancient speculative systems, particularly those with a Neoplatonic emphasis. Madame Blavatsky, co-founder of the society, was to become one of the most important exponents of the Ancient Wisdom tradition through her writings, which she claimed were inspired by ascended masters (see 3.3.1 b xxii and 5.2.3).

Despite the emphasis on an ancient wisdom regained, most participants in this study also concurred that a great deal of information has only lately been made available to humanity, since human beings were now deemed sufficiently evolved to understand and appreciate this knowledge. Many of the participants therefore also shared a belief in continuous revelation from God and the angelic dimension (see 7.2.2 c).

(iii) *Pythagoras*

Aside from the ancient wisdom, the earliest ideas in western philosophy with which New Agers identify are found in the teachings of the Samian philosopher and geometrician, Pythagoras (572-497 BCE)⁶, who founded a school at Kroton in Italy. The fact that some New Agers see a continuity between this ancient philosopher and themselves is borne out by the fact that one offshoot of the Theosophical Society in the twentieth century was called the Krotona Institute of Theosophy. Prominent New Agers who claim Pythagoras as a predecessor include MacLaine (1983: 97, 105, 120) and Spangler (1977). In *Towards a planetary vision* Spangler (1977: 30) writes:

All of us ... feel this pressure, ... the pressure of our soul which demands that we take again the opportunity that Jesus offered, that Buddha offered, that Mohammed offered, that Plotinus offered, that Pythagoras offered, that all the great initiates have offered

One participant claimed that 'outstanding Torchbearers, or Initiates of the Cosmic Flame' have through the ages come to humanity from the 'supreme Source of Being' and that these included Orpheus, Pythagoras, Socrates and Plato (F30:2:190).

(iv) *Orphic religion*

Pythagoras was an exponent of the Orphic religion, which scholars agree was well established by the 6th century BCE. Adherents of this religion subscribed to the notion of an earlier state of perfection which had been lost, but which could eventually be regained through an evolutionary process that included reincarnation. Escape from the wheel of rebirth was possible through ritual purification which included initiation and asceticism. Other beliefs included a concept of the body as a tomb of the soul, which was seen to be divine, and a belief that everything comes from the One, and eventually returns to the One. The latter belief can be seen to suggest an implicit monism.

Numerous philosophers elaborated on Pythagoras' work and his influence can be traced to a point where this body of thought becomes indistinguishable from the theories which Plato attributed to his teacher, Socrates (Robertson 1936: 309).

It is noteworthy that Orphic religion shows a striking resemblance to the beliefs prevalent in India at about the same time (Burnet 1971: 82). However, the question concerning the possible influence on the Greek mind of Oriental thought remains controversial. Robertson (1936: 162) points out that there is a marked resemblance between the doctrine and practice of Pythagoreans and the Jewish Essenes, which raises the question whether both were not of Persian derivation. He speculates that although both seem to have been influenced by Buddhism, it is, in fact, unlikely that this could have occurred at so early a stage (530 BCE). Burnet (1971: 18), on the other hand, maintains that there is evidence suggesting that Indian philosophy arose under Greek influence as opposed to the east having influenced Greek thought. He furthermore rejects the idea that the Greeks derived their philosophy from Egypt and Babylonia, citing the lack of evidence of an Egyptian or Phoenician philosophy. Instead, Burnet (1971: 82) suggests that the same northern Scythian source probably influenced both Greek and Indian philosophy. The origins of these ideas and the possible influences between different systems remain shrouded in mystery. Nevertheless, some of the ideas (or variants of them), such as the emanationist creation theory with its implicit monism, and the notion of an evolutionary process that includes reincarnation, are held by many New Ager. However, the emphasis on ritual purification through asceticism and the depreciation of the body that are found in the Orphic religions are not found in the New Age movement.

In this study, a few of the participants compared the socio-religious climate of the western world in the latter half of the twentieth century with the world into which Christianity was introduced and in which it eventually triumphed. These individuals see a similarity between the successful introduction of Christianity into the ancient

world and the eventual transformation of the New Age movement into a world religion (T8:1:157; F30:2:7). This theme is also expounded by prominent British New Ager Sir George Trevelyan (1984: 21).

The Hellenistic age in which Christianity is rooted covers roughly the period 300 BCE to 400 CE. It was an age when the worship of Olympian and Roman gods was in decline, while a considerable number of eastern and Egyptian cults were flourishing. With first the Greek, and then the Roman armies on the move, and the opening of many trade routes, which led to the development of cosmopolitan cities, much spiritual cross-pollination took place. For the first time in history, individuals had a choice regarding their religious expression and this led to the formation of many new religious groups.

This period was characterised by profound spiritual ferment. There was a marked religious awakening and a spiritual hunger in the Mediterranean world and people yearned for warm fellowship, personal immortality and contact with the divine. The most distinguishing features of the new movements that developed were syncretism and eclecticism. The similarity with the spiritual ferment of our age and the many groupings of the New Age movement is very vivid.

(v) *Great Mother religious cults*

In the course of this study only one participant expressed some interest in Goddess worship, but the notion of God as Mother was often emphasised, and a characteristic of the Age of Aquarius is said to be the dominance of the female principle. This brings us to the many Great Mother religious cults⁷ that were common during the Hellenistic age. Depending on the geographical area in which the cult was situated, the goddess was referred to as Astarte, Ishtar, Cybele or Isis. The basis of these cults is a nature myth in which the death of vegetation in winter and its revival in spring was celebrated. Concomitantly, these were religions of redemption in which the adherents could, through the intervention of a saviour, be reborn into an immortal life. This type of Goddess worship has in recent years emerged as a new force in America (especially in feminist circles) where it is usually linked to the Neo-Pagan movement, Wicca (witchcraft), and sometimes the New Age movement. This is given further attention below.

(vi) *Gnosticism*

Another very controversial grouping of the Hellenistic age was Gnosticism,^{8 9} which consisted of various schools whose origins have, over the years, been hotly disputed. Some of the early Christian church fathers saw its origin in Hellenistic philosophy, while modern scholars have postulated, in turn, Hellenistic, Babylonian, Egyptian

and Iranian roots. Pagels (1981: xviii) emphasises that Christian gnostics were indeed Christians - Christians who regarded themselves not as heretics but who claimed to possess knowledge of Jesus' secret teachings. However, Jonas (1970: 33) points out that these schools were products of syncretism, and that although all the theories concerning their origin is supported by the evidence, none of them is satisfactory on its own. There is also evidence to suggest contact with the beginnings of Kabbalism, which in Hellenistic times was still an oral tradition said to have been communicated by God to Adam and Moses (Jonas 1970: 33).

The doctrines of the different gnostic schools varied widely, but two tenets were common to all the schools. The first was the radical dualism regarding the relationship between God and the world. The material universe, to which humankind was bound, was not created by God but by the leader of the Archons, the demiurge, and was therefore intrinsically evil, while the spiritual universe, where God the Father dwelled, was good. The second tenet pertains to the nature of salvation, which was seen to lie in the transcendent knowledge of God's redemptive purpose. This knowledge was obtained through an intuitive process of self-knowledge which would ultimately lead to knowledge of God. This is well illustrated by the following Valentinian formula quoted in Jonas (1970: 45):

What liberates is the knowledge of who we were, what we became; where we were, whereinto we have been thrown; whereto we speed, wherefrom we are redeemed; what birth is, and what rebirth.

Today only one of the two main tenets finds approbation among New Agers. Most New Agers firmly reject the dualism inherent in gnostic teachings, but the belief in the salvific power of esoteric knowledge is widely accepted. It will become clear in the course of this report that this emphasis on knowledge (inner, intuitive and esoteric) is one of the most pervasive beliefs in the movement (see 7.2.1). Other tenets of some of the gnostic schools which are found in New Age thinking are: an emphasis on the illusionary nature of this consensus reality which can be dispelled by spiritual enlightenment; a notion that humans are not 'saved' by the atonement of Jesus, but are rather guided to higher spiritual understanding by his teachings; and an acceptance of Jesus, not as a divine being who saves, but as someone who sets an example which can be emulated in order to become his equal (Pagels 1981: xix).

There is evidence that magic, astrology, exorcism and incantations were practised by some of the gnostic groups, but *all* the schools were firmly rejected by Christendom and relentlessly persecuted. Nevertheless, the tradition survived and surfaced again in the Middle Ages in movements such as the Cathari, and in secret societies such as the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons (King 1973: 373ff).

Despite the prevalence of the idea of gnosis in New Age thought, only one participant referred to Gnosticism during the interviews. Interestingly enough this person, who believes in the illusory nature of this reality (see 5.3.1 b), used the gnostic scriptures to support her idea that one can penetrate the illusion that obscures the underlying sacred reality. She quotes Philip of the Nag Hammadi texts as saying ‘those who say they will first die and then rise are in error. Instead they must receive resurrection while they live’ (F25:1:4).

(vii) Hermetic texts

The New Age movement also has elements of another consequential facet of the Hellenistic age, namely the body of mystical philosophy called the Hermetic texts.¹⁰ Although this philosophy was proved in 1614 to have originated in the 2nd to 3rd century CE, many of its followers have maintained that Hermes Trismegistus was, in fact, an ancient Egyptian sage. Thus, one participant in this study claimed that Hermes Trismegistus was an ‘Initiate of the Flame’, like others such as Jesus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Zarathustra, Moses, Gautama the Buddha and Gandhi, ‘who totally surrendered themselves to the divine will and wisdom and so became qualified to be overshadowed and instructed by the Light of the World’ (F30:2:190). The Hermetica have not only retained their fascination for their followers, but have greatly influenced later traditions (Yates 1964; Tuveson 1982).

Prior to 1614 these writings were ascribed to the Egyptian god Toth, the scribe to the gods. The Greeks named him Hermes Trismegistus (Hermes, the thrice great), and therefore designated all the sacred texts attributed to this legendary figure as Hermetic. The authors were, however, probably all Greek, and scholars, while differing on the amount of Egyptian content, usually agree that the texts contained few genuine Egyptian elements (Yates 1964: 2). These writings were concerned with subjects such as philosophy, astrology, the occult sciences, sympathetic magic, astral magic and mystical gnosis. The Hermetic cosmology, which assumes a hierarchy of gods with one supreme Godhead, and an intricate structure of symbolic correspondences throughout nature, blends smoothly with Neoplatonist and Kabbalistic perspectives. This symbolic correspondence is expressed in the most famous of all Hermetic principles, ‘As above, so below’, which is constantly being quoted by New Agers. It will be seen that the above themes are today represented in various elements of the New Age movement.

(viii) Neoplatonic tradition

Despite the fact that many New Agers claim Plato¹¹ as a precursor, it is rather strands of the Neoplatonic tradition¹² that are visible in some components of the New Age movement. Several New Age authors and scholars of religion have

referred to Plotinus and the Neoplatonic tradition as sources of occult, theosophic and New Age thought (New Ager Spangler 1977: 30; scholar of religion Ellwood 1973a: 31, 1983:121ff; historian Moore 1983: 137; and a participant representing the Liberal Catholic Church in this study - T8:1:290).

During the second century CE in the city of Alexandria, Plotinus (204-270 CE) and his disciples developed a mystical interpretation of the Platonic and Pythagorean teachings. Plotinus maintained that all manifestations, both material and spiritual, were emanations from the One, the transcendent Godhead, and would ultimately return to this source through mystical experience in which the limitations of matter are transcended. Thus we see that in this system reason was subordinated to intuition, and a monistic perspective is implied. These issues are reflected in much that passes as New Age thought today. Another practice which eventually became an integral part of the Neoplatonic tradition is, however, absent from New Age thought, namely purification through magic. Some disciples of Plotinus, such as Iamblichus (250-325 CE), Porphyry (234-305 CE) and Proclus (410-85 CE), elaborated on his philosophy and incorporated the practice of *theurgy*, a system of ritual magic for purifying the soul. While both purification of the soul and magic are issues for New Ager, I have not come across one instance in which they were linked.

Proclus, who belonged to the school of Athenian Neoplatonists, apparently influenced the author of the writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite in which a synthesis of Christianity and Neoplatonism is presented.

Dionysius eventually became known as Pseudo-Dionysius since scholars established that the author of the writings attributed to Dionysius could not have been the Dionysius of whose conversion there is mention in the Bible. These writings show a strong affinity with the Neoplatonism of Proclus, especially in the view of God as 'beyond being'; in the postulation of three levels of reality: God, the angelic hierarchy, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy; and in the notion of the procession of creation out of God and the eventual return to God. This return to God is accomplished by purification of all that hinders the approach to God, and through the gift of illumination, which culminates in the union with God.

During the ninth century, John Scotus Eriugena made a new Latin translation of these writings which contributed greatly to the dissemination of Dionysian thought in the west. Eriugena so closely related God to his creatures that subsequent readers interpreted his writings as a form of pantheism and in the thirteenth century some of his writings were condemned by the Church.

(ix) The mystical tradition

Plotinus, Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius thus helped to mould the Christian mystical tradition¹³, in the east through Maximus the Confessor, and in the west through John Scotus Eriugena, the Rhineland Mystics and John of the Cross (Jones et al 1986: 99-100). This tradition produced a number of mystics in whose lives orthodox Christianity and some of the aspects of the alternative tradition were integrated. It is therefore not surprising that many of the individuals suffered church censure.

Some of those interested in the New Age phenomenon have realised that certain aspects of the movement closely resemble the mystical traditions of the world religions. New Thought minister Donald Curtis (1990: foreword) remarks that the New Age is

the mystical core of all true religions and idealistic philosophies. Greek, Oriental and Eastern philosophies, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Judaism, and Christianity all have a golden mystical thread running through them. This thread is the teaching of every new age.

On the other hand Christian critic of the New Age movement, Elliot Miller (1989), remarks on the similarities between the mystical tradition and the New Age in a derogatory way. He refers to a number of religious figures (such as Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Merton and Bede Griffith) as dangerous. Teilhard is condemned for his writings on evolution, while Merton and Griffith are regarded as dangerous because of their extensive dialogue with eastern religions. All three are individuals who have emphasised the experiential dimension of religion and their descriptions of their religious experiences place them squarely within the mystical tradition. Teilhard and Merton predate the New Age movement but Griffith aligns himself with authors such as Fritjof Capra and Ken Wilber in his expectation of a new age and a new culture that will replace the rampant materialism and scientism of the twentieth century.¹⁴ Nevertheless, there are clear indications within the New Age movement that many adherents also strive towards the mystical experience of union with God.

The Christian mystic most often mentioned in New Age literature is Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) who expounded a somewhat unorthodox doctrine (Fox 1983; Spangler 1984: 57; Ferguson 1980: 46). His teaching was essentially mystical and was concerned with the possible union between the human soul and God. In his emphasis on the divine essence of the human soul he seemed to obliterate the distinction between creature and Creator (Jones 1986: 317). With the birth of God within the soul the person can return to the world: 'Having found God in its own depth, it finds him everywhere'.

As with Eriugena, some of Eckhart's statements were declared heretical by the Church. Nevertheless, Eckhart's influence can be detected with later mystics such as Julian of Norwich, Nicholas of Cusa and John of the Cross - all mystics cited by Fox (1983: 307ff) as part of the tradition of creation-centred spirituality.

Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) was another relevant mystic. Although none of the participants in this study mentioned his name, some leading New Age figures (Ferguson 1980: 46; MacLaine 1983: 354) refer to him as influential in the tradition. Scholar of religion Ellwood (1973a: 48) lists him as an influential mystic of the alternative tradition during the Renaissance, as does historian Roszak (1976: 12). Boehme was influenced by mystics such as Eckhart and Tauler, but also by the hermetic and theosophic literature of the Renaissance (Underhill 1975: 220). He held that all things are of God and in God, and that the eternal light and the eternal darkness are found not only within God but also within the living soul (Underhill 1975: 217-8). He contended that human beings have heaven and hell in themselves, and ultimately 'what we make of ourselves, that we are' (Underhill 1975: 218).

(x) Witchcraft and paganism

We now turn to the subjects of witchcraft and paganism¹⁵ which are so interrelated that any attempt to separate them will involve much repetition. Likewise, the contemporary manifestation of these beliefs and practices in the Neo-Pagan movement in America cannot be separated.¹⁶ The connection between Wicca (as witchcraft is now termed) and Paganism on the one hand, and the New Age movement on the other, is not immediately apparent, especially since Neo-Pagans often dissociate themselves from the New Age movement (Melton 1991: 340). Some witches do, however, regard themselves as part of the New Age movement, most notably Selena Fox of the Church of Circle Wicca. The two movements have much in common, such as their shared interest in psychic abilities and the belief in reincarnation and karma, and although many Neo-Pagans consider their religion superior, individuals like Selena Fox work towards improving relations between followers of all religions (Melton 1991: 341). Melton (1982: 6) states that 'the members of the various segments of the magical community in America acknowledge that despite very real differences, all - whether they call themselves ritual magicians, Witches, Pagans, Druids, or even Voodooists - are part of the same movement'.

When one considers that the Neo-Pagan movement is comparable in size to the New Age movement in the United States, one realises what an enormous following it commands. Given the influence of American culture on South Africa, one would expect that this movement will also soon surface here. Not one of the interviewees for this project volunteered any information on Wicca, but some ideas and practices suggest that the central elements of Goddess worship are already present in South Africa.

It should be emphasised that modern Wicca in America bears no resemblance to the alleged practices of witchcraft in medieval times.¹⁷ The modern variety is characterised by the veneration of the Mother Goddess (and a rejection of both the Christian God and the Christian devil), a joyful approach to life and the fertility cult (Adler 1979; Starhawk 1989; Melton 1982: 44; Russell 1980: 14). According to Russell (1988: 8, 161) modern witches worship the ancient gods and practise magic such as astrology, divination, herbology and incantations.

With regard to medieval witchcraft, there is no consensus among scholars about its origins. Anthropologists tend to equate it with worldwide sorcery, while historians of the western tradition equate it with satanism. Witchcraft rests partly on the magical worldview, which states that there are hidden relationships between all elements of the universe. In contrast with the aims of higher magic, witchcraft (or simple sorcery, or low magic) was seen as the ability to control these relationships (Russell 1988: 14).

There are contemporary witches who claim continuity with a pre-Christian tradition, and although some researchers feel there is no clear evidence to support this, others accept that some pagan beliefs and practices did survive through the Middle Ages into the present (Melton 1982: 7-8; Russell 1980: 40-42, 152).¹⁸

Most modern witches believe in the gods and goddesses of pre-Christian polytheism which they see as immanent in nature, although the chief deity is the Goddess (the Earth Goddess, named, inter alia, Isis, Astarte, Ishtar, Kali, the Magna Mater). Some witches worship only the Goddess while others also worship her consort, the horned god. Witches revere the earth, and attempt to attune themselves to the forces of nature by rituals and festivals which harmonise with the seasons and other natural rhythms of nature (Russell 1980: 158). It is in these practices that the similarities with some New Age groups are very strong. Many witches and Neo-Pagans are openly hostile to Christianity, and the majority are members of new non-Christian religions. Those who do consider themselves Christians claim to teach 'a deeper or truer or gnostic version of Christianity' (Melton 1982: 6). This view was echoed by one participant in this study who claimed that the Christian churches have lost the deeper spiritual message of Jesus, but that this message is presently again unfolding and that this time the churches will not succeed in suppressing it (T18:2:170ff).

Melton (1982: 342) suggests that another recent movement, the Women's Spirituality movement, has much in common with both the New Age and the Neo-

Pagan movements. In ecofeminism, women are linked to the earth and to religion of nature, and religion of nature is usually religion of the Goddess. In this view all is seen to be interconnected and women are regarded as the flesh of this connectedness (Albanese 1990: 176). The worship of a female deity has attracted some feminists to the Craft, which has subsequently given rise to the establishment of 'Dianic' covens for women only (previously most covens included men).

(xi) Satanism

Closely related to witchcraft in the popular mind is satanism.¹⁹ In contrast to the other issues discussed in this chapter, satanism is included not because there is a relationship between it and the New Age movement, but because there is *no* relationship between the two movements. The New Age movement has, however, so often been accused by Christian authors of being 'satanist' that the issue cannot be ignored. These accusations are often made by individuals who believe that all worship that does not accord with their specific interpretation of the Christian God is, by definition, satanic.

Satanism refers to the practice of worshipping the Judaeo-Christian devil, an entity which to some is only a symbol, but to others is very real (Truzzi 1974: 216). While satanism forms part of the occult tradition, Ellwood (1988b: 721-2) warns against overestimating its place in the occult tradition, since 'from a technical point of view it is only marginally part of the occult stream because of its essential ties to Judaism and Christianity'. The fact that many elements of the occult tradition form part of the New Age movement has led to the two movements being confused or sometimes equated. In a discussion of the relationship between the New Age and the Neo-Pagan movements, Melton (1990: 313) writes:

New Agers eschew the terms magic and witchcraft, especially the latter, which is often equated with Satanism by the uninformed. Satanism, however, insofar as it is real, is an utterly different sort of religious phenomenon, and has nothing to do with the Neo-Pagan Movement.

Satanism thus does not form part of the New Age movement, since most New Agers' conception of God, which is monistic, does not allow for the existence of Satan unless he, too, is part of God.

(xii) Magic

Where satanism and witchcraft are discussed the subject of magic²⁰ cannot be omitted. The origins of magic are much disputed and magical practices were known to have existed centuries before the highly developed magical systems of Egypt and

Babylonia. In addition, the practice of magic was widespread in primal tribes and sorcerers are found in them all. In early Europe, however, magical practices were forbidden by the Christian Church and practitioners performed these acts at their peril.

According to Thorndike (1947: 2), magic in the broadest sense of the word includes all the occult arts and sciences, superstitions and folk-lore, and cannot be excluded from the history of thought. Thorndike emphasises that although the term 'magic' has always been contentious, it has never referred merely to an operative art, 'but also to a mass of ideas or doctrine, and that it represented a way of looking at the world' (Thorndike 1947: 4). It is therefore not strange to find elements of magic in Gnosticism, the Hermetic texts, Neoplatonism and the Kabbalah.

During the Middle Ages a distinction was made between higher magic and black magic. The most famous practitioners of high magic in medieval Europe were Paracelsus (1493-1541) and Agrippa (1486-1535). Russell (1988: 13) comments as follows on the term 'high magic':

The basis of magic is the belief in *kosmos*, an ordered and coherent universe in which all the parts are interrelated. This is also the basis of the principle of uniformity upon which so much scientific theory has been constructed. In a universe in which all parts are related and affect one another, however remotely, there is a relationship between the individual human being and the stars, plants, minerals, and other natural phenomena. This is the magical belief in correspondence. Such doctrines have been carefully worked out in a coherent and sophisticated pattern. This sophisticated magic is called high magic.

Paracelsus (in Tiryakian 1974: 49, 54), the brilliant and eccentric alchemist, hermeticist, and founder of the modern science of medicine, said of high magic: 'it is the most secret of the arts and the highest wisdom concerning the supernatural on earth', and also: 'For this art is truly a gift of God. Wherefore not everyone can understand it. For this reason God bestows it upon whom He pleases, and it cannot be wrested from Him by force'.

By contrast, Russell (1980: 14) equates low magic with simple sorcery and automatic magic: one performs a certain action, and one gets certain results (Russell compares this with modern technology). Black magic, says Spence (1988: 68), may be defined as the use of a supernatural knowledge for the purpose of evil and is, therefore, a perversion of legitimate science.

Although only one of the participants in this study admitted to dabbling in magic (with dire consequences), the extensive literature included in the new book catalogues regularly distributed by the publishing houses suggest that information about the magic arts is indeed sought after. A perusal of the relevant bookshelves in some local bookshops will also bear out this statement.

Such an investigation will also reveal a related subject of supreme interest in New Age circles, namely divination techniques. In addition to astrology, numerology, graphology, palmistry, runes (a Nordic system of divination using 25 runestones - often of wood or ceramics) and tarot cards, a popular divination method in New Age circles is the Chinese *I Ching*, which does not form part of the western occult tradition. It is usually employed for guidance when difficult decisions are to be made, but can also serve as a divination method for predicting future events.

In this discussion only a brief exploration of astrology will be undertaken.

(xiii) Astrology

The practice of astrology²¹ can be traced to ancient Babylon (which probably accounts for the high regard some New Agers have for this culture), but its roots probably lie even further back in time (Jerome 1977: 15). It appears that this form of divination has formed part of the occult tradition since antiquity and, therefore, of the alternative religious tradition. The ancient Babylonian astrologers employed hemerology, the reading of sky omens according to the principle of correspondence, which presupposed a loose correspondence between events on earth and the positions of the celestial bodies. It was only after the tradition had been carried to Egypt that the notion of cosmological determinism was born. By the time the Greeks inherited the tradition, the notion of causality had been firmly established.

In the New Age movement astrology is a key element, not only as an explanation for the New Age that is now dawning (see 4.2.1), but also as a tool in personality analysis and divination (see 7.4.1 c).

Interest in astrology as a tool in divination has mushroomed in recent times, and it is estimated that in the mid-seventies at least 5 million Americans planned their lives according to astrological predictions, while some 1 200 of the 1 750 daily newspapers in America publish horoscopes (Eliade 1976: 59). Professional astrological societies estimate that there are presently more than 10 000 professional astrologers in the United States, who serve more than 20 million clients (Melton 1990: 42). In a South African study, Plug (Tyson 1979: 2) found that 49 percent of his 243 subjects at the

University of Pretoria believed that 'there is something in astrology' and in reply to the question: 'Do you think that astrology works?', 24 percent answered in the affirmative.²² It may therefore be said that astrology has, since its genesis in antiquity, been a perennial western phenomenon, and that while there have been periods in which it was dormant, it is at present experiencing a massive revival. However, although most New Ager accept the notion of celestial influence on human personality or destiny, not everyone who reads their horoscope or consults an astrologer can be regarded as a New Ager.

Astrology, however, functions on different levels. It is not only human affairs, but also planetary destiny, that are said to be influenced by the heavenly bodies. In tropical astrology (the system founded by Claudius Ptolemy, [c 100-180 CE] the sun and its planets are said to revolve around a central sun in an orbit that lasts approximately 26 000 years. This orbit is known as the Zodiac and is divided into twelve signs - Aries (the ram), Taurus (the bull), Gemini (the twins), Cancer (the crab), Leo (the lion), Virgo (the virgin), Libra (the scales), Scorpio (the scorpion), Sagittarius (the archer), Capricorn (the goat), Aquarius (the water bearer) and Pisces (the fish). According to this theory the solar system moves through these signs in a process known as the 'precession of the Equinoxes', and is influenced by the sign that corresponds to the location of the sun at the moment of the spring equinox each year. It therefore takes 2 160 years to move through each of the Zodiacal signs. The period of time during which the sun is in a particular constellation is named after that constellation. Presently, according to observational astronomy, the sun is still in the constellation of Pisces on the day of the spring equinox, and notwithstanding the announcements of the dawning of the Age of Aquarius, the fact is that the sun will not enter the constellation of Aquarius for about 300 years (Melton 1990: 26). Well-known esotericist Manley Palmer Hall (1979: 266)²³ calculates the advent of the Age of Aquarius as even further into the future:

According to the opinions of modern astronomers, the sun is now in about the 8th degree of Pisces, and has therefore about 8 degrees yet to retire before it retrogrades by the precessional motion out of the sign and into Aquarius. The precessional motion is about 1 degree in 72 years. According to this calculation, it will be nearly 600 years before the sun actually enters the sign of Aquarius, at the equinox, and the Aquarian Age has its beginning.

Although he does add:

Of course, the sun changes degree every 72 years, and these degree changes are in themselves capable of producing a considerable change in the life of man. I know that several metaphysical movements are of the opinion that we have already entered the Aquarian Age, or will very soon do so, but I do not

believe that these organizations can justify their opinions astronomically (Hall 1979: 266).

On the other hand Alice O Howell (1990: 127) points out that:

The dating of the astrological Ages has been extremely confusing to many astrologers. The reason for this is the amount of empty space between the visible constellations in the sidereal zodiac, resulting in interfaces of several hundreds of years. If I could make an analogy, the problem is akin to determining the beginning and the end of a large, discernible wave in the middle of the ocean. You can feel it gathering, you can see it crest and break, and you can feel the energy spending itself and intermingling with the next surge. But I think you will agree that determining the very moment such a wave begins is virtually impossible. For this reason, do not take my dates or anyone else's too literally. *What is of paramount importance is the sequence of development.*

(xiv) Kabbalah

We turn now to another component of esoteric wisdom which is highly regarded by New Agers, namely the Kabbalah.²⁴ In the United States, New Age Judaism has become a strong movement under the guidance of a few rabbis such as Joseph H Gelberman, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Shlomo Carlebach (who recently toured South Africa). These rabbis have emerged as the most important Jewish spokespersons for the New Age movement.²⁵

The new Jewish spirituality is in large measure based on the Kabbalah, the esoteric teachings of Judaism and Jewish mysticism. At a number of organisations established by the above-mentioned rabbis, this new spirituality is taught not only to Jewish groups, but also to interfaith groups. While this spirituality draws heavily on the Kabbalah, the influence of Oriental philosophy is also clear (Melton 1990: 186, 242-245, 404-406). In South Africa, interest in the Kabbala (in New Age circles) is evident in the amount of available literature. One of the participants in this study teaches a course in Kabbalism and another attested to having studied it. With yet another there were clear signs of Kabbalistic influence in her use of the Names of God in meditation.

The term 'Kabbalah' refers to the mystical dimension of Judaism, especially in the forms it assumed from the Middle Ages onward (Scholem 1974: 3). This system of esotericism, theosophy and mysticism is seen as a primordial revelation accorded to Adam in the Garden of Eden, and was subsequently orally transmitted until it was

written down in the thirteenth century (probably by Rabbi Moses de Leon) as the *Zohar*.

In contrast to exoteric Judaism, the Kabbalah holds that the creation of the world took place through a series of emanations from the Godhead, *En Soph*, who is said to be a limitless, undifferentiated being, beyond all description. The first *sephirah* (singular) that emanated from *En Soph* was the desire to manifest and the subsequent nine *sephiroth* (plural) are contained within the first. The nine *sephiroth* are divided into three triads which are represented in a glyph known as the Tree of Life. This represents the inner constitution not only of humans, but of all reality - a teaching with pantheistic implications. A time is envisaged when all souls will have developed the seeds of perfection with which they were implanted, and eventually all will return to the Godhead. Even Satan will then be restored to his angelic position (Spence 1988: 241).

The Kabbalah includes a practical dimension, recourse to which, although not categorically forbidden, is prohibited in all but the most dire emergencies and public need. Scholem (1974: 182) states that 'the realm of practical Kabbalah is that of purely motivated or "white" magic, especially as practiced through the medium of the sacred, esoteric Names of God and the angels, the manipulation of which may affect the physical no less than the spiritual world'.

(xv) *The Renaissance*

In the fifteenth century Kabbalism and classical antiquity were rediscovered by Renaissance²⁶ scholars who saw themselves as returning to earlier and better times. These scholars believed that truth was to be regained by studying the ancient wisdom, and the rediscovery of ancient texts became the launching pad for a reaction against the medieval mind-set. This is exactly how many New Agers view the present age: as a time of awakening and rebirth when, through the ancient wisdom, a reaction against the modern, scientific mind-set can be precipitated.

Sages of the Renaissance like Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) and Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) turned to the study of Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, numerology, astrology, alchemy and the Tarot. In 1460, Ficino was commissioned by Cosimo de' Medici to translate the *Hermetica*, which they both believed to be a source of ancient wisdom. Pico believed that a new era had arrived in which the powers that were ascribed to humans by the *Hermetica* were reviving. He attempted to combine Hermeticism with Kabbalism, and both Pico and Ficino strove to define a Christian Hermeticism. Bruno, on the other hand, believed Egyptian magic to be superior, and constructed a worldview which corresponded to Gnosticism. He postulated a view of God as the mysterious source from which all

things emanated and to which they would ultimately return. The essence of each individual was therefore a breath of the infinite. With regard to epistemology, Bruno rejected the authority of the Church in favour of direct inner intuition. Despite the new atmosphere of searching enquiry, Bruno was burned at the stake in 1600 on account of his views.

Nevertheless, some Renaissance intellectuals continued to risk persecution, and as a result of their studies of Neoplatonism, the Hermetica and the Kabbalah, came to hold beliefs which included a pantheistic worldview in which this reality was seen as the visible manifestation of the divine from which it emanated. This conception naturally led to a high regard for the dignity of the person and of nature, which were seen to share in the essence of the divine Mind. Enlightenment, they believed, could be gained by gnosis: through direct knowledge of God, humans were given the power to divinise themselves. The resemblance of these beliefs to those held by many New Agers will become evident in the course of this report.

Another important feature of the Renaissance was the rise of secret societies in which initiates could gain access to occult wisdom. Many adherents of the New Age movement regard these societies as the guardians of the ancient wisdom which humanity is now ready to receive.

(xvi) The Rosicrucians

In 1614 an anonymous manifesto called the *Fama*²⁷ was published in Cassel, Germany. It proclaimed the revival of learning and piety and recounted the life of a certain 'Father C.R.C.' or 'Christian Rosencreutz', who was supposedly the founder of the Order of the Rosy Cross.²⁸ A second publication followed in 1615, setting out the Order's aims, which included putting an end to political and sectarian conflict, and furthermore proclaiming the Order's opposition to the papacy and to Islam. Men of goodwill and learning were invited to join the Order in order to improve the conditions of mankind, and to facilitate a reformation in science that would parallel the religious reformation. This reformation was to be brought about by the 'Brotherhood' - the children of light who had been initiated into the mysteries of the Grand Orient, and who would lead the age to perfection (Spence 1988: 340).

It is extremely doubtful that such an organisation ever existed and the identity of the author of the manifestos remains a mystery, although some scholars considered the theologian Johann Valentin Andreae a likely candidate. Waite (1924: 36) maintains that there are indications that a Rosicrucian Society was founded in 1598 in Nurem-

burg by a mystic and alchemist named Simon Studion, and that it was under the auspices of this Society that the manifestos were printed in 1614. In 1710, and later in 1785, such manifestos were again published and circulated in Germany, and in Waite's (1924: 36) opinion this proves that the Brotherhood was in existence at these times. Eminent scholar Frances Yates (1975: 74) disagrees. However, she points out that the word 'Rosicrucian' aptly describes a certain 'style of thinking which is historically recognizable without raising the question of whether a Rosicrucian style of thinker belonged to a secret society' (Yates 1975: 264).

Nevertheless, from the manifestos it is obvious that the authors had been influenced by Neoplatonism, Hermeticism and Kabbalism. They also subscribed to the teachings of Paracelsus which embraced alchemy, astrology, higher magic and a belief in occult forces in nature. Furthermore, they apparently accepted the doctrine of the microcosm, which states that humans contain all the possibilities of the universe, and they believed in elemental spirits. The manifestos referred to the existence of magical writings that were supposedly open to all eyes but which were only understood by a very few. Some form of practical magic was also known to the supposed fraternity and the authors of the manifestos claimed to have achieved the transmutation of metals through the science of alchemy, and also to have manufactured the elixir of life. In summing up the movement, Yates (1975: 277) writes:

The most striking aspect of the Rosicrucian movement is ... its insistence on a coming Enlightenment. The world, nearing its end, is to receive a new illumination in which the advances in knowledge made in the preceding age of the Renaissance will be immensely expanded. New discoveries are at hand, a new age is dawning. And this illumination shines inward as well as outward; it is an inward spiritual illumination revealing to man new possibilities in himself, teaching him to understand his own dignity and worth and the part he is called upon to play in the divine scheme.

The resemblance to New Age thought is so striking that it needs no further comment.

Two well-known contemporary Rosicrucian groups exist today, the one being the Rosicrucian Fellowship, founded in 1907 by Carl Louis van Grasshoff (also known by his pen-name, Max Heindel). Heindel was also a theosophist and the teachings of Blavatsky (to which we will turn shortly) pertaining to cosmic evolution, reincarnation and karma, and a spiritual hierarchy that assists cosmic as well as individual evolution, are incorporated in the teachings of the Fellowship. The larger and better known of the two Rosicrucian groups is the Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae

Crucis (AMORC), which was founded by H Spencer Lewis in 1915 (Melton 1986b: 157). It teaches esoteric doctrine and techniques, and the Theosophical influence is apparent in its acceptance of the existence of the Great White Brotherhood (see 5.2.3).

(xvii) Romanticism

The eighteenth century brought revolution to Europe, followed by the subsequent cultural movement of Romanticism.²⁹ Among Romantics, who included poets such as William Blake (1757-1827), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) and Percy Bysshe Shelly (1792-1822), there arose a yearning for the mental healing of the individual, beleaguered in a strife-torn age. This healing they perceived as being available from nature. Furst (1979: 14) shows that 'romanticism' was not originally a term of artistic classification, but that it referred to a fundamental predilection for things imaginative and emotional; it was the outcome of a basic reorientation of values and worldviews. The seeds of the movement are to be found in the decline of the authoritarianism of the Neo-classical period and the subsequent Enlightenment.³⁰ Pre-romantic thought represented a new conception of the outer world: a change in worldview from a mechanistic to an organic perspective. From this came a recognition of nature's dynamic, exuberant and organic character and the association of this with the moods of humanity, leading to a perception of the interpenetration of nature and humanity. These views are central to the New Age movement and are especially prominent in the creation-centered spirituality of Matthew Fox and in the veneration of Gaia and the great mother (see 5.3.2).

Roszak (1976: 112) points out that once the organic dynamism of nature is perceived, 'the idea of evolution is not far off' and this has proved true for the New Age movement, where the concept of evolution (individual, planetary and galactic) permeates all beliefs. In Darwin's theory of evolution the vital component of consciousness was absent, but in New Age thought it is central. Thus although the notion of transformation and evolution of spiritual awareness, as found in the ancient occult tradition, again surfaced in a slightly modified form in Romanticism, this view was banished from the modern mind with the acceptance of Darwinism into the mainstream of scientific thought (Roszak 1976: 112ff), only to surface again in the postmodern world.

Apart from the convergence of the alternative religious tradition and the literature of the eighteenth century in the Romantic movement, a number of significant developments took place at that time within the occult tradition itself. Ellwood (1973a: 62) points out that it is in this century that we first see the appearance of substantial sociological groupings connected with the alternative tradition which have clear continuity with the new religious movements in contemporary America. Freemasonry is

one such a group, and the groups associated with Mesmer and Swedenborg are further examples.

(xviii) Freemasonry

The link between the New Age movement and the Freemasons³¹ is only very indirect. According to Ellwood (1973a: 62), Freemasonry's contribution to the contemporary alternative traditions lies mainly in the fact that the structures, rituals and initiation systems of the Freemasons were adopted by many of the new organisations. In the United States, Freemasonry eventually evolved in such a way that by the nineteenth century, those who were serious about occult ideas joined or established lodges of other organisations such as the Theosophical Society or the Rosicrucian Order (Ellwood 1973a: 62).

There was, however, an historical connection between the Rosicrucians and the Freemasons, and in England during the nineteenth century it was necessary to be a mason in order to be considered for membership of the Rosicrucian Society of England. Freemasonry stems from the medieval stone masons' guilds which were established to guard the secrets of its building trade. In the seventeenth century, however, the lodges were in decline and the 'operative masons' (those who plied the trade) agreed to admit other men who were interested in architecture. This paved the way for the 'speculative masons' who eventually took over the lodges. They retained the emphasis on secrecy as well as some of the rituals and signs, but introduced new, and revitalised the old, ethical teachings.

On the 24th of June 1717 the Grand Lodge of England was inaugurated, soon to spread to Europe and America. Despite strong opposition from the Roman Catholic Church, its all-male membership increased dramatically and many prominent historical figures were members. In America 13 presidents were known to have been masons, of the 56 signatories of the Declaration of Independence at least 50 were masons, and all but 5 of the 55 members of the Constitutional Convention were masons (Harman 1988: 162). And in England the office of Grand Masters of England has, since 1721, always been held by one of noble or Royal blood (Pick & Knight 1977: 74).

In spite of the aura of secrecy that surrounds the fraternity, information on the teachings of the brotherhood is freely available, consisting in general of the major components of the occult tradition. Spence (1988: 175) suggests that among the lower ranks of the fraternity the significance of the teachings are ill understood and

that masonic transcendentalism has not kept up with the more modern forms of mysticism.

(xix) Frans Anton Mesmer

One of the influential figures of the eighteenth century was the Austrian physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1733-1805)³², who became well known for the development of hypnosis. In 1766, while still a student, he published a treatise in which he expounded on the influence of the planets on the human body through a subtle universal fluid pervading all things. This theory closely resembled the doctrine of animal magnetism which was said to have originated with Paracelsus in the sixteenth century. Paracelsus posited a force or fluid which supposedly radiates from the celestial bodies, humans and other life forms, as well as from inanimate objects. All things are connected through this force and must, therefore, influence one another. This universal fluid permeates reality, and unites it in a single common entity (Mesmer [1799] 1980: 99). Mesmer believed that disease occurred when the flow of this fluid was impeded, and he attempted to develop techniques whereby the normal course of the fluid could be restored. In this attempt, he discovered the induced hypnotic trance, which was to have a significant influence on spiritualism.

The ideas of both Paracelsus and Mesmer may thus be seen as the precursors of the notion postulated by some New Agers of a unified field in which all is connected.

(xx) Emanuel Swedenborg

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772)³³ was a Swedish scientist and mystic who is often regarded as the father of modern occultism (Campbell 1980: 13). At the age of about fifty-five, Swedenborg had a number of mystical experiences which compelled him to turn his back on his career as a scientist, and concentrate all his time and energy on mystical exploration. He developed the doctrine of correspondence, according to which all the phenomena of the physical world have their spiritual correspondences. He believed in the existence of a higher, invisible analogue of the visible physical world. The causes of all things originated in the higher sphere, but their effects were evident in the physical sphere, so that the whole visible world is a theater that portrays the spiritual world. He wrote:

I have been taught by a great deal of experience that there is nothing whatever in the natural world and its three kingdoms that does not portray something in the spiritual world, or that does not have something there to which it corresponds (Arcana Coelestia 2992, quoted in Swedenborg 1985: 93).

This notion closely resembles the Neoplatonist and Paracelsean idea of the inter-relatedness of the cosmos and human affairs, and is also very prevalent in New Age thought.

In Swedenborg's many works there are frequent references to his out-of-body journeys to other realms, where he claims to have had extensive conversations with disincarnate spirits and angels, whose company included historic luminaries such as Plato and Calvin. This, of course, implied the continued existence of the human spirit in other realms, a view which corresponds to Pythagorean, Gnostic and Kabbalistic ideas on reincarnation. This interaction with the inhabitants of the spirit realms was, in time, to become the central activity of the Spiritualist movement (see below) that took late nineteenth century America by storm. Today the tradition continues in the phenomenon of 'channelling', an important component in the New Age movement (see 7.2.2 c).

Swedenborg furthermore claimed to have had encounters with extra-terrestrials, and to have visited other planets in out-of-body journeys. Echoes of these beliefs are frequently encountered in the UFO groups within the New Age movement. A further similarity between Swedenborg's work and the New Age movement is the belief in an ancient, arcane scripture, which he called the 'Lost Word', that was purportedly preserved in Asia. As we shall see in due course, the idea of the existence of such ancient scriptures was taken up by Madame Blavatsky, who claimed to have studied such manuscripts. Despite Swedenborg's immersion in the occult tradition, he steadfastly clung to Christianity, and even founded a New Church (known today as the Church of the New Jerusalem, and still in existence in a number of places throughout the world). He believed that eventually members of all churches would belong to this church, if only spiritually. It is therefore not surprising that he made an important assertion concerning Christ. The second coming of Christ, he maintained, had taken place spiritually in 1757. Such assertions concerning the second coming of Christ were to become an important feature in a major faction of the New Age movement. It is obvious that echoes and reverberations of Swedenborg's beliefs are still present in the alternative religious tradition today, although his work is not at all well known. It was through the Spiritualist movement and its many offsprings that these beliefs gained wide dissemination.

(xxi) Spiritualism

Spiritualism³⁴, now referred to as channelling, is enjoying a major revival as an intrinsic part of the New Age movement, as will become apparent in the ensuing report (see 7.2.2 c). Many of the components that go to make up the New Age movement will be seen to have had their roots in this very consequential movement.

Modern Spiritualism originated in America in 1848 and proved to be pivotal in the history of the alternative religious tradition. A number of different traditions which challenged mainstream Christianity came together in this movement and many new groups, such as the influential Theosophical Society, issued from it.

In the early nineteenth century there emerged in America a number of groups which collectively could be seen as a movement away from Puritan Christianity and Calvinism. When one considers the variety of immigrants who had swarmed to the New World in previous centuries, it is obvious that religious conformity would have been an impossible dream, and that the tolerance of diversity that characterised the New World was born of necessity. Many of the most respected Founding Fathers were radical in their religious affiliations, and they set the example for independent thought in theological matters, freely expressing their contempt for narrowness and intolerance (Ahlstrom 1978: 13). It is therefore not surprising that this protest against Puritan Christianity could, in the early years of the nineteenth century, command such an enormous following. These resistance groups did not form part of the occult tradition, but can be viewed as an alternative for many Americans who could no longer accept the institutionalised Christianity of their time. The revolt against Puritan Christianity, with which Spiritualism is associated, was in fact led by the Unitarians, the Universalists and the Transcendentalists, and their influence on Spiritualism was conspicuous. The Unitarians emphasised the latent creative possibilities within humans, which pointed to mastery over one's own fate, while the Universalists believed in universal salvation and rejected the doctrines of predestination and eternal damnation - all ideas that are at the heart of the New Age movement.

It was, however, with the rise of Transcendentalism during the 1830s that the revolt against orthodox Christianity reached its peak. The Transcendentalists drew not only on the thinking of European Romantics but some, notably Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, were also versed in Oriental religions and often quoted the then newly-translated Hindu scriptures. They represented the first religious movement in America to incorporate eastern philosophy (Melton 1986a: 108). They believed in divine immanence in finite existence, and subscribed to the idea of inner intuitive knowledge, which they called transcendental reason.

With regard to Spiritualism, Ellwood (1973a: 71) points out that the speed with which it grew indicated that the nation must in some way have been peculiarly ready for its advent. When, in 1848, the Fox sisters of Hydesville, New York, claimed to have discovered an intelligent force to account for the mysterious rapping sounds heard in their home, their announcement soon caused a sensation.³⁵

Estimates of the number of people involved in Spiritualism during the 1850s vary considerably - from under a million to 11 million (Moore 1977: 14) - but the numbers were clearly significant. Public lectures on, and demonstrations of, Spiritualism drew thousands and many societies and churches were established, although none gave direction to the movement as a whole. Nevertheless, a number of tenets seemed to appeal to most of those who identified with the movement.

The one tenet all Spiritualists accepted was that spirits communicated with humans, and whatever else Spiritualists might believe, declared the New England Spiritualist Association, belonged to them as individuals and not necessarily as Spiritualists (Moore 1977: 43). However, most Spiritualists rejected supernaturalism and subscribed to the inviolability of natural law. They also proclaimed their reliance on external evidence rather than on any inward state of mind and firmly believed in the progressive development of knowledge. They sought to prove by scientific means that life continued after death. However, in their insistence that spirits were a higher form of matter which happens to be invisible and therefore not accessible to the senses, they contradicted their basic claim to positivism, as opposed to intuitive knowledge (Moore 1977: 19).

The predilection of many Spiritualists for psychic phenomena such as the materialisation of spirit forms, the moving of inanimate objects and levitation, testifies to the occult influence on the movement. Spiritualists were, however, at pains to dissociate themselves from occultism and the secrecy which surrounded it. Instead, they prided themselves on their openness and their lack of esoteric formulas or mysterious rites (Moore 1977: 23). They rejected supernatural and occult knowledge and claimed that their basic tenet of the existence of life after death could now be proved by empirical investigation.

Under the influence of various freethinkers of the time, most Spiritualists came to espouse certain tenets that are today central to the New Age movement. They rejected the ideas of human depravity, vicarious atonement and final judgment in favour of the principles of divine immanence, spiritual evolution spanning many lives, individual responsibility for self-improvement, a hierarchy of heavenly spheres and universal salvation. An eclecticism was also evident in Spiritualism, as demonstrated by their appreciation of Oriental religions. This alarmed many orthodox Christians who saw in it a threat to institutionalised Christianity. A last characteristic feature of the Spiritualists was their concern with social issues, in terms of which they strove to build a better world. Many Spiritualists actively supported a number of highly controversial issues such as equality for women, the abolition of capital punishment and the right of labour to organise.

Towards the late nineteenth century the Spiritualist movement was in decline for a number of reasons. One was that it had become obvious that it was not going to gain the scientific support it sought, since many of the mediums and the spirit manifestations had been exposed as fraudulent. In 1888 the Fox sisters confessed that they themselves had produced the rappings that had made them famous, and this further discredited the movement.³⁶ In the meantime Madame Blavatsky had founded the Theosophical Society, which syphoned off the support of those who were inclined toward the occult, and William James had founded the American Society for Psychical Research which drew away those to whom the scientific investigation of spiritualism appealed.

(xxii) The Theosophical Society

In the course of this study it became apparent that the Theosophical tradition, which includes the many offshoots of the Theosophical Society (TS)³⁷, forms the backbone of the New Age movement in South Africa. Some participants declared that they had been active in the New Age movement for thirty years or more, but this was anomalous with the agreement among scholars that the movement originated in the 1970s. On further investigation it became clear that these individuals had been members of one of the constituent groups of the Theosophical tradition. Many different groups emerged from the original TS and all those included in the following discussion are represented in South Africa. Most of these groups would identify with the central conception of the movement, namely the vision of a new era in which humanity will undergo a leap in its evolutionary process. The influence of this tradition on the New Age movement in South Africa can hardly be overemphasised.

The Theosophical Society was founded in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891) and Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907). Madame Blavatsky was a woman of aristocratic Russian descent, who at the age of eighteen married a widower more than twice her age. She soon left him and apparently travelled widely for the next two decades. The details of these twenty-five years of her life, until her appearance in New York in 1874, are unclear. Her own version is that she studied spiritual lore in Tibet, among other places, and received initiation there. However, other sources (for example the memoirs of her cousin, Count S Y Witte [1849-1915], statesman and prime minister of Russia from 1905 to 1906), put her in Europe at the side of an opera singer (Campbell 1980: 5; Ellwood 1979: 108), and describe her as having been, for short periods during a colourful but sometimes unfortunate career, a performer in a Turkish circus (Ellwood 1979: 108), and a snake charmer in Egypt (Leonard 1976: 34-5).³⁸ She was obviously an ingenious and resourceful woman who took care of herself very ably.

In comparison, Henry Olcott's early background appears commonplace. He came from middle-class America and practised law and journalism. The 'Theosophical

Twins', as Olcott liked to call the partnership, met at a spiritualist meeting and their shared interest in the occult led to a friendship and collaboration which was to last until the end of their lives. In 1875 they founded the TS with Olcott as the president and HPB (as she preferred to be called) as corresponding secretary. In time, however, HPB became the inner esoteric leader of the Society while Olcott retained the exoteric leadership. The aim of the original Society was to collect and diffuse knowledge of the laws which govern the universe (Campbell 1980: 28), but Madame Blavatsky undoubtedly saw it as a forum for imparting the ancient wisdom to humanity.

A year after its founding the Theosophical Society had all but ceased to exist, and only the enthusiasm of the two founders kept it alive. Olcott related how, late one night, a turbaned Indian man had appeared to him and instilled in him a deep longing to visit India. (HPB had reported visits from mysterious turbaned gentlemen since her teens.) Soon thereafter, Olcott and Blavatsky set sail for India, where they established the new headquarters of the Society. Within five years, more than a hundred branches of the Society had been established in India.

In 1877 HPB published her first book, *Isis Unveiled*, to public acclaim. This two-volume work (one named Science, the other Theology) clearly shows the influence of the occult and eastern traditions, eg of Mesmerism, numerology, Masonic symbols, Pythagoreanism, Neoplatonism, Hinduism and Zoroastrian texts. It has, however, as its major theme the topic of an ancient wisdom religion. She suggests that this religion originated in an ancient civilisation in which there was a unity between science and religion. According to HPB, this ancient wisdom religion was the source from which all other religions have sprung and it would in future again become the universal religion of humankind. This will transpire, maintained HPB, when humankind comes to perceive the superiority of this religion. This once and future wisdom religion is said to comprehend an emanationist cosmology, according to which humankind, through a process of involution, devolved from the divine spheres to the sphere of matter, from which it now has to evolve back to its Source; a belief in highly evolved Masters of Wisdom who guide and assist humanity in this evolutionary process; and an esoteric Christianity which has purportedly been lost by institutionalised Christianity.

Eleven years later, in 1888, Madame Blavatsky published her second work and masterpiece, *The secret doctrine*, which she claimed was based on the 'Stanzas of Dzyan'.³⁹ This 1 500-page work comprised two volumes. The first, *Cosmogogenesis*, deals with the creation of the universe, while the second, *Anthropogenesis*, covers the history of the planet and the evolution of humanity.

In this work HPB again claims that the ancient wisdom is the essence of all the religions of the world and the source from which all have emanated. The work establishes three fundamental principles: (1) the existence of an omnipresent, eternal, boundless and immutable principle, the one absolute Reality, the infinite and eternal cause; (2) the law of periodicity, the eternity of the universe as a boundless plane, where numberless universes incessantly manifest and disappear; and (3) the fundamental identity of all souls with the universal Over-Soul, and the obligatory pilgrimage every soul must make to pass through the cycle of incarnation, in accordance with cyclic and karmic law (Blavatsky [1888] 1952 vol 1: 79-83).

The concept of a group of disincarnate adepts or 'Masters of Wisdom' (also known as the Elder Brothers, the Mahatmas, the Great White Brotherhood⁴⁰ and the Masters of Compassion), who are guiding the evolution of the world, was introduced by Blavatsky and Olcott, but would later be systematised and elaborated by Alice Bailey, who broke away from the TS and founded her own Arcane School in 1923. Madame Blavatsky claimed contact with a number of adepts (among others, the spirit John King and an unidentified Egyptian spirit), but the two major entities with whom HPB was said to be in contact were Koot Hoomi and Morya.

The teachings of the Theosophical Society can be summarised as consisting of four sets of ideas (Campbell 1980: 62ff). *Evolution* is the first, and reflects TS's belief in an impersonal Absolute that periodically emerges into manifestation as the cosmos and then in time withdraws again. This process is described as one of involution and evolution, corresponding to a Day and Night of Brahma, each of which lasts approximately 4,3 billion years (see 3.2). Within the Absolute there are vast numbers of universes and within each universe many solar systems, all in a process of evolution. Every solar system is an expression of a mighty Being, who is called the Solar Deity or Solar Logos. In the same manner, each planet has a Planetary Logos who controls evolution on that planet (see 5.2.3).

Secondly, the *human constitution* is described as being 'Sparks of the Divine Fire' and is said to have emanated from the Solar Logos to which it will eventually return (a notion with Kabbalistic overtones). Humans have a lower and a higher nature, the lower comprising four principles and the higher, three. The lower four elements (the physical body, the life principle, the astral body and the seat of animal desires) are transitory, while the upper three, which comprise the mind, the spiritual soul and the spirit, are regarded as the real and eternal principles, which utilise the four lower elements in order to express themselves in matter (see 6.2.1 f).

Thirdly, *reincarnation and karma* are presented as the means by which universal emancipation of the soul can be attained. It is said that the higher nature of humans reincarnates in order to give the person a wide range of experiences from which he or she has to learn appropriate lessons. Karma is seen by HPB as 'the law of retribu-

tion' which rewards and punishes with an impartial justice. The logical conclusion is, therefore, that individual human attributes and circumstances are the outcome of actions taken during former lives (see 6.2.1 f).

Lastly, *after-death states* also provide the eternal higher triad with opportunities for increased growth. Immediately after death, the individual lives on for a period in the astral body, but as soon as the emotions generated by the preceding life have been exhausted, the astral body is discarded and the higher triad moves to a realm which corresponds with the Christian idea of heaven. HPB maintained that the previous incarnation determines the length of time spent in this astral sphere. It was thought to be, on average, 1 000 to 1 500 years (see 6.2.1 f).

After Madame Blavatsky's death in May 1891, a power struggle took place in the Theosophical Society which eventually led to the first major schism. William Quan Judge, who took responsibility for the Society in America after the founders moved to India, united the American section behind him in his claim for leadership, and in April 1895 it seceded from the parent body and would thereafter be known as The Theosophical Society in America. Its headquarters were eventually moved to Point Loma in California. The remarkable Mrs Annie Besant, who had sided with Olcott in this struggle, left the Society's headquarters in India, and embarked on a tour of America where her notable skill as a public speaker was to have far-reaching consequences. The TS in India, usually referred to as the Adyar group (after the city in which its headquarters was situated), soon gained many thousands of new members in America, while the membership of the Judge group shrank drastically. When Olcott died in 1907, Annie Besant (1847-1933) became the president of the Society and expanded the membership by 50 percent within a year.⁴¹

Next, an extremely controversial member of the Society, Charles Leadbeater⁴², identified a young Indian boy, Jiddu Krishnamurti⁴³, as the earthly form in which the coming World Teacher, the Lord Maitreya and the Christ, had incarnated. An organisation called 'The Order of the Star in the East' was founded to promote Krishnamurti and the emergence of the World Teacher. The organisation grew rapidly and, at its height in the 1920s, it numbered about 45 000 members. In 1927 Mrs Besant proclaimed that:

The Divine Spirit has descended once more on a man, Krishnamurti, one who in his life is literally perfect, as those who know him can testify ... The World Teacher is Here (Campbell 1980: 129).

Krishnamurti, however, dissolved the Order in 1929 when he denied the claims made on his behalf. He stated that he believed that truth could not be approached by any path, or religion, or organisation, and that he wanted only to set people free

from bondage. He resigned from the TS the following year and as a result the Society lost about a third of its membership in one fell swoop. Krishnamurti went on to build a career as a lecturer and became a respected world figure, commanding a following which was probably larger than that of Theosophy. Campbell (1980: 148) points out that although Krishnamurti was a rebel who turned against Theosophy, he represented, at the same time, a fulfilment of the Theosophical ideals. He taught that all outside authority should be rejected and that the ultimate authority was the inner intuitive experience that liberates the individual. According to Krishnamurti, one could not depend on anyone because there was no guide, no teacher, no authority - there was only oneself, and it was through self-knowledge that one could attain knowledge of reality. In recognising one's conditioning through life experiences, one could transcend this prior programming and be liberated to a state of mind that was new, sensitive and aware. While Krishnamurti did not prophesy a New Age in human evolution and therefore cannot, strictly speaking, be included in the New Age movement, his teachings on the inner authority and the liberation from past conditioning coincide with some vital and central insights of the majority of the individuals who see themselves as part of this movement. While in South Africa the followers of Krishnamurti might not identify with the movement, they do advertise in New Age publications and it was therefore deemed appropriate to include a follower of these teachings as a participant in this study.

Mrs Besant's association with Leadbeater and the Liberal Catholic Church, and their promotion of their own work at the expense of Madame Blavatsky's, led to a 'Back to Blavatsky' movement which eventually benefited another offshoot of the Society - the United Lodge of Theosophists, which was formed in Los Angeles in 1909 as a result of the conflict between the other two Theosophy groups.

We have now established that the original Theosophical Society had a number of offshoots, such as the various Theosophical groups, which dissociated themselves from the original group and the Krishnamurti groups. Other significant offshoots are the Anthroposophical Society, the Liberal Catholic Church, The Rosicrucian Fellowship and, probably the most important of them all, Alice Bailey's Arcane School, to which we now turn our attention.

(xxiii) The Arcane School

Of the many participants in this study, approximately two-thirds had been markedly influenced by the Bailey teachings, although some suggested that the Bailey teachings were of limited value and implied that they personally had moved beyond them.

Alice La Trobe Bateman (1880-1949)⁴⁴ was born in England and raised in the Church of England. At an early age she claimed to have encountered a turbaned

after she joined the Theosophical Society, she recognised a picture of the turbaned visitor at the Society's headquarters and realised that he was, in fact, the Master Koot Hoomi (Sinclair 1984: 19; Campbell 1980: 150). As a young woman she worked as an evangelist among British troops and eventually married an Episcopal priest. By the time the marriage ended in divorce, she had three children whom she had to support by working in a cannery in California.

In 1915 she joined the Theosophical Society where she met Foster Bailey, whom she later married.⁴⁵ Both held office in the Society, but two factors eventually led to their withdrawal. One was the neo-Theosophy of Annie Besant to which they objected, and the other was the writing Alice Bailey had begun to do. She claimed that the Master Djwhal Khul, also known as 'the Tibetan', had invited her to cooperate with him by acting as his amanuensis. This collaboration lasted for 30 years, during which Mrs Bailey published 24 books, of which 19 were the joint efforts of the Tibetan and Mrs Bailey, and 5 were hers alone.

Alice Bailey's early writings attracted much attention and in response to many enquiries the Baileys founded the Arcane School in 1923. The School was conceived of as a training school for disciples and it offered correspondence courses in the ancient wisdom. Practical group training was also necessary to integrate the student into the principles that underlie the new era in human evolution (Lucis Press s a: 31). The School estimated that by 1978, about 200 000 people had taken the courses (Campbell 1980: 152).

In her writings Bailey elaborated on a number of Theosophical themes, most notably that of a spiritual hierarchy of masters who are said to be in charge of individual and planetary evolution. A cosmology that incorporates the notion that seven rays of energy underlie all life in the universe was further developed; and an anthropology distinguishing between the soul and the personality was emphasised. Integration of the personality and development of the mind were regarded as prerequisites for controlling the emotions. Emotional control was imperative if the disciple desired to contribute towards the establishment of the right conditions for the reappearance of the Christ (see 4.3.3 and 5.2.6). One of the major milestones in Bailey's work was the prayer that she claimed she had received from the Tibetan. This prayer, she said, was previously not known to humanity as it had been deemed too holy for humans, and had consequently been used only by highly evolved spiritual entities. It was now, however, at the disposal of humans and according to Mrs Bailey, could contribute greatly to the establishment of the goodwill which would enable the Christ to make his appearance. It goes thus:

The Great Invocation

From the point of Light within the Mind of God
 Let light stream forth into the minds of men.
 Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God
 Let love stream forth into the hearts of men.
 May Christ return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known
 Let purpose guide the little wills of men -
 The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men
 Let the Plan of Love and Light work out.
 And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth.

A number of service-oriented organisations, affiliated with the Arcane School, were created, examples of which are Triangles and World Goodwill. Triangles was founded in 1937 and consists of cells of three people each who link in thought and purpose every day in order to unite mentally with all other Triangle groups worldwide. It is said that a network of mental power is created which may be used to communicate the energy of goodwill between all people of the world (Lucis Press s a: 31). A second organisation, World Goodwill, which was established in 1932, has as its aim the establishment of right human relations throughout the entire human race. The organisation's activities centre on education through the distribution of literature, especially the Great Invocation; the building of information and research services; the publication of suitable material for distribution; and the provision of a study course on the problems of humanity. The World Goodwill organisation is an accredited Non-Governmental Organisation with the United Nations in New York and in Geneva (Lucis Press s a: 32).

The Lucis Trust was established in 1922 and is the legal and financial agent for all the undertakings established by the Baileys. It incorporates a publishing company which is responsible for the dissemination of the Bailey books and related works.

The 'energy pattern' of the work is illustrated in a diagram attributed to the Tibetan, which clarifies the relationship between the different but related organisations. This is published in *Thirty years' work: The books of Alice A. Bailey and the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul* (s a). The energy pattern flows as follows: from the Spiritual Hierarchy

of the planet to The New Group of World Servers, using many agencies (often without their knowledge) including the Arcane School and its service activities, (such as Triangles, the Goodwill work, the Invocation and the Lucis Publishing Company). The summary of the 'energy pattern' ends with the statement: 'It is the books which bring people into the various phases of the work: you can aid by keeping them in constant circulation' (Lucis Press s a: 33).

The teachings of the Arcane School revolve around the idea that humanity is entering a New Age in which the Christ will reappear. There is a New Group of World Servers composed not only of human disciples, but also of masters who are working to facilitate the return of the Christ. This can only come about if the right conditions of international goodwill, economic sharing and religious unity can be brought about.

(xxiv) The Anthroposophical Society

Another significant offshoot of the TS that has ties with the New Age movement is the Anthroposophical Society of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925).⁴⁶ After leading the German branch of the Theosophical Society for more than a decade, Steiner was banished from the society by its president, Annie Besant, because of his objection to the formation of the Order of the Star of the East (the organisation which was founded to promote Krishnamurti as the coming World Teacher. Steiner took the major share of the membership of the TS's German lodges with him when he formed his own society in February 1913.

His teachings coincide in the main with those of HPB, but also incorporate esoteric Christianity, the thinking of Goethe and German idealism. Central to his teachings is cosmic evolution which governs not only cosmology but also anthropology. Steiner believed humanity was on a descending spiral of devolution, but deemed this a necessary stage in humanity's growth from which it would eventually free itself. There were, however, evil forces at large, of which the most malevolent were the two fallen angels, Lucifer and Ahriman. These forces, claimed Steiner, had to contend with Christ whose sacrificial birth and death balanced their activities and incorporated them into the evolutionary process, which was ultimately in Christ's power. The evolutionary process was, therefore, destined to follow an ascending path in accordance with the will of Christ.

Other important facets of Steiner's teachings include the idea of the sevenfold constitution of man; karma and reincarnation; and after-death states. Unique in the western tradition, his teachings included a system of meditation the purpose of which was to stabilise the will and the feelings, and to enhance mental concentration and self-observation. It also prescribes a system of ethics which includes compassion

and self-sacrifice as an antipode for the self-centredness which might arise from the meditation exercises.

Steiner is probably better known to many individuals who have no interest in the occult as the founder of the alternative educational system known as the Waldorf Schools (of which there are several in South Africa). The Schools emphasise not only the 'three r's', but also music, art, drama, and the importance of body movement. Steiner developed a system of body movements which he called eurythmy, in which the child is taught to express the spiritual qualities of words through movement (this system has proved to be invaluable in the training of dislectic children). These Schools also teach and practise a form of organic gardening in which the rhythm of the earth and the celestial influences are taken into account.

Roszak (1976: 137) summarises Steiner's contribution to the Aquarian frontier as follows:

What Steiner invites us to contemplate is a liberated individuality on the far side of neurotic individualism, a personal consciousness which, though born of alienation, can yet become the vehicle for transcending our isolation from nature and can carry us into a new communion with the whole.

(xxv) New Thought

We turn now to another grouping which has significantly influenced the New Age movement, namely the New Thought movement.⁴⁷ New Thought predates the New Age movement by about a century and can be seen as having paved the way for the latter. In the formative years of the New Age movement many of the teachings of New Thought were incorporated into the younger movement, but since the mid-eighties the flow of ideas has been reversed. The major New Thought elements that were appropriated by the New Age movement are prosperity consciousness teachings, mental healing, and the esoteric interpretation of scriptures.

New Thought was inspired by the teachings of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-1866). Quimby taught an idealist philosophy in which the power of mind is fundamental as well as causative. He taught that mind is capable of transcending all limitations because it is the stuff of which the universe is composed. It could, therefore, create whatever it could conceive. Quimby emphasised healing of both the body and the mind and developed a form of mental healing which relied heavily, but not exclusively, on positive thinking. A patient whom Quimby had cured, Mary Baker Eddy, was to combine Quimby's teaching with Christian values to develop the Christian Science movement (see below). Other significant individuals who contributed to the dissemination of the theories on positive thinking were Ralph Waldo Trine, Horatio Dresser and Ernest Holmes.

Like Theosophy and Spiritualism, New Thought underwent a number of divisions during the early twentieth century and produced several new groups, among which were a number of churches such as the Church of Religious Science, the Church of Divine Science, Unity Church (all affiliated to the International New Thought Association) and the I AM movement, which also subdivided in later years. The New Thought movement is at present well represented in South Africa and one of the participants in this study is a minister in a New Thought church.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the major components of the modern occult tradition, such as Swedenborgianism, Spiritualism, Theosophy and New Thought, had found organisational stability and all of them generated innumerable new groups, producing literally hundreds of new organisations (Melton 1988: 40). Many of the central themes of the New Age movement can be traced to these groups. Theosophy, for example, played the role of midwife in the rebirth of astrology, and despite its close links with Buddhism, was instrumental in the dissemination of Hindu philosophy in the west. Madame Blavatsky standardised the use of the term 'reincarnation', while the work of Edgar Cayce, a Theosophy disciple, made the notion of reincarnation acceptable to 'the vast majority of the metaphysical community' (Melton 1988: 41). Spiritualism and the Arcane School of Alice Bailey legitimated the practice of mediumship (or channelling, as it is now known), and the New Age movement today hosts many hundreds of channellers all over the world who claim to channel a great number of discarnate entities. The notion of the power of positive thinking was eventually to develop into the idea of personal responsibility for all the events of one's individual life, since it was accepted that individuals created their own destinies (see 6.2.1 f). New Agers' fascination with science can be traced not only to the occult practices of the preceding centuries, but also to the modern Spiritualist movement and the establishment of research centres for parapsychology.

(xxvi) *Christian Science*

Two participants in this study are indirectly linked to Christian Science⁴⁸ through their studies of the work of Joel S Goldsmith (d 1964) who was a Christian Science practitioner who later founded his own (but very similar) organisation, *The Infinite Way*. Although there is no direct link between Christian Science and the New Age movement, it is interesting that virtually all the tenets of the older organisation are found in the very popular channelled work published in 1985, *A course in miracles* (see 2.4).

Christian Science teaches that God is good and God is all, and that therefore disease, sin and death are illusions. The only reality evil has is the reality it is accorded by humans through their belief in it. Salvation from suffering, sin and death is there

fore possible through acquiring the Mind that was in Christ Jesus. This change in perception leads to the realisation that evil is an illusion. Christian Scientists also distinguish between the impersonal and the personal aspects of God, as well as between the man Jesus and the Christ. These beliefs were all encountered again in this study during interviews with certain participants.

c The counter-culture movement in the United States

Although the topic under discussion here is the alternative tradition in America during this century, a detour to include the American counter-culture of the sixties seems appropriate at this juncture.⁴⁹

Without negating the complex sociopolitical issues that contributed to the birth of the counter-culture in the sixties, only the religious aspect of this phenomenon will be explored in this brief overview. Theodore Roszak (1970), who studied the subculture in America, came to the conclusion that it was essentially a revolt against the expansion of the technocracy.⁵⁰ He defined the technocracy as 'that society in which those who govern justify themselves by appeal to technical experts who, in turn, justify themselves by appeal to scientific forms of knowledge. And beyond the authority of science, there is no appeal' (Roszak 1970: 8). This worldview, as we have seen in the previous chapter (1.1.2), had led to the escalation of the process of secularisation and the privatisation of religion. In the youth subculture, rebellion against technocracy combined with a passionate protest against the Vietnam war and the rejection of the prevailing materialism, reaching an intensity that was to have repercussions for many years thereafter. Roszak (1970) felt that at the core of the movement was the attempt of youth to provide an emergency balance for the gross distortions of the technological society - often, however, 'by occult aberrations that were just as gross' (Roszak 1970: 142). This was, therefore, not a rejection of religion *per se*; as Roszak (1970: 138) remarks: 'The dissenting young have indeed got religion ... and what began with Zen has now rapidly, perhaps too rapidly, proliferated into a phantasmagoria of exotic religiosity'.

Carl Raschke (1980: 228ff) criticises Roszak severely for his sympathetic view of the plight of the American young during the sixties.⁵¹ For him the new religions that flourished among the young people were a product of the paralysis and powerlessness of antiwar politics which had failed to shake the policies of the government. In his view the ensuing despair of the young led them to turn, first to drugs, and later inward, in order to escape the harsh realities of the escalating war in Vietnam and the crumbling institutions of society.

An unrelated event which significantly influenced the direction in which the movement developed was the rescinding of the Oriental Exclusion Act in 1965, which opened the door to a great company of Asian spiritual teachers who immigrated to the United States specifically to spread their traditions among an audience which seemed imminently ready to receive them. The 1970s saw the rapid growth of a number of eastern imports, such as the Transcendental Meditation of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi;⁵² the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishna movement) introduced by AC Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada;⁵³ the Divine Light Mission of the (then) teenage guru Maharaj Ji;⁵⁴ the Healthy, Happy, Holy Organisation (3HO) of Yogi Bajan;⁵⁵ and the Rajneesh Foundation International of the late Bhagwan Rajneesh, whose excesses led to his indictment and subsequent agreement (as part of a plea bargain) to leave the United States in 1985.⁵⁶ On the basis of their teachings, two movements that were founded by westerners can also be categorised with the eastern imports. These are the Church of Scientology⁵⁷ founded by L Ron Hubbard, which has some affinity with Buddhism, and ECK-ANKAR⁵⁸ founded by John Paul Twitchell, who declared himself the 971st Living ECK Master in 1965, and whose movement relies heavily on Sant Mat teachings (in the Sikh tradition).

A number of new movements which stem from Christianity rather than from eastern philosophy also emerged during this time and rapidly grew to become organisations which collectively exerted an enormous influence on the youth of America. The biggest of these, the Unification Church⁵⁹, had been introduced to the United States in 1959, but it was only after its founder, Sun Myung Moon, moved to the States in 1972, that the movement started to flourish. Other new religions in this category were the Family of Love (previously known as the Children of God)⁶⁰ of David Brandt Berg, once a minister in the Christian Missionary Alliance Church who took over the work previously begun by Teen Challenge, the youth ministry of Dave Wilkerson (whose book *The Cross and the switchblade* became quite well known in South Africa); and The Way International⁶¹, founded by Victor Paul Wierwille, who read for an MTh at Princeton Theological Seminary. The infamous People's Temple⁶² of James (Jim) Jones also falls into this category. Jones founded a new congregation in a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), rather than a new religion, and retained the support of his denomination up to the time of his death (Melton 1986b: 126). Martin (1990: 55), one of the most hostile of the Christian authors who warn against the New Age movement, cites the People's Temple as an example of New Age groups and of the dangers that the movement involves. No serious scholar of new religious movements would, however, agree that the People's Temple was part of the New Age movement. Furthermore, those who simply lump the People's Temple in with the New Age movement absolve themselves from learning the necessary lesson of the Jonestown catastrophe: that in the hands of a fanatic (in this case the hands of a Christian fanatic), any religion poses dangers.

The Spiritualist/Theosophy tradition also yielded a number of new religions which became popular with the youth culture. In 1930, the 'I AM' movement⁶³ was founded by Guy Ballard (1878-1939), who claimed to have had contact with the ascended master Saint-Germain. After Ballard's death the movement lost much of its appeal among the public. Nevertheless, the once large and powerful movement still exists, although in much diminished form.

A movement that is frequently confused with 'I AM' is the Church Universal and Triumphant, which was founded in 1958 by Mark L Prophet (Prophet is his surname, not his title).⁶⁴ While these groups were never affiliated with each other, there is a marked resemblance in their teachings. In 1973 Mark Prophet died and his wife Elizabeth Clare Prophet took over the organisation, whereafter the church expanded dramatically.

It is obvious that with the rapid growth of all these groups during the seventies, alternative philosophies and worldviews were widely disseminated. Since most of the groups were involved in controversy of some sort, ranging from mass suicide to apparently coercive recruitment campaigns and fraud, it is not surprising that many of them eventually lost the major part of their followings. The spiritual need that drove the young to these movements did not, however, disappear when the movements were discredited.

It is ironic that the fiercest critics of the new religions are fundamentalist Christians, whose own revival was sparked by the same conditions that led to the formation of the new movements. For another feature that distinguished the seventies was the parallel development of the charismatic movement and the revival of evangelicalism and fundamentalism in Christianity.⁶⁵ This trend continued and at present two of the main features of the religious scene in both the United States and South Africa are the evangelical grouping and the New Age movement. These movements show such an uncanny resemblance, despite their mutual antagonism, that this is one of the really fertile fields that needs to be explored in future studies. These movements are, however, not the only groupings or issues of consequence in the United States or in South Africa. In fact, in South Africa the New Age movement represents a small minority which would probably not have had nearly as much impact were it not for its very vocal critics.

3.3.2 Eastern philosophy

At the beginning of this chapter it was shown that four major tributaries have fed into the New Age movement. The first, the alternative tradition, has been dealt with, and it is to the eastern philosophies that we now turn. Spangler (1977: 63) links

the eastern philosophies with the New Age movement in an essay on the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the life of the Buddha, at the start of which he writes:

The New Age consciousness is really quite old and the demonstration of human capability and super-human capability has always been with us. The teachings of the past form the foundation from which the new is emerging.

a Hinduism

Although many individuals in America, such as a number of transcendentalists, had been exposed to eastern religious thought, the introduction of eastern religion in institutionalised form can be traced to the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893 (an historic event that can be regarded as a symbol of the approaching post-Christian era in America⁶⁶). An unknown Hindu from India, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), addressed the delegates and made an indelible impression on them.⁶⁷ Vivekananda was a disciple of the modern Hindu sage Ramakrishna (1836-1886), who represented the Vedanta school in Hinduism. Soon a number of Vedanta Societies were established in America and Vivekananda later journeyed to Europe where he founded more of these groups. In America several prominent individuals, such as the actress Sarah Bernhardt and authors Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood, joined the Society. The influence of these teachings on Aldous Huxley was to become evident in his well-known work *The perennial philosophy*, which was first published in 1946 (see 2.3).

Vedanta teachings posit an *advaita* or nondual philosophy in which the only reality is Brahman. Humankind is therefore part of Brahman, and thus divine. The aim of human life is to realise this hidden inner divinity through meditation. This realisation will sweep away ignorance and reveal the illusion of the phenomenal world.

The second significant Hindu guru arrived in America in 1920 as a guest of the Unitarian Church of Boston, and remained for thirty years. In contrast with Vivekananda, who emphasised the verbal intellectual teachings of Vedanta, Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952) was a yogi who introduced the practice of traditional yoga techniques, as prescribed by the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (100 BCE), into his Self-Realization Fellowship groups.⁶⁸ The highest spiritual patron of Yogananda and his Fellowship groups is Swami Babaji, a master who is said to have lived for many centuries and who is purportedly still alive in the Himalayas and destined to remain in the body until the end of this age of the world (Ellwood 1973a: 226). In addition to the nondual philosophy and the yoga techniques in which one is

required to redirect one's life-energy towards the *chakras* (seven energy centres within the human frame) in order that one might realise one's true divine nature, the choice of physical immortality is also offered. One participant in this study did, in fact, claim to be physically immortal (T15).

The influence of the Hindu tradition on the participants in this study is obvious when one considers that the scriptures they reported treasuring most are, firstly, the Bible and, secondly, the *Bhagavad Gita* (IT 15).

b Buddhism

With regard to Buddhism in the west⁶⁹, the first person to become a Buddhist on American soil was Charles T Strauss, who was admitted to the Buddhist religion during the World Parliament of Religions in 1893. It was, however, only towards the latter half of the 1950s that Buddhism, and specifically Zen, became well known through the writings of Zen master D T Suzuki, Alan Watts, Jack Kerouac and Gary Snyder.⁷⁰

According to Suzuki (1983: 34ff) Zen is neither a philosophy nor a religion but a practical and systematic method of spiritual training that denies all doctrinal authority. *Satori*, or enlightenment, comes through insight into the nature of one's own mind, which is also the Buddha-mind. Suzuki (1983: 46) quotes the Zen master Yengo, who says:

The great truth of Zen is possessed by everybody. Look into your own being and seek it not through others. Your mind is above all forms; it is free and quiet and sufficient; it eternally stamps itself on your six senses and four elements. In its light all is absorbed. Hush the dualism of subject and object, forget both, transcend the intellect, sever yourself from the understanding, and directly penetrate deep into the identity of the Buddha-mind; outside of this there are no realities.

The dissenting youth and Bohemian intellectuals, later to be known as the 'Beat Generation' or 'beatniks' (and the predecessors of the hippies and flower children of the sixties), took to Zen with great enthusiasm and the 'Zen Boom' that followed soon compelled Watts (who was probably mainly responsible for the boom⁷¹) to criticise the various aberrations from Zen which he referred to as Beat Zen and Square Zen. Beat Zen, he said, was 'a pretext for license ... a simple rationalisation', which confuses 'anything goes' at the existential level, with 'anything goes' at the social level (Watts 1973: 101), while Square Zen indulged in 'spiritual snobbism' and a 'quest for the *right* spiritual experience, for a *satori* which will receive the stamp (*inka*) of approval and established authority' (Watts 1973: 103-4).

Despite the shallowness with which Zen was understood by the youth of the late 1950s, Roszak (1970: 136) maintains that it represented a radical critique of the prevailing scientific conception of humankind and nature. He writes (1970: 137):

Perhaps what the young took Zen to be has little relationship to that venerable and elusive tradition; but what they readily adopted was a gentle and gay rejection of the positivistic and the compulsively cerebral. It was the beginning of a youth culture that continues to be shot through with the spontaneous urge to counter the joyless, rapacious, and egomaniacal order of our technological society.

Field (1981: 243) points out that by the mid-1960s Zen groups were springing up like mushrooms after a spring rain. By this time the counter-culture was at its height, and Zen, although an important component, was only one among a plethora of new paths to discover.

One of the most influential Buddhist groups was and is that of Chogyam Trungpa's Vajrayana Buddhism, which in the early eighties estimated its followers as numbering around 20 000 (Hurst & Murphy 1987: 227). This organisation established meditation centres in most major American cities and retreat complexes were founded in both Colorado and Vermont. A university of Buddhist Studies, Naropa Institute, was opened, also in Colorado, and a therapeutic institute was established in New York State. Naropa Institute has, over the years, attracted many renowned academics, artists and psychologists not only to study at the Institute but also to offer courses in their special fields (Hurst & Murphy 1987: 227; Cox 1977: 52ff).

In South Africa there are a number of different Buddhist groups representing various branches of Buddhism. On the whole one cannot equate Buddhism and the New Age movement, but since these groups advertise in New Age publications one can infer that Buddhism is of interest to individuals in New Age circles. The participant chosen to represent Buddhism in this study said that he had investigated most religions during his life and that now he is active in both the Theosophical Society and a Buddhist meditation group.

3.3.3 Humanistic and transpersonal psychology

The humanistic and transpersonal schools in psychology are of vital importance in the New Age movement since it is from these roots that the human potential movement grew. Spangler (1977: 58) in writing on 'the new man' for a New Age observes:

The humanistic psychology movement in its highest form - it has its lunatic fringe but in the form that is being expressed by Maslow - is incredibly close, in fact it is nothing more than a restatement of the same things that the New Age movement is seeking to convey to people ...

What Maslow is saying is that those who are true prototypes of the new humanity are those who ... know that in our terminology they *are* the New Age, and they had better get up and start actualizing it, expressing it, bringing it out, growing, externalizing it, being it.

Humanistic psychology is often referred to as 'third force' psychology, in order to distinguish it from the earlier psychological theories of behaviourism and psychoanalysis (Robinson 1979: 237). This movement represented an about turn in psychology, away from techniques and practices which were seen as dehumanising - detached observation, objectivity and analysis that seemed to rob people of their personhood and reduced them merely to objects to examine, patients to treat, or research subjects (Coan 1977: 276). Although it is an extremely heterogeneous movement, a brochure of the Association for Humanistic Psychology (in the United States), lists the following features as characterising the humanistic orientation:

1. A centering of attention on the experiencing *person*, and thus a focus on experience as the primary phenomenon in the study of man. Both theoretical explanations and overt behavior are considered secondary to experience itself and to its meaning to the person.
2. An emphasis on such distinctively human qualities as choice, creativity, valuation, and self-realization, as opposed to thinking about human beings in mechanistic and reductionistic terms.
3. An allegiance to meaningfulness in the selection of problems for study and of research procedures, and an opposition to a primary emphasis on objectivity at the expense of significance.
4. An ultimate concern with and valuing of the dignity and worth of man and interest in the development of the potential inherent in every person. Central in this view is the person as he discovers his own being and relates to other persons and to social groups (cited in Coan 1977: 277).

In view of the above, it is not surprising that this movement gained credibility during the sixties when a major section of American youth was rebelling against

dehumanising trends in society - increased technocracy, bureaucratisation, racism, the arms race and the prospect of a nuclear holocaust - and against the war in Vietnam (Coan 1977: 277).

Humanistic psychology, which places much emphasis on personal growth, self-realisation and self-actualisation, has led to the development of the dynamic human potential movement. The various techniques employed by its subgroups are indebted to a number of psychologists, such as Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Roberto Assagioli and Carl Rogers⁷², and to some eastern philosophies, among them Vedanta and Zen Buddhism (Coan 1977: 280). Many of the influential humanistic psychologists studied eastern religious traditions and were obviously much influenced by them. Among these Jung was probably the most knowledgeable, but Maslow, Fromm and Assagioli were all well read in various areas of Oriental thought. The developmental psychologist, Richard Alpert, whose rejection of society was widely publicised in the 1960s, eventually returned from India as the guru, Baba Ram Dass, and has since done much to synthesise eastern thought and western psychology (Hall & Lindzey 1978: 354). During the sixties the human potential movement was characterised by the use of encounter group therapies, but in the early seventies the new religious awakening began to affect the movement, and the emphasis shifted to a focus on the inner person and transpersonal or mystical experience (Tageson 1982: 230).

This leads us to the 'fourth force' in psychology, namely transpersonal psychology. This new branch of psychology is concerned with the spiritual aspects of being - those ultimate human capacities and potentialities not accommodated elsewhere in psychology (Tageson 1982: 13). Anthony Sutich, the founding editor of the *Journal for Humanistic Psychology* and the *Journal for Transpersonal Psychology*, describes transpersonal psychology as follows:

The emerging Transpersonal Psychology ('fourth force') is concerned specifically with the empirical, scientific study of, and responsible implementation of the findings relevant to, becoming, individual and species-wide meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experiences, B-values, ecstasy, mystical experience, awe, being, self-actualization, essence, bliss, wonder, ultimate meaning, transcendence of the self, spirit, oneness, cosmic awareness, individual and species-wide synergy, maximal interpersonal encounter, sacralization of everyday life, transcendental phenomena, cosmic self-humor and playfulness, maximal sensory awareness, responsiveness and expression, and related concepts, experiences and activities (Tageson 1982: 13).

From the above it is obvious that certain depth and humanistic psychologists such as Jung, Maslow and Frankl, were precursors of the 'fourth force'. Italian psychologist,

Roberto Assagioli's psychosynthesis, while situated within the range of the 'third force', proves, on closer scrutiny, to be one of the 'fourth force' psychologies.⁷³ Assagioli postulated a multidimensional human psyche of which the higher Self is the true centre - the word 'Self' is capitalised to convey a divine dimension (Gordon-Tydd 1980: 8). The initial aim of psychosynthesis does not differ from that of psychoanalysis, since it strives to establish a harmonious integration of all human aspects. Assagioli called this a personal psychosynthesis. However, the ultimate goal is concerned with what he calls a spiritual psychosynthesis, and here the aim is to assist the well-functioning individual to grow towards realisation of the true or higher Self (Gordon-Tydd 1980: 7).⁷⁴

From the above it is quite apparent that this offshoot of psychology has entered the arena of spirituality and, therefore, of religion. The role of contemporary psychology in the formation and growth of the human potential movement, which overlaps extensively with the New Age movement, is evident.

3.3.4 New discoveries in physics

The fourth stream to feed into the swirling current that we call the New Age movement, is what is popularly called 'the new physics' or 'the new science'. The discoveries in physics of the early twentieth century have struck a fatal blow to the Newtonian mechanistic worldview that has reigned supreme since the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. These discoveries led to the formulation of relativity theory and quantum theory, which shattered the foundations of realism, determinism and reductionism of the Newtonian worldview. The international group of physicists concerned with these discoveries included Max Planck, Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, Louis De Broglie, Erwin Schrödinger, Wolfgang Pauli, Werner Heisenberg and Paul Dirac (Capra 1990: 65). The new insights plunged many physicists into a conceptual crisis, which for some had acute existential reverberations. Heisenberg (1963: 42) conveys their sense of confusion when he writes:

I remember discussions with Bohr which went through many hours till very late at night and ended almost in despair; and when at the end of the discussion I went alone for a walk in the neighboring park I repeated to myself again and again the question: Can nature possibly be so absurd as it seemed to us in these atomic experiments?

However, these seemingly absurd findings provided an unexpected link with mysticism and eastern philosophies. A number of authors such as Fritjof Capra (1975) and Gary Zukav (1979) have demonstrated the parallels between statements made by physicists and those made by mystics on the nature of reality.⁷⁵ This has led

to a common but erroneous belief among New Agers that 'physics have proved mysticism'. Ken Wilber (1984), himself an important figure in New Age circles although he disclaims the label, writes in the preface to *Quantum questions: mystical writings of the world's great physicists*:

The theme of this book ... is that modern physics offers no positive support (let alone proof) for a mystical worldview. Nevertheless, every one of the physicists in this volume was a mystic. ... It is not my aim in this volume to reach the new-age audience, who seem to be firmly convinced that modern physics automatically supports or proves mysticism. It does not. But this view is now so widespread, so deeply entrenched, so taken for granted by new-agers, that I don't see that my book could possibly reverse the tide. ... No, the audience I would like to reach is the same audience these physicists wanted to reach: the orthodox, the established; the men and women who honestly believe that natural science can and will answer all questions worth asking. And so, in that orthodox spirit, I would simply ask: ... what does it mean that the founders of your modern science, the theorists and researchers who pioneered the very concepts you now worship implicitly, the very scientists presented in this volume, what does it mean that they were, *every one of them, mystics?*

Evidently, although Wilber warns against a simplistic equation between physics and mysticism, he is convinced that the study of physics has led some physicists beyond physics to an intuitive mystical experience of reality.

Capra (1975: 63-4) writes that among the accepted principles of Newtonian physics that were shattered by the new physics are: the concept of absolute time and space, the belief in the existence of solid particles as the building blocks of reality, the acceptance of the causal nature of physical phenomena, and the assumption of objective description of nature.

He points out that Einstein's special theory of relativity was the first of these discoveries that revolutionised modern science. Einstein proved that all space and time measurements are relative and consequently the concepts of absolute space and absolute time as independent entities had to be abandoned (Capra 1975: 173). The space and time coordinates, it was proven, are in fact only elements of language with which an observer structures his or her environment (Capra 1975: 173). Relativity theory also proved that space is not three-dimensional and that time is not a separate entity, but that both are inseparably connected in a four-dimensional continuum, termed 'space-time' (Capra 1975: 175).

The discovery that space and time are connected and interpenetrating is compared by Capra (1975: 180) to the insights of mystics who experience reality as dynamic and interconnected.

Further research on particle interaction led to the discovery that subatomic particles can move in any direction with regard to time. Capra (1975:194) suggests that since particles can move forward and backward in time in the same way that they can move left and right in space, the notion of causation should also be discarded. Physicists have not suggested that timelessness can be experienced or observed in the actual world, but Capra (1975: 196) points out that mystics have often claimed that they experience timelessness. He quotes Swami Vivekananda who wrote:

Time, space, and causation are like the glass through which the Absolute is seen In the Absolute there is neither time, space, nor causation (Capra 1975: 196).

According to Capra (1975: 70) another of the new discoveries that caused the upheaval in physics, was the discovery that atoms are not solid particles but in fact consist of vast regions of space in which extremely small particles - electrons - move around a nucleus. Depending on the manner of observation, these electrons manifest characteristics of either particles or waves, which indicates that subatomic matter has no intrinsic properties independent of its environment. The more accurately one aspect of the particle (eg position) is determined, the less accurately the other (momentum) can be determined. Therefore the very act of measuring a particle's velocity would make it impossible to measure its position. The uncertainty principle postulated by Heisenberg states that since one cannot determine both the position and the momentum of subatomic particles, one cannot predict specific events, but only probabilities. Furthermore, physicists realised that the very act of observation influences the object being observed (Capra 1990: 68; Zukav 1979: 54). 'This', writes Zukav (1979: 134), 'is the primary significance of the uncertainty principle. At the subatomic level, *we cannot observe something without changing it.*' As Heisenberg (1963: 57) says: 'What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.'

The complementarity principle of Niels Bohr is also pertinent. Bohr held that the particle and the wave pictures are complementary descriptions of the same reality (Capra 1975: 164).⁷⁶ One theme in this principle stresses the interaction between subject and object, and according to Bohr, there can be no sharp division between the observer and the observed, between mind and matter. What is observed is intimately linked with the concepts, thoughts and values of the observer.

Zukav (1979: 54) shows that this has led some physicists to ponder whether the experiments on particles do not *create* the properties which the scientists choose to

measure. He compares some statements by physicists in this regard with the descriptions of eastern mysticism and finds them very similar. Quantum mechanics, he feels, leads to 'the possibility that our reality is what we choose to make it' (1979: 54).

Another development in physics which is often quoted as proof of the metaphysical assumption of the oneness and interconnectedness of the universe, is Bell's theorem. In 1964 John S Bell, a physicist from Switzerland, provided mathematical proof that either the statistical predictions of quantum theory are false, or the principle of local causes is false. When physicists at Berkeley subsequently validated the relevant statistical predictions of quantum theory, it followed that the principle of local causes must be false (Zukav 1979: 320). Zukav (1979: 298) explains that forty years earlier physicists had noted an intriguing connectedness among quantum phenomena that seemed to disprove the theory of local causes, but they assumed it was an accidental feature of the experiment which would in time be explained. This strange phenomenon was observed in an experiment with a two-particle system of zero spin. This means that the two particles in the system have equal and opposite spin which therefore cancel one another. If one (A) spins up, the other (B) will spin down, or if A spins left, B will spin right. However, should these particles be separated and removed from one another experimentally, and the spin of one (A) then be altered by the physicist, the spin of B *immediately* changes to the opposite of A. This raises the question of how particle B 'knew' that the spin of A had been changed and that it should therefore adjust its own spin.

Two assumptions of relative physics are questioned by this discovery, since either the one or the other must be false. These are the assumptions of *locality* and of *classical realism*. The first states that no causal influence can be transmitted between two isolated systems faster than the speed of light, and the second states that particles possess definite properties at all times, even when they are not being observed (Barbour 1990: 106). Most physicists chose to relinquish classical realism and keep locality, but some, like the famous David Bohm⁷⁷, chose the opposite.

In *Wholeness and the implicate order*, Bohm (1981) proposes a realistic nonlocal theory which holds that there is a holistic underlying implicate order which connects the whole of reality. He proposes further that there are three realms of existence: the explicate order (the physical world of separate thing-events in time and space), the implicate order (where all thing-events are enfolded in a total wholeness and unity), and a source-ground beyond both (a realm which is totally unqualifiable and inexplicable). Subsequently Bohm (1985) proposed an additional realm of existence, namely the super-implicate order, which is the organising principle of all the other realms, is also their source, and transcends them.⁷⁸ Another interesting feature of Bohm's worldview is his holomovement theory (Bohm 1981: 177). This involves two

essential elements: movement and wholeness. He proposes that each region of space and time contains the entire order of the universe and that everything is folded into everything else.

Bohm (1986: 27) also explored the significance of his theory of wholeness and the implicate order with reference to consciousness, and concluded that a worldview based on an unbroken and seamless whole may end the fragmentation that arises from a mechanistic worldview. He suggests that:

... fragmentary thinking is giving rise to a reality that is constantly breaking up into disorderly, disharmonious, and destructive partial activities. It seems reasonable then seriously to explore the suggestion that a mode of thinking that starts instead from the most encompassing possible whole, and goes down to parts (sub-wholes) in a way appropriate to the actual nature of things, would tend to bring about a different reality, one that was orderly, harmonious, and creative (Bohm 1986: 37).

The similarities between Bohm's thought and New Age thought is apparent inasmuch as both stress the unity, interpenetration and connectedness of the whole, and the acceptance that the whole is reflected in every separate part. Zukav (1979: 326) drives home the point when he observes that

... all eastern religions (psychologies) are compatible in a very fundamental way with Bohm's physics and philosophy. All of them are based upon the experience of a pure, undifferentiated reality which is that-which-is.

Lately, Bohm has become almost a cult figure to numerous people who see in his work a bridge between science and spirituality, and while his move towards philosophy has perturbed many scientists, he nevertheless remains highly respected in his profession (Weber 1987: 140).⁷⁹

A word of caution should, however, be sounded since it is clear that many of the new theories in physics are not accepted by all physicists. There are many dissenting voices that point to difficulties and limitations in the theories, and resist and criticise as invalid the parallels that have been drawn between physics and metaphysics. Capra (1990: 66) admits as much when he writes:

This view is not shared by the entire physics community, but is being discussed and elaborated by many leading physicists whose interest in their science goes beyond the technical aspects of their research.

These few examples of the similarity between the new physics and mysticism will suffice to illustrate the influence of certain scientific discoveries on the growth and development of New Age thought. As was mentioned before, the majority of participants in this study did not refer to any of these discoveries specifically, but many were aware that these parallels have been drawn and they welcomed what they considered to be scientific proof of mysticism. Nevertheless, as Father Enomiya-Lasalle (1988: 39) writes:

One thing is certain. If you wish to get any sort of general grasp on the spiritual world situation, you can no longer ignore the latest developments in physics.

3.4 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONNECTION

The discussion has up to now centred on the growth of the alternative tradition, the eastern philosophies, humanistic and transpersonal psychology, and the new physics in America. To a large extent the new religious movements that have been discussed are movements which originated in the United States or were established there by their founders, and which spread from there to the European continent and also, in time, to South Africa.

In South Africa a number of movements in the Theosophical tradition have been in existence for about eighty years. It was, however, only after the new religious movements took America by storm in the seventies that some of these groups were established in this country. The launching of the magazine *Odyssey* in 1977 indicates that by that time there was a large enough audience to make such a venture a viable proposition.

No South Africans were to play a major part in the growth of the international movement, but there were two fascinating individual precursors to the movement in South African history. The first was Johanna Brandt and the second Jan Christiaan Smuts.

3.4.1 Johanna Brandt

Some scholars attribute the first use of the term 'New Age' to Alice Bailey (Basil 1988: 10), but the first person to use the term in this sense was, in fact, Johanna Brandt (1876-1964). Brandt was the wife of the moderator of the 'Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk in Afrika', and was also famous for her 'grape cure'⁸⁰ - a diet which she claimed had cured her of cancer.

In 1916, at the deathbed of her mother, Brandt saw a number of visions in which a destructive hurricane of violence swept over South Africa and, on spending itself, was followed by a millennium of peace and harmony for the whole world. This peace had its origin in South Africa, since, according to the vision, this country was 'a pearl in the eyes of God'. According to Brandt the wave of destruction was caused by hatred, anger, injustice and jealousy, which are found in the hearts of the people of this land. This holocaust could, however, be mitigated if not deflected, if Brandt proclaimed the message of the vision and the nation responded to it. Accordingly, she founded the Order of Harmony, a spiritual movement for the promotion of harmony on earth - harmony between the races, the sexes, religion and politics, spirit and matter, mysticism and intellect, faith and reason, nature and science, precept and practice - in a word, harmony between God and man (The Order of Harmony s a: 1-2). She described the Order as a union of reformers whose first aim was to reform themselves and to create the harmony of health and perfection in their own bodies, their homes and immediate environment, as the only means of bringing about harmony in this restless world (The Order of Harmony s a: 2).

Even in those early days, Brandt maintained that the signs of the coming New Age were obvious. She wrote:

rondom ons is daar onbetwisbare bewijse dat die eeuw van die mistiek begin te herleef. ... Van alle kante siet ons die stigting van hoog-geestelike vereniginge om die doodsheid van die Kerk teen te gaan, maar ons erken hulle nie, of ons veroordeel hulle voordat ons weet waarnaar hulle eintlik streef (Brandt 1918: 128).

From Brandt's writings it is clear that she had been in contact with some source of occult wisdom. For instance, she refers to the coming of the Age of Aquarius, and points out that since Aquarius is a life-giver, this implies femininity and that the Age of Aquarius would therefore also be the Age of the Mother. She further maintains that the New Age will bring about the realisation of the nonduality of body and soul, of the interrelatedness of humans and nature, of the balance of male and female principles, and of the benefits of a vegetarian diet. Lastly, she emphasised self-realisation as a key feature of the coming age. She further subscribed to the notion of reincarnation and the divinity of humankind (Brandt 1921: 14-15). She expressed tolerance towards the atheist (Brandt 1918: 135-6) and believed that the kingdom of God lies within the human being and is also present in this reality (Brandt 1918: 114). She believed, as well, that the universe is in a process of evolution (Brandt 1936: 17) and that manhood is evolving towards godhood (Brandt 1921: 16).

In 1927 Mrs Brandt travelled to America in order to spread the news of the curative properties of the grape diet.⁸¹ Here she also established branches of the Order of

Harmony. After getting off to a false start, she eventually caused quite a stir with her propagation of the grape diet, which received mixed reactions. On the one hand, the medical profession not only gained an injunction against her which forbade her to treat patients, but also sought to have her deported as an undesirable person. The Homeopathic Society, on the other hand, conferred an honorary doctorate on her for her contribution to the field of natural remedies.

Although Mrs Brandt was a member of a mainstream Christian church all her life, her work makes it clear that the alternative tradition was alive and flourishing in South Africa as early as the 1920s. However, it is also apparent that Mrs Brandt tried to integrate her Christian faith with her more radical convictions. She never left the Church although she met with much opposition from the more conservative and orthodox circles (Brandt 1918: 123).

3.4.2 Jan Christiaan Smuts

The other well-known South African figure who is highly regarded in New Age circles (Ferguson 1980: 48) is General Jan Christiaan Smuts (1870-1950), preeminent statesman and twice prime minister of South Africa (from 1919 to 1924 and again from 1939 to 1948).⁸²

In 1926 Smuts published his book *Holism and evolution*, in which he postulated a creative unifying principle or force in nature that tends towards whole-making - the creation of ever more highly organised wholes. This principle he called 'Holism' (Smuts 1987: v). This force is fundamental in nature and can clearly be observed in the evolutionary process, which is nothing less than the 'gradual development and stratification of progressive series of wholes, stretching from the inorganic beginnings to the highest levels of spiritual creation' (Smuts 1987: v). He warned that one should not infer from this that there is a grand inner Purpose or Mind which is the source of the evolutionary process - that would be to apply the later human categories to the earlier phases of the evolutionary process. The principle of Holism, however, does involve direction, regulation and control of the evolutionary process towards ever-increasing wholeness, fullness and blessedness. He wrote:

And the faith has been strengthened in me that what has here been called Holism is at work even in the conflicts and confusions of men; that in spite of all appearances to the contrary eventual victory is serenely and securely waiting The groaning and travailing of the universe is never aimless or resultless. Its profound labours mean new creation, the slow, painful birth of wholes, of new and higher wholes, and the slow but steady realisation of the Good which all the wholes of the universe in their various grades dimly yearn and strive for The rise and self-perfection of wholes in the Whole is the slow but unerring process and goal of this Holistic universe (Smuts 1987: 344-5).

It will become clear in this report that holism as described by many of the participants in this study, despite their high regard for Smuts, differs substantially from what Smuts envisaged. Whereas Smuts saw Holism as the principle that is responsible for the universe becoming aware of itself, most New Agers see holism as a description of a monistic universe in which there is only One, usually called Bramha, God, Universal Spirit or Supreme Being.

3.5 CONCLUSION

It is now evident that there are a number of ideas that have surfaced again and again over many centuries and that there is indeed continuity between, on the one hand, the alternative religious tradition and later additions such as eastern philosophy, humanistic and transpersonal psychology and the new physics, and on the other hand, the New Age movement.

The four tributaries (the alternative tradition, the eastern philosophies, humanistic and transpersonal psychology, and the new physics) that have converged in the mainstream of the New Age movement give us a vertical distinction, while the four levels identified by Spangler (the commercial, the New Age as glamour, personal and social transformation, and the New Age as the incarnation of the sacred) (see 2.2) provide us with a horizontal distinction, which together form a framework or grid in which each individual phenomenon within the movement can be situated and the spectrum of beliefs plotted. Two statements such as 'the New Age movement wants to change the world' and 'the New Age movement is not concerned with social justice' seem contradictory, but both are in fact true for different groups within the movement. The first might refer to the World Goodwill organisation (an activity of the Arcane School which is part of the alternative tradition) whose aim is world transformation (Spangler's third level), while the second could refer to a human potential activity (humanistic psychology) on the second of Spangler's levels, which is directed towards attaining psychic powers. Two apparently contradictory statements about the movement can therefore be seen to hold no true contradiction, since the beliefs are situated on different parts of the grid.

With the laying of this historical foundation, the time has come to investigate what the participants in this study view as constituting the New Age movement.

Notes

1 According to Marrs (1987: 24), proof of the existence of this Babylonian mystery religion is found in Revelation 17:5-6, which reads: 'And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.' This, says Marrs, proves that since 'the time Satan rebelled and was banished to earth, *two churches* have existed on the planet. God's true church ... [and] the opposing world church [which] is likened to a defiled woman, a drunken whore.' Marrs then explains that the early Roman Catholic Church incorporated many of the Babylonian Mystery Religion's elements into Catholic doctrine and worship, and comments: 'mystery Babylon lived on!' (Marrs 1987: 25). I came across more than one concerned Christian who subscribed to this interpretation.

2 See McGinn *The Calabrian abbot* (1985).

3 For literature on the occult tradition, see the influential volume edited by Edward A Tiryakian (1974), *On the margin of the visible: sociology, the esoteric, and the occult*; the popular but comprehensive work *The Occult* by Colin Wilson (1971); and for modern occultism, see *The occult in America: new historical perspectives* by Howard Kerr and Charles Crow (1983). Frances Yates' excellent works *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic tradition* (1964) and *The Rosicrucian enlightenment* (1975) are also useful in this regard.

4 Ellwood, following C R Dodds, shows that there was a direct link between the Greeks in the late archaic period and the central Asiatic type of shamanistic culture. Since that period there appeared in Greece 'a series of *iatromanteis* - seers, magical healers and religious teachers, some of whom are linked in Greek tradition with the North, and all of whom exhibit shamanistic traits' (Ellwood 1973a: 49).

5 Geoffrey Ashe (1977) in *The Ancient Wisdom*, finds evidence for such an ancient wisdom and traces its source to a supposed Central Asian location, namely Shambhala.

6 See Robinson (1960; 1973).

7 See Willoughby (1929: ix, 307).

8 For a scholarly treatment of Gnosticism see Filorama (1990), Jonas (1963),

Pagels (1979), and Widengren (1973).

9 In *The interruption of eternity* Carl Raschke (1980) identifies the recurrence of gnostic ideas through the ages and links it with the emergence of the new consciousness. And in *A history of Gnosticism* Giovanni Filorama (1990) finds in the ancient world of Gnosticism an important parallel with the present pluralistic society which is characterised by social restructuring and changing religious sentiments.

10 See *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic tradition* by Frances Yates (1964), and *The avatars of the Thrice Great Hermes: an approach to Romanticism* in which Ernest Lee Tuveson (1982) links the Hermetic texts with Romanticism.

11 Feibleman (1971: 138-9) points out that:

the Plato the Neoplatonists adopted and adapted was a highly selective one ... [and] Henceforth, Plato was to mean Neoplatonism, and Neoplatonism was to mean a philosophy constructed on the framework of metaphysical objective idealism suggested by one of Plato's two philosophies but extending far beyond it in directions Plato could not have envisaged and would probably not have sanctioned.

12 See Armstrong (1967); O'Meara (1982) - a volume of articles by several members of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies; and Blumenthal & Markus (1981), a volume in honour of A H Armstrong.

13 See the comprehensive volume *The study of spirituality* by Jones et al (1986), and *The Rhineland mystics* by Oliver Davies (1990), as well as the general works on mysticism by Stace (1961), Katz (1978) and Underhill [1930] (1961).

14 See Bede Griffiths (1989) *A new vision of reality: western science, eastern mysticism and Christian faith*.

15 For information on the history of witchcraft, see Russell's *Medieval witchcraft and medieval heresy* (1974), and *A history of witchcraft* (1980); for scholarly speculation on the origin of medieval witchcraft, see Eliade's (1976: 69ff) *Occultism, witchcraft, and cultural fashions*; and for modern Wicca in America, see the excellent work by Wiccan priestess Margot Adler (1979) *Drawing down the moon*. Other highly regarded insider works are by Starhawk: *The spiral dance* (1979) and *Truth or dare: encounters with power, authority and mystery* (1987). Works which involve the

women's spirituality movement, include *When God was a woman* by Merlin Stone (1976); *The Gods and Goddesses of old Europe* (1982) and *The language of the goddess: unearthing the hidden symbols of western civilization* (1989) by Marija Gimbutas; and *Woman's mysteries* by Ester Harding (1971). For an academic handling of the tradition of nature religion in America, see Catherine L Albanese's (1990) *Nature religion in America: from the Algonkian Indians to the New Age*.

16 While modern witchcraft is a revival of paganism, not all modern witches are Neo-Pagans, and not all Neo-Pagans are witches. A witch is a pagan who in addition to worshipping the gods (which could be any of the gods and goddesses of the ancient Celts, Teutons, Greeks or Egyptians) also practises some form of magic.

17 Contemporary scholars tend to believe that witchcraft in the Middle Ages was a phenomenon that grew out of the very mechanism which was founded to eliminate it, namely the Inquisition. Russell (1980: 62) suggests that 'European witchcraft is essentially the history of a concept whose relationship to physical reality was tenuous.' Nevertheless from the fourteenth century, when the Church started its relentless persecution of what it perceived to be a false religion, until it reached its high between 1560 and 1600 (the time of the Renaissance and Reformation, not the Middle Ages) at least 100 000 people were executed for allegedly practicing witchcraft (Russell 1980: 11, 83).

18 Former Egyptologist, Margaret Murray, in 1921 published *The Witch-cult in Western Europe: a study in anthropology*, in which she suggested that what was regarded as witchcraft during the Middle Ages, was in fact, the survival of rituals and folk beliefs of a pre-Christian archaic fertility religion. This influential book, despite stringent criticism from historians and archaeologists (to which Mircea Eliade [1976:73] added his voice), kindled an explosion of interest in paganism. As a direct result of this theory, British occultist Gerald B. Gardner (1884-1964) during the early 1940s recreated a new form of magical religion which was based upon the worship of the Great Mother Goddess and her consort, the horned God. This gave rise to the revitalisation of the tradition.

19 For a comprehensive history of Satanism, see the excellent work by Gerhard Zacharias (1980) *The Satanic cult*. Russell (1980: 144) in *A history of witchcraft* includes a section on Satanism 'only so that the lack of resemblance between it and witchcraft may be clear'. While literature on Satanism is, in general, unreliable, Spence [1920] (1988) and Hartland (1921) can be recommended. For an insider view of the subject, see satanist Anton La Vey's *The Satanic Bible* (1969) and *The Satanic rituals* (1972).

20 For a survey of the history of magic in the west, see Thorndike (1947) *A history of magic and experimental science during the first thirteen centuries of our era*, and Cavendish (1967) *The black arts*.

21 For the history of astrology, see Thorndike (1947) and Jerome (1977). Jerome gives a negative evaluation of astrology, while West and Toonder (1973) evaluate it positively. For a South African study on astrology, see Tyson (1979).

22 In October 1991, the magazine *Insig* reported:

Nog 'n aanduiding van die gewildheid in Suid Afrika is dat byna 70 000 mense die laaste ruk 'n Australiese nommer (teen R6 per minuut) gebel het om te hoor wat hul sterre voorspel. Die telefoniese diens *Starscopes* is een van vele wat die laaste ruk begin is om mense in te lig oor hul toekoms en selfs die kies van 'n lewensmaat.

23 Manley Palmer Hall authored more than a hundred books on the esoteric and occult Ancient Wisdom tradition and was the founder of the well-known mecca of esotericism, the Philosophical Research Society in Los Angeles.

24 See Gershom Scholem's *Kabbalah* (1974) and *Major trends in Jewish mysticism* (1977).

25 See Schachter-Shalomi's *Fragments of a future scroll: Hassidism for the Aquarian age* (1975), *The first step: a guide for the new Jewish spirituality* (with Donald Gropman) (1983), *Sparks of light: counseling in the Hassidic tradition* (with Edward Hoffman) (1983).

26 See the excellent *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic tradition* (1964) and *The Rosicrucian enlightenment* (1975) by Frances A Yates, which both contain detailed discussions on Renaissance philosophy.

27 The full title was: *Universal and General Reformation of the whole wide world; together with the Fama Fraternitatis of the Laudable Fraternity of the Rosy Cross, written to all the Learned and Rulers of Europe; also a short reply sent by Herr Haselmayer, for which he was seized by the Jesuits and put in irons on a Galley. Now put forth in print and communicated to all true hearts. Printed at Cassel by Wilhelm Wessel, 1614* (Yates 1975: 72).

28 For a historical study of the Rosicrucian ideals in the early seventeenth century see Yates (1975), and for an insider view see Waite [1887] (1960), (1924).

29 In *The avatars of thrice great Hermes: an approach to Romanticism*, Ernest Lee Tuveson (1982) demonstrates a resemblance between the Hermeticism of the Renaissance and the later Romantic movement. Although he traces the historical stages of the transformation of the original hermeticist ideas to its manifestation in the Romantic movement, he suggests that certain worldviews can emerge again and again depending on the circumstances. Carl Raschke (1980), in *The interruption of eternity* also sees Romanticism as a link between the ancient Gnosticism and the new religious consciousness of the late twentieth century.

30 For a discussion on the many 'counter rational' movements that developed in opposition to the rationalism of the Enlightenment (eg the romantics in literature, existential philosophy, phenomenology, natural language philosophy, hermeneutics, humanistic and transpersonal psychology) see Isaiah Berlin (1989) (*Against the current: essays in the history of ideas*).

31 For a history of Freemasonry see Pick and Knight (1977).

32 See Mesmer [1799] (1980).

33 For a brief biography and a selection of Swedenborg's works, see Swedenborg (1985) (*A view from within: a compendium of Swedenborg's theological thought*). Also see Swedenborg's *The true Christian religion* [1771] (1933), *Heaven and its wonders, and Hell* [1758] (1909), and *Arcana coelestia* [1749-1756] (1984).

34 R Laurence Moore (1977) deals particularly well with modern spiritualism in his book *In search of white crows: Spiritualism, parapsychology, and American culture*.

35 Although the beginning of modern Spiritualism is usually linked with the rappings reported by the Fox sisters, an eighteen-year-old, Andrew Jackson Davis, in 1844 claimed to have received visits from Swedenborg and the Greek physician Galen, in which he was told that he would be used as a channel for the influx of truth and wisdom. His report attracted some attention, and George Bush, a professor of Hebrew at New York University and an authority on Swedenborg, examined Davis and his claims. He subsequently certified that Davis had indeed dictated in Hebrew, Arabic and Sanskrit, languages of which the young Davis had no knowledge. Bush concluded that Davis probably was in contact with Swedenborg. In 1847

Davis published *The principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind, By and Through Andrew Jackson Davis, the 'Ploughkeepsie Seer' and Clairvoyant*, in which he expounded an evolutionary theory of nature, and referred to a hierarchy of spiritual planes which the soul could attain to. Davis provides the most direct link between Swedenborgianism and Spiritualism (Moore 1977: 10ff). Another forerunner of the Spiritualism movement was the American Shaker communities who, from the 1830s on, received a steady stream of channelled messages (Moore 1977:8).

36 The rappings brought instant fame but also ultimate destruction to the three Fox sisters. The pressure to produce demonstrations on cue, the angry mobs who protested their 'witchcraft', and the determined investigators who scrutinised their sessions eventually proved too much of a strain for the sisters and their relationships with each other suffered. All three sought refuge in alcohol, and Margaret became an alcoholic. She eventually confessed that they themselves were responsible for the rappings, only later to retract the confession, saying that the exposé had been done for money under the influence of anti-spiritualists (Klimo 1987: 99).

37 For a history of the society see the well-balanced scholarly works by Bruce F Campbell (1980) (*Ancient Wisdom revived: a history of the Theosophical movement*) and Robert Ellwood (1980) (*Theosophy: a modern expression of the wisdom of the ages*). Despite his membership of the Society, Ellwood has, characteristically, given a balanced review of the subject.

38 The May 1991 issue of *Odyssey* contains an article on Madame Blavatsky (in celebration of the centenary of her death on 8 May 1891) in which the authors claim that few people in our time have been more persistently misrepresented, slandered and defamed than Madame Blavatsky. They maintain that the 'regular flow of publications pretending either to "unveil" Madame Blavatsky, or to prove that she was an imposter, a fraud, a plagiarist, a Russian spy or at least a disreputable woman, has of late come to and end.' They furthermore claim that all these publications had one thing in common, namely that their authors had not studied, and sometimes not even read, her major works. Although this might be true of many of Blavatsky's critics, it is not true of Campbell and Ellwood.

39 Madame Blavatsky never clarified exactly how she came upon this manuscript, but the implication is that she saw it during her travels in Tibet. Towards the end of *The secret doctrine* she has this to say about the manuscript:

THE BOOK OF DZYAN - from the Sanskrit word 'Dhyan' (mystic medita-

tion) - is the first volume of the Commentaries upon the seven secret folios of *Kiu-te*, and a Glossary of the public works of the same name. Thirty-five volumes of *Kiu-te* for exoteric purposes and the use of the layman may be found in the possession of the Tibetan Gelugpa Lamas, in the library of any monastery; and also fourteen books of Commentaries and Annotations on the same by the initiated Teachers (Blavatsky [1888] 1952 Vol. 5: 389).

In her introduction to *The secret doctrine*, HPB warns that:

One of the greatest and perhaps the most serious objections to the correctness and reliability of the whole work will be the preliminary STANZAS. How can the statements contained in them be verified? True, though a great portion of the Sanskrit, Chinese, and Mongolian works quoted in the present volumes is known to some Orientalists, yet the chief work - that one from which the STANZAS are given - is not in the possession of European Libraries. The BOOK OF DZYAN (or DZAN) is utterly unknown to our Philologists, or at any rate was never heard of by them under its present name. This is, of course, a great drawback to those who follow the methods of research prescribed by official Science; but to students of Occultism, and to every genuine Occultist, this will be of little moment (Blavatsky [1888] 1952 Vol.1: 46).

Scholars have different views on the origin of the Stanzas. Bruce F Campbell (1980: 41-42) reports that Rene Guenon believed the origin of the Stanzas of Dzyan to be fragments of the Tibetan Kanjur and Tanjur which was published as the twentieth volume of *Asiatic researches*, while Gershom Scholem (Campbell 1980: 41) considered the source of the text to be in the Jewish Zoharic Kabbalistic writings. Campbell (1980: 41) also quotes Max Muller as remarking 'that either Madame Blavatsky was a remarkable forger or she had made the most valuable gift to archaeological research in the Orient.' Alice Bailey was in due course also to use these Stanzas as the basis of some of her works.

40 The 'White' refers to their brightness, not their colour.

41 For a biography of Annie Besant, see *Mrs. Annie Besant: a modern prophet* by Theodore Besterman (1934).

42 Charles W Leadbeater was born in England in 1847. After living in South America for a time, he returned to England where he attended Oxford and later took Orders in the Church of England. In 1883 he joined the Theosophical Society and in the following year became the first Christian minister to have a dual commit-

ment, when he proclaimed himself a Buddhist. He claimed to have contact with the Masters of Wisdom and wrote a number of occult biographies of TS members, tracing their past lives through the ages. Persistent rumours and finally definite charges implicated Leadbeater in a scandal involving young boys who were in his charge. This led to many resignations from the Society in Britain, and all the members of the Sydney, Australia lodge (the largest in the world at that stage), resigned from the Society and formed their own Independent Theosophical Society (Campbell 1980: 114ff).

Leadbeater was also influential in the Liberal Catholic Church, which was founded by Josiah Wedgwood of the Old Catholics, a group that had seceded from the Roman Catholic Church in 1870.

43 See *The quest of the quiet mind: the philosophy of Krishnamurti* by Stuart Holroyd (1980) and *The life and death of Krishnamurti* by Mary Lutyens (1990).

44 Alice A Bailey wrote an autobiography but at the time of her death in 1949 it was still incomplete. It is said by her husband, Foster Bailey, that once the thirty years' work that the Tibetan planned for Mrs Bailey had been accomplished, she 'gained her release from the limitations of the physical vehicle' within thirty days - which accounts for the autobiography's incomplete state (Lucis s a). It was, however, published as *The unfinished autobiography* in 1951. A useful and informative work on Bailey and her work is that by Sir John R Sinclair (1984), *The Alice Bailey inheritance*. For a full list of Bailey's writings, see the bibliography.

45 Foster Bailey, who was a mason as well as a theosophist and later an adherent of his wife's teachings, provides a link between the Freemasons and the Arcane School. See his book *The spirit of Masonry* [1957](1979).

46 See Steiner (1977) (*An autobiography*), as well as *Rudolf Steiner: a documentary biography* by Johannes Hemleben (1975).

47 For a history of the New Thought movement, see Larson's *New Thought: modern religious approach* (1985) and *Spirits in rebellion: the rise and development of New Thought* (1963) by Charles S Braden.

48 See Mary Baker Eddy (1906) (*Science and health with Key to the scriptures*).

49 For an exposition of the counter-culture phenomenon, see Roszak (1970) (*The*

making of a counter culture: reflections on the technocratic society and its youthful opposition).

50 Another scholar who evaluates the counter-culture and the new religious movements positively is Charles A Reich (1970) in *The greening of America*.

51 Others who criticise the counter-culture as narcissistic include: Johnson in *The narcissistic condition: a fact of our lives and times*, edited by Nelson (1977,) and Adler (1972) in *The underground stream: new life styles and the antinomian personality*.

52 See Bainbridge and Jackson (1981) (*The rise and decline of Transcendental Meditation*), and Gaum (1987) (*Moksha en die Transendentale Meditatie van Maharishi Mahesh Yogi: 'n Godsdienstwetenskaplike ondersoek*).

53 See Judah (1974) (*Hare Krishna and the counterculture*), and Shinn (1987) (*The dark Lord: cult images and the Hare Krishnas in America*).

54 See *Sacred journeys: the conversion of young Americans to Divine Light Mission* by James V Downton (1979).

55 See Alan Tobey (1976) (*The summer solstice of the Happy-Healthy-Holy organization*).

56 See Sharma (1985) (*The Rajneesh movement*).

57 For reliable scholarly accounts of Scientology, see Wallis (1977) (*The road to total freedom: a sociological analysis of Scientology*), and Flinn (1983) (*Scientology as technological Buddhism*).

58 See Enroth (1983) and Melton (1986a).

59 See Fichter (1985) (*The holy family of Father Moon*), *The Unification Church* by Robbins and Anthony (1984), and Sontag (1977) (*Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church*).

60 See *The organization and functioning of the Children of God* by Davis and Richardson (1976).

61 See Enroth (1985) and Melton (1986a).

62 See Chidester (1988) (*Salvation and suicide: a religio-historical interpretation of The People's Temple*), Hall's *The apocalypse at Jonestown* (1981) and *Gone from the promised land: Jonestown in American cultural history* (1987), and Levi (1982) (*Violence and religious commitment: implications of Jim Jones' Peoples's Temple movement*).

63 See Enroth (1985), Melton (1986a) and Ellwood (1973a).

64 See Melton (1986a) and Ellwood (1973a).

65 See *American evangelicalism: conservative religion and the quandry of modernity* by Hunter (1983) and *The roots of Fundamentalism* by Sandeen (1970).

66 For a comprehensive dealing with this fascinating event, see *The World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago, Illinois 1893: America's religious coming of age* by Richard Huges Seagers (1987).

67 See *The life of Vivekananda and the Universal gospel* by Roland Rolland (1970).

68 For an autobiography, see Yogananda (1946) (*The autobiography of a yogi*).

69 For a comprehensive history of Buddhism in America, see *How the swans came to the lake: a narrative history of Buddhism in America* by Fields (1981).

70 For a comprehensive account of American Zen, see *Getting saved by the sixties: moral meaning in conversion and cultural change* by Steven M Tipton (1982). For works on Zen by D T Suzuki, see *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* [1949] (1983), *Essays in Zen Buddhism* 3 Volumes (1927-34), and *Manual of Zen Buddhism* [1950] (1986). Alan Watts also wrote extensively on Zen, for instance: *The way of Zen* (1957) and *This is it: and other essays on Zen and spiritual experience* (1973). Although Watts was the best-known American exponent of Zen, Dr Suzuki once remarked that in his opinion, Thomas Merton understood Zen better than any other student in the west (Fields 1981: 296). Merton also published several works on Zen, of which the most notable is *Zen and the birds of appetite* (1968).

71 Fields (1981: 221) maintains that it was most probably Watts' very visible, easy and free-floating attitude to Zen that was responsible for the notorious 'Zen Boom' which flourished among artists and pseudo-intellectuals during the late 1950s. And Roszak (1970: 132) points out that Watts, often at the risk of vulgarisation, made a determined effort to translate the insights of Zen into the language of western science and psychology.

72 See Jung [1953] 1968, [1959] 1990, and 1975; Maslow 1962 and 1964; Assagioli 1965, 1973; and Rogers 1967.

73 See Assagioli's *Psychosynthesis: a manual of principles and techniques* (1965) and *The act of will* (1973).

74 Other psychologists who postulated the existence of an inner higher self are Jung and Maslow.

75 In *God and the new physics*, Paul Davies (1983) explores the impact of the new physics on what were previously seen as religious issues. Davies (1983: preface) suggests that 'science offers a surer path to God than religion.' Another volume in which the authors probe the knowledge of God and new scientific discoveries, is *The God who would be known: revelations of the Divine in contemporary science* by John M Templeton and Robert L Herrmann (1989).

76 In 1947, when Niels Bohr was knighted by the Danish king in recognition of his achievements in physics, he chose to include the Chinese *t'ai-chi* symbol and the inscription *Contraria sunt complementa (opposites are complementary)*, in his coat-of-arms.

77 David Bohm's (1917-) books such as *Quantum theory* (1951), *Causality and chance in modern physics* (1957), and *The special theory of relativity* (1966) are widely prescribed at universities (Weber 1987: 23). He graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, from where he received his PhD in physics in 1943. He taught at Princeton and the Technion in Haifa, among others, before being appointed Professor of Theoretical Physics at Birkbeck College of the University of London.

Bohm's work had always included reflection on the philosophical implications of the discoveries in physics, but he was particularly stimulated by his contact with the philosopher-sage Krishnamurti. When asked about their relationship, Bohm replied: 'We are friends and have had a close relationship, formed around questions of

mutual interest that we've explored together for many years' (Weber 1987: 24). Two books that record dialogues between them have appeared: *Truth and actuality* (1978) and *The ending of time* (1985).

78 For discussions on the philosophical and theological implications of Bohm's thinking, see Russell (1985) and Sharpe (1990).

79 At a conference in 1984, entitled *Beyond mechanism: the universe in recent physics and Catholic thought*, the stated aim was to:

... reflect on the meaning of nature (*physics*), in light of some of the central concerns of Catholic theology and philosophy. The immediate context for this reflection was set by the developments in twentieth century physics, particularly as interpreted in the work of theoretical physicist David Bohm.

Bohm delivered a paper and provided comments on each of the other papers read at the conference. The proceedings of the conference were edited by David Schindler, and published in 1986 as *Beyond mechanism: the universe in recent physics and Catholic thought*.

80 According to Hexham (1991: 373) Brandt's book *The grape cure* was reprinted by a hippie commune in the US during the 1970s.

81 Two incidents have proved to me that Johanna Brandt is not totally forgotten. Firstly, a friend informed me that she had come across Brandt's *Grape Cure* (1929) in a health shop in Canada in 1989. Then in 1990 I received an enquiry from a woman in England, which was originally addressed to the CSIR, seeking information on Johanna Brandt, her grape cure, and the Order of Harmony.

82 For a biography of Smuts, see *Jan Christiaan Smuts* by his son, also Jan Christiaan Smuts (1952). See also *The holistic Smuts* by Piet Beukes (1989).

CHAPTER FOUR - THE NEW AGE VISION

*Something is afoot in the universe,
a result is working out which can best
be compared to a gestation and birth:
the birth of a new spiritual reality ...*

*Teilhard de Chardin
(1969: 49)*

4.1 THE AIM OF THE CHAPTER

In the interviews with participants, they were asked to explain exactly what they understood by the term 'New Age movement', and what their expectations were in this regard. They were further asked to elaborate on what they regarded as key elements and characteristics of the movement. Thus, this chapter explores *why*, according to them, a new age is expected at this time, *what the expectations* are for the immediate future, and *what the distinguishing characteristics* of the coming age will be.

It is important to recognise that an understanding of the New Age movement is impeded by the diversity of the component groups. Thus, while all share the distinction that they have *a vision of an imminent transformation* of both the individual and society, this vision and its source differs radically from organisation to organisation. However, during the course of the project it became clear that the vision included a new cosmology and a new concept of God and humanity (see chapters 5 and 6), as well as an expectation of social and spiritual transformation (see chapter 7).

One component of the movement shares the expectations of many Christians of *an imminent apocalypse and subsequent millenium*, while another interprets the New Age in terms of social and personal development. A significant group of adherents

points to the *emerging paradigm shift in the western worldview*, and many claim that a *new spiritualised age* is dawning for humanity. A minority do not regard the New Age as a temporal event but rather as *a way of being in the world*.

For many the source of this idea of a new age lies in *astrology* and its notion of evolutionary cycles through which our solar system moves, while others look to *prophets*, such as Nostradamus, Edgar Cayce and Alice Bailey, as the source of their belief in the emerging New Age. Still others, such as the sociologist Pitrim Sorokin (1941), Arnold Toynbee (1972), Lewis Mumford (1956) and, more recently, Marilyn Ferguson (1980) and Fritjof Capra (1990), hold a pragmatic view and believe that *the desperate circumstances of humanity and the world* are the compelling forces towards transformation.

These different views roughly correspond to the horizontal levels distinguished by Spangler (see 2.2). The prophetic and occultist expectations are usually found on Spangler's second level, the sociological studies clearly fit into the third category, while the metaphorical notion of a spiritual 'New Age of being' falls neatly into the fourth category.

Before proceeding with a discussion of the above-mentioned themes, it is interesting that two of the participants believed that the present conditions in our society (and western society as a whole), mirrored the early Christian times which were noted for their syncretism and eclecticism.¹ It was suggested that one such parallel was the diversity of groups and forms of the New Age movement, also evident in Christianity before it became a more cohesive system. It was also felt that the negative reaction of society towards the early Christians was echoed by the reception of the New Age movement by conservative Christians in our society today (T8:1:157; F30:12:7). The opponents of the new movement, it was believed, would be as successful in arresting the growth of the movement as the early enemies of Christendom had been in stifling the growth of Christianity (F30:12:7). One person compared the movement to a wave in the ocean, and said that opponents could as little hope to check the movement as people who tried, with their bare hands, to stop the wave from crashing on the beach (T18:2:219).

4.2 HUMANITY AT A CROSSROADS

4.2.1 Astrology

In reply to the question 'why now?' the participants in this study, with only a very few exceptions, concurred with the astrological explanation for the advent of the New Age (see 3.3.1 b xiii). This, of course, presupposes a connection between the heavenly bodies and events on earth. Participants mostly agreed with this assump-

tion, although some rejected a causal and deterministic link as restrictive of human freedom (T23:1:413). In general, participants seemed to accept astrology as a law of correspondence and synchronicity, rather than one of cosmic determinism and fatalism. Events on this planet were thus seen to reflect the situation in the heavenly realm, rather than as being caused by it. Here traces of Swedenborgian teachings are evident.

One participant in particular took great pains to clarify the astrological significance of a New Age.² Since about two-thirds of the participants agreed with this theory, this participant's exposition, as put forward in a written document (F18:6:1-4) will be summarised below (see appendix 1 for the full text).

She explained that as the sun moves through each sign of the Zodiac, the earth is influenced by the characteristic energies of that particular sign, and 'all life on this planet undergoes major changes'(F18:6:4). These changes are accompanied by 'new Spiritual Teachings and revelations [which were] brought to the evolving Life on Earth by Great Spiritual Beings from the Inner Planes of Life' (F18:6:4). She continues:

The twelve glyphs of the Zodiac may be considered as the formula of a sequential life process applicable to every form of manifestation. As our sun moves out of the influence of one sign into that of another, so man, the microcosm, reflects the macrocosm with its particular energies, and a new age is born. This happens approximately every two thousand years (F18:6:1).

In support of this theory, this person explained that the influence of these constellations on our planet was obvious in the history of religion on earth. She cited, as an example, the Taurian age (the age of the bull), which lasted from 4000 - 2000 BCE, features of which were the emergence of the religion of Mithras in the near east, the important symbol of the minotaur (half-man, half-bull) in Greece, and the human-faced winged bull of Nineveh (F18:6:1).

The age of Aries (the ram) covered the 2 000 year period starting with the birth of Abraham and ending with the birth of Jesus. According to this participant, the turbulent history of the Jews - the migrations, wars and conquests - very obviously reflected the qualities of Aries and Mars (being the planet which is said to rule Aries). The god of the Israelites was a sun god in the guise of a warrior - a god of wrath who demanded burnt offerings of preferably a ram or a lamb. Other evidence of the influence of Aries, claimed the participant, could be found in Persia where Mithra, formerly worshipped as the sacred bull, was reborn as the unconquerable sun, the slayer of the bull (F18:6:2).³

The participant explained that the period of transition between the Arian and the Piscean ages was also the transition into the new Great Year (approximately 26 000 years). This period of transition stretched from about 600 BCE to about 600 CE, and saw the inauguration of the present world religions, their founders all having been born within this period - Lao Tse, Zoroaster, Gautama Buddha, Jesus, Confucius and Mohammed.⁴ The teachings of these great initiates, wrote the participant, laid the foundation for the progressive unification of spiritual concepts and for the establishment of one universal religion (F18:6:2).

Moving to the age of Pisces, the participant explained that a significant change had come about when the earth moved into this constellation. The earth had then entered a period comparable to the mystical 'dark night of the soul' a period 'unequaled in history for misery, ignorance and superstition'. 'The suffering of Jesus', suggested the participant, 'had been symbolic of the suffering of mankind in the Age of Pisces'. In the evolutionary development of humanity, this age corresponded to that of adolescence in the life of the individual; it was a state of imbalance, emotionalism, selfishness and self-centredness, but also of unfoldment and devotion. These qualities produced the great religions of devotion but also the emotional attachment to a spiritual teacher or divine saviour. According to the participant, the 'keyword of Pisces was "I believe"'. Martyrdom, said this person, was a characteristic of Pisces, which found expression in both Christianity and Islam. The great power of the priesthood was received from Jupiter, the traditional ruler of Pisces, but the negative qualities of Venus, which reached their highest expression in Pisces, resulted in sentimentality, sensuality and dissoluteness. Virgo, Pisces' opposite, was expressed in the missionary zeal of the Christians, Buddhists and Muslims who went forth to convert the heathen (F18:6:3).

Pisces, being a water sign, writes this participant, resulted in many rituals connected with water (eg baptism). The fish also became the symbol for Christianity among the early Christians and Jesus performed many miracles connected with water and fish. This person also found it significant that Jesus chose his disciples from among the local fishermen.

According to her, 'with the development of scientific thought the world had once more entered another transitional period and the energies of Pisces were being slowly superseded by those of Aquarius, the Age of Science.' With the discovery of the planet Uranus (the ruler of Aquarius) in 1781, remarkable changes are said to have come about. 'Mechanical inventions revolutionised the way of life, and Darwin's theory of evolution opened the history of the human race. Astronomy revealed the wonders of the stellar universe, and physics the wonderful world of the atom.' The world is still experiencing 'tremendous changes because of the outgoing energies of Pisces and the ever-increasing and powerful energies of incoming

Aquarius.' The old forms and energies will be destroyed until the 'purification is complete' and the necessary energies for the evolving spirit of humankind can make their appearance.

The influence of Aquarius (an air sign), claimed this participant, can be seen in the conquering of space. Not only has the world become 'physically inter-connected, but air is also the universal breath which unites all peoples.' Aquarius is 'the age when the race of men will move into maturity and understanding.' Jesus, according to this person, had said 'When the sign of Man shall come, he will enlighten you in all things.' This, therefore, is the age of enlightenment. It is also the period which has been called in occult writings 'the Age of Restoration of what has been broken by the Fall'. The keyword in this age is no longer 'I believe', but 'I know'. 'It is the time of the occultist, and of active participation in the creative processes of life - of conscious co-operation in establishing a new culture and civilisation on Earth.' This calls for active participation in bringing about the Plan on earth. The participant concluded:

The power in the hands of individuals today is great, and never before has opportunity knocked so loudly and insistently. It is necessary to recognise the urgency of the issue, the necessity for a *planetary viewpoint*, and of *personal responsibility*. Every person who succeeds in helping himself, renders a service to the whole, for every heightened response increases the vibratory rate of the whole.

Humanity is standing at the portals of the spiritual or superhuman kingdom, and at this time all the forces of nature are gathered and aimed at helping those who are endeavouring to move out of personality focus and separateness into soul consciousness, the level from which the New Heaven and the New Earth can manifest on Earth (F18:2:4).

This theory is also expounded by Eva Dowling (1969: 10), daughter of Levi H Dowling, in an introduction to *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*.⁵ She points out that not only was the fish an identifying symbol among early Christians, but that Jesus, before baptising disciples, had said: 'All the men must be washed, symbolic of the cleansing of the soul' (*Aquarian Gospel* 64: 7). According to Dowling, the age of Aquarius (the water bearer), which is now at hand, was also referred to by Jesus in these words: 'And when the man who bears the pitcher will walk forth across an arc of heaven; the sign and signet of the Son of Man will stand forth in the eastern sky. The wise will lift up their heads and know that the redemption of the earth is near' (*Aquarian Gospel* 157: 29-30).

Exponents of this theory among participants also pointed out that it was not incidental that an important symbol in Christianity was the fish, as the birth of Jesus coincided with the Earth's entering into the constellation of Pisces. These participants expected the reappearance of the Christ to coincide with the dawn of the age of Aquarius (F18:6:5). (See 4.3.3 and 5.2.6).

A few participants with Theosophical connections claimed that Jesus had himself referred to the symbol of the Aquarian age and the task he was destined to fulfil during the New Age (T28:1B:185). In Luke 22:10 Jesus instructed his disciples to go into the city where they would meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. They were to follow him to the upper room and there prepare for the communion feast which he (Jesus) would share with them. The significant words or concepts in this passage are: the water bearer, which is said to signify the age of Aquarius; the upper room, which refers to a higher state of consciousness; and the sharing of nourishment, which refers to spiritual nourishment which is received from the Christ and shared by all of humanity. Sharing, as we shall see, is a key concept in New Age thought. This esoteric and allegorical interpretation of Luke 22:10 can be traced to the Bailey teachings and is to be found in *The reappearance of the Christ* (1969: 80ff).

An exposition of this astrological theory which gives a more esoteric interpretation of the influence of the signs of the Zodiac (eg under the symbol of the bull, mankind is destined to wrestle with the animal in itself), can be found in Bailey's *The labours of Hercules* (1974)⁶ and is also expounded by Alice O Howell in *Jungian synchronicity in astrological signs and ages* (1990). In agreement with the esoteric interpretation participants usually referred to the age of Pisces as a 'dark and violent age' (F13:1:4), while the age of Aquarius is expected to be a golden age of peace (T2:1B:592).

4.2.2 Social malaise and spiritual malnutrition

Many participants responded to the question 'why now?', with social critique that included not only religious, but also psychological, social, economic and ecological aspects. Some expressed an unspecified unease that 'something was seriously amiss' (T8:1:032; T15:1:012) in contemporary western society and that 'we cannot go on as we are' (T21:1:521). The feeling was that 'humanity has arrived at a point where it has to change whether it wants to or not' (T21:1:521), and 'God', said one person, 'could not continue to watch us in the mess we were in' (T21:1:531).

Other participants were more specific in their descriptions of the malaise, as the anguish in the following quotation shows:

Everywhere people are growing increasingly troubled by disturbing events shattering the old world they have known. Fear, uncertainty, violence and a host of other evils are tearing at the heart of our civilisation, sapping its very life-blood. Starvation, disasters and frustrations of every kind are causing untold misery to millions of our fellow men. 'Why? ... Why? ... Why? ...' is the agonising cry of humanity (F30:2:1).

a Religion

The essence of the problem was held, by most participants, to be the state of religion in contemporary western society. They felt that people were on the whole 'disillusioned with religion' (T1:1:430), and that this had led to a 'loss of spiritual values' (T3:1:324). One participant remarked on the mutual mistrust and intolerance among the different religions and the wars and oppressions in which these attitudes had culminated (T21:1:187). Another writes:

The greatest of all the hungers of man is for spirituality. Although modern man may not know it, he is suffering from spiritual malnutrition. He lives in the blindness of soul-darkness, crying out from his innermost being for light and freedom, which can only be obtained from that Bread of Truth which comes to us from the heavenly spheres (F30:2:130).

Some participants displayed obvious hostility towards the Christian churches which, according to them, had distorted the original message of Jesus and the essence of Christianity (T18:2:169). People's spiritual malnutrition and the general state of irreligion (T21:1:445) were attributed by some to the fact that people were being 'bogged down by dogma and prescription' (T8:1:037). On this subject Roman Catholic priest Matthew Fox (1983: 50) warns:

Doctrine is not the basis of faith or its starting point. ... Doctrine serves as a parameter, much like the sidelines in a soccer game, within which believers play out their faith. An experiential living out of faith births insight which later generations sometimes summarize as doctrine. When doctrine becomes a starting point for faith, I fear faith is already dead. ... One does not study the sidelines and call this knowing soccer; so one does not study doctrine and call this theologizing, much less living a spiritual life.

Participants in this study seemed generally to accept that if people would rid themselves from the hold of dogma they would realise that on a deeper, mystical level all religions have a common core. One participant said that 'on examining the teachings of the many religions ... it is discovered that they each have a certain similarity founded upon the common basic truth' (F30:2:51). This common truth or mystical

faith which underlies all the different traditions could, it is said, bind people from different religions together. They also felt that many of the dogmas would be seen to be compatible, if studied 'correctly'. The 'apparent differences' among the teachings of the different religions were regarded as being superficial and were attributed to cultural differences (T20:1:031). One participant explained that in the Kabbalah, God is referred to as the Void - which he claimed is identical with the Buddhist concept of the Void and the Upanishadic concept of *sunyata*. 'There is total agreement between all scriptures concerning God the Absolute Being - He is that Void and in meditation we actually experience that' (T20:1:242). This notion is ubiquitous in the New Age movement and the following two (perhaps somewhat facile) explanations by well-known international New Agers illustrate the belief:

- (1) ... several characteristics were common to most religions. One was belief in the existence of the soul, another the acceptance of supernatural revelation, and finally, among others, the repeated quest for salvation of the soul. From the Egyptians to the Greeks, to the Buddhists and Hindus, the soul was considered a pre-existent entity which took up residence in a succession of bodies Each religion had its own belief for the origin of the soul, but no religion was without the belief that the soul existed as a part of man and was immortal (MacLaine 1983: 52).
- (2) Centuries ago great religious avatars came to this planet in a state of cosmic consciousness - the Indian seers, Akhenaten, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed. They sensed themselves as part of the whole Universe attuned to the directing intelligence of a Creator guiding them onward to universal life through love of each person as a member of their own body. All taught the same ethic of love, the same faith in God, and the same promise of eternal life beyond the bonds of this planet and this mammalian body (Hubbard 198: 68).

On the whole, participants exhibited a remarkable lack of knowledge with regard to the basic teachings of the different religions between which they saw so little difference. For instance, one participant claimed that Christianity was the only religion which sent missionaries into the world (T1:1:149), another referred to Plotinus as a 'church father' (T8:1:490)⁷ and another repeatedly referred to the exhortation 'Thou shalt not kill' as the first and most important commandment in Christianity (T6:1:250).^{8 9}

Nevertheless, the intuitive belief that there is a common core in all religions provides spiritual grounds for embracing solidarity with all humanity despite diversity. This belief (also referred to as the '*perennial philosophy*'), is not restricted to New Agers. Although it is not possible to review this wide-ranging and complex debate on the relationships between the various world religions in any depth, it

should be noted that in Christianity the great philosopher-theologian Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) was one of the first Christians to grapple with the problem of the radical relativity of all cultures. He accepted that the Absolute was manifest in all religions, but that all manifestations of the Absolute were limited and no one of these manifestations was absolute.¹⁰ Another influential voice from within established academia is that of historian Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975).¹¹ He postulated that if one could isolate the essential experience and insights of all religions, stripped of all non-essentials, one would find that all were basically the same. Other religious figures who hold variations of this view are Christians Rudolf Otto and Wilfred Cantwell Smith, the philosopher Aldous Huxley, the Hindu sage Sri Radhakrishnan, the Muslim Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the scholar of religion Huston Smith, and the metaphysician-mystic Frithjof Schuon.¹² Some prominent authors who are much read by New Agers, such as leading theoretician in transpersonal psychology Ken Wilber (1983) and scientist and futurist Willis Harman (1988), also subscribe to this view.

Closely related to the disillusionment with religion is another aspect that was often quoted as being a characteristic of the modern human being, namely fear (eg T8:1:072). This was mostly attributed to the influence of the Christian churches where, some participants claimed, fear was used in order to 'retain control' over people (T26:1:544). One participant, writing on the 'ignored', 'edited', 'censored' and 'revised' scriptures that were considered for inclusion in the Bible, remarks:

All the additions to the New Testament had a purpose which was, in that cruel and dogmatic age, to increase the wealth and hegemony of the Church and its priests who were greedy, avaricious and ruthless. This was the reason for the introduction of the whole Lucifer-Satan-Devil theme, in order to play on the gullibility of the illiterate masses, and to make the peasants totally subservient and acquiescent. These unfortunate conditions have remained owing to the fervent and fanatical adherence to the *word* of the Bible: not one word is permitted now to be changed - for devotees have to accept the Bible word for word regardless of the contradictions and confusions. This does seem to be changing slowly, which is most encouraging, but until it does, many people will be under misconceptions and will not be inspired with the joy of the spirit, but imbued with fear, hopelessness and guilt (F12:1:3-4).

Some participants, however, attributed this fear to the apocalyptic expectation, as prophesied in the Bible, as well as to the trials and tribulations associated with the turn of the century, as predicted by Nostradamus (T3:1:B044).

b Materialism, rationalism and scientism

'The dark cloud of materialism' (F30:2:135) was seen as a further major cause for the loss of spirituality. Together with the prevailing rationalism and scientism of this age (T8:1:047), it was seen as lying at the core of our troubled society.

Again the notion of society in crisis is not a novel one, nor is it found only in New Age circles. In all likelihood, all generations of people have believed that their particular age was the worst and that things were unlikely to improve without radical changes. Although social criticism does not necessarily imply social crisis, participants in this study did indeed stress that the problems besetting humanity at present call for fundamental and far-reaching changes, specifically of the mind. One participant (T27) provided me with a copy of an article by Willis Harman and suggested that I read his other works for clarification on this topic. Harman, one-time electrical engineer and systems analyst but now a social scientist and futurist, is also the director of the Institute of Noetic Sciences.¹³ He visited South Africa in January 1992 and again in October of that year. The first visit was at the invitation of the Human Sciences Research Council, to act as keynote speaker at an HSRC conference on *Science and Vision*, and the second at the invitation of the organisers (all prominent individuals in New Age circles) of the symposium on *Planet in Change* (under the patronage of Sir Laurens van der Post).

Harman (1988: introduction) compares the impending paradigm shift with the seventeenth century scientific revolution that ultimately affected the lives of all humanity.¹⁴ The scientific paradigm, with its objectivism, positivism and reductionism has, he claims, ousted the spiritual, leaving people with spiritual needs that cannot be satisfied by the materialism that has ensued. It has also failed to account for important aspects of human experience, such as spiritual and miraculous healing, psychic phenomena, volition, intention and the search for meaning, and has therefore proved inadequate to account for the total human experience. Thus, just as the ecclesiastical authority of the Middle Ages was displaced by the authority system of empirical science, there are indications that people today are challenging the prevailing scientific authority system (Harman 1988: 34). It should be noted that the scientific paradigm touches the most fundamental level of the belief structure of modern western society, and it is here, on this basically spiritual level, that changes are said to be taking place. This 'global mind change' postulated by Harman accounts for the optimism of New Agers despite their discontent, frustration, anxiety and deep despair in relation to modern society.¹⁵

4.2.3 New revelation

A common perception among the participants was that the earth was at a critical point in time (T11:1B:193) and that new teachings were being given to humankind (T12:1:292). These teachings were said to originate either from God (T21:1B:536), or from the 'Brotherhood of Light' (F10:13:1).

One participant claimed that new energies were also being released at this time:

New energies are sweeping into our universe Our entire universe is going through a vast leap into a new Light creation, whereby the super-super galaxies, super spectrum galaxies, galaxies which are local universes, gas giant planets and earth-type planets will all be raised to a new energy level. This is part of a changing energy network which is purifying itself (F10:20:1).

Many of the participants believed that in addition to new energies, actual messages were also being received from ascended masters through human channellers (eg F24:8:9), and some claimed to be channels themselves (T6:1:580) (see 7.2.2 c). The only interview that I myself did not conduct contained such a channelled message (T30:1:232). The message apparently came through while the participant was explaining the role of the New Age movement in the future of South Africa (see 4.3.2). This person pointed out that there are esotericists who can take the lead in this time of transition, since they are in contact with the hierarchy and know the will of the Logos (God) (F30:2:1-2).

One participant mentioned (as do some of the well-known New Age authors) that it was 'mostly through space travel that we are beginning to understand our world - we see Mother Earth with new eyes (T23:1:091).¹⁶ Spangler (1984: 5) concurs with this notion of new revelation through human experience, and quotes astronaut Russell Schweickart who writes as follows of his experience of blasting off into orbit:

And you identify with Houston and then you identify with Los Angeles and Phoenix and New Orleans. And the next thing you recognize in yourself is that you're identifying with North Africa - you look forward to that, you anticipate it, and there it is. And that whole process of what it is you identify with begins to shift. When you go around the Earth in an hour and a half, you begin to recognize that your identity is with that whole thing. And that makes a change.

Spangler (1984: 7) concludes:

In us, whoever or wherever we are, lie the possibilities for new vision. To explore those possibilities, to be open to the seeing that promotes unfoldment is to do justice to our world. That's why we're here.

4.2.4 Humanity's preparation

There was a strong belief among many of the participants that the New Age would not come about if humans did not work unceasingly towards creating the atmosphere in which the Christ and the masters of wisdom could reappear (F18:11:3). Here the influence of the Bailey teachings, with their emphasis on the New World Servers (see 6.2.2 b) and their obligation to work for the reappearance of the Christ, is again clearly visible. Bailey (1969: 38-9) wrote:

The Christ stands in patient silence, attentive to the efforts that will make His work materialise on Earth The Buddha hovers over the planet, ready to play His part if the opportunity is offered to Him by mankind. Everything now depends upon the right action of men of goodwill.

Participants who accepted this teaching realised that it was up to humankind to 'establish peace on Earth in preparation for the reappearance of Jesus Christ and other great spiritual beings and angels' (F18:6:1). Perseverance in what must seem like a daunting task may be explained by a pervasive theory of 'critical mass' (also known as 'the hundredth monkey phenomenon') which a number of participants mentioned (F24:1:28; T3:1:333). This theory states that when a new awareness spreads to a critical number of people in a society, it will then spread exponentially to the rest of society and to other societies until it becomes universally accepted. The theory, it is said, was tested and proved by a scientist who observed the behaviour of a colony of monkeys on the island of Koshima in 1952. These claims have, however, been the subject of an unabated controversy.¹⁷

Three participants seemed to take heart from the fact that 'many old souls [souls who have reincarnated many times before - HCS] are now being born on Earth' (T3:1:319) and this will presumably strengthen humanity to face the challenges ahead. This was reportedly visible in the great number of children and young people who presently exhibit wisdom and insight beyond their years (*Odyssey* August/September 1990: 29).

The issue of the New Ager's responsibility in working for the advent of the New Age raises the interesting question of whether the New Age is in fact an unavoidable and predestined event, as the astrological theory would suggest, or whether it is an event

which can be delayed by uncooperative human actions.¹⁸ When presented with this problem, most participants thought that humans could in fact delay the advent of the New Age, but not indefinitely.

4.3 EXPECTATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE NEW AGE

Three salient expectations generally held by participants were that: (1) catastrophic trials and tribulations were in store for humanity; (2) a bright future awaited South Africa; and (3) the Christ would return to Earth in the near future.¹⁹ It should be noted that not all participants subscribed to these beliefs. Those who were influenced by the Theosophical tradition and by the Christian apocalyptic premonitions were found to subscribe to the more calamitous expectations, while persons who represented the eastern philosophies and the humanistic and transpersonal psychology streams usually held more optimistic views with regard to the near future.

4.3.1 Trials and tribulations

About a third of the participants warned that there were severe trials and tribulations in store for humankind before the golden age of peace would become a reality (T6:1B:216) In the words of one participant, 'we have terrible, absolutely terrible times ahead of us' (T8:1B:061). This prospect was attributed by some to the fact that destruction was necessary before anything new could be built (T25:1B:202), or it was seen as a cleansing process (T6:2B:218) out of which a purified humanity would emerge. All suffering on Earth was seen to be part of this cleansing process and three participants referred specifically to AIDS as also forming part of this purification process (T6:1B:191). According to Bailey (1965: 408-9):

At each of the great shifts in the Earth's axis, there has been upheaval, confusion, and cataclysm, preceding reconstruction, stabilisation and relative quiet. Of these macrocosmic events, there are similar microcosmic correspondences in the lives of both humanity and individual man. Hence the present world crisis - though precipitated by human error and sinfulness, by past karma and emerging idealism - is basically the result of much greater and vaster combinations of force currents in macrocosmic relations.

Four of the participants subscribed to the idea of a secret, influential group (eg the Illuminati, the Grey Men, the Cartel, the Bilderbergers), who sought total control over this planet through control of the economic systems of the world (F18:74:18-23). This group, it is said, not only aspires to total domination of the planet by the year 2000, but is aided in its plans by aliens from outer space (F18:74:19). The

events described in the Biblical book Revelations were expected to come to pass in the near future. This included the rise of a false religion, the coming of the anti-Christ, World War 111, a nuclear holocaust and subsequent world destruction.

Moreover, malevolent aliens from outer space who are aided by various powerful governments of the world were believed (by some) to be orchestrating these events. It was claimed that these aliens have frequently visited this planet over the last sixty years and have had secret dealings with a succession of American as well as Soviet governments.²⁰ One participant linked these events to the Christian churches. She sent material from which the following paragraph elaborates on the link between the churches and the Illuminati:

Seeing the churches as an excellent vehicle for the accomplishment of their nefarious ends the conspirators set out many years ago to infiltrate and subvert them with the long range objective of controlling and finally destroying them (F18:80:2).²¹

This participant expressed her concern in this regard:

Well-meaning and sincere 'born again' Christians should therefore seriously ask themselves whether they are playing into the hands of Lucifer by attacking the New Age movement which is attuned to facilitate the Second Coming of Christ. I pray that they will wake up to realise that their condemnations and judgments of everything that is 'New Age' as being the 'work of the devil' are judgments on themselves (F18:11:1).

Another expectation of disaster, associated with the astrological theory, is that of Earth changes. According to this theory the planet undergoes great changes during the times of transition from one Zodiacal constellation to another. These changes involve natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods and the submersion of great chunks of land into the sea (T8:1B:069). According to two participants who were bold enough to put a date to these prophecies, this could be expected to take place towards the end of this century (T2:1B:519; T8:1B:075). Another felt convinced that in spite of these calamities the golden age would commence by the year 2011 (T6:1B:199). It is noteworthy that although one participant linked the expected calamities to the year 2000, no-one else attributed any particular significance to the turn of the century. I gained the impression that they considered that a bit naive.

These upheavals are not, however, regarded as inevitable by all. Some claim that there are hidden sources of support that humans are not always aware of. As one

participant explained, compassionate extra-terrestrials have 'patched up the magnetic core of our earth many times in the past, because it is tilting dangerously' (T28:2:340).

Some prominent international New Agers have expressed concern about people's preoccupation with the calamitous. Creme (1980: 166), while condemning what he calls the 'catastrophe complex', nevertheless acknowledges the inevitability of the disasters:

There is prevalent today what I call a 'catastrophe complex'. From all sides, prognostications of disaster are being given out. I consider it necessary to counter this destructive fear syndrome - for that is largely what it is. There is catastrophe today - millions are starving to death in a world of plenty; the incidence of earthquakes is lessening, due to the Presence of the Christ - He acts as the Agent of Divine Intervention to mitigate their effects - but still they occur; the whole world is in a ferment of change, in which many old and much-loved forms are being swept away. But the forecasts of inundations and destruction on a continental scale are based on nothing more than fear - a fear stimulated and maintained by the forces of evil, in their 'backs-to-the-wall' fight against their inevitable defeat - and a misunderstanding of time-focus.

The continental shifts and destruction of land masses to which most of the prognostications refer, are not due to occur until some 800 years from now. By that time a more mentally polarised humanity, with the aid of the then externalised Hierarchy, will find themselves well able to cope. ... The misunderstanding of Revelations and Nostradamus is leading to an unhealthy over-emphasis on disaster - thus engendering fear.

David Spangler (1985: 76) has also taken issue with this trend in the movement. He writes:

The idea of the new age, as I see it, is - and must be - an optimistic vision. ... It is not a vision of nuclear holocaust nor of ecological degradation nor of social collapse A person who seeks to serve or embody this idea must himself or herself be birth-orientated, not haunted or obsessed with images of destruction. There is too much fear in the world already, poisoning our efforts at healing and change.

4.3.2 Expectations on the future of South Africa

An interesting view was held by some participants who believed that South Africa would not be affected by these catastrophes, because of its moral conservatism and religiosity. This, said one, is evident in the fact that 'parliament is opened with prayer'(T2:1B:592). Said another, 'South Africa is a country with high spiritual vibrations' (private conversation with participant 28). Other participants felt that although South Africa will not be spared these trials, she will emerge as an example to the rest of the world on how to overcome enormous problems and how to live in harmony (T3:2:012; T30:1:180). 'In South Africa we are working out a world problem, not a South African problem - namely separation (T14:2:030). This view, incidentally, coincides with that of Johanna Brandt (see 3.4.1).

One participant was particularly emphatic in this regard:

South Africa has tremendous possibilities. The inherent rightness of South Africa's people will blossom forth like a rose to the morning sun - it will be a divine urge to do the right thing, the wisest thing, for all its peoples (T30:1:20). ... South Africa has passed through its 'crucifixion' and is now in a process to prepare itself for ascension - to be lifted up and to become a shining light for the whole wide world. Yes, South Africa has a great spiritual destiny (T30:1:80).

To see South Africa concerned with materialistic progress, has its place, but unless it is equated with a spiritual awakening, then all is lost (T30:1:107).

There must be a universal vision acceptable to all, not a patched up system of old outmoded ideas, whether they be philosophical, religious, or political - but a program in accordance to a new cosmic Aquarian plan (T30:1:130).

South Africa has been appointed by Hierarchy to take the initiative, in a variety of ways, and without certain individuals knowing it - they have been shuffled into positions of importance and authority in all departments, including the political. Certain processes of transformation are taking place - in Eastern Europe concrete walls have collapsed - and in South Africa the psychological walls, likewise, soon will be gone (T30:1:140).

But the most importance of all is to see that it is spiritually motivated - then material and spiritual wellbeing of this country will go forth triumphantly (T30:1:152).

On the recording (taped in November 1990) which contains these assertions, the person's voice changes (to a tone and style which are very similar to that of the late Winston Churchill at his most intense), and I was told that at this stage the master teacher who sometimes channels through this individual, had taken over. His entire message is quoted below:

South Africa has a tremendous future. I say this with all confidence because it was divinely ordained long ago and is of special concern to those of us who guide the soul of the nations. Yes, behind the scenes there are mighty forces at work. There is in a sense a psychological war going on between the positive forces of light and the forces of negation, but the forces of light are destined to be triumphant. A lot of spade work has been done and the Lord of Civilisation has taken the initiative and placed his sacred seal upon the mission that has already commenced. And there will be right leadership in many and varied quarters. Some of the old guard will either be compelled to change or be removed. Nothing wrong with a change - change is a sign of growth, and we have witnessed in this last year or so tremendous changes which is a promise of tremendous things to come. Has it occurred to my friends that South Africa has been appointed to be a guardian and to initiate plans that will prove beneficial and a shining example to many other countries in Africa and eventually the whole wide world? There has to be a point of initiation on the planet for the benefit of all. A certain amount of good work has been done in other lands, but South Africa is in an unique position and will prove herself.

So my friends I can only extend to you thoughts of encouragement and inspiration. Go forth with your endeavours to raise the consciousness of all your people to the best of your abilities and you can be assured that we will undergird your efforts and bring you through triumphantly. Seldom in the history of the world has there been such a direct shaft of light from Hierarchy as is being demonstrated now. Not that we have favourites between the nations, but because of the trials and tribulations of your peoples and having transcended a great amount of the difficulties involved, you have earned the right to have a steady stream of spiritual light and power directed through all your leaders with vision. I will not mention names, it will not help, but there are certain individuals in this land who have captured something of the hierarchical intention. There has to be cooperation between those in various departments, with different missions and in different departments - the old separative and competitive attitude must be transcended.

Let the process of divine alchemy become manifest in this land through your dedicated efforts. Live, my friends, with purpose, live not only as South

Africans, but live as citizens of the world and citizens of the universe. Nothing less will do in this New Age. The ideal world consciousness has already been spread abroad, but you are citizens of the universe - this is your screenboard - this beautiful land of South Africa. Take courage my friends, go forth confident in the task divinely appointed to you - a mantle of protection and love is being spread around this land - protecting and guiding its appointed leaders. Many of them are there at our instigation. Oh, the battles are not over but the negative forces have their backs against the wall and are surrendering all along the line. Yes, the forces of light will be triumphant, I assure you, in this wonderful land of physical and spiritual sunshine.

May the radiance of the Christ spirit, the Buddha spirit, the Krishna spirit and the light of all great luminaries pour through and assist in creating a new world order. Do not hesitate to establish your academies of spiritual science

with its varieties of possibilities - influencing education, commerce, industry, art, music and every other department of human life and living. I rejoice with you as your elder brother - peace my friends, peace be with you, peace without and peace within. I salute the divinity in every one of you - as we will say in the land of mine (sic) origin, *Namas-te!*²² (T30:1:153-318).

This favourable view of South Africa's future was held by about a third of the participants, and although some referred to the violence that was then (May - November 1990) being experienced, this was also viewed in a positive light as a necessary and temporary cleansing and transformative phase (T1:1B:118; T22:1:490). Many participants also felt that South Africa has a mission to set an example of true brotherhood for the rest of humanity (T22:1:477). The individual quoted above also ventured the following opinion (F30:1:3):

I foresee the possibility of South Africa eventually taking the lead in the New Age spiritual awakening and giving the lead to the rest of the world in the quest for cosmic consciousness.

Some participants referred to national karma as opposed to individual karma (see 6.2.1 f). One remarked that the 'Americans and Canadians had wiped out the Indians and the Australians the aborigines, and they would all eventually pay for this' (T2:1B:560). South Africa, on the other hand, was going to be the one safe place in this world because 'we have been trying to work with our national karma' (T2:1B:579). Another warned that white South Africans should realise that if they

feared changes in the country these fears would manifest - and added that therefore everyone had a responsibility to view all changes in a positive light so that the process of change could be successful (T6:2B:008).

What became very evident in the discussions on the New Age vision was the perennial optimism (despite short-term frustrations and pessimism) with which New Agers view the future. This was eventually found to be a common chord that is sounded throughout New Age thought. With regard to the future of South Africa, participants agreed that official moves toward reconciliation and democracy were steps in the right direction and that this land's future would be marked by brotherhood and peace.

4.3.3 The reappearance of the Christ

Approximately a third of the participants believed that the reappearance of the Christ was imminent. The persons concerned were either acknowledged followers of the Bailey teachings, or had been influenced by them.

Bailey (1969: 5) pointed out that all the great religions subscribe to the notion of a further revelation which will be given by a future teacher or *avatar*. Christians, she maintained, are awaiting the return of the Christ, Buddhists are awaiting the Lord Maitreya, and Muslims await the coming of the Imam Mahdi. These divine intermediaries come forth for two reasons, namely, 'when the inscrutable and unknown Cause prompts them' to do so, and 'on the demand or the invocation of humanity itself' (Bailey 1969: 8). She elaborates further (1969: 9-10):

Ever down the ages, and at every great human crisis, always in the hours of necessity, at the founding of a new race, or in the awakening of a prepared humanity to a new and wider vision, the Heart of God - impelled by the Law of Compassion - sends forth a Teacher, a world Saviour, an Illuminator, an Avatar, a transmitting Intermediary, a Christ. He gives the message which will heal, which will indicate the next step to be taken by the race of men, which will illumine a dark world problem and give to man an expression of some hitherto unrealised aspect of divinity.

In 1945 Bailey (1969: 30) reported that as a result of the distress of the entire human family, the Christ had come to a great decision. He had decided 'to emerge again into physical contact with humanity, *if* they would bring about the initial stages of establishing right human relations.' At this time, according to Bailey, the Christ had also given the world the Great Invocation (see 3.3.1 b xxiii), the 'oldest prayer ever known, but one which hitherto had not been permitted to be used except by the most exalted, spiritual Beings' (Bailey 1969: 31).

In April 1982, Benjamin Creme²³ of the Tara Centres (which later combined to form the Share International Foundation, based in Amsterdam, Holland), took out full-page advertisements in the major newspapers of the world (including the *Rand Daily Mail* in South Africa), in which he proclaimed the return of the Christ, this time as the Lord Maitreya, within two months (the relationship between Jesus, the Christ and the Lord Maitreya will be dealt with in chapter five (5.2.3; 5.2.5; 5.2.6). When this did not materialise, he attributed the delay to humanity's lack of readiness for the event. However, in 1986 he again announced that the *avatar* was at that moment alive and living in London and that he would soon make his presence known. A certain weariness was apparent in relation to Creme and his announcements among the participants in this study. Although this did not imply any weakening in their belief in the imminent return of the Christ, there was some cautiousness about making claims involving specific dates.

4.4 THE INSIGHTS OF THE NEW AGE

Having dealt with the expectations for the New Age in the previous section, we turn now to the insights which many participants claimed would characterise the coming New Age.

While not all participants subscribed to the views mentioned above, most agreed on certain central features that would characterise the New Age. The different insights mentioned in this section will receive more detailed attention later in this thesis and are therefore mentioned now simply to provide an overall view of the New Age vision.

4.4.1 Evolution of consciousness and transformation

The majority of participants described the essence of the movement in terms of 'a shift in consciousness' (T1:1:426; T15:1:031), 'a new awakening' (T24:1:013), or a 'radical transformation' (F24:8:8). A number of participants compared this shift in consciousness to a rebirth. One explained:

The Sanskrit word for 'bird' means 'the twice-born'. First the bird is born inside the egg, the outer shell enclosing it in the darkness of *avidya*, or ignorance. There comes a time when the shell can no longer contain the growing bird. The protective covering has become a prison and must be shattered. The chicken is then born for the second time, emerging into the light of a new and greater world (F24:1:25).

Three participants pointed out that a higher consciousness necessarily implies that the veil between the seen and the unseen becomes more transparent. New revelations can thus be transmitted from the unseen spheres and communication and contact between these different worlds are, it is said, taking place more readily today (F24:8:9; F30:2:48) (see 7.2.2 c).

This shift in consciousness or rebirth will involve a 'paradigm shift' (T25:1B:113) or a 'new Renaissance of spiritual awareness' (F8:1:3). Humankind, most participants felt, stood poised at the brink of 'a universal Spiritual Awakening' (F30:2:135).

This view coincides with the vision of the Age of Aquarius as being essentially a spiritual age. Dowling (Levi 1969: 10-11), in the introduction to the *Aquarian Gospel*, says:

The Aquarian Age is pre-eminently a spiritual age, and the spiritual side of the great lessons that Jesus gave to the world may now be comprehended by multitudes of people, for the many are now coming into an advanced stage of spiritual consciousness.

This view is current among New Agers in other parts of the world as well. For instance, the well-known Roman Catholic priest and Zen master, Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle (1988: 133), writes:

With the new consciousness man will become a mystic, but one who awakens the mystical presence with the use of reason. ... The new man will stand on a higher step than man of the mental structure. ... The importance of this becomes clear from the fact that we can say without exaggeration that this step will have a significance in human development second only to the evolution from animal to man.

The 'evolution of consciousness' and the present time as a 'time of transition' (F24:8:8), as implied by the astrological theory, are undoubtedly two of the main insights which New Agers share.

4.4.2 Holism

The term 'holism' has a variety of definitions depending on the user. Smuts (1987: 86) who coined the term, defined it as 'the fundamental factor operative towards the creation of wholes in the universe.' In contrast, a contemporary South African New Ager defines it as:

the idea that everything in life is connected, in a live, meaningful, dynamic way. Individually we are body, mind and spirit; in relationships *everyone* we meet is there to show us a part of ourselves; in the world *everything* we see is a part of our own ever-unfolding healing process (F18:3:1).

According to the interviewees other important insights of New Age thought are linked to the central idea of wholeness, oneness and interpenetration. Participants emphasised the underlying unity of all things (T12:1:226). They claimed that people are becoming aware of the fact that there is no separation, but that everything is part of a larger whole. God, humans and nature are not separate entities, but interpenetrate one another (see 5.2, 5.3 & 6.2.1). One participant described the New Age as an invitation 'to reach beyond the self to empower others and acknowledge our interconnectedness by embracing the whole in a spirit of unity and reverence for all life' (F24::8:10). Most participants also emphasised the ecological awareness and planetary consciousness to which people are awakening (see 6.2.2).

4.4.3 The Brotherhood of Man

In the same vein, 'the Brotherhood of Man' (F12:1:4) was often referred to as a significant insight of New Age thought. (Note that despite the New Age emphasis on the female principle, the non-inclusive language used fails to reflect this hoped-for change.) The personal transformation that is expected will culminate in a social transformation in which the social problems of the world will be transcended and a new united, peaceful global society will emerge. The individual's allegiance will be to humankind and the planet as a whole, rather than to one's nation, race or country (T22:1:081). One participant held that the universalist vision already finds expression among people who are working for one world order that will include a world university, a world currency, a world language, a world parliament, a world flag, a world Council of Churches and a world Fellowship of Faiths (F30:2:62) (see 6.2.2 b). The values for this global community can, according to Donald Keyes (1982: 13), be summed up in two words, namely caring and sharing. This relates not only to all life on Earth, but also to all life further afield (see 4.3.2). One participant (F30:2:193) comments on this as follows:

Universal Brotherhood denotes a sense of sharing the life that embraces all beings in the infinite cosmos. Included therein are the inhabitants of all other planets where entities live in physical bodies, and all beings greater and lesser who inhabit the ethereal regions, from the highest planes to the lowest evolutionary stages of life. All these are innerly part of me, and in varying degrees of conscious awareness share in the realisation of brotherhood.

4.4.4 Human responsibility and co-creation

The need for humans to take responsibility was often emphasised as an important new insight. This included not only personal responsibility for one's own life and experiences, but also responsibility for one's spiritual development and ultimate salvation (F24:8:9). One participant said that the New Age is the 'expression of a maturing process, and a movement towards becoming more consciously responsible for ourselves and the world we have co-created' (F24:8:9). There was also some reference to responsibility towards the animal kingdom (F30:2:97) and the planet (T21:1:508) (see 6.2.2 b).

4.4.5 World peace and planetary collaboration

About a third of the participants maintained that world peace and cooperation will be characteristics of the New Age. A most important characteristic of this era will be a realisation of the transformative power of love (F18:3:1-2). Three participants felt that this age will therefore be distinguished by a sense of community among people (T8:1:086), and one interviewee anticipated the creation of a single world currency and a global community free of national borders (T6:1B:072). Only one participant referred to a coming world government (an idea much criticised by opponents of the movement, and one which can be traced back to the Bailey teachings [1958: 185-7]). This new government will, however, be 'unlike any government of man, because it will be governed by the higher mind entities of the Great White Brotherhood, who even at this time are changing the focal rings of intelligence on the outer tip of this galactic region' (F10:13:1). This coincides with Creme's (1980: 169) assessment that:

[A] world government will not be imposed on mankind, but will be the result of the manifested brotherhood. The sharing and the co-operation of all mankind, the redistribution of the produce of the world, will result in world government. Any attempt to achieve or impose world government without the acceptance of sharing is doomed to failure.

Five participants stressed the atmosphere of openness and tolerance for cultural and religious differences that will prevail. And other cultures which have in the past been disparaged (such as the indigenous traditions of southern Africa and America), will now be appreciated anew (T9:1B:519).²⁴ This new tolerance will lead to the formation of new ecumenical movements between different religions. Although most participants subscribed to the perennial philosophy, no-one predicted that a world religion will come about soon (another issue in the Bailey teachings [1958: 400] that Christian authors, in particular, criticise fiercely). This does not mean that participants did not believe that this will ultimately come to pass, but that they did not view it as a viable prospect for the immediate future. Similarly, Creme (1980: 89) predicts that the major religions of the world will slowly wither away as the cur-

rent generation of believers dies off, and as the new religion gains adherents; and Enomiya-Lasalle (1988: 123) says that over the past few years, experiences of unity in Christianity and Buddhism have become so numerous that what was previously accessible to only a few individuals can now become a reality for many. One has to bear in mind that the Aquarian age is to endure for 2 200 years and there seems ample time for the necessary developments to come about.

In conclusion, note prominent New Ager David Spangler's (1984: 13) definition of what the New Age is all about:

... a transformational impulse has appeared. Appearing in different guises and called by different names, it represents a resurgence of hope, of vision, and of creative activity on behalf of a better civilization. At its heart, it is a rebirth of our sense of the sacred.

4.4.6 The New Age as metaphor

A few participants interpreted the New Age as a 'metaphor for a way of being in the world' (F24:8:10; T23:1:016). In this sense we have always been in the midst of the New Age, and it is, in fact, in no way new. This 'way of being' involves a 'recognition of the sacred in the secular and opens us to the presence of God in the midst of our ordinariness' (F24:8:10). 'The New Age for me', said one, 'is to find the God within and to find the God within the other' (T9:1:92).

Another participant expressed the view that her group is 'part of a growing community on Earth which sees this [life] as life in Heaven, rather than an arduous preparation for it' (F15:2:1). This interpretation is found in the writings of important figures in international New Age circles such as David Spangler (1976) (as one participant acknowledged), Joel S Goldsmith (1968) and Peter Lemesurier (1990), among others. Lemesurier (1990: 231) writes:

And so it follows that you have only to achieve ... a state of pure consciousness - and not merely the partial, distorted consciousness of dualistic thinking - for the Golden Age of ultimate, holistic reality to be restored on Earth. With the dawning of the knowledge of truth (as both the Essenes and St Paul foresaw) the perceived universe is utterly transformed. ... It occurs not in the past, not in the future, but now, in the instant, in the twinkling of an eye.

And Spangler (1984: 34-5) attempts to reconcile the views of a future yet ever present New Age when he writes:

The new age was not so much an event as a state of mind The real question was not when and how the new age would come but what kind of people

we would be when it came and what kind of a world we would wish to build and live in. The new age is already here, in spirit if not in form, and anyone can now co-create with that spirit so that the form will become manifest.

This interpretation of the sacred golden age as being present in the profane, everyday existence of humankind renders the idea of coming golden ages of the classical cosmologies redundant since the golden age is perceived to be present here and now. It is noteworthy that this view has a parallel in the gnostic writings²⁵, as well as in the work of Christian theologians Rudolf Bultmann and John A T Robinson who interpret the Christ message existentially.²⁶

4.5 ANCHORING OF NEW AGE ENERGIES

One participant gave an account of three elaborate ceremonial rituals in which she had played a key role (T22:1:311ff).²⁷ According to her, these rituals had been set up under the guidance of a number of spiritual entities. The British New Ager Robert Coon (by his own description a mystic and immortalist²⁸) claims to have received instruction from Elijah (of biblical fame) on the structural dynamics of the planet Earth.²⁹ This knowledge is said to be crucial for the acts of energy transformation which are to follow. Another internationally well-known New Ager, Peter Fuller, claims that detailed instructions for the energy transmission ceremonies have been received from Mahatma Gandhi and Winston Churchill.³⁰ The object of these ceremonies is to transfer the energies from the Piscean energy site in Jerusalem to the Aquarian energy site, which is said to be situated at Glastonbury in England.

According to Coon, just as the three Zoroastrian priests bore symbolic gifts to the baby Jesus, which signified the transference of the energies of the age of Aries to the age of Pisces, so too a pilgrimage had to be undertaken to transfer and seed the energies for the Aquarian age. Consequently, three carefully chosen persons (one being a participant in this study) embarked on a symbolic journey during Easter of 1990. These persons not only represented different geographical areas of the world, but included two women (one young, one somewhat older) since the Aquarian age is to be characterised by the female principle. They were accompanied by a number of people who felt called upon to undertake the pilgrimage. An equal-sided Aquarian cross was made and this was carried by the three central figures to the Mount of Olives, to Mount Sinai and to the pyramids in Egypt, at which sites intensive meditation sessions were held in order to 'gather and purify the new energies'. The cross and the energies were eventually taken to Glastonbury (this is where the heart chakra of Gaia is said to be situated), where it was anchored at a specific location. This site, according to the participant, was the place to which Joseph of Arimathea had taken the holy grail after the crucifixion and where he planted his staff, which

subsequently grew into a sacred tree. In the same manner that Joseph of Arimathea is believed to have seeded the energy for the Aquarian age which was expected to dawn 2 000 years later, someone will have to carry the energies to Brazil during the next 30 years in preparation for the age of Capricorn which is due in about 2 200 years' time.

Another global event took place on the 11th January 1992. This was the most recent in a series of events that started with the World Peace Meditation (31 December 1986) and was followed by the Harmonic Convergence (16 and 17 August 1987), Earth Link (February 1988) and Earth Day (22 April 1990). A series of smaller planetary events, such as Star Link in 1988, Crystal Light Link in 1989, and Time Warp in November 1989 were also arranged in order to 'bring the planet and humanity into an increased sense of Oneness - Healing, transforming and ushering new levels of consciousness into the planetary Logos' (F28:1:1). This event is referred to as '11:11', and 'signifies a time when the Planet Earth and all of humanity shall be given the opportunity to move onto a new level of consciousness' (F28:1:1).³¹ A leaflet announcing the 'Opening of the Doorway' and calling humanity 'to awaken' refers to the above-mentioned events as follows:

All of these quantum leaps have brought us to the place of readiness where we stand right now. And now we are called upon to prepare for the most important activation thus far. This is the Opening of the Doorway of the 11:11. ... After we pass through the Doorway of the 11:11 we shall move onto a new spiral formation. ... This is where we shall experience the prophesied 1000 years of peace.

The leaflet informs the reader that 'in order to open this doorway we need a critical mass number of a minimum of 144,000 activated Star-Borne ['all of us presently incarnate who know that we originate from somewhere other than this planet'-F28:1:2] to unite together in *conscious* Oneness worldwide on January 11, 1992.' This activation, the author of the leaflet informs us, will be 'centered at the Great Pyramids in Giza, Egypt'. The 'Great Pyramids', it is said, 'have long served as the beacon for remembrance of our starry origins and contain the key for our homeward journey' (F28:1:2). The reader is warned that:

The doorway of the 11:11 opens once and it closes once. Only one may pass through. This one is our Unified Presence, *the many as One*. The 11:11 shall open on January 11, 1992 and close on December 31, 2011. Unless at least 144,000 of us gather together either physically or in spirit throughout the planet on January 11, 1992, the 11:11 will not open at all and we shall have missed this Golden opportunity for our mass ascension into new realms of consciousness (F28:1:2).

The reader is informed of the meditation times in Egypt (12:11 am on 11 January 1992 to 2:11 pm on 12 January 1992), and is given a South African telephone number to call should he or she be interested in joining the meditation groups in Egypt.

Subsequently, it was reported that the 11.11 had been successfully entered. A document received from a participant reads:

We have victoriously Ascended through the Doorway of 11:11. Now, daily and hourly, we are moving into greater frequencies of Harmony and Balance. The upward shift of vibration was accomplished at causal levels on January 11, 1992, in perfect Divine Order, and unparalleled frequencies of Light are now beginning to filter into the everyday lives of Humanity.

Until we actually Ascended through the doorway on January 11, 1992, not even the Company of Heaven knew exactly what the shift in vibration would mean. Everything was contingent on how much purification would be accomplished prior to the shift and how far we would move through the 'Doorway' during the shift as we begin our 20 year spiral into the Fourth Dimension. According to the Realms of Truth, we Ascended beyond even the expectations of Heaven (F18:110:1).

Another document that came to hand reveals that:

Within the time-frame of 11:11 ... lies another smaller Doorway ... an OVERLAY ... which helps to bring in other people who are not yet fully committed. It is the last Doorway that can be based on our present calendar, and is known as 12:12 (December 12th) (F18:111:1).

It should be emphasised that only about six participants seemed to uphold the value of these exercises.

4.6 CONCLUSION

A most important feature that is highlighted by the data in this chapter is the *ambivalent situation* in which New Agers find themselves. The movement seems to be characterised by two opposing perspectives. On the one hand there are those with an apocalyptic view of an imminent catastrophic cleansing of the planet, and on the other hand there is a group with an optimistic hope of cosmic renewal. The former group concurs with the latter that renewal and a golden age are on the cards, but not before the forces of destruction have been unleashed in a final demolition and subsequent purification of the existing civilisation. There is an intriguing

similarity between the expectations of the apocalyptic group and the current millennialist expectations of Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists, and this warrants closer scrutiny. Both groups respond to the same socio-religious situation, and in remarkably similar ways.

In this study no more than eight participants could be said to represent the optimistic perspective and they were on the whole extremely hesitant to claim esoteric knowledge or psychic gifts. Their views reflect those of prominent international figures such as David Spangler, Marilyn Ferguson and Fritjof Capra, while the apocalyptic group reflects the views prevalent in the occult tradition, specifically those of the Theosophical and Bailey teachings.

It is obvious that the Bailey teachings and the Theosophical tradition have had an enormous influence on the movement in South Africa. In fact, the New Age movement in South Africa may be said to have emerged out of the Theosophical tradition. If one examines the literature on the movement in America and Europe, it would appear that this is a unique South African trait. A recent guide to the movement (Clancey et al 1988) has a total of about 180 references for further reading, with no mention of the Bailey books or classic Theosophical sources. It was also mentioned previously that Ferguson (1980) ignores this aspect of the movement (see 2.2). This might be attributed to the fact that the eastern philosophies and the human potential movement have not had the same impact in South Africa as in America. In view of the breakdown of ecclesiastical authority structures in South Africa, which allows individuals to explore other religions, and the enormous influence of American culture on South African youth through the medium of television, I would hazard a guess that both the eastern philosophies and the human potential movement will soon gain greater sway over the New Age movement in South Africa.

Regarding the *insights of wholeness, interpenetration and interconnectedness*, these imply a radically different perception of the world from the prevailing dualistic western view which has been formed and moulded by the Christian tradition. This explains the influence of the eastern philosophies and the alternative western tradition on the movement. Considering the classic cosmologies (which include the myth of a future golden age) of the eastern traditions, it is clearly not from these sources that New Agers derive their hope for a New Age in the foreseeable future. However, the notion of spiritual liberation from the terror of daily existence, which some New Agers subscribe to, can be derived from these and other religious traditions.

On the whole there appears to be a rejection of the Christian tradition, or rather of the Christian churches, since some participants claimed that it was New Agers who

have preserved the essence of Christianity, while the churches are said to have distorted the original message of Jesus. Most participants concurred with the common core theory of religions or *perennial philosophy*, even though their acquiescence was mostly based on intuition.

If this discussion of the New Age vision seems *fragmented and contradictory*, it is because the vision of the participants is indeed fragmented and contradictory. The contradictions were present both between different groups as well as within the views of many individuals.

Nevertheless, this study indicates that despite the differences with regard to the vision of the future, the constructed typical New Ager can be said to subscribe to the view that the vision of a New Age implies a *radical transformation of human consciousness* that will culminate in a new civilisation.

Notes

1 See Latourette (1976:13ff), and Filoramo (1990: introduction).

2 More detailed expositions of this theory can also be found in Lemesurier (1990) and Howell (1990).

3 Nowhere in the academic literature have I come across this theory and I suspect that proponents will be hard pressed to convince scholars of these ancient cultures of the merit of this theory. In a very superficial examination of some of the claims of this document, I found that during the Taurian age which lasted from 4000 - 2000 BCE and was supposedly characterised by bull cults, the sky gods of the Indo-Mediterranean religions were all in one way or another identified with bulls (Eliade 1974: 76). This was, however, a symbol of only one attribute of the god, namely fecundity. People attributed every hierophany that was associated with the fertility of the world, to the personality of the sky gods, and therefore these sky gods were also associated with lunar signs, the earth mother and thunderbolts (Eliade 1974: 87).

To link the symbol of the ram with the period 2000 BCE up to the birth of Jesus, also presents difficulties since the ram as symbol, while being associated with the Egyptian sun god Amen-Ra, is nowhere near being as pervasive a symbol in the ancient religions of the Arian period as the bull (Goldsmith 1929: 126). These anal-

ogies furthermore only hold up in the Mediterranean area.

4 This period coincides approximately with the period Karl Jaspers (1953: 1) dubbed the 'Axial Age'. During this age radical change took place in different geographical regions (China, India and Persia, and the eastern Mediterranean including Greece and Israel), without any significant influence of one region on the others.

5 The author (or messenger as he denoted himself) of *The Aquarian gospel of Jesus the Christ*, Dr Levi H Dowling (1844-1911), published the book under the pseudonym Levi. He claimed to have accessed the Akashic Records (believed to be 'the imperishable records of life preserved in the Supreme Intelligence or Universal Mind'), by attuning his own vibrations to the vibratory tone and rhythm of the records, and to that of Jesus of Nazareth, Enoch and Melchizedec (Levi [1911] 1969: 17). The work was first published in 1911 in Los Angeles, and by 1969 was in its twentieth impression. The volume accounts for the 'lost' years of Jesus' youth. It suggests that he travelled widely in the east (India, Tibet and China), as well as in Greece, Persia and Egypt, where he received instruction from various spiritual teachers. According to Levi, after the resurrection Jesus appeared in a fully materialised body to a number of individuals in India, Persia, Jerusalem, Greece, Italy and Galilee.

This publication resembles a previous work, *The unknown life of Jesus Christ* (previously entitled *Life of Saint Issa, Best of the Sons of Man*, published in 1894) by a Russian war correspondent, Nicholas Notovitch, who claimed to have come across the manuscript in a Tibetan lamasery where he was laid up with a broken leg. This book also gives an account of Jesus' life between the ages of twelve and thirty, and also places him in the east where he supposedly not only learnt from spiritual teachers, but also taught them (Goodspeed 1956: 3ff).

6 This is one of the books that Bailey authored herself and for which she does not claim guidance from Djwahl Kuhl.

7 This error is made by other New Agers as well. In *Many mansions: the Edgar Cayce story on reincarnation*, Gina Cerminara (1978: 35) also refers to Plotinus as one of the 'Christian fathers' who has taught reincarnation.

8 Another incident that illustrates some participants' lack of knowledge of the world religions occurred in conversation with an astrologer. She informed me that I had spent one of my previous lives at the feet of the Buddha, but that I was torn

away and cruelly murdered by the Christian missionaries. The Buddha, however, had lived 500 BCE.

9 Participants in this study are, however, not alone in confusing religious data. Shirley MacLaine (1986: 350) writes:

The teachings of the Bible, the Mahabharata, the Koran, and all the other spiritual books that I had tried to understand flooded back to me: The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. Know thyself and that will set you free; to thine own self be true; to know self is to know all; know that you are God; know that you are the universe.

The above sayings include some by Jesus and Jehova, but also some by Shakespeare and Socrates.

10 See Troeltsch (1971) *The absoluteness of Christianity* (1971), and *The place of Christianity among the world religions* (1980). Paul Knitter (1985) discusses and criticises this theory, among others, in *No other name?*, as does Ninian Smart (1973: 61ff) in *The science of religion and the sociology of knowledge: some methodological questions*.

11 See Toynbee, *An historian's approach to religion* (1956), and 'What should be the Christian approach to the contemporary non-Christian faiths?' in *Christianity among the religions of the world* (1969).

12 See *The idea of the holy*, Otto (1958); *The meaning and end of religion*, W C Smith (1964) and *Towards a world theology* also by Smith (1981); *The perennial philosophy*, Huxley (1950); Radhakrishnan *The Hindu view of life* (1960) and *Religion in a changing world* (1967); *Knowledge and the sacred*, Nasr (1981); H Smith's *The forgotten truth* (1976), *Beyond the post-modern mind* (1982), and with Griffin, *Primordial truth and postmodern theology* (1989); and *The transcendent unity of religions*, Schuon (1984). Hick and Askari (1985) include viewpoints from adherents of different religions on this issue in their volume *The experience of religious diversity*.

13 The Institute of Noetic Sciences (noetic, from the Greek 'nous' meaning mind, intelligence, understanding) was founded in 1973 by Edgar D Mitchell (US astronaut and the sixth man to walk on the moon) after a 'peak experience' while in space. He describes 'how peacefully, how harmoniously, how marvelously [earth] seemed to fit into the evolutionary pattern by which the universe is maintained ...

the experience of divinity became almost palpable, and I *knew* that life in the universe was not just an accident based on random processes' (Melton 1990: 288). The institute 'engages in research, dialogue and communication on issues concerning the human mind and consciousness and their role in the continuing evolution of humankind' (Harman 1988: 183). Major programmes include a project on the inner mechanisms of the healing response, a project in cooperation with other organisations in smoothing the global mind change now in progress, a project on the latent exceptional abilities of humans, and a programme on the human capacity for unselfish love and creatively altruistic behaviour. The institute is a nonprofit organisation open to general membership (Harman 1988: 183).

14 Other authors who trace the modern Cartesian and Newtonian worldview to its origin in the Copernican revolution and critique its inadequacy and the consequent necessity of a new paradigm, are Fritjof Capra (1990) in *The turning point* and Ken Wilber (1983) in *Eye to eye*.

15 Theodore Roszak, in his book *Person/Planet: A creative disintegration of industrial society* (1978) asserts that the disintegration and breakdown of society offers opportunities for new and enhanced life-styles to emerge from the chaos.

16 Shortly after the Apollo 11 mission, Joseph Campbell (1973: 246) wrote that the moon voyage 'has transformed, deepened, and extended human consciousness to a degree and in a manner that amount to the opening of a new spiritual era'.

17 Ruper Sheldrake (1981) in *A new science of life* postulates a theory of 'formative causation', which states that if one member of a biological species learns a new behaviour, the morphogenetic field for the whole of the species changes. If the behaviour is repeated over a long enough time span, the 'morphic resonance' increases and eventually affects the entire species. It is this theory that was purportedly proved by the research on the monkey tribe on Koshima. Sheldrake has also demonstrated his theory in the laboratory. He explains that crystallising certain organic compounds is notoriously difficult. Should one scientist, however, succeed in crystallising a new compound, other scientists usually find it much easier to follow suit. Sheldrake's theory and the monkey research are recounted by biologist Lyall Watson (1979) in his book *Lifetides: a biology of the unconscious* and by Ken Keyes (1982) in *The hundredth monkey*. These books are both best sellers and in 1990 more than a million copies of the latter was in print. Keyes also produced a television programme on this theory, which he employed in his crusade against nuclear armaments. However, this theory and the research on which it is based have been sharply criticised by Maureen O'Hara in three articles, namely *Reflections on*

Sheldrake, Wilber and New Science (1984); *Of myths and monkeys: a critical look at the theory of critical mass* (1985); and *Science, pseudoscience, and mythmongering* (1988). In the second of these articles, O'Hara shows that Watson's work is based on anecdotes, speculation and improvisations of several studies undertaken by Japanese researchers Kawai and Kawamura, who themselves never made any such claims. Criticism of this theory is also found in some New Age publications, eg *The sacred journey* by Lazaris, as channelled through Jach Pursel (1988: 58).

18 Michael Marien (1983: 7) points out that the belief that social transformation is taking place, serves to keep it from taking place. If transformation is regarded as inevitable it leads to the 'sandbox syndrome' where an individual or an organisation is kept in a childish state of innocence, content with building sand castles, instead of real-life structures.

19 Just recently another expectation has gained prominence in New Age circles, namely that of *ascension*. This apparently refers to the 'awakening of the inner Christ' (F18:101:5).

20 In general, New Agers regard extra-terrestrial contact in a positive light while ufologists are more inclined to adhere to the alarmist theories in this regard. Ufologists are usually not New Agers and are often the fiercest critics of the New Age contactee/channelling beliefs. However, these alarmist theories sometimes converge with aspects of New Age thought. In South Africa, the Academy of Future Science (an international organisation founded by Dr J J Hurtak) is the foremost proponent of these cataclismic theories.

21 This theory is not only quite popular among New Agers, but also among many Christians (McLoud 1989). These groups, however, accuse each other of being the instruments of these secret organisations.

22 *Namas-te* is a word used in Tibet for greeting and parting, and means 'I salute you'. The use of this term suggests that the master who was speaking was in fact the Tibetan, or Djwhal Khul, who channelled through Alice Bailey - but this was not confirmed.

23 Benjamin Creme was born in Scotland in 1922. He became interested in occultism and eastern philosophies in his twenties, and during the fifties, became involved with the Aetherius Society, a group interested in extra-terrestrial contact. It was, however, the Bailey teachings that had the strongest influence on him. He

started receiving inner messages, which told him that he should proclaim the second coming of the Christ. On 25 April 1982, he took out full-page advertisements in 17 major newspapers worldwide, which read 'The Christ is Now Here'. He claimed that the identity of the Christ would be revealed during the next two months. In May, Creme told journalists that it was their responsibility to search for and find the Christ, who was living in London as a Pakistani. Some reporters complied but notwithstanding their search, Maitreya was not found. Creme suggested that the indifference of the journalists was partly responsible for Maitreya's non-appearance. He is said to continue to expect the appearance of Maitreya, possibly in a worldwide television broadcast (Melton 1990: 137). For Creme's account of his relationship with the Masters of Wisdom, see *The reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of Wisdom* (1980) and *Messages from Maitreya the Christ* (2 volumes, 1980, 1982).

24 Although certain sectors of the movement in the United States emphasise the value of the indigenous Native American Indian traditions and appear appreciative of them, in this study only two participants mentioned, in passing, the value of traditional cultures. *Odyssey* magazine, however, from time to time publishes articles evaluating these traditional cultures positively, eg 'The path of spirit', an article on the sangoma (traditional healer) Credo Mutwa in the April/May 1989 edition; 'Kwangoma: synthesis in sound' in the Oct/Nov 1989 issue; and 'Leonard Peltier and the quest of the American Indian people' in the April/May 1990 edition.

25 In *The Gospel according to Thomas* (logion 113, in Layton 1987: 399) we read:

His disciples said to him, 'When is the kingdom going to come?' [Jesus said], 'It is not by being waited for that it is going to come. They are not going to say, "Here it is" or "There it is". Rather, the kingdom of the father is spread out over the earth, and people do not see it'.

This led some gnostics to believe that salvation is obtained not through an historical event but through internal transformation - which was likened to spiritual resurrection. *The Gospel of Philip* (Layton 1987: 345) proclaims:

People who say they will first die and then arise are mistaken. If they do not first receive resurrection while they are alive, once they have died they will receive nothing.

26 See Bultmann (1969) (*Faith and understanding*), especially the chapter entitled 'The eschatology of the gospel of John', pp 165ff, and Robinson (1962) *Jesus and his coming*.

27 These ceremonies were described in the February/March 1990 and October/November 1990 editions of *Odyssey* magazine. These articles include information on Robert Coon and Peter Fuller's involvement as discussed below.

28 An immortalist is someone who extends to its ultimate conclusion the belief that humans choose the events of their lives. Immortalists believe that dying is also a choice and they consciously choose not to die. In chapter three (3.3.2) we came across the Hindu sage Babaji, who is said to have lived for many centuries and who will continue to do so until the end of this age. He is the spiritual guide of the adherents of this belief, whose leader in America is Leonard Orr of the Rebirthing groups. Orr has written a number of books, among them *Physical immortality for Christians* (1986) and with Sondra Ray, *Rebirthing in the New Age* (1983).

29 Robert Coon is an exponent of a theory which postulates that the Earth (Gaia) has her own chakra system. These chakras (or energy nodules) are related to certain supposedly sacred sites on Earth and form the arteries of the living organism that is Gaia. He claims that these chakras have spiritual significance for life on Earth. Through the performance of specific rituals, people can activate the chakra power and increase the Earth's frequency, thereby uplifting all life on the planet. This theory includes a hypothesis about the Earth's four 'spinner wheels', one of which is said to be situated on Table Mountain in Cape Town. Apart from this cardinal centre, there are said to be a number of other sacred centres in South Africa, eg in the Pilanesberg, and in the Drakensberg at Mont-aux-Sources. Sacred centres such as these, when activated, release potent energies and inspiration which can be utilised for the good of the people. Coon claims that a central part of his work is prophecy and regarding South Africa he says: 'I have always had a good feeling about it: I have never felt that it would erupt into chaos and civil war (*Odyssey* Oct/Nov 1990: 26-27).

30 It is interesting to find these two historical figures working together, since Churchill, while in the flesh, declined an invitation to meet and talk with Gandhi, and disparagingly referred to him as a 'half-naked fakir'.

31 The numerology of 11 January 1992 is explained as follows:

This date can also be written 1.11.1992. Notice that it contains an 11:11 within the 1111992. Together the numbers add up to 33, which is the master vibration number for Universal Service (F28:1:1).

**CHAPTER 5 -
THE NEW AGE WORLDVIEW: GOD AND THE COSMOS**

*All are but parts of one stupendous whole
Whose body nature is and God the Soul*

*Alexander Pope
(1973: 514)*

*The entire universe is basically a single,
indivisible ... but flexible and ever changing, unit.*

*David Bohm
(1951: 140)*

5.1 THE AIM OF THE CHAPTER

In this and the next two chapters the most prevalent beliefs touching the main components of the New Age worldview are investigated. These components include the concept of God, cosmology, anthropology and theodicy.

By way of introduction it should be stated that the New Age worldview represents much more than merely another new variant of traditional western religion - in effect it presents an entirely new way of looking at the world. It strives to create a synthesis of religion and science with a much broader and comprehensive perspective than the dominant scientific view of western society. This perspective, adherents predict, will soon bring about a radical transformation of human consciousness which will have cosmic reverberations.

Willis Harman (1988: 4ff) points out that the dualistic scientific worldview of modern western culture has failed to account for all human experience and much of this experience has had to be ignored or denied in order to hold on to the dominant rationalistic perspective. The proposed and emerging new perspective can accom-

moderate the new discoveries in science, provide answers to existential questions of life, and accept religious pluralism.

In contrast with the scientific perspective, which is built around the central notion of separateness, the New Age worldview is constructed around the primary concepts of oneness, wholeness and interrelatedness.¹ This provides a paradigm which enables one to account for the totality of human experience. Everything in the world, whether mineral, vegetable, animal or human, is seen to form part of a larger whole and everything is interconnected. All events, actions and thoughts in this sphere eventually influence the whole and nothing is confined within a single isolated field of reality.

Harman (1988: 23ff) shows that this new worldview further entails the recognition of inner conscious awareness and thought as causal, which places an enormous responsibility upon humans, who are the only self-conscious beings in this reality. It is therefore within the power of the self-conscious individual to influence the process of the whole. There are no longer any observers, only participants in this reality which is shaped by one's choices, decisions, thoughts, attitudes, and by both one's conscious and unconscious beliefs.

Another aspect of this worldview concerns the purpose of life. On the whole adherents accept that this world and the creatures that inhabit it are in an evolutionary process which is directed by some kind of teleological force towards increased awareness and complexity.

5.2 THE CONCEPT OF GOD

The concept 'God' was one of the primary topics discussed during the interviews. Virtually none of the participants had to be prompted to expound on this topic as everyone considered it one of the most important facets of their worldview. In this regard we will consider the structural categories into which participants' views on God can be grouped, as well as the attributes ascribed to God and the metaphors used to represent God. Related issues discussed in this section will be the status and role of Jesus, the Christ, the Holy Spirit, as well as angels, the spiritual hierarchy and space brothers.

5.2.1 Structural categories and the concept of God

a Pantheism, panentheism and classical theism

In order to identify the different belief systems which participants adhered to, a brief typology of the relevant systems is presented below.

■ In contrast with classical theism, which stresses the dialectic of God's *transcendence and immanence*, the pantheistic worldview stresses the identity of God with the world. Panentheism, on the other hand, holds that 'all is *in* God, and God is *in* all'. In this view God encompasses the universe but is not contained within the universe. Philosopher Charles Hartshorne (1964: 89) writes that:

'panentheism' is an appropriate term for the view that deity is in some real aspect distinguishable from and independent of any and all relative items, and yet, taken as an actual whole, includes all relative items.

And process theologian David Griffin (1989: 111) says that in panentheism 'God both is and is not identical with the world' and then elaborates that the world is:

other than God ... in the way my body is other than me: I feel its feelings so intimately, and it expresses my thoughts and feelings so directly, that I and others often think of it as me.²

■ Whereas pantheism is *monistic* in its emphasis on the unity of reality which is seen to be divine, classical theism is *dualistic* in the sense that God is seen as separate from this world. Panentheism, on the other hand, is neither monistic nor dualistic, although it accommodates elements from both systems.

■ Most forms of pantheism are *deterministic*, as reality, which is God, is seen to be just as it ought to be. Classical theism, on the other hand, attributes freedom to humans while insisting on God's omniscience - which raises the question whether freedom is at all possible within this model. Panentheism, however, circumvents the problem of classical theism when it maintains that God orders the world through persuasion that does not infringe upon human freedom. Panentheism therefore allows for human freedom and argues that God and humans together determine the continuing creation (Hartshorne 1964: 142).

■ In classical theism, panentheism and some forms of pantheism, cosmic reality is regarded as *real*, but in one form of pantheism, namely acosmic pantheism, God alone is perceived to be real and cosmic reality is held to be *illusory*.

■ On the whole, classical theism holds a middle view between the two poles of *materialism and panpsychism*, since some things are viewed as sentient and some not. A few forms of pantheism maintain a materialistic view, although the majority, together with panentheism, subscribe to a panpsychic view of the world.

- Classical theism adheres to a view of God as a *personal* being, while God in a pantheistic system is viewed as an *impersonal* force or energy that permeates all of reality. However, the practice of *bhakti* (devotion to a personal God) in Hinduism is a reminder that personal elements may merge with impersonal elements.
- In classical theism God is held to be *absolute* and the world *relative*. Similarly, in most forms of pantheism God is regarded as absolute, and since God and the world are identical, the world is likewise seen to be absolute. Panentheism, on the other hand, holds that there are different levels in God's nature and God can therefore be seen to be both absolute and relative, cause and effect, active and passive.

b Analysis of participants' belief structures

Generally speaking, participants evinced a syncretist perception of God which included elements of esoteric Christianity, Christian Science, Gnosticism, Theosophy and eastern philosophies. Thus they often combined what seemed like mutually exclusive ideas into their worldviews. On the whole, however, three main categories with respect to the nature of the relationship between God and the world were salient. Firstly, the most common statements were statements which seemed to imply a *pantheistic* concept of God; secondly, many statements suggested a *panentheistic* concept of God; and thirdly, two participants held a *monotheistic* perception of God.

Although literature critical of the New Age movement consistently maintains that the New Age worldview is pantheistic (Lutzer & DeVries 1989: 59ff; Marrs 1987: 198; Verkuyl 1989: 19; Chandler 1988: 29; Miller 1989: 17; Sire 1988: 13), this study of the movement in South Africa did not substantiate this statement. Rather, in most cases New Agers' belief systems could be described as *panentheistic*. A study of the literature by leading international New Agers indicates that the South African movement conforms with its overseas counterpart and the critical literature which describes the movement as pantheistic is in error.

At least 25 of the 30 participants used one of the following quotations, or slight variations thereof, to explain their concept of God: 'God is all', or 'God is all and all is God', or 'God permeates the universe'(IT 2). For example, one participant explained:

God is an indivisible, indestructible UNITY, who is called Spirit or Energy. God is ... One Spirit in different levels of vibration and is all that manifests (without exception) in these worlds (F18:1:2) (own translation from Afrikaans).

Another stated that:

God is within you, He is not far or separate, He is where I am. We are part of God and we are all one consciousness... God is all (T28:1B:136, 389).

A participant who was raised in the Jewish tradition maintained that the Jewish creed, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is One', confirms the fact that there is no separation between God and humanity (T20:1:348ff).

Taken out of context these statements seem to imply a pantheistic and monistic worldview. Ultimately, however, none of the participants who referred to God as 'all' consistently adhered to a pantheistic perspective - they all qualified their statements with references to either a personal relationship with God, the transcendence of God, or a belief in human freedom.

One stated that 'God is a universal force', only to add that 'God is like a friend' (T1:1:220), while another remarked that 'God is the ever-present universal flow of energy' and then added that this energy 'carries within itself the vibration of unconditional love' (T22:1:174). In view of the presence of theistic elements, as revealed by the practice of *bhakti*, in some pantheistic systems, these remarks might not be sufficient reason to categorise these views as panentheistic rather than pantheistic. However, when the same persons also stressed the transcendence of God, or the role of humans as co-creators of God (see 6.2.1 c), panentheism seemed the more appropriate category in which to classify these beliefs. One participant explained:

(We teach) the existence of God, infinite, eternal, transcendent and immanent. He is the one essence from which all other existences are derived. In Him we live and move and have our being (F8:7:2).

These views are comparable to those expressed by the influential spokesman for the New Age movement, David Spangler (1984: 41), whose perception of God is also clearly panentheistic rather than pantheistic when he writes:

For God is both transcendent and immanent, beyond us and all with which we are familiar and still within us and our everyday world. ... We encounter God in the unique depth of ourselves, and also in the great holistic web of interrelated life, the large context that embraces all faiths, all cultures.

Alice Bailey (1969: 36), the pivotal thinker of the Theosophical tradition, prophesied in 1948 that in the New Age the concept of God would change in the following way:

God Transcendent, greater, vaster and more inclusive than His created world, is universally recognised and has been generally emphasised; all faiths can say with Shri Krishna (speaking as God, the Creator) that 'having pervaded the whole universe with a fragment of Myself, I remain'. This God Transcendent has dominated the religious thinking of millions of simple and spiritually minded people down the centuries which have elapsed since humanity began to press forward towards divinity.

Slowly, there is dawning upon the awakening consciousness of humanity, the great paralleling truth of God Immanent - divinely 'pervading' all forms, conditioning from within all kingdoms in nature, expressing innate divinity through human beings and - two thousand years ago - portraying the nature of that divine Immanence in the Person of the Christ. Today, as an outcome of this unfolding divine Presence, there is entering into the minds of men everywhere a new concept: that of 'Christ in us, the hope of glory.' (Col. 1:27) There is a growing and developing belief that Christ *is* in us, as He was in the Master Jesus, and this belief will alter world affairs and mankind's entire attitude to life.

Another person who is held in high esteem in New Age circles and who adheres to a panentheistic worldview is Roman Catholic priest, Matthew Fox. He asserts that the dualistic theism that places God 'out there' has 'killed God and the soul alike' (Fox 1983: 90). The solution to this situation, he suggests, is 'our moving from theism to panentheism'. He continues:

Panentheism ... is altogether orthodox and very fit for orthopraxis as well, for it slips in the little Greek word *en* and thus means, 'God is in everything and everything is in God'. This experience of the presence of God in our depth and of Dabhar [the creative energy of God - HCS] in all the blessings and the sufferings of life is a mystical understanding of God. Panentheism is desperately needed by individuals and religious institutions today. It is the way the creation-centered tradition of spirituality experiences God. It is not theistic because it does not relate to God as subject or object, but neither is it pantheistic. Panentheism is a way of seeing the world sacramentally (Fox 1983: 90).³

The commentaries quoted above more accurately describe the views of most participants in this study on the relationship between humans, the world and God than would the label 'pantheism'. These views, which emphasise the presence of

God not only in nature but also within humans, give rise to the joyous celebration of nature that we see in these circles as well as the reverence for all life that characterises the movement.

The participants included three individuals whose worldviews, by virtue of their belief in the illusory nature of this world, tended more towards an acosmic form of *pantheism*. In their view God is absolute and all, but this cosmic reality is seen as illusory. None of the individuals who maintained that this consensus reality is an illusion were, however, consistent in their elaborations. For example, one declared that 'the human condition is not reality' (F25:1:6) and 'God did not fashion physical creation' (F25:1:7) therefore 'God is not with humans' (F25:1:2), only to exhort her readers elsewhere to 'sense or feel the presence of God' (F25:8:46). Another first explained that the physical universe was necessary in order to reach a certain goal in the evolutionary process (F18:1:3) but then suggested that all sense experience is ultimately illusory (F18:62:2) and that all the experience a soul gains during its many lives on earth will culminate in a realisation that all has been an illusion (F18:62:2).

This notion of the illusory nature of this world, or acosmic pantheism, is also a fundamental concept in the popular New Age course, *A course in miracles* (which adherents believe was channelled from Jesus) and in the teachings of Lazaris, the nonphysical entity who is channelled by Jach Pursel (1988: 45). This view also has a predecessor in the Hindu sage Sankara's (788-820 CE) *advaita vedanta* system which has wielded considerable influence in the development of the New Age movement. Another herald of acosmic pantheism is the Christian Science movement in the west. Two of the three participants who held this view had been influenced by Joel S Goldsmith, one-time Christian Science practitioner who eventually formed his own school, The Infinite Way. He holds that God is incorporeal and has therefore brought forth incorporeal man (Goldsmith 1968: 137). He explains:

The only image there is of God is man: God appears *as* man; but since God is incorporeal, man is incorporeal. The fact that man has a corporeal body does not make him corporeal. The fact that he travels in an airplane does not make him an airplane; and the fact that he uses and has a body does not make him a body.

Further on in the same work (1968: 143), he states:

Man himself is the same incorporeality that God is because they are one, not two. It is God Itself that is living man's life.

Despite their belief in the illusory nature of this world and in God's absence from it, these individuals all believed in a divine grace which is available to humanity

(T28:1B:010; F18:62:1). Although God knows nothing, and is not concerned about this human world with its suffering and pain, there is liberation from this illusion when the mind is stilled and the inner Godself teaches the person (T25:1B:034) that he or she is part of God. Goldsmith (1968: 12) clarifies as follows:

No, God is too pure to behold iniquity, and God has no knowledge of any sin or any sinner.

The activity of God is like light touching darkness. It does not do anything whatsoever to darkness: it does not heal it, correct it, change it, or remove it. It just reveals that there is none. That is what the activity of God is like. In healing, It does not heal a disease: It just reveals that there is none. It does not reform a sinner: It reveals God's man, who never sinned.

This view is compatible with the notion of a realised eschatology in which the kingdom of heaven is seen to be present in the here and now.

Only two participants held a monotheistic worldview in a very strong sense. One was a member of the Raja Yoga group, also known as the Brama Kumaris World Spiritual University,⁴ and the other a member of the Church of Scientology. The former explained that the Brama Kumaris organisation had originated in Pakistan and contained principles from both Hinduism and Islam. When I expressed interest in the fact that a 'Hindu group' in the New Age movement should confess a monotheistic creed, he emphatically denied this origin and stated that they do not regard their religion as a part of, or as an offshoot of, Hinduism. This group believes in one God who is perceived to be both immanent and transcendent. Humans can through purification draw near to God and experience God's presence, but this experience is never one of 'blending' into God. Although the experience of God is sometimes described as a unity, this never implies an ontological unity (T21:1:357).

This person expressed the group's belief with regard to the concept of God as follows:

We perceive God as a Being who is a soul and as a soul he is related to us in the sense of a mother and a father, teacher and guide. He is the repository of unlimited Good, Ocean of Love, Ocean of Peace. He is infinitely powerful. He is available to human souls. It is the soul which connects with God. God is a metaphysical entity who is almighty and all knowing. [In meditation] God is an overwhelming presence of love and peace, ... and if there is enough love the soul and God seem to merge ... but the soul does not vanish into God (T21:1:255, 286, 293).

The reason I found this view so significant is that this group has done by far the most to promote the New Age movement in South Africa. In 1989, 1990 and 1992 it organised the Festivals of Mind and Body in Cape Town and Durban, as well as in Johannesburg.⁵ These events offer all New Age related groups an opportunity to disseminate information on their activities. When asked why the Raja Yoga groups were so involved in a movement from which they differed so radically on such an important issue, the participant explained that they were very aware of the 'massive amount of spiritual light' that was incoming to whoever was ready for it. He said it was 'in a sense a second coming' (T21:1:555). 'Many people', he maintained, 'are getting obvious touchings' and they 'are expressing it in the best way they can' (T21:1:562). When humankind opens itself to God in this way, 'God is able to give' (T21:2:021).

The representative of the Church of Scientology pointed out that her personal views on God did not necessarily reflect those of her church. In this organisation knowledge of God is gained only after 'becoming clear' - a state that is attained after a lengthy process of purification and inner development. At this stage of her development she held a monotheistic and dualistic view of God, but she declared that she was open to new insights which would most surely arise as a result of her spiritual development.

In summary, therefore, it transpired that the belief system most prevalent among the participants in this study is that of panentheism. I strongly suspect that should New Age views in South Africa be quantified, this result will be confirmed. Furthermore, a perusal of New Age literature confirms that, despite assertions to the contrary, New Age beliefs in the United States and Britain are also predominantly panentheistic. Only a small minority of the participants held a mainly pantheistic worldview and even fewer a monotheistic worldview. There are, however, indications that acosmic pantheism might be more widespread than this sample indicates. This is demonstrated by the enormous popularity of the channelled views of the entities Lazaris and Ramtha, who both present a worldview in which self-generated reality is ultimately an illusion.⁶

5.2.2 The nature of God

a Beyond description

A number of participants were very hesitant to say anything at all about the nature of God, and when they did venture an opinion, they emphasised that one could not intellectually grasp God and that language and concepts were totally inadequate to convey a description of God. As one said: 'To define God is to defile God' (T7:1:313). Although many participants said that God is beyond concepts and

human understanding, only one declined to discuss God on these grounds - but not until he had remarked that 'the greater one's consciousness the less likely one is to look at this something [God] as tangible' (T23:1:133). One participant echoed this view when she suggested that 'as one grows spiritually, one knows less' (T24:1:266), which implies that cognition decreases as spiritual intuition increases. Another wrote of 'realisation through unknowing' in which she suggested that the only use of doctrines and dogmas, philosophies, creeds, brotherhoods and fraternities is to teach people to transcend them all (F25:8:49). And still another participant explained that:

In the Kabbalah God the Supreme is referred to as the Void. This is a state beyond all concepts, but if one did conceptualise, this would be identical with the Buddhistic Void and with that which the yogis called *sunyata* (T20:1:242).

The same participant pointed out that the name of God in the Bible, namely YHWH, gives a precise definition of God. The acronym YHWH, said the interviewee, is the Hebrew verb 'to be', a word with no tense, which therefore refers to a 'being which transcends time', and that is why humans can say 'In Him we move and live and have our being' (T20:1:331).

Among those who declared that God is beyond description was an adherent of the Krishnamurti teachings who implied that people project their own longings onto a self-manufactured being. 'People have made God in their own image' (F26:1B:084), and

[we have] thought out how God is, but we have no conception of anything to do with this thing we put the letters g o d to - we don't have the consciousness to understand this (T26:1B:087).

She did, however, elaborate that 'God is the most precious thing' and that 'he has made everything wonderful' (T26:1:598). According to this participant, God created this universe with powerful laws and then handed it over to humanity. Humans may choose either to use their free will to live according to these laws, and so bring about their own salvation, or to disobey these laws and suffer (T26:1:032ff). In response to a question on what role God played in her life, this participant replied: 'None, but I obey the laws and have a tremendous feeling of gratitude for the order and for my latent powers to enlightenment' (T26:1B:020).

About a third of the participants made a distinction between the Godhead and the lesser gods (see 5.2.3)⁷. Aart Juriense, a South African author who summarised the

teachings of Alice A Bailey and her spirit guide, Djwhal Khul, has done much to simplify the elaborate teachings for the uninitiated.⁸ He says of the Godhead (1985: 171-2):

The concept of the **ALMIGHTY** is something totally beyond all human discernment - it is all-encompassing and remains absolutely unfathomable. ... God manifests Himself as nature, life and energy, in every atom and form; He dwells within these forms and yet He is so much more than these manifestations of His Will and Purpose.

It is clear from the above discussion that some of the participants adhered to a negative or apophatic type of religion in which God can only be known in a noncognitive way.⁹ It was also true that many seemed to combine this view with a generous measure of positive religion in which God can be known through symbols. In the ensuing chapters the emphasis on experiential knowledge of God that characterises the apophatic way or *via negativa* receives further attention (see 7.2).

b Symbols employed in the concept of God

The kataphatic tradition of positive religion, in which symbols are used in order to come to some understanding and experience of God, was employed by many participants in this study in their attempts to describe God. This led to a discussion of the attributes of, and the metaphors for, God. More than half of the participants described God as love. Other epithets used in relation to the attributes of God were, in order of frequency, nonjudgmental, creator, light, immanent, transcendent, process, omnipotent, omnipresent, spirit, androgynous, eternal, infinite, omniscient, will, dual, sound, and immutable. The metaphors most often used in these descriptions were those of father, guide and friend (IT 2).

In the discussion on the love of God, participants repeatedly emphasised that a loving God does not punish humanity. For instance, the Liberal Catholic Church states that:

All references to fear of God and His wrath, imprecations on heathens, servile cringing and self-abasement, repeated appeals for mercy, naive attempts to bargain with God and fear of everlasting hell, together with other crude survivals of the past, have been eliminated as derogatory to the idea of a loving God and to man whom He has created in His own image (F8:2:1).

One person said that God is 'an Ocean of Love ... and that Love expresses itself through humans' (T13:1:171). Another combined the attributes of love and energy and gave the following description:

God means Love - ever present universal flow of energy which carries within itself the vibration of unconditional love. The whole of creation breathes that energy. Everyone breathes in God and breathes out God. It is God breathing through us. God is creation ... it is His desire to express himself in matter that has made all this (T22:1:174, 214).

When God was described as nonjudgmental and forgiving, an interesting dichotomy developed. Some participants felt that God forgave humans their indiscretions and sins, since love is God's most important attribute. One remarked: 'A human parent will not punish his children with illness or suffering, so why will God?' (T28:1B:592). However, virtually all participants believed in the law of karma which many interpreted to imply that God did *not* forgive, and that humans would ultimately have 'to pay' for their misdeeds even if only in a future life (T1:1B:490). (The laws of karma and reincarnation will be discussed in more detail in 5.1). These laws were, however, usually seen as part of God's benevolence. One participant expressed this view as follows:

God is total benevolence and love. He is not vindictive and he does not punish. ... God is love, the two are identical. ... In God's infinite love, he says: 'I give you as many lifetimes as is needed to get it right'. ... There are no scales of justice or banishment to hell - that is a man-made invention (T6:1B:560ff).

The metaphor most often employed in the descriptions of God was 'father'. Participants who referred to God as father emphasised the love, caring and protection of the father figure, and one participant pointed out that:

'Father' and 'Son' are metaphors for aspects of God the Creator introduced by Jesus for the Age of Pisces - new insights which were radically different from the angry and wrathful God of the Age of Aries (F18:11:4).

c The feminine principle

Some participants pointed out that God is an androgynous being - is, in fact, 'an energy which combines both male and female in itself' (T22:1:184). However, this did not prevent any of the participants from referring to God in exclusively

'masculine' language and there were none who used feminine pronouns, even occasionally, in referring to God, as is now common among many contemporary theologians.

Nevertheless, a few participants did emphasise the female principle in the Godhead. The Liberal Catholic participant wrote:

The Liberal Catholic Church recognizes and pays deep homage to the maternal aspect of divinity - the mother-nature of God. The latter is looked upon as all-pervading, unfathomable, divine mystery. It brings forth and nourishes all life. The highest expression is the World Mother as represented by the Holy Lady Mary (F8:4:1).

Another pointed out that although the Source is without opposites, in the creation process opposites are necessary in order to bring forth something new. Creation manifests as the result of interaction between the positive and negative in order to bring about a third aspect (F18:12:1). What one therefore sees in the physical world is a reflection of the higher vibrations. From the interaction between the 'Father' aspect and the 'Mother' aspect (the Holy Spirit), the 'Son' or the Christ is born (F18:12:1). According to this participant the Christian churches have ignored the influence of the female aspect in creation, but lately a new awareness and appreciation for the motherhood of God has emerged (F18:12:1).

The wife of another participant echoed this theme in a tape-recorded lecture of a monthly meeting of their group. The topic was 'The Cosmic Mother' (T30a). This lecture emphasised the motherhood of God and testified to a belief that is held in many other quarters (and which was also encountered in the prophecies of Johanna Brandt - see 3.4.1), namely that the coming age of Aquarius is to be dominated by the feminine principle. Interestingly enough, this does not represent a move beyond gender, but rather suggests that the present patriarchal era is to be replaced with a matriarchal age.¹⁰

It is noteworthy that the feminine aspect of God is also recognised and earnestly grappled with by some Christian theologians in the west - among others Matthew Fox¹¹, Rosemary Radford Reuter, Catherine Halkes and Sallie McFague.¹²

d Personal or impersonal

As we have seen, about a third of the participants described God as an 'energy force' or a 'universal force' (IT2), which is consistent with a pantheistic view of God as an impersonal force or principle which permeates the universe. However, two-thirds of the participants described God in personal terms such as 'father', 'mother',

'teacher', 'creator', 'guide' and 'friend'. Frequent references were made to events or emotions which implied a personal God, such as daily conversations with God (T1:1:232; T2:1B:375), guidance from God (T9:1:041; T24:1:276), not being alone but being enveloped and supported by God (T18:1:380), receiving fatherly care (T21:2:035), and emotional attachment, which the participant described as 'a joyous thing' (T1:1:247). Often it was the individuals who had described God as an all-pervading universal force who also alluded to their personal relationship with God (T1:1:220, 247; T9:1:041, 150). This might have been a reflection of conceptual confusion, but not necessarily, since such views are not inconsistent with the panentheistic worldview.

For an illustrative example of the notion of a relationship between God and humans, one can again turn to David Spangler (1984: 146), who writes:

At the heart of spirituality is a relationship with God, a covenant that holds both parties accountable in a bond of love.

The participant who stressed the unreality of the corporeal world also stressed God's impersonal nature. Her mentor, Joel S Goldsmith (1968: 11), writes 'there is nothing personal about the activity of God in the sense that God would do any more for me than He would do for you.' The grace of God, says Goldsmith (1968: 110) 'falls alike on the just and the unjust, and we do not have to be what the world calls good to receive that Grace.' This participant also referred to Jesus' words, 'I must go now otherwise I cannot send you the comforter'.¹³ The references to 'grace' and 'the comforter' seem to indicate that the notion of an impersonal God coexists with a conception of God as caring - which is difficult to reconcile with an impersonal God.

In this study, however, the majority of the participants qualified their statements about the impersonal God with statements that disclosed the personal ways in which God is experienced.

e The grace of God

As mentioned above, in an impersonal view of God one would not expect a description of God in personal terms. However, considering the personal terms which participants did use to describe their relationship with God, it was not surprising that about a third mentioned the grace of God. Mostly they saw the grace of God in the experience of humans who realised that they were not alone (T18:1:274) and who have daily contact with a higher reality (T21:1B:577). One participant explained that human intelligence and universal laws are signs of grace: one knows that if one obeys the cosmic laws one will not suffer (T26:1:038). Another saw divine grace in human intuition as well as in trust in the cosmic process (T27:1B:580). While grace

was seen to be available to all, most participants emphasised that humans have a duty 'to put themselves into the way of grace' (T17:1:200): by faith (T21:2:039), right conduct (T21:2:043; F18:62:1; T17:1:161) and openness to and awareness of divine grace (T17:1:167). 'The more you are grateful' said one, 'the more you receive' (T17:1:203). As two participants summed it up: 'God helps those who help themselves' (T21:2:027; F18:62:1). Despite the perception that the grace of God is available to all, some participants pointed out that this did not mean that humans were exempt from responsibility for their own spiritual growth (F18:62:1) and neither did it imply the nullification of the law of karma (T29:1B:093). Karma and the grace of God, said one participant, were not irreconcilable - the law of karma would exact its toll, but the grace of God would sustain the individual in meeting the demands of karma (T29:1B:093). One interviewee stressed that there is a balance between grace received and one's own effort. He emphasised the inherent harmony of the cosmic process of evolution and remarked that humans should not be too eager to attempt to direct the process, since they could, in so doing, step out of this harmony. One should rather attempt to void oneself of one's own will and ego, in which case cosmic harmony would establish itself (T27:2:007).

f God in process

Participants who were influenced by the Bailey teachings and the Theosophical tradition sometimes stated that God is also in process. However, the distinction between the Godhead and the lesser gods is pertinent here. The gods to whom they were referring are the Planetary Logi and the Solar Logi, and not the ultimate Godhead 'about which nothing can be known' (T4:1B:132).

Only one participant suggested that the Godhead was also involved in an evolutionary process and needed humans as much as humans needed God (T3:1B:478), although she did not elaborate on this view. This seems anomalous since most participants subscribed to the notion of humans as co-creators with God. In a truly cooperative relationship one would expect both parties to influence one another. The absence of this element in the participants' views deserves further investigation as it forms an integral part of the panentheistic worldview.

5.2.3 Angels, the spiritual hierarchy and space brothers

a Angels and the spiritual hierarchy

The existence of angels was a topic referred to by only a few participants, but more than half believed in a spiritual hierarchy. One pointed out that beings from the angelic realm differ from the masters in the spiritual hierarchy since they never come to earth in human form (T6:2:133), whereas the masters have all lived at some

time in human form. However, both angels and masters in the hierarchy are actively engaged in assisting humans in their evolution. 'Angels', said one, 'are responsible for humans in the same way that humans are responsible for the animal and mineral kingdom' (T8:1B:379). Five participants in the study claimed contact with these higher realms. One said that her guide is an archangel; another referred to 'impartations' that she has received from higher realms; two claimed to receive information through clairvoyance from, respectively, masters and spirit guides, and one claimed to be in contact with various masters.¹⁴ Only seven of the participants said that they did *not* believe in the spiritual hierarchy, and said they knew they could approach God directly without going through intermediaries (even if these were manifestations of God's different aspects), and four 'did not know' whether such a hierarchy exists.

This hierarchy is said to comprise a group of entities whose existence was publicly revealed by Madame Blavatsky of the Theosophical Society during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The concept was subsequently systematised and elaborated on in the works of Alice A Bailey.

Participants generally regarded the members of the hierarchy as God's agents and available to humans for assistance in their evolution (T4:1B:115).¹⁵ Bailey (1958: 526) writes of the hierarchy:

It is a great salvaging corps of dedicated, liberated Units of Life, working in group formation with all forms and lives in all kingdoms, and with all souls particularly. As the Hierarchy so works, Its emphasis is solely on the *consciousness aspect* of all forms; Its present agency of salvage and of service is the mind, as it expresses Itself through the minds of all humanitarians, all aspirants, all disciples ... and of all initiates; the Hierarchy also can express Itself through the medium of thought currents and ideas and through them impose Its hierarchical concepts upon the embryonic minds of the general and average public; and It also directs the educational work of all nations, so that the underdeveloped masses can become - in due turn - the intelligent general public.

A participant commented, more succinctly:

The Brothers in White, who have trodden the road from Bethlehem to Calvary, gather around us in the Realms of the Spirit and walk in loving fellowship with us (F30:1:18).

Approximately a third of the participants made a distinction between the Godhead and the Planetary Logos, the latter being responsible for matters on earth (IT4).

The Supreme Being or Godhead is said to 'have surrounded Himself with a vast executive organisation to administer and consummate His Will, Purpose and Plan' (Juriaanse 1985: 166). Each galaxy, star and planet in the universe has its own designated spiritual guide or god under whose supervision the evolutionary process unfolds. On earth this process was set in motion more than 18 million years ago by 'The Great Lords of Light who came here from Venus', explained one interviewee, 'where they installed a spark into the mind of infant humanity' (T4:2:033). Today the entity who is responsible for events in our solar system is known as the Solar Logos, and the one who rules this planet is called the Planetary Logos. Benjamin Creme (1980: 116) simplifies the concept as follows:

The planetary Logos is a little God in a bigger God which is the systemic Logos - which itself is only a little God in an even greater galactic system - at the centre of which is another greater God. There is a Hierarchy.

According to this teaching, 'the Planetary Logos incarnated and entered His physical vehicle, our planet, as the Lord of the World, Sanat Kumara'¹⁶ some eighteen and a half million years ago (Juriaanse 1985: 174). Since then he has never assumed a physical body, but acts on the etheric levels. Sanat Kumara, it is said, is presently assisted by six kumaras, who together form the Central Council in Shamballa.¹⁷

b Space brothers

Ten participants agreed that visits from extra-terrestrials to this planet are probably taking place. Four of them expanded on the subject, with three regarding these beings as mostly benevolent and one perceiving them mainly in a negative light. 'They are our brothers who are trying to help us' (T28:2:328) declared one, while another emphasised that some are fallen angels who sow chaos on earth (F10:12:1). Another argued that these beings were in the service of the ascended masters (T4:2:044). The documents received from one participant included channelled material from the 'Ashtar Command and the Galactic Fleets' which invited humanity to approach them with a request for assistance. The message reads:

We are willing to bring to earth our knowledge of advanced technologies and education which can benefit ALL peoples and eradicate poverty, starvation, and the multitude of other social ills with which your planet is plagued ... **IF YOU WILL ALLOW US.** How far must you allow yourselves to be destroyed before you request assistance from those who can help you?

Our desire to serve is ever present. We look forward to being openly welcomed upon your planet. Our love and compassion for your life-threatening predicament is profound. And yet, abiding as we do under Universal Law,

our hands are tied until we are INVITED to come to your assistance. Must you allow yourselves to be carried to the point of planetary annihilation before you call upon us?

We await your decision, people of Earth. We come IN PEACE ... offering Love, assistance, and Higher Awareness to all. It is only for you to acknowledge our existence, REQUEST our presence, and welcome us upon your planet.

We salute you in the Love and Light of the Eternal One, and we await your call (F18:100:4).

A further document submitted by this participant explained that 'The Lord Esu Jesus Sananda is the Commander-in-Chief of the Ashtar Command and is also our World Teacher.' It goes on to say that 'in this capacity he serves in the Christ Department of our Planetary Spiritual Hierarchy, known as the Order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:4-11) (Heb. 6:20) which is an Order of Ascended Masters who serve under the Lord Maitreya - Our Planetary Christ' (F18:100:2).¹⁸ Here, a connection between the spiritual hierarchy and the space brothers is apparent.

Finally it became clear that slightly more than half of the participants accepted the existence of these well-populated higher realms whence direction and assistance are being given to the lower realms in the evolutionary process.

5.2.4 The God of the Old Testament - YHWH or Jehova

Only three participants referred to YHWH. One explained that this term is without tense, and as such signifies 'a being which transcends time' (T20:1:331). The second interviewee who referred to YHWH, did so in an explanation that held YHWH to be the god of this creation and as such to be part of the ultimate Godhead and head of the Spiritual Hierarchy (T10:1:330).

The last participant who made some reference to JHWH suggested that YHWH was 'the supreme God of whom nothing may be said', but that Jehova was 'the tribal god of Israel against whom the prophets continually warned' and that there is a connection between Jehova and the devil (F18:101:1).¹⁹ This participant pointed out that Jehova 'is a god that demands blood sacrifices to appease his anger and wrath' (F18:73:1) and in this can be compared with 'satanism [which] until this very day still indulges in blood sacrifices of both animals and humans' (F18:73:1). She then asked rhetorically: 'Is it then not a form of satanism and Jehova worship to claim Jesus as a blood sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins?' and, answering her own question, said that Jesus himself never 'proclaimed such an obscenity' (F18:73:1).

5.2.5 Jesus

Twelve of the participants referred to Jesus in their discussions of God. The opinion most often expressed was that Jesus had shown humanity the way (T28:1B:355), and had opened the door (T11:1B:162) through which humanity has to move in order to return to the Universal Principle (T22:1:250). On an inner esoteric level, Jesus' life stages of birth, baptism, transfiguration, crucifixion and resurrection represent an opening up into an ever-increasing and expanding awareness of the inner Christ, culminating in full Christ consciousness (F18:6:1)²⁰. One participant wrote:

If this Easter Story is the record of historical events, as Christians deem it to be, it relates a most wonderful happening. But it is much more than that. In the Divine Wisdom teachings of pre-Christian ages, carefully preserved and guarded from the knowledge of all but a privileged few, the stages of development through which the human spirit must pass in its upward struggle towards the Light are portrayed as the Initiate's Path. They include the phases of experience recognisable as Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Ascension Day. So that the events of Easter week were not only historical fulfilment of prophecy according to Hebrew and Christian tradition, but a Great Demonstration of fundamental spiritual laws and mystical principles that are divinely revealed to the highly evolved souls of all ages.

To initiates who have reached a certain stage of spiritual evolution, there comes a moment when, on account of the spiritual power they are able to exercise as Teachers or Healers, they are recognised as having a divine mission. Such a one 'rides in procession' and is acclaimed as a soul in the state of God-realisation. Reborn of the spirit, he perceives his divine nature; but fully to realise that nature he must also 'put off the old man', and this is the experience enacted on Good Friday, good only in the sense that during its tragic course, the complete purification of consciousness is attained (F30:1:9-10).

Jesus was variously seen as a 'world teacher who represented God on this plane' (T28:1B:355); a 'fully conscious being in Christ' (F18:6:1); 'a particular incarnation of God on earth' (T11:1B:158); 'a member of the Order of Melchizedek' (F18:10:36); 'a channel for Maitreya under whom he serves in the Spiritual Hierarchy' (F18:1:9); and 'a Being who best manifested the great glory of Christ' (T30:2B:015).

What all participants, bar one, had in common, was the rejection of the notion of vicarious atonement. 'Everyone is responsible for healing the broken contract - this no-one can do for him - not even Jesus' (F18:62:1). Nevertheless, Jesus was clearly

deeply respected by all participants, but only as an example of a highly evolved human being who should not be worshipped (T25:1B:274)²¹, but emulated (T11:1B:164). Spangler (1977: 83) expresses this notion well when he writes:

Two thousand-odd years ago this being took incarnation upon the Earth and manifested himself through a human vehicle for the purpose of demonstrating the potentiality inherent within each individual. He was the prototype or the expression of the reality of the Christ consciousness which is inherent in us all.

In *A course in miracles*, Jesus is reported as saying 'I was not "punished" because you were bad' (ACIM 1985 I: 32), and:

I have been correctly referred to as 'the lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world', but those who represent the lamb as blood-stained do not understand the meaning of the symbol. Correctly understood, it is a very simple symbol that speaks of my innocence. The lion and the lamb lying down together symbolize that strength and innocence are not in conflict, but naturally live in peace. 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God' is another way of saying the same thing (ACIM 1985 I: 33).

The one participant who apparently deviated from these views believed that Jesus forgave sins and that Jesus, as Christ, atoned for humans' sins (T29:1B:070). This, however, did not prevent him from subscribing to the law of karma. When questioned further, it became clear that this person believed that Jesus provided a way which could soften the harsh effects of karma, but that he could not, or would not, cancel one's karmic debt.

This person's view seemed to reflect some confusion regarding karma, grace and vicarious atonement. This highlights the syncretistic beliefs to which many participants subscribe - new components such as the law of karma are combined with the remnants of discarded worldviews in an attempt to accommodate only those tenets of the different systems which appeal to the individual.²²

With reference to the relationship between Jesus and the Christ, participants usually regarded them as two separate entities who temporarily functioned as one (T28:1B:355) 2 000 years ago. 'Jesus is a fully conscious Being in Christ' writes one participant, 'who came to kindle the remembrance of Christhood in all of Humanity' (F18:6:1). The man Jesus was overshadowed by the Christ, who took complete charge of the personality of Jesus. When Jesus was crucified the spirit of Christ had departed and it was Jesus, the son of man, and not the Christ, who was crucified (F30:1:11).²³

Another person pointed out that 'Jesus came to demonstrate that he could be put to death in a gruesome manner, and still walk away unscathed' (T25:1B:247).²⁴ This echoes Goldsmith (1968: 49) who writes that Jesus chose corporeal death in order to demonstrate to his disciples that death is not an experience, but an illusory sense that must be understood and seen through.²⁵ This person was the one who stated that Jesus had said: 'I must go otherwise I cannot bring you the Comforter - the comforter being the Christ' (T25:1B:269) (see 5.2.2 d). According to *A course in miracles*, which this participant studies, humans can communicate through the Comforter with the Absolute, which does seem to allocate a mediatory role to Jesus as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit (ACIM 1985 I: 215).

A number of channellers presently claim to channel Jesus, as he is said to continue assisting humanity in its evolutionary process. One such a person is Virginia Essene, whose work is quite well known among New Agers in South Africa since some of it has been disseminated through networking, and a number of articles on her work have appeared in New Age publications in this country.

From the above discussion it appears that one of the major differences between orthodox Christianity and the New Age movement centres around the person of Jesus. Whereas mainstream Christians believe in salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus, New Agers primarily regard him as a prototype of human destiny.

5.2.6 The Christ

a The nature of the Christ

Eight of the participants referred to the Christ in their discussions of the concept of God. An interesting aspect of this response is that, of the twenty people who referred to Jesus (twelve persons) and the Christ (eight persons) only four mentioned both. These twenty were generally participants who had been influenced by the Theosophical teachings (especially the Bailey teachings) and *A course in miracles*.

It was pointed out earlier that in the Theosophical teachings 'the Christ' is a title (like 'President') and that for the last 4 000 years the Christ has been the Lord Maitreya (T14:1B:121). Participants' descriptions and comments on the Christ included the following: 'Christ is a powerful and incomprehensible Cosmic Being' (F18:6:1); 'Christ is the creator that contains all of creation and ensouls all of creation' (understood in this way, all in creation are 'Christians' or 'Beings of Love' whether the awareness of this high estate is present or not) (F18:6:1); 'Christ is the "son" in the Holy Trinity' (F18:6:1); 'Christ lives as a mighty spiritual presence in the

world, guiding and sustaining His people' (F8:3:1); 'he is the way to the Father' (F18:67:6); 'humans are not saved through Christ' (T7:1:395); 'the divinity which was manifest in Christ is gradually being unfolded in every man' (F8:3:1); 'Christ is the head of all religions' (T12:1:293); 'the ever-increasing and expanded awareness of the Inner Christ can culminate in full Christ consciousness' (F18:6:1); 'the Cosmic Christ comes again and again' (T17:1:160); 'the reappearance of the Christ is widely expected throughout the world at this time' (F18:6:4); and, 'the orthodox churches are delaying the return of the Christ' (F25:8:24).

Most of the above statements reflect aspects of the Theosophical teachings. A number of important themes in this regard will receive attention. However, the place of the Christ in the spiritual hierarchy should first be established. In the hierarchy, the Solar Logos is followed by the Lord of the World (Sanat Kumara). Then follows a triumvirate who act 'as the primary recipients of the Will of God, transmitted from Shamballa'. These entities are known as the Three Lords of Activity. They are, firstly, the Lord of Will and Purpose (the 'Manu' of the Eastern races), Lord of the Races; secondly, the Lord of Love-Wisdom (the 'Bodhisattva'), the Christ, or World Teacher; and thirdly, the Lord of Intelligence (the 'Mahachohan'), the Lord of Civilisation (T4:2:106ff; Juriaanse 1985: 192).

Only the Lord of Love-Wisdom who is the World Teacher and the Christ will receive attention here. According to Juriaanse (1985: 193), the Lord of Love-Wisdom is said to be

the Great Being known by the Christian religions as the *Christ*; in the East the same Entity is known as the *Bodhisattva* or the *Lord Maitreya*, and the Mohammedans name him the *Iman Madhi* - all these nations or religions actually referring to the same Being, and doing so with the same veneration, but under a different name. It is the Christ who has been the Leader of mankind since about 600 B.C.; it is the Christ who two thousand years ago availed himself of the body in which the initiate Jesus had been incarnated a few years before, and it is this Teacher of humanity who is expected to reappear among men within the near future, to lead them to redemption.

The Lord of Love-Wisdom is assisted by senior master Koot Hoomi (the entity with whom Madame Blavatsky claimed the most frequent communication).

'The Christ', explained one participant, 'is actively concerned in awakening the Christ principle in man and [developing] him into a Christed being' (T30:2B:007). Juriaanse (1985: 212-213) summarises the teachings of the Christ as follows:

... the Christ-principle is present within all humans; the keynote of spiritual life is loving service to fellow beings; everyone who is truly inspired by the divine spirit are children of God, despite the religious tradition to which they belong; the task of the World Teacher is to unite all nations and races into a single, loving and serving humanity; this united humanity will be held together by One World Religion.

This passage leads our enquiry to the expected reappearance of the Christ, when these prophecies will come to fruition.

b The reappearance of the Christ

Although this topic did not figure strongly in the interviews, the critical literature on the New Age movement has elevated this aspect to a central position. It is therefore dealt with more thoroughly than warranted by its salience among participants. Only five participants referred to the second coming of the Christ. One remarked that the Christ repeatedly returned to this sphere in order to help humanity (T17:1:160) and another suggested that the reappearance of the Christ is widely expected at this time (F18:6:4). The reappearance of the Christ was usually seen in concrete physical terms, although two participants interpreted this event in esoteric terms.

(i) Historical exoteric interpretation

In the early 1920s the Tibetan (who channelled through Alice Bailey) prophesied the reappearance of the Christ. We are told that in the 1940s, the Christ finally decided that he would return to earth in physical form. Bailey (or DK, the Tibetan, through Bailey) (1969: 30-31) explained:

Today (1947), humanity stands at a peculiar and unique middle point, between an unhappy past, and a future which is full of promise if the reappearance of the Christ is recognised, and preparation for His coming is undertaken. The present is full of promise and also full of difficulty; in the hands of human beings today, and in the immediate present, lies the destiny of the world and - if it may be reverently said - the immediate activity of the Christ. The agony of the war, and the distress of the entire human family, led the Christ, in the year 1945, to come to a great decision - a decision which found expression in two most important statements. He announced to the assembled spiritual Hierarchy and to all His servants and disciples on Earth, that He had decided to emerge again into physical contact with humanity, *if* they would bring about the initial stages of establishing right human rela-

tions; secondly, He gave to the world - for the use of the 'man in the street' - one of the oldest prayers ever known, but one which hitherto had not been permitted to be used except by the most exalted spiritual Beings.

At present the return of the Christ is, according to Juriaanse (1985: 214), being delayed by the virulent forces of hate, selfishness, greed and desire, which continue, to a large extent, to dominate relationships between people and nations. One participant suggested that the orthodox Christian churches are to blame for the delay in the second coming (T18:6:1).

It is this prophecy of Bailey that led Benjamin Creme (a follower of the Bailey teachings), in April 1982, to proclaim the reappearance of the Christ in a newspaper advertisement (see 4.3.3). Creme announced that he had been chosen to bring this message to humankind. According to him, the Lord Maitreya, the Christ, is alive and living in London from where his presence will soon be made known. Once this happens, war and hunger will soon come to an end and all religions will be united. Creme (1986: 12) has subsequently revealed that the Christ's emergence has been postponed owing to humanity's non-responsiveness to the Christ's presence.

Bailey (1969: 45) points out that, strictly speaking, the Christ cannot *return*, because he has never left this earth. He has always been here, watching over the spiritual destiny of humanity. In the coming years those individuals who are sensitive to the presence of the Christ principle will become aware, not only of his presence, but also of the love and light that are being radiated to humanity (Juriaanse 1985: 215). The following rather lengthy quotation from Bailey (1969: 55) gives DK's account of certain facts surrounding the reappearance of the Christ:

[The Christ must now] come forth and take His place prominently on the world stage; take His part in the great drama which is there being played. This time He will play His part, not in obscurity as He previously did, but before the eyes of the entire world. Because of the smallness of our little planet, and because of the prevalence of the radio, of television, and the rapidity of communication, His part will be watched by all, and the prospect must surely, for Him, hold certain horror, must present its tests and major adjustments, plus painful and unavoidable experience. He does not come as the omnipotent God of man's ignorant creation, but as the Christ, the Founder of the Kingdom of God on Earth, to complete the work He started, and again to demonstrate divinity in far more difficult circumstances. ...

He comes to correct the mistakes and the misrepresentations of those who have dared to interpret His simple words in terms of their own ignorance, and to recognise those whose faithful service has made His return possible.

Bailey (1969: 19) points out that the Christ may appear in his physical manifestation as a member of virtually any nationality or religion. He will, furthermore, not come to restore any of the 'ancient religions, including Christianity', but he will come to restore humankind's faith in the Father's love, the livingness of the Christ, and the brotherhood of humankind. Neither, says another South African student of the Ageless Wisdom, is he coming 'to save humanity from the results of its own sins, but once more to show humanity how to save itself in the new conditions and new opportunities with which the world is faced' (Crawford 1990: 163).

Juriaanse (1985: 215) summarises the unique events that are expected once the Christ has inaugurated the New Age. He says that the coming of the Christ will be preceded by the externalisation of the hierarchy, and although the general public is not aware of this, it is presently taking place through two processes, namely incarnation and overshadowing of individuals. Ultimately, says the author, the New Age will be characterised by goodwill, peace and better human relations, which will lead to one humanity under the direction of the Christ and the members of the hierarchy. Much of what is old, outworn, false, decadent and redundant will have to be removed in the coming years.

Although the Forces of Darkness are employing humans as instruments of evil to oppose the recognition of the Christ, this will prove to be a vain attempt, since, says Juriaanse (1985: 217), there has never been any question about the Christ's eventual 'return'.

(ii) Inner esoteric interpretation

Some participants interpreted the second coming of the Christ in an esoteric manner. 'The second coming', said one, 'is the awakening of humanity into soul awareness' (F18:6:5).

This corresponds with the view of David Spangler who suggests that the 'birth of the Christ is occurring ... all about us now' (1977: 127), and that this 'is the age of the birth of the Christ in the heart of humanity (1977: 140). Just as the New Age is not a temporal event, the rebirth of Christ is something that occurs in the hearts of people and externalises the Christ and the New Age. Lazaris (through Pursel 1988: 57) maintains that 'the Second Coming is a personal revelation of the Christ Consciousness within', and in similar vein Matthew Fox (1988: 240) interprets the second coming as the coming of the Cosmic Christ who will usher in a renaissance and a subsequent age of wisdom. He writes:

If the Cosmic Christ has the power to come again in the hearts, minds, and bodies of the humans on this planet, then surely that Christ will come as wisdom awakened, sought after, and celebrated. The Cosmic Christ *is* the 'pattern that connects' and connecting is what all wisdom is about ... (Fox 1988: 240).

And *A course in miracles* teaches that the second coming

means nothing more than the end of the ego's rule and the healing of the mind. I was created like you in the first (coming of Christ which is creation), and I have called you to join me in the second (ACIM 1985 I: 58).

It is therefore obvious that not all believers in the imminent reappearance of the Christ interpret this as a tangible event.

5.2.7 Holy Spirit

Only three participants referred to the Holy Spirit in discussing the concept of God. One (a member of the Liberal Catholic Church) explained that the Holy Spirit was the third emanation of God and also represented the feminine principle (T8:1:563). He explained that:

God manifests in His universe as a Trinity, called the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons in one God, co-equal and co-eternal; the Father, the cause of all, the Son, the Word, who was made flesh and dwelt among us, the Holy Spirit, the life-giver, the inspirer and sanctifier (F8:3:1).

This participant likened the Christian trinity to the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Shiva and Krishna (actually the triad idea of God in Hinduism consists of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva - Krishna being one of the avatars of Vishnu). According to this participant the Holy Spirit is the creator, and therefore coincides with the Hindu creator-god Brahma (T8:1:500).

The second participant (in the Theosophical tradition) agreed that the trinity consists of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, although she equated the trinity with the three aspects of the Solar Logos, namely the Will (the Father), Love-Wisdom (the Son) and Active Intelligence (the Mother) (T18:1:9).

The third person (representing the teachings of *A course in miracles*) referred to the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, but did not elaborate any further. In these teachings

the Holy Spirit (or the Comforter) is the teacher who leads the individual to God and knowledge (ACIM 1985 I: 97, 184).

It is apparent that the Holy Spirit is not a concept that figures strongly in participants' views, although there were frequent references to God as being 'spirit', which could perhaps be construed as references to a Holy Spirit.

5.2.8 Conclusion

By way of summary it can therefore be stated that the majority of New Ager who participated in this study adhere to a panentheistic perception of God, since God is seen as both transcendent and as immanent *and* humans are seen as co-creators of God. Consequently the ideal-type New Ager can be described as a panentheist.

Although God is often regarded as beyond description, many participants nevertheless attempted verbal depictions. Both the apophatic and kataphatic types of religious knowing are therefore present, but in most cases there appears to be a synthesis of the traditions. It is also significant that the feminine aspect of God is acknowledged despite the fact that one of the most frequent metaphors employed in respect of God is that of 'father'.

The relationship between God and human beings as co-creators of the future is emphasised by most participants and forms an important component in the make-up of the constructed type. The concept of a spiritual hierarchy, with the Christ as an important entity in this hierarchy, is part of the belief systems of about half of the respondents, once again indicating the profound influence of the Theosophical tradition on the movement - another noteworthy characteristic of the South African New Ager.

5.3 COSMOLOGY

In the introduction to this chapter it was stated that the pivotal element in the New Age worldview is the concept of oneness, wholeness, or holism. In considering the cosmology of New Ager one finds that this element is complemented by another of almost equal significance, namely evolution. Together these concepts are the mainstay of the cosmological dimension of the new consciousness. It will become clear that both these themes are integral to New Ager's perspectives regarding the nature of the universe and of this world in particular.

Cosmic oneness, change and development are principles that have frequently appeared in the various components of the alternative tradition and that are

indigenous to the eastern philosophies. The rise and recent popularisation of quantum physics have, however, also exerted an influence on the most prevalent forms of New Age cosmology. The new physics is of tremendous significance in the literature, but references to the new science by participants in this study were always casual, superficial and lacking in detail - understandably, perhaps, in view of the complexity of the subject. However, it was obvious that participants interpreted the new scientific discoveries as having authenticated the cosmological insights of the alternative tradition and of eastern religions.

During the interviews it became clear that there was some diversity of opinion with regard to the nature of the cosmos and the relationship between humans, the cosmos and God. Two-thirds of the participants endorsed an evolutionary theory with regard to the universe, and about half viewed the universe as hierarchically structured. While only two individuals propounded the Unified Field theory of Transcendental Meditation, about half stressed the unity and interrelatedness which this theory implies. One person endorsed the Tree of Life cosmology of the Kabbalah, and two subscribed to the notion of the physical realm as illusory. Only the most prevalent theories will be discussed in this section.

5.3.1 The nature of the universe

a The universe as a manifestation of God

A number of participants put forward variations on the concept that the universe is the bodily manifestation of God (T11:1:335; T3:1:448). One described it as 'the manifestation of the consciousness of a Great Being' (F18:67:1) whom the participant later identified as the Christ (T18:2:335), and another remarked that 'everything that exists came from out of God and is a manifestation of God' (T3:1:272). Another wrote:

The Great Architect of the Universe, the eternal Lord of All, is continually outpouring creative power - Life, manifesting throughout innumerable forms of expression, material and non-material. The great solar systems, suns, stars and planets, down to minute cells and atoms - from the Macrocosm to the Microcosm - all are manifestations of Himself (F30:2:57).

This idea is well represented in New Age literature. Gina Cerminara (1978: 227), in a summary of the view of the highly influential prophet, Edgar Cayce, writes that: 'All the manifest universe is an expression of the Creative Energy of the Universe; in which we live and move and have our being', and Manley Palmer Hall (1979: 18),

exponent of the Ancient Wisdom teachings, explains that forms, whether electrons or suns, are 'temporary manifestations of eternal forces' and he adds, 'the world is the Real made form.'

Christian theologian Sallie McFague, in her book *Models of God* (1988: 77ff), points out that the metaphor of the world as the 'body of God' does not reduce God to the world. Humans can distance themselves from and speak of their bodies, which implies that they are more than their bodies; in similar fashion, God is also more than a body. Analogous to human bodies, however, God's body is also vulnerable and at risk, since other factors besides God's care influence its wellbeing. Humans may choose to care for or neglect and destroy this body of God, and in this model of the immanent God, God is thus seen as suffering with and through humans. This interpretation aptly reflects many of the participants' views and furthermore accounts for their ecological concern.

b The universe as illusion

In contrast, one participant claimed that she had 'received an impartation to the effect that God is not with mortals' (F25:1:2), by which she meant that God is not in this imperfect reality. 'God did not make anything perishable otherwise he would not be God' and 'an infinite creator's work will not decay or cause pain' (T25:1B:118). This everyday reality is an illusion, 'a nightmare', and 'God is not in it' (T25:2:094). 'Adam', said the person, 'fell asleep and had a horrible nightmare' (T25:1B:274). As was pointed out in a previous section (3.3.1 b xxvi), this notion can be traced to, inter alia, the work of Joel S Goldsmith (1968: 3) of *The Infinite Way*, who says much the same: 'Everything that is taking place in this world of ours is taking place only because there is no God in the human scene'. This view is also found in the teachings of *A course in miracles*, in which we read:

The world you see is an illusion of a world. God did not create it, for what He creates must be eternal as Himself (ACIM 1985 III: 81)

and

... the Bible says that a deep sleep fell upon Adam, and nowhere is there reference to his waking up. ...Only after the deep sleep fell upon Adam could he experience nightmares (ACIM 1985 I: 15)

and

If this were the real world, God *would* be cruel. For no Father could subject his children to this as the price of salvation and *be* loving. *Love does not kill to save* (ACIM 1985 I: 220).

The similarities between this view and the *advaita vedanta* system of the Hindu sage Sankara (788-820 CE), as well as the teachings of many of the gnostic schools in the first three centuries, are striking. For instance, in the gnostic scripture, *The Gospel of Truth* (Layton 1987: 250ff), the author emphasises the illusory quality of the material world. If the disciple would wake up from the nightmare in which he or she lives, the illusion of this reality would fade away into nothingness.

c Energy as the stuff of the universe

'All that is, is energy in a constant state of vibration' declared one participant (F18:1:2), and, explained another:

Science has already gone a long way towards proving that matter is, in the final analysis, energy. All substance is, so we are informed, made up of atoms. Further, when the atoms are broken down, matter ceases to be - therefore it is now agreed that the whole physical universe exists in a sea of multiplex energies (F30:2:114).

This presumably refers to Einstein's famous formula which revealed that energy and matter are different forms of the same thing. This idea is embedded in the Ageless Wisdom and Theosophical traditions, and Juriaanse (1985: 17) writes of this energy:

... the whole Universe, with all it embraces, consists of *Energy* - energy in its myriad forms of manifestation; energy freely moving in space, supporting the celestial bodies, and at the same time the carriers of those powers and forces which interrelate everything in the universal system, synthesising it all into the *One Whole*.

This energy is in constant movement and therefore nothing in the universe ever remains unchanged. In time, says Juriaanse (1985: 28-9), energy becomes bound into form by a process of involution, whereafter it changes during a process of evolution. When, however, the form has served its purpose, withdrawal of energy (or devolution), sets in and the energy is released to continue on its cyclic path. In line with this perception, some participants pointed out that the universe and humankind have arrived at their present state through involution and that it is through the

process of evolution that both can return to their Source (T18:2:129). This Source of energy is described by Juriaanse (1985: 35) thus:

The nature and origin of Primordial Energy, the Will of the Almighty, will forever remain an obscure and incomprehensible secret to the human mind, but apparently the potency of this fundamental energy is such that with direct contact it would annihilate any material form known to man. According to the Ageless Wisdom, this Primordial energy successively passes through a series of Celestial Entities or Bodies, during which process the energy becomes subdivided and dispersed to such an extent that it is considerably moderated before it ever reaches our solar system.

This brings us to the notion of the rays of energy which Alice Bailey and her spirit guide taught. One participant who had been influenced by the Theosophical tradition explained:

The universe is the physical manifestation of the present creation and is only the outer manifestation of a complex of worlds in worlds on levels of higher and higher vibration. Each world of frequency is populated by beings of spirit which coincide with the frequency of that world. [These worlds] ... are controlled by highly developed spiritual beings of the Hierarchies or Spiritual Orders, e.g. The Order of Melchisedek which controls the Earth system and in which Jesus is a member as the world teacher (F18:1:2).

Juriaanse (1985: 35) explains that this energy manifests in different forms and will eventually be resolved into unbound energy, but until then it is influenced and supported by streams of energy of many grades, qualities and potencies. These streams or rays of energy are reticulated on a septenary basis: each of the seven primary rays passes through a higher life where it is split up into seven subsidiary rays which permeate and influence every form along their path of progress. A participant explained that the seven rays are classified into two groups: the first three are the major, and the next four the minor rays.

The major rays are 'Rays of Aspect':

Ray 1 : The Ray of Will or Power

Ray 11 : The Ray of Love-Wisdom

Ray 111 : The Ray of Activity, Adaptability, Intelligence

The minor rays are 'Rays of Attribute':

Ray 1V : The Ray of Harmony, Beauty, Art or Unity

Ray V : The Ray of Concrete Knowledge or Science

Ray VI : The Ray of Abstract Idealism or Devotion

Ray VII : The Ray of Ceremonial Law or Magic (T12:1:426ff).

These rays are said to determine the evolution of every living form, and during each life cycle one of the major rays will exert a predominant influence. It is believed that the dominating ray of this solar system is the second ray (of love-wisdom) and, says Juriaanse (1985: 39), 'these two basic principles of Love and Wisdom are the main guiding and controlling powers underlying the functioning of our whole system, determining both the Quality and Purpose of our Deity'. Therefore, every life form in this solar system is governed by love and wisdom, and the influences of the other rays, although not absent, are secondary to the all embracing ray of love-wisdom.

Some participants (also in the Theosophical tradition) further suggested that the universe is multilevelled. They distinguished seven planes of existence which constitute the cosmic physical plane, which in turn is the lowest of seven cosmic planes. This lower cosmic physical plane is divided into physical and spiritual planes. The physical planes include the physical and etheric plane, the emotional or astral plane and the mental plane. The spiritual planes start with the plane of the soul or the Buddhic plane, followed by the spiritual or Atmic plane, then by the Monadic plane, and finally by the highest plane, said to be that of the Divine (F18:1:8-10). Humanity as a whole is presently said to be situated between the mental and Buddhic planes although some individuals are at the fringe of the Buddhic plane (T4:1B:157).

The existence of subtle or psychic spheres beyond the physical realm was generally accepted by the participants, and some claimed to have had experiences of these realms (see 6.2.1 e). All psychic experiences, for instance clairvoyance, clairaudience, mental telepathy and precognition, are said to represent experiences of these psychic realms. The faculty for psychic experience is said to have been lost by most westerners, but today more and more people are recovering it.²⁶

d Interrelatedness

In the Ageless Wisdom tradition it is believed that although all energy originates from the One Source, it has differentiated into a number of subsidiary streams and reaches the planet from many secondary sources which all have their own distinct attributes (Juriaanse 1985: 31). Furthermore, every atom is clothed in an etheric body or aura, and any combination of atoms that manifests in a myriad of forms is similarly equipped. The etheric body both encloses the form and interpenetrates it with an intricate network. This network is responsible for the interchange of

energies and is the element which synthesises all of creation into one interdependent whole. One participant explained that 'there is a Golden Rule which refers to the unity of life - the one life that is God. Whatever happens to one part affects all the parts' (F18:9:1). This echoes Juriaanse (1985: 34), who points out that 'whatever happens to any one part of the system, must inevitably be reflected by a reaction of a corresponding nature somewhere in the remaining part of the whole.' This notion is of course also similar to the holomovement theory postulated by David Bohm (see 3.3.4). However, this universal law applies to both the macrocosm and the microcosm. Therefore, says Juriaanse (1985: 34):

In his [man's] daily existence this means that every single thought fostered in the mind, every action that is taken, whether deliberate, accidental or involuntary, has been triggered by some prior activity, vibration or influence. Furthermore every such action *must* inevitably be followed by a corresponding repercussion in the surrounding etheric sphere, and these vibrations must again be demonstrated by some effect on physical, astral, mental or spiritual levels either separately or combined: the *Law of Cause and Effect* or *Karma*.

The above exposition reflects the influence of the Bailey teachings, but the notion of interrelatedness was also widespread in the group of participants who had not, apparently, been influenced by the Theosophical tradition. The notions of wholeness, interrelatedness, interpenetration and unity in diversity that were stressed by these participants derived from other sources such as the religious teachings of the east, or interpretations of the new discoveries and theories in physics, especially the work of physicist David Bohm (1981; 1985) and authors Fritjof Capra (1975) and Gary Zukav (1979) (see 3.3.4). Thus Bohm (1980: 19-20) writes:

In the very early phases of the development of civilization, man's views were essentially of wholeness rather than of fragmentation. In the East (especially in India) such views still survive, in the sense that philosophy and religion emphasize wholeness and imply the futility of analysis of the world into parts. Why, then, do we not drop our fragmentary Western approach and adopt these Eastern notions which include not only a world view that denies division and fragmentation but also techniques of meditation that lead the whole process of mental operation non-verbally to the sort of quiet state of orderly and smooth flow needed to end fragmentation both in the actual process of thought and in its contents?

Capra (1975: 134) also refers to the eastern mystical tradition in which the mind is stilled through meditation and the basic unity of the universe is experienced. He quotes Ashvaghosha, as translated by Suzuki:

Entering into the *samadhi* of purity, [one obtains the] all penetrating insight that enables one to become conscious of the absolute oneness of the universe (quoted in Capra 1975: 134).

And, somewhat tongue in cheek, Zukav (1979: 272) observes:

Bell's theorem tells us that there is no such thing as 'separate parts'. All of the 'parts' of the universe are connected in an intimate and immediate way previously claimed only by mystics and other scientifically objectionable people.

The views of the Ancient Wisdom and Theosophical traditions, as well as those of the eastern philosophies and the new physics, are transmitted by leading New Age figures who are widely read and respected by New Age followers, although they themselves have not had any contact with the original works. For instance, Sir George Trevelyan (1984: 7), father of the New Age movement in Britain, writes:

The spiritual world view is a vision of wholeness, an apprehension of the essential unity of all life. ... there is a deepening conviction that the whole is alive and is the work of Mind, of some Intelligence. Behind all outwardly manifested form is a timeless realm of absolute consciousness. It is the great Oneness underlying all the diversity, all the myriad forms of nature.

And Spangler (1984: 42) writes of the holistic vision:

This is the awareness that all life is interrelated and interdependent, that the formative elements of creation are not bits of matter but relationships, and that evolution is the emergence of ever more complex patterns and syntheses of relationships. A contemporary Jesuit theologian, Thomas Berry, puts it that 'every atomic particle is present to every other atomic particle in an inseparable unity, a unity that enables us to say that the volume of each atom is the volume of the universe'.

e Evolution

Evolution is one of the most important aspects of New Age cosmology, but it should be noted that in contrast to Darwinian theory, New Age evolutionists commonly introduce some integrating and teleological force of 'Mind' or 'Intention'.

To place humanity in perspective, some participants referred to the enormous time span involved in the process of creation issuing in the world as we know it. A leaflet disseminated by Greenpeace (and sent to me by an interviewee) summarises the remarks of many participants:

Planet Earth is 4 600 million years old. If we condense this inconceivable time span into an understandable concept, we can liken the Earth to a person of 46 years of age. Nothing is known of the first seven years of this person's life. Only scattered information exists about the middle span, but we know that only at the age of 42 did the Earth begin to flower. Dinosaurs and the great reptiles did not appear until one year ago when the planet was 45. Mammals arrived only eight months ago. In the middle of last week man-like apes evolved into ape-like men, and at the weekend the last ice age enveloped the Earth. Modern man has been around for 4 hours. During the last hour man discovered agriculture. The industrial revolution began a minute ago, and during those sixty minutes (sic) of biological time, modern man has made a rubbish dump of paradise. He has multiplied his numbers to plague proportions, caused the extinction of 500 species of animals, ransacked the planet for fuels, and now stands like a brutish infant, gloating over his meteoric rise to ascendancy, on the brink of war to end all wars, and of effectively destroying this oasis of life in the solar system (F18:12:4).

Approximately two-thirds of the respondents subscribed to the idea that the universe is in a dynamic process of becoming. Creation, it was felt, was not an event but a process. But, contrary to the pessimistic scenario sketched in the Greenpeace document above, more than half believed that this evolutionary process was in an upward spiral towards 'the good' (T24:2:107). In general this approach parallels that of Teilhard de Chardin with his theory of evolution towards the Omega point. Bede Griffiths (1989) points out the similarities between this and Sri Aurobindo's view that we are presently evolving from mental consciousness (dualistic, mental consciousness) to 'supermental' consciousness (which corresponds with Teilhard's Omega point). He says: 'The Supermind is the supreme manifestation of the ultimate Reality, which acts upon the whole creation, bringing it to fulfilment (Griffiths 1989: 93).

Although a significant number of participants thought there was an ordered blueprint according to which the universe evolves (F8:1:12) (eg the Plan in the Bailey teachings), most agreed that the process of evolution could be delayed (T4:1B:105) and a few considered it possible that the actions of human beings could reverse its direction from ascent to descent (T10:1:484). There was therefore agreement among the participants that the evolutionary process does not follow a strictly determined route but responds to the effect of humanity's free will. This view of people as co-creators with God is discussed more fully in the next chapter on anthropology (see 6.2.1 c). On the whole, God's role in the evolutionary process is

therefore seen to be evocative and not controlling. This resembles postmodern process thinking, which postulates that humans participate in the creation of the ever-evolving universe (Cobb & Griffin 1976).

Notwithstanding the prevalence of the concept of evolution amongst the participants, few demonstrated any knowledge of the evolutionary theories that have influenced the New Age movement in the United States, like the theories of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and James Lovelock. However, since secondary literature on the subject abounds, and it was obvious that most of the participants had been in contact with these ideas, they deserve brief mention.

Popular New Age author Barbara Marx Hubbard (1982)²⁷, distinguishes six characteristics of evolution. Although not all six features were emphasised by the interviewees, Hubbard's ideas in this regard (1982: 104) are shared by most New Age groups and provide an overview of important facets of the evolutionary theory. Firstly, she holds that 'quantum transformations are traditional', which means that nature has always created newness through the synthesis of different parts, which produces more complex patterns. This principle is basic to New Agers' evolutionary theories. Secondly, 'problems are evolutionary drivers' which stimulate dormant potential and result in new approaches to old problems. This view probably accounts for the attitude of some participants who were not unduly perturbed by the global crisis, since this meant that the resolution of the problems could not be far off (T12:1:273). Thirdly, Hubbard postulates that 'design innovations with a technological substrate are at the basis of every quantum change.' Just as language and symbols have led to quantum change, so human-made technologies are now providing the physical form for a quantum leap which will transform humans into co-creative beings who will assume godlike tasks. Fourthly, holism 'is inherent in the nature of reality.' Holistic tendencies are seen in operation in the new levels of integration stemming from the planetary perspective that is emerging among human beings. Fifthly, 'evolution is a consciousness and freedom raising experience.' Through the ages nature has produced ever more conscious beings and humans have now arrived 'at the first age of Conscious Evolution' and 'can co-create the future of evolution on Earth.' Lastly, 'evolution proceeds by long periods of incremental change punctuated by sudden shifts, radical changes.' According to Hubbard (1982: 105) and many of the participants in this study, humanity 'seems to be on the verge of such a sudden shift.'

One dissenting voice came from a participant who was strenuously opposed to any idea of process as far as God is concerned. She repeatedly remarked that 'God did not create through process' and that 'anything that has followed a process is not of God' (T25:1B:433). This person follows the teachings of *A course in miracles* (1985) and views this world as an illusion. Since the course teaches that God is not subject

to change and therefore nothing God creates is subject to change, it is held that anything involving change or process is not of God and therefore illusory.

5.3.2 The nature of the planet

a Astrology and earth changes

In discussing the nature of this world, the notions of astrological influence on the planet and the interrelatedness of all life on earth and in the universe were stressed by participants. Human responsibility with regard to the planet was often emphasised, but this is examined in the next chapter (6.2.2 b).

As seen in chapters three and four, the theory that the planet is moving from one astrologically determined energy field to another is ubiquitous and is one of the cohesive factors in this movement. It is widely accepted that new energies are being received on earth as it moves into the sphere of influence of the Aquarian sector (see 7.2.2 c).

Another opinion held in regard to the earth is the expectation of certain earth changes (see 4.3.1). There was some mention of the civilisations of Atlantis and Lemuria (T6:1B:227) which crumbled because of a clash between the forces of Light and Darkness, and some participants expected catastrophic earth changes which will involve the submergence of large land masses beneath the ocean and the simultaneous eruption of new land from the ocean floor (T6:1B:227). Although the legends of Atlantis and Lemuria were not given prominence during the interviews, some participants obviously accepted these as historical facts. Apart from the well-known Greek myths about Atlantis, Madame Blavatsky and the New Age prophet Edgar Cayce revitalised, adapted and popularised these old legends. One of the participants suggested that the submerged Atlantis had some connection with the mysterious Bermuda triangle where aircraft and ships have disappeared without a trace (T6:1B:451).

b The Gaia hypothesis

Participants who chose to discuss the new ideas about this planet that are currently taking shape, all stressed that the earth is a living organism (T7:1B:309), of which humanity is an integral part. 'I am only one cell in the body of the universe', remarked one participant (T1:1:226).²⁸

This perception of the earth as a living organism is referred to as the 'Gaia hypothesis' and was first expounded by James Lovelock.^{29 30} Gaia, or Ge, is the name the ancient Greeks gave to the earth, which was conceived of in vaguely per-

sonal terms as a goddess or Earth Mother. In terms of the Gaia hypothesis, the earth is thought of as 'a self-regulating and self-sustaining system, continually adjusting its chemical, physical and biological processes in order to maintain the optimum conditions for life and its continued evolution' (Russell 1982: 12). Spangler (1984: 44) quotes James Lovelock as maintaining:

The entire range of living matter on Earth, from whales to viruses and from oaks to algae could be regarded as constituting a single living entity, capable of manipulating the Earth's atmosphere to suit its overall needs and endowed with faculties and power far beyond those of its constituent parts.

An interesting aspect of Lovelock's hypotheses concerns Gaia's self-regulating capacities. He differs from the majority of New Agers, who condemn environmental pollution (which he does not consider excessive), but instead criticises practices that threaten the regulation of the climate. He warns:

The maladies of Gaia do not last long in terms of her life span. Anything that makes the world uncomfortable to live in tends to induce the evolution of those species that can achieve a new and more comfortable environment. It follows that, if the world is made unfit by what we do, there is the probability of a change in regime to one that will be better for life but not necessarily better for us (Lovelock 1988: 178).

In his gripping book *The awakening Earth*, Peter Russell (1982) surveys the history of evolution from the big bang in which, it is said, the universe was born from a gigantic fireball which cooled to form the primordial galaxies and stars. Following this birth of matter from energy came the birth of life from matter, and finally the birth of self-reflective consciousness. Russell points out that the universe presently contains characteristics which were not present at the beginning. He speculates that 'one of the principal trends of evolution is a movement towards increasing complexity' (Russell 1982: 47).³¹

Some participants suggested that humankind had for a long time abused its responsibility to the planet. It was suggested that if people did not begin to grasp the interrelatedness of humankind and the earth, they would ultimately destroy their home (T6:1B:165). One participant even asserted that humanity is already paying the price for polluting the atmosphere, since there is now an 'infiltration of "space dust" which humans ingest and which can cause AIDS' (T6:1B:178). Russell (1982: 18) elaborates on this possible destruction, pointing out that there are two opposing perspectives on the role of humanity in Gaia. One view is that humanity represents the developing nervous system whereby Gaia will become aware of herself, the other that humanity represents some kind of planetary cancer. Russell (1982: 20)

suggests that both these perspectives are valid, and that the global nervous system is presently passing through a rapid phase of development and appears to have reeled out of control. However, as seen above, Lovelock suggests that this essentially human-centred approach overestimates the importance of humans in the larger scheme of things.

The participants in this study, however, were at one with Russell's (1982: 21) assertion that if the negative trends are to be reversed, it is imperative that humanity change in a most radical way. Humanity and Gaia are at the threshold of a major evolutionary transition, says Russell (1982: 92), and if humanity can become welded into a single whole (a kind of social super-organism), the next level of evolution (namely the Gaiafield, in which the planet develops consciousness), might come about. He explains:

Thus the urge that many people feel to grow and develop inwardly is nothing less than the force of evolution manifesting within our own consciousness. It is the Universe evolving through us (1982: 143).

The evolutionary process is thus seen to be related to human responsibility. As Spangler (1984: 57) notes:

...humanity participates in and is even responsible for the spiritual unfolding of the earth, of nature, and of matter itself, as well as of its own spiritual progress.

c Earth as mother

Related to the concept of the earth as an organic system is that of the earth as mother. This is a notion that is widespread in both old and new mythology and which permeates primal cultures. Likewise, it is an important perception among New Agers, and particularly so among the participants in this study.

Two not incompatible notions were stressed by participants. Some emphasised the pragmatic angle and pointed out that 'our mother nourishes us and we should care for her since we need her' (T7:1B:309) and 'whatever we do to others (or nature) we ultimately do to ourselves (T18:1:488). As one respondent quite sensibly observed, 'If we look on the Earth as Mother, we will not destroy her (T14:1:312). On the other hand, others emphasised 'the awareness of Mother Earth as sacred' in view of the interpenetration of God and nature (T9:1B:300) and the apprehension of the earth as 'a member of the Body of Christ' (F18:11:1).

Matthew Fox (1988: 13) quotes the twelfth century Benedictine abbess, Hildegard of Bingen:

The earth is at the same time mother, she is mother of all that is natural, mother of all that is human. She is the mother of all, for contained in her are the seeds of all.

He then suggests (1988: 15-16) that 'Mother Earth is dying' as a consequence of human actions such as the destruction of topsoil, deforestation, water pollution and accidents such as Chernobyl and Bopal. Fox (1988: 11ff) places this phenomenon in a wider perspective when he describes what he calls 'a modern crucifixion story': Mother Earth is dying, but so are the mystical brain, creativity, wisdom, youth, native peoples, Mother Church and compassion. And the 'resurrection story of our time', suggests Fox (1988: 36) lies in the recovery of the mystical consciousness. It therefore appears that deliverance for both humanity and the planet will not come about without a radical change in consciousness.

This was touchingly affirmed by one participant who said that 'the only way to heal the planet is to begin to be who we are' and that 'it was no good buying CFC-free products if you keep spewing out negative emotions from your heart' (T11:1:522).

Veneration for the earth in New Age circles clearly links the movement with older traditional cultures which are usually revered in these groups.³² The concept of the earth as mother also represents an area of convergence between the Neo-Pagan movement and the New Age movement.³³ For example, reverence for the earth was common among the Indian tribes of the United States as is illustrated by Chief Standing Bear's description, recounted by Regenstein (1992: 103), of the relationship of his people with 'Mother Earth':

The Lakota was a true naturalist - a lover of nature. He loved the earth and all things of the earth ... Kinship with all creatures of the earth, sky, and water, was a real and active principle Wherever the Lakota went, he was with Mother Earth. No matter where he roamed by day or slept by night, he was safe with her. This thought comforted and sustained the Lakota and he was eternally filled with gratitude.

Of the participants in this project, only a very few referred to the value of African traditional wisdom (T9:1B:519), but articles to this effect are often carried in *Odyssey* (see 4.4.5 - end note 21).

5.3.3 Conclusion

It appears that the cosmology that emerges from these discussions can be described in terms such as dynamic, whole, organic, interrelated, sacred.

Wholeness as a key aspect of New Age cosmology was confirmed in the discussions of all the separate variations on the cosmology theme. Whether individuals understand the universe as the body of God, or as a manifestation of cosmic energy, unity and relatedness are always stressed. Concurrently, the concept of dynamic transformation is a common strand in almost all the participants' cosmological convictions.

It can therefore be concluded that the ideal-type New Ager subscribes to a holistic cosmology that includes the notion of continuous creation which will ultimately culminate in unification with the One.

The above summary of the discussions with participants on the subject of the universe and the planet cannot convey the deep sense of longing for rootedness in nature, the cosmos and God that was often the silent but almost tangible emotion that surrounded these conversations.

Notes

1 It is not only within New Age circles that the need for a holistic worldview is propounded. Prominent Christian theologian Hans Küng (1991: 21) observes:

From the changes in physics through the alternative methods of homeopathic medicine to humanistic psychology and the new awareness of the environment, nowadays an intensified holistic way of thinking can be seen which could also make possible a balance between the European-American and the Asiatic way of thinking. At any rate, what is required today - and here there may be agreement between the most rationalistic systematic theoreticians (like N. Luhmann) and hermeneutical philosophers (like G. Gadamer), through serious researchers into the future (like R. Jungk, E. Laszlo) to the pioneers of the New Age (like F. Capra) - is an equilibrium between the rational tendencies and the emotional and aesthetic tendencies of human beings, indeed a holistic view of the world and human beings in their different dimensions.

Also see Küng et al (1990) *Godsdienst op een keerpunt*.

2 In *Primordial truth and postmodern theology*, Griffin and Smith (1989) provide the reader with two constructive postmodern alternatives to the modern and relativistic postmodern worldviews. Griffin proposes a panentheistic view which is grounded in process theology, and Smith a pantheistic view which is based on the perennial philosophy, which he calls 'the primordial tradition'.

3 A number of Christian theologians have in recent years advocated panentheism as more accurately reflecting the original Christ message. See John A T Robinson (1967) (*Explorations into God*), Hugh Montefiore (1985) (*The probability of God*), and process theologians John Cobb and David Griffin (1976) (*Process theology: an introductory exposition*).

4 The Brama Kumaris World Spiritual University was founded in 1937 and has its international headquarters at Mount Abu in India. It has more than 1 450 centres in more than 50 countries worldwide. The organisation is dedicated to the moral and spiritual upliftment of humanity and it is actively engaged in promoting world peace through participation in the Global Co-operation for a Better World project. The organisation is interesting in that although it offers meditation training to both men and women, it is administered by women only. In reply to my enquiry on this somewhat unusual arrangement, the participant said that the organisation sought to redress the traditional oppression of women in India by reserving all forms of power in their organisation for women.

5 In 1991 a newly established New Age organisation, The Font (based in Johannesburg) organised a similar Festival, which they hope to turn into an annual event. This event attracted 44 exhibitors and it was judged to be a successful venture by the organisers.

6 According to Ramtha:

(God) has allowed you to experience your dreams according to your own designs. You simply have forgotten that *you* created the dream in the first place - and that you have the option to change it at any moment you choose (Weinberg 1986: 202).

And Lazaris concurs when he says that many people involved in metaphysics do not understand the core, namely 'I create my own reality'. He continues:

They never intend to really own that belief precedes reality, that belief precedes the illusion you create called reality (Pursel 1988: 139).

7 Robinson (1967: 130ff) points out that a number of Christian mystics and theologians, among others Meister Eckhart, Jan van Ruysbroeck and more recently Paul Tillich, have also made this distinction. The distinction evolved as the result of an acceptance of the limitations of concepts and images in conveying the essence of God. Anthropomorphism and symbols inevitably diminish the Absolute, and the Godhead was postulated as God beyond God in order to be able to express something of the nature of God without trivialising God. Although many participants demurred when it came to the use of concepts with reference to God, this was not why the distinction was made in these circles. Rather it was the structure of the spiritual hierarchy that was referred to in these discussions of the Godhead and the Solar and Planetary Logi (see 4.1.3).

8 In order to assist my understanding, one participant, on behalf of his group, presented me with several books, some of which he had written, and one of which was *Bridges* by Aart Juriaanse (1985). Juriaanse's books are highly regarded by the participants who study the Bailey teachings and several of them recommended that I study his writings as an introduction to the arcane teachings. Other books on the Bailey teachings by Juriaanse include *Of life and other worlds* (1974) and *Reference guide to the teachings of D K by Alice Bailey* (1978). Another South African student of the Bailey teachings who has written an introduction for the uninitiated is Ina Crawford (1990) (*A guide to the mysteries: an Ageless Wisdom digest for the New Age*).

9 For a discussion on the types of religion, namely positive, negative and absolute, see Krüger (1985: 11ff).

10 In the United States there is at present a revival of the Mother Goddess religion, which appeals to many women who have experienced society as oppressive (see 2.3.1). In contrast, this phenomenon is not at all well developed in South Africa and in this study only one person referred to this Neo-Pagan movement. This person was apparently just becoming aware of this movement as she showed me a number of books on this theme that she had recently bought, but had not yet read (T9). The availability of the literature and the fact that many features of American society eventually find their way to this country, suggest that we are likely to see more of this movement in South Africa in the near future.

11 Fox (1983: 222ff) states that the dominant patriarchal tradition has for the last

3500 years ignored the implications of God's feminine dimension. However, the motherhood of God 'is celebrated wherever panentheism is celebrated.' He further points out that a return to the motherly side of God involves a return to compassion and wisdom:

Wisdom and compassion; compassion and wisdom: wouldn't such energy revitalize Western religion and civilization, forge new links with non-Western traditions, create gentler and more dialectical relationships to earth, to body, to pleasure, to work, to the artist within and among us? (Fox 1983: 225).

12 See Reuter (1983) (*Sexism and God-talk*), Halkes (1984) (*Zoekend naar wat verloren ging*), and McFague (1988) (*Models of God: theology for an ecological, nuclear age*).

13 John 16:7 reads 'But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.' (Note that 'the Comforter' is used in the King James translation of the Bible). Traditionally this is interpreted as a reference to the Holy Spirit that will be sent, although the participant remarked 'they did not know what the comforter was ... it was the Christ' (T25:1B:270).

14 One participant declined to discuss the authority on which she based her beliefs - on the grounds that there are certain things which she could not discuss. Another participant casually remarked that the former participant claimed contact with a master in the hierarchy. If this woman *did* make such a claim, it might account for her reluctance to reply to my question and there would then be six participants who claimed contact with disincarnate entities.

15 The participant who claimed to be in contact with an archangel suggested that the angel catered for her every need. On enquiring precisely how the angel rendered assistance, the person related an incident when she was travelling and burdened with heavy luggage. She commandeered 'Sunshine', as she referred to the archangel, to provide a much needed taxi - which immediately presented itself. None of the other participants demonstrated the same familiarity with the entities with whom they claimed contact.

16 According to Juriaanse (1985: 171, 174) *sanat* means first and *kumara* means entity. However, the fact that 'sanat' is a shuffled version of the word 'satan' has not escaped the critics of the movement (Marrs 1987: 79ff).

17 The term 'Shamballa' can also refer to the centre from which the will of God is directed; or it can be used symbolically to refer to the powers of the Lord of the World (Juriaanse 1985: 176).

18 Included in the documents was one from Ashtar discussing Sananda, 'our role model'. In the message Jesus is presented as a role model for those who desire to attain messiahship. This can apparently be done through visualisation of the desired state - a method which is illustrated by Ashtar with an example of weight loss through visualisation! One has to wonder at the audience that Ashtar had in mind when he intermingled the sublime with the ridiculous. The message reads:

We will talk today about Sananda. He is what you might call a role model for those who may become messiahs in the future.

He who walked the Earth as a human, who lived and died as a human, did, indeed practice much of the ways of experience that are written in the Bible. It is very well known that He was able to heal the sick, raise the dead, part the waters of the Red Sea [sic], walk on water, manifest food, and at some stages vanish and reappear at will. He taught by the experiences of himself or others through parables, which were just stories which portrayed lessons. Although crowds gathered around Him as He did healings, He did not preach as a priest now does. Love and forgiveness were the main themes of His lessons, and He lived as an example of that, right down to His last words. ... Many lessons were hard to accept by the onlookers as they stared in disbelief as a miracle was performed with the loving words and hands of Jesus. Much was not understood and much was misunderstood. ... They tried to understand the secret powers that transformed the lame into wholeness or the blind to sight. That power was love, faith and total trust in the ways of the universe, as exhibited by a living master.

The ways of a messiah, as described above, are possible for everyone to attain, for the reality of the miracles is that they are natural manifestations of creation. Whatever one can create in their mind, can indeed be created in physical form. All it takes is love, faith and the total trust which Jesus exhibited.

We are, at this time, putting forth the idea of messiahship to those who are Star Seeds as a possible way of furthering their mission upon the Earth in a positive, safe and loving manner, during the times of greatest trial and upset. All one has to do to manifest this within themselves is to desire it! With this desire, everything will fall into place as surely as one can visualize themselves [sic] slim and become slim. It is a matter of change of attitude and being

reasonable.

If one visualizes themselves [sic] as being slim, having that constant picture in their mind, there will be many less trips to the refrigerator, for the logical mind will know that snacking produces extra weight and therefore the desired result cannot be achieved. Time is therefore spent in changing the habits of a lifetime. They are changed happily and readily because with every day, the scale tells of pounds being dropped off, and with every week the promise of success is assured. Once again, back to basics, your mind will tell you, after your goal has been reached, that if you go back to your former ways of eating, those pounds will return, and you will once again be on the merry-go-round of losing pounds over and over again, yet still being overweight.

To prepare for your messiahship, create in your mind that which you desire, and it is yours! Everything will fall into place for you, just as in the example above! The right book will fall into your hands, the right person will help your lessons in unconditional love, the fragile nature of all material possessions will be realized, and you will have no fear, though you are venturing into unknown, uncharted territory. Your trusted guides will be with you every step of the way, and will understand exactly what your intention is relative to the heights of your desire.

Many are being called, at this time. Few will answer that call. It is available to everyone, for the first known time in Earth's history (F18:100:39).

19 Based on the words of Jesus in John 8:44, which reads: 'You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies'.

20 See *From Bethlehem to Calvary* by Alice Bailey [1937] (1961).

21 According to the *Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ* (1969:63) Jesus said: 'I am your brother man just come to show the way to God; you shall not worship man; praise God, the Holy One'.

22 In *Habits of the heart*, Robert Bellah and his co-authors (1985) highlight this type of individualised faith with a reference to one of their respondents who spoke of her faith as 'Sheilism' - an individual faith named after herself. Many individuals,

as Bellah et al (1985: 235) point out, attempt to transform external authority into internal meaning after having liberated themselves from oppressive and dogmatic religious systems.

23 This view corresponds to some schools of gnostic thought in which it is proposed that the Christ 'departed for the incorruptible realm, but Jesus was crucified' (see 'Other gnostic teachings according to St. Irenaeus', translated by Layton 1987: 180).

24 *A course in miracles* (1985 1: 86) states:

I elected, for your sake and mine, to demonstrate that the most outrageous assault, as judged by the ego, does not matter. As the world judges these things, but not as God knows them, I was betrayed, abandoned, beaten, torn, and finally killed. It was clear that this was only because of the projection of others onto me, since I had not harmed anyone and had healed many.

25 Goldsmith (1968: 50) writes:

There is no death; no one has ever died Death is an experience only of corporeal sense, the sense that testifies that we are physical, mortal, finite, but death itself is never an experience of our true being. By permitting himself to experience corporeal death, Jesus revealed that there is not death, and he revealed himself in what appeared to be the same corporeal form with all its wounds. Then, having served this purpose, he had no other function here on earth.

26 For information on parapsychological research see *The Signet handbook of Parapsychology* edited by Martin Ebon (1978), which contains essays by 34 authorities on the subject; and the volume edited by Edgar Mitchell (1974) *Psychic exploration: a challenge for science*.

27 Melton (1990: 223) describes Barbara Marx Hubbard as a futurist, a New Age visionary, and lately, one of the foremost spokespersons for the New Age movement. The major influences on her life were the work of Abraham Maslow on human potential, Teilhard de Chardin on planetary and human evolution, and the space flight of John Glenn which 'led to a vision of the human race as a universal species possessed of a technology of transcendence' (Melton 1990: 223). She became the co-founder of organisations such as the Foundation for Co-Creation, the Institute for the Study of Conscious Evolution, and the Global Family. She was also nominated for the vice-presidency of the United States at the 1984 Democratic

National Convention (this last interesting fact is from Larson [1989: 239], an avid critic of the movement.

28 The concept of the earth as a living organism is also an essential feature of primal religions, and in Hinduism it was expounded by the sage Ramanuja in his system of qualified monism.

29 This theory was independently developed by another individual, namely Otter G'Zell, the founder of a Neo-Pagan group, Church of All the Worlds. G'Zell published his vision of the Earth as a living organism (which he termed 'Terrebia', Latin for 'Earth life') in the church's magazine in 1971, where it went completely unobserved by anyone outside the organisation (Melton 1990: 183). Lovelock, an atmospheric biochemist, gives a comprehensive account of his theory in *Gaia: a new look at life on Earth* (1979) and *The ages of Gaia* (1988). Another author who has dealt with this theory is Peter Russell (1982), in *The awakening Earth: our next evolutionary leap*.

30 A Christian theologian who advocates this theory is Hugh Montefiore in *The probability of God* (1985: 44ff) and *Reclaiming the high ground: a Christian response to secularism* (1990: 55).

31 Russell seems to be unaware of the work of Jan C Smuts, whom he never mentions.

32 In an appendix to Matthew Fox's (1988) book *The coming of the Cosmic Christ* there are three 'Apologies to Native Congregations' by the United Church of Canada, the Pacific Northwest Church Leaders, and the United Church of Christ. The first and shortest of these is quoted in full:

Apology to Native Congregations - United Church of Canada

Submitted by the United Church of Canada General Council to Native Elders and accepted by the Same on August 15, 1986:

Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here, and you received from your elders an understanding of creation, and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, and rich and to be treasured. We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the value of your spirituality. We confused western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length

and height of the gospel of Christ. We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the Gospel. We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred and we are not what we are meant by God to be.

We ask you to forgive us and we ask you to walk with us in the spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God's creation healed.

33 The Great Mother Goddess in Neo-Paganism is an earth goddess and consequently reverence for the earth forms part of the Neo-Pagan tradition. Starhawk (Miriam Simos), a leader of the Neo-Pagan movement, states that the Great Goddess is 'the life force manifest in nature, human beings, and the world' (Melton 1990:433).

CHAPTER 6 - THE NEW AGE WORLDVIEW: ANTHROPOLOGY AND THEODICY

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.*

William Wordsworth

I laugh when I hear the fish in the water is thirsty.

*The Kabir Book
(Bly 1977: 9)*

6.1 THE AIM OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter the role of anthropology and theodicy in the New Age worldview is probed. It is vital to realise that the New Age anthropology is intimately linked with the understanding of the nature of God and the universe. As was often stressed in the previous chapters, human beings and the universe are believed to form part of a larger whole which is seen as the All, or God. This monistic view, combined with the perception of God as good, has many ramifications when exploring the question of the existence of evil, which will be discussed in the second part of this chapter.

6.2 ANTHROPOLOGY

6.2.1 The nature of the human being

a Inherent divinity

Most participants believe that there is a spark of God at the centre of every human being, which naturally elevates the human being to a high status. While this inner

divinity is not denied, a few participants also stressed the insignificance of the human species when compared with life in the universe. As one participant remarked: 'The wonder of the universe tells you, you are insignificant' (T1:1B:302).

Following the belief that the divine is within, participants felt that humans could turn inwards in order to find God (T3:1:374). As one participant ruefully described the spiritual quest: 'Something inside us is screaming out for God, but we will not find it outside - it is within' (T1:1B:200). Another person started our interview by playing a short tape-recording of Joel S Goldsmith in which he teaches that the inner spiritual self of each person is unchanging - it is the word of God, it is the Godself that teaches the way to the Kingdom (T25:1B:026).

The Theosophical Society, which has influenced many of the interviewees, also promotes this belief as is clear in the second of their three tenets:

The Principle which gives life dwells in us, and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent; is not heard or seen or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception (F4:1:2).

A participant explained further

Humans are part of a greater whole that is God. The Life principle is flowing through our veins. We have that God principle in us, that Trinity which is Life, Love, Light (T12:1:565).

These remarks bear out the earlier conclusion that the majority of the participants, and probably the majority of New Agers, are in fact panentheists rather than pantheists. Thus, while the essence of humanity is perceived to be the same as the essence of God, God as the ocean is ultimately much more than the single drop (T3:1:460). Most participants would also agree that ultimately the human soul will merge into God just as the drop merges with the ocean.

During the interviews, participants constantly referred to Jesus as having said 'the Kingdom of God is within you'. The fact that the relevant verse (Luke 17:21) can be translated from the original as either 'within you' or 'among you' is what has given rise to the confusion which surrounds it - some Christian critics vehemently stating that it should be 'among you' while many New Agers just as adamantly claim it should be 'within you'.¹

Some participants intimated that Jesus had taught his disciples things that he did not teach the multitudes, since the latter were not yet spiritually prepared for his message (T24:2:063). Several of these teachings were said to be documented in the

gnostic scriptures, some of which were discovered at Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945. The spiritual interpretation, rather than the orthodox eschatological interpretation of the contentious verse, is confirmed in *The Gospel of Thomas* (logion 3 in Layton 1987: 380). In this text there is no ambiguity concerning the Kingdom of God:

The kingdom is inside of you. And it is outside of you. When you become acquainted with yourselves, then you will be recognized. And you will understand that it is you who are children of the living father.

The alleged secret teachings are also referred to in *The Gospel of Thomas* (logion 13 in Layton 1987: 382):

And he took him, withdrew, and said three sayings to him. Now, when Thomas came to his companions they asked him, 'What did Jesus say to you?' Thomas said to them, 'If I say to you one of the sayings that he said to me, you will take stones and stone me, and fire will come out of the stones and burn you up.'

Pagels (1981: 65) claims that what Jesus told Thomas was apparently too secret to be written even in this secret gospel. She furthermore points out that

on the basis of analogy with esoteric traditions, scholars have suggested that the three sayings may be something like the following: 'I am God'; 'You are God'; 'I am thou' (Pagels 1981: 66).

A participant writes:

On examining the teachings of the many religions of the world, it is discovered that they each have a certain similarity founded upon the common basic truth. ... These Enlightened Ones [from the different religions] ... share one thing above all: they speak not of God as something to be believed, as a theory; something apart or outside of man; they speak with a certain knowledge which is born of direct experience - an awareness of the Divinity Within (God-Realisation), throwing its reflection upon their individuality or soul, due to their having merged or become at one with DIVINE REALITY - GOD, the supreme truth (F30:2:51).

This echoes the *Chandogya Upanishad* in which the identity between the true self of the person and Brahman is expressed in the formula: *Tat tvam asi* or 'That art thou'. The notion of the soul as a portion of the Divine Energy is also expressed in the influential Cayce readings. Cerminara (1978: 227), in a summary of Cayce's teachings, explains that humans stand in relation to God, or the Creative Energy of the

Universe, as a sunbeam to the sun, or a drop of water to the ocean. In view of the influence of eastern philosophy and the popularity of the Cayce material, it was to be expected that some of the participants would also use these analogies to describe the relationship between God and humans. One remarked that 'while we partake of the characteristics of God - we will never be God. The drop is not the ocean even though they are both water' (T3:1:455). And the husband of one of the participants interjected a remark during the interview, to the effect that 'God is me, but I am not God' (T25:2:550).²

It became clear that most participants were in unison regarding the inherent divinity of humankind. Some quoted Jesus when he said 'you are gods' (T12:1:556). This refers to both Psalm 82:6: 'I said, "you are 'gods"'; you are all sons of the Most High'; and John 10:35:

Jesus answered them: 'Is it not written in your Law, "I have said you are gods"? If he called them "gods", to whom the word of God came - and the Scripture cannot be broken - what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world?

This theme is taken up by some of the channelled entities such as Ramtha (Weinberg 1986: 143) and John, an entity channelled through Kevin Ryerson for Shirley MacLaine's benefit, who tells her:

You are God. You know you are Divine, But you must continually remember your Divinity and, most important, act accordingly' (MacLaine 1983: 209).

The reference to action raises another controversial issue. The intellectual acceptance of the idea that God is all and all is God, is bound to lead to antinomianism and we see evidence of this in some of the actions and utterances of MacLaine. In a television programme on Ms MacLaine and her ideas, one sees her and a friend standing on a beach with arms outstretched to the sky, shouting 'I am God'. This, together with her subsequent insight that nothing is tragic and nothing is wrong (MacLaine 1988: 351) demonstrates the attitude to which the cognitive acceptance of this idea might lead. Serious exponents of this view warn that while God is indeed all, and all is God, this should be experienced and realised, and in practice this is only realised by the saint. The threat of antinomianism is eliminated when the saint 'does as he or she wants' because what he or she wants is identical with what God wants (Huxley 1950: 83ff).

MacLaine's utterances and those of some other New Agers have shocked and alienated many Christians who have reacted to these statements without endeavouring to explore the deeper significance of these belief systems. Although many

participants in this study agreed with the statement that God is all, and all is God, and therefore that the individual is God, most felt that it needed to be qualified. One participant, who expressed what many others also felt, admitted that there is 'a certain amount of irresponsibility among New Agers' with regard to the intellectual conception of non-dualism, and that the insight of human divinity 'needs to be integrated and experienced'(T20:1:367). Another observed that there should be a middle way between the extremes of saying, on the one hand, 'I am nothing, just a lowly worm', and of declaring, on the other hand, 'I am God'. With the first, she said, 'you give away your power' and the latter she described as 'sheer arrogance - neither is the whole truth' (T24:1B:104).

In a newsletter, the Academy of Future Science warns its readers:

This is what many channels would like to see us recognise, that God is within everyone and that there is no Divine Intelligence that we have to look up to. Many people relate to the texts of these channels saying: 'It is all within us, we have nothing to do with other realms of intelligence - we don't have to work on sharing with other people; we don't have to understand that there are universal intelligence and Divine authorities that we work with in an orderly creation. The fact is there is a Living Godhead, there are Divine Hierarchies and Realms of Intelligence. It is more than just a universal form of Life that dots every universe (F10:13:2).

Prominent New Age spokesman, David Spangler (1984: 156), also cautions:

If the God within is not complemented by a living experience of God as that which transcends us, it becomes an idol, wrought in the image of our own personalities. We are more limited than before, since we have lost a sense of that which can help us transcend ourselves.

In *The power of myth*, New Age protagonist Joseph Campbell (1988: 211) remarks tersely:

There are two ways of thinking 'I am God'. If you think, 'I here, in my physical presence and in my temporal character, am God,' then you are mad and have short-circuited the experience. You are God, not in your ego, but in your deepest being, where you are at one with the nondual transcendent.

b Oneness with all

'We are all One' is a statement that was often made in the interviews. Not only are humans one with God, they are also one with each other and one with the universe.

One participant writes:

From my point of consciousness within the vastness of the universe I appear to myself as a living spark in the wholeness of the All Pervading One. I see all aspects of life as one, and all beings, incarnate and disincarnate, as being part of this wholeness. I am in this sense part of all other beings, and they are part of me. Such is the reality behind the term 'Universal', which relates to the collective life in all its countless variations throughout the solar system and beyond. Our universe itself is only a fragmentary life-expression within the cosmic whole (F30:2:193).

A participant of Jewish origins referred to the Jewish *shema* 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one' as being a confirmation of nonduality - and declared 'we are all one' (T20:1:274).

The same concept of oneness is expressed by many leading figures in the New Age movement, of which Willis Harman is an example. He writes:

In higher states of consciousness there is an awareness of being one with the universe and all its creatures, of a knowing - a *gnosis* - related to that of the Creator (Harman 1988: 87).

Russell (1982: 124) quotes Edward Carpentier who gives a striking description of this state of oneness:

If you inhibit thought (and persevere) you come at length to a region of consciousness below or behind thought ... and a realization of an altogether vaster self than that to which we are accustomed. And since the ordinary consciousness, with which we are concerned in daily life, is before all things founded on the little local self ... it follows that to pass out of that is to die to the ordinary self and the ordinary world.

It is to die in the ordinary sense, but in another, it is to wake up and find that the 'I', one's real, most intimate self, pervades the Universe and all other beings - that the mountains and the sea and the stars are a part of one's body and that one's soul is in touch with the souls of all creatures.

Russell (1982: 136) level-headedly points out that the experience of oneness does not instantly transform the person and that for a true shift in identity to take place, 'the experience of oneness usually needs to be repeated again and again before it can begin to be included as part of one's personal reality'.

c Co-creators with God

An ubiquitous notion among New Agers is that humans are co-creators with God in a creation that is in process. Fox (1983: 256) articulates this well when he writes:

the spirit of God who wants creation to thrive is with us. The kingdom/queendom of God is among us; and it is a kingdom not just of words but of power. The New Creation will be God's work *and* our work. We will truly be co-creators in this process of transformation.

And Spangler (1977: 151) explains:

Now man is at a point where he himself must be the agent of the creative change, not simply endure the change or pass through it. He must create it. He must cause it. He must cooperate with the Divine in bringing the new heaven and the new Earth to birth.

In this study at least a third of the participants referred to humans as 'co-creators with God'. One pointed out that humans have a unique opportunity to accelerate the evolution of all the kingdoms on earth and of all life in the cosmos as they grow towards perfection and ultimate unity with their Source (T4:2:013). This places an enormous responsibility on individuals since their actions directly influence not only their own lives, but also cosmic life. This sense of responsibility is a theme that constantly surfaced in many of the interviews. It is examined further, in greater detail, in section 6.2.2.

d The structure of the human being

On the whole participants felt that humans are immortal spiritual beings and that their bodies are merely temporary garments. 'Man is a spiritual being' (T4:1B:258), said one person, and then referred to the body as a school uniform which is discarded at the end of a school year only to be donned again for a subsequent learning period (F4:1B:364).

Among the participants who had been influenced by the Theosophical tradition and more specifically the Bailey teachings, were some (T4:1B:295) who referred to the sevenfold nature of human beings.³ We turn again to Juriaanse (1985: 73) for a concise summary of what this involves:

Man is the manifestation of physical matter of the spiritual Monad, a single spark of the One Spirit. The final objective as far as man, the individual, is

concerned, is that his physical life and activities should be brought under complete and conscious control of the Soul, the reflection of the Monad, or the Christ within.

The constitution of the human being is divided, according to Juriaanse (1985: 74) into the *personality*, which comprises, firstly, the physical body which contains the dual aspect of the dense physical body and the etheric or vital body; secondly, the emotional or astral body; and lastly, the mental body. Then follows the *soul*, which is the link between spirit and matter, and then the *spiritual triad* which is expressed as Spiritual Will, the Christ Principle, and the Higher Mind. Above this is the Monad or Pure Spirit.⁴

Juriaanse (1985: 77) explains that the term 'body' should not be interpreted literally, since the etheric body encloses and interpenetrates the physical body and may therefore still be regarded as a tangible 'body', while the astral and mental 'bodies' are merely 'vague spheres of focus, or reservoirs of energy closely associated with the physical body. The term "body" is simply used as a matter of convenience.'

One participant stressed the importance of the etheric body and added:

This etheric web, the finer vibration of the physical, is part of the cosmic etheric web. This cosmic etheric web interpenetrates and is part of all matter or physical manifestations, i.e. our bodies, all other life forms on the planet, animate and inanimate, the planet itself, our solar system, our universe, and so on and on ... (F18:52:1).

According to this person the brain and the nervous system constitute the most vital part of 'this physical vehicle' since they form the potential connecting bridge which enables spirit to ensoul matter. She elaborated on the *chakra system* within the individual - a teaching found in Hatha Yoga, in which the spinal column, where the nerves converge, is said to have seven major 'energy vortices' or *chakras*. These are situated at the base of the spine, over the spleen, at the navel, over the heart, at the front of the throat, in the space between the eyebrows, and on the top of the head (F18:52:1). She explains:

When the Kundalini Fire is activated by the balanced positive and negative forces that spiral round the sushumna, it rises up through the sushumna canal, activating the chakras, and finally unites with the Sun in the head - the

Father, the head centre ... when this happens the individual awakens spiritually. This means expanded awareness, and being cosmically conscious. It means vibrating on a higher frequency of light, and one is said to be Enlightened (F18:52:2).

Since individuals need an extended period of time to grow into this spiritually exalted state, many opportunities are granted the soul in order to accomplish the goal of Enlightenment - which leads naturally to the concepts of reincarnation and karma (see 6.2.1 f).

Another interesting conviction regarding the nature of the human being is the allegation of genetic interference by extra-terrestrials (T1:1:533).⁵ This possibility was raised by only two participants, one of whom cited Genesis 6 (which deals with the Sons of God who took the daughters of man as wives) as proof of these interferences. Given the extensive literature on the subject of UFOs and extra-terrestrials, one has to conclude that the belief in visitations from other galaxies (whether genetic interference is postulated or not) has a substantial following in certain sectors of the movement (see 5.2.3).

e Inherent psychic abilities

More than a third of the participants claimed to possess psychic abilities of some kind, such as clairvoyance, aura reading, channelling, mental telepathy, past-life recall, precognition and clairaudience. Even though the remaining participants did not claim to have had any of these experiences themselves, they all subscribed to the notion that these abilities are latent within all human beings. One individual wrote that:

you can eventually learn to draw upon energies at the super-causal levels and demonstrate the truly magical, as was the case of the Great World Teacher when he told his disciples: all the things that I do, these and greater things shall ye do (F30:2:13).

This person stressed telepathic intercommunication as a feature of the 'New Spiritual Age of Man'. He writes:

In the new era, Telepathy will gradually come to be recognised as a cosmic function, transcending the limitations of the external world of form as conceived through physical sense, perception of Universe, Distance, Space and Time (F30:2:140).

'The psychic nature of man is now accepted' said another person, 'and it is no longer a question of whether it exists or not - it is being researched' (T28:1B:217). Despite the general acceptance of this phenomenon, during the interviews very little was said on this topic.⁶

f Creating one's own reality and the laws of reincarnation and karma

The laws of reincarnation and karma are cornerstones of many eastern philosophies and in the west they are frequently part of the belief systems of individuals and groups in the alternative tradition.⁷ It is, however, mainly through the work of Madame Blavatsky, and the Theosophical Society and its offshoots, that information on these laws was disseminated in the west during this century. While there are no statistics on the prevalence of these beliefs in South Africa, Cranston and Williams (1984: xiii) report that a 1981 Gallup poll on religion in the United States revealed that 23 percent of the adult population admitted to being reincarnationists, while a severe critic of the New Age movement claims that 58 percent of Americans either believe in reincarnation or in the possibility thereof (Martin 1989: 97).

In this study none of the participants rejected the ideas of reincarnation and karma outright, although three considered these beliefs irrelevant to this life (IT8). They reasoned that a belief in reincarnation could induce people to do good for selfish reasons, for example to attain a better future incarnation, in preference to doing what is right for its own sake (F26:4:1). Indeed, this is exactly what one person avowed: 'I do not do good for the sake of doing good, but because *I* am important and *I* will benefit' (T1:1B:470). This was not, however, a view expressed by a majority of the respondents.

The belief in reincarnation led some participants to proclaim that 'there is no death.' One writes: 'Let's get this straight - death never killed anyone, because it's only a word!' (F25:17::9), while another stated that death was 'merely another beginning' (T6:1B:212). 'Physical form' said one, 'is merely a garment of flesh which enables humans to express themselves' (T13:1:195). This, according to another, strips religion of its power over people, since the fear of death, she claimed, is the driving force behind people's clinging to orthodox religion (T6:1:199).

Nevertheless, some participants felt that belief in reincarnation is not in conflict with the Bible. A representative of the Theosophical tradition quoted Matthew 17:10-13 as proof that Jesus' disciples believed in reincarnation (T4:2:496).⁸ In this passage the disciples asked Jesus why the scribes had said that first Elijah must come (before the appearance of the Messiah), and Jesus answered that Elijah had already come - in John the Baptist. Other references to reincarnation, claimed some

participants, had been edited out of the Bible 'by priests who wanted power' (T15:2:038). This view was not uncommon among participants and many would agree with MacGregor (1982: 61ff) when he points out that the belief in reincarnation

has a special tendency to cause those who believe in it to feel able to dispense with the *institutional* aspects of the Christian Way They stress freedom of choice and the individual's capacity to make or mar his or her own destiny If I accept a reincarnationist view I recognize that in the last resort I can do without the Church, as a boy can do without his mother, deeply though he may love her Few Church leaders are either humble enough or sufficiently mature in the spiritual life to be ready so to abdicate power.

An interesting remark came from one of the Jewish participants to the effect that although reincarnation had always been a Jewish belief, this had now become an embarrassment to orthodox Jews (T20:1:073).⁹

Integral to the belief in reincarnation and karma is the notion of *choosing one's own reality*. About half of the participants believed that humans are responsible for choosing their earthly circumstances. This is neatly summed up by the third tenet of the Theosophical Society's credo which reads:

Each man is his own absolute law-giver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment (F4:1).

This belief entails that before reincarnating into a body, one chooses the exact circumstances that are required for one's soul to learn certain lessons. Some said these choices are made with the assistance of highly developed spiritual beings (a Council of Elders - T13:1:080), while others held that these choices are made by one's own 'Higher Self' (T4:1B:380).

All these choices are influenced by the individual's previous lives and while some participants saw this as a form of punishment (T2:1B:083), others were adamant that 'there is no punishment' (T9:1B:187). Most interpreted reincarnation as another opportunity for spiritual development given by a benevolent God (T8:1B:005). 'God is a Father of love', said one interviewee, 'who does not punish his children a month after they were naughty' (T17:1:308). But, said another, 'through reincarnation the soul arrives exactly where it can get what it deserves and can get what it needs - the punishment is part of the reward' (T21:2B:092).

Cranston and Williams (1984: 295) relate a story that illustrates this point. Hasidic Master Reb Zusya, who was good and pious but also ill and poverty stricken, was asked by students to explain the phenomenon of evil. 'What evil?', he asked. When the students reminded him of his dire circumstances he replied, 'O that - that is just what my soul needs'.

All my questions as to why one would choose desperate circumstances were met with explanations of karmic causality. For instance, the question 'Why would one choose to die as an infant?' received the reply that perhaps the soul was giving the mother an opportunity to develop (T12:1B:044)¹⁰, and the question 'Why would one choose to be a famine victim in Ethiopia?' met with the observation that these people might be new souls¹¹ or that they might simply have 'chosen to suffer' (T2:1B:108). One, however, suggested that a very advanced soul might choose seemingly impossible circumstances, as Helen Keller did, in order to demonstrate that these can be overcome (T24:1B:597). Another felt that these souls were possibly from different levels of evolution and different star systems and were now incarnating into different race systems on earth (T10:1B:014).

Some felt that if one belonged to a privileged group one could offer service which the less fortunate souls could accept or reject, but ultimately 'we have no right to interfere with their destiny' (T22:1B:230). Spangler (1984: 156) warns against this attitude when he writes:

this idea that we each create our own world can disconnect us from the rest of the world, allowing us to deny any responsibility for another's state of being. ... In the name of a 'new' perception of divinity, all sense of the interconnectedness and wholeness of the world is lost.

One person warned that one should 'be careful to perform one's allotted tasks before the light of day fades, for the night comes when no man can work' (F4:2B:006). The night, he said, refers to the time between lives where one assimilates and recuperates before incarnating for another time span in the school of life. When one fails to learn the required lessons for a specific life, one will have to return to much the same circumstances for another attempt, until the goal is reached.

Participants explained that the reason one does not recall one's previous lives is that 'one drinks the cup of forgetfulness just before birth' (T10:1B:001). Nevertheless, some participants did remember previous lives (Cranston & Williams [1984] speculate that such people might not have emptied the cup of forgetfulness, or might have incarnated after a very short recuperation period¹²). In one case a participant

reasoned with some resignation that a specific ailment she suffered from in this life represented atonement for her own cruel actions in a previous life (T13:1:101). Another recalled many previous lives, among others as a monk in Tibet, a high priestess in Egypt and a philosopher in ancient Greece (T22:1B:014). This person also claimed that the soul of her deceased brother, who was very dear to her, had incarnated as her own son, a belief in which she found great comfort and joy.

Some participants said that they believed in the laws of reincarnation and karma, but added certain qualifications. The immortalist among the participants believed that one had the choice of whether or not to die and return, and that if one chose not to die and return, one could continue in this life until perfection was reached, after which one would unite with one's Source (T15:1:272). Another felt that humans shape their lives according to their beliefs. She writes: 'We have erected karma, the root cause of our anguish in the human drama, the scenario of sin and punishment There is no need of karma between us and God who sees only our eternal sinlessness as an unblemished part of Him' (F25:11:22). Yet another believed that the laws of reincarnation and karma were much more subtle than most people believed. He speculated that one's consciousness would not cease to exist after death, but neither would it continue on a personal level. He said: 'On the level of human consciousness there is no link, but on a more holistic level, that which I am will continue in another life' (T27:2:031 - own translation from Afrikaans).

David Spangler (1977: 122-3) also warns that reincarnation should not be taken as a substitute for the Christian doctrine of survival. He continues:

They speak about previous lives as if indeed they were the same being who is reincarnating whereas esoterically that is not so. The doctrine of reincarnation is far more subtle than that and the being which you are at this moment has never existed on this planet in the form in which it is. The soul may have re-embodied itself, but each re-embodiment is unique and displays another facet of the eternal divine jewel of the being. The laws linking one life to another are far more subtle and complex than has yet been determined by the rather parlor room type of esotericism that is generally discussed.

And the channelled entity Ramtha (Weinberg 1986: 164) advises:

It is unwise to look to who you were in your past. When you look back to your past for answers, you will never experience this moment of life and the answers that it holds for your future, for you will be too busy with your head backwards to see the now when it comes. You are curious about who you have been before, ... yet you don't even know who you are *now*.

We turn now to one of the implications of this belief in spiritual growth and evolution through reincarnation, namely *universal salvation*. Almost a third of the participants referred to this as another example of God's love and grace. As one participant put it: 'We are all doomed to perfection' (T10:1:349), and proclaimed another: 'we have free will to work out our own salvation and ultimately we cannot fail because Christ is within us' (F18:6:2). As was seen in the previous section on cosmology, all the universe is thought to be in the process of evolution and ultimately all souls and other manifestations of God will be reunited with their Source which is God.

6.2.3 Human responsibility and the purpose of life

For most of the participants, the ultimate purpose of life was finding one's way back to the Father or the Source (T1:1:184). Since this will probably not be accomplished by many in this lifetime, most participants also referred to intermediate aims for the present life. Furthermore, the nature of the human being as postulated by most participants, together with the cosmological view and the concept of God discussed above, imply certain responsibilities. These responsibilities emerge logically from the concept of wholeness, oneness and interdependence of all life on earth. Donald Keyes (1982: 77) suggests that there is an analogy between the emerging globalisation and the many people who are now turning to a deeply meaningful inner life. This breakthrough by what he designates as 'high achieving intronauts' is paralleled by the accelerating passage to global consciousness. The aim and purpose of life are therefore seen to involve responsibilities towards oneself and others.

The responsibilities involving oneself centre around one's spiritual growth and the development of one's inner potential, as well as, ultimately, the experience of cosmic or Christ consciousness - which would then in turn lead to the realisation of certain social, political and ecological responsibilities. Shouldering these responsibilities will enhance the individual's own growth. Since the evolution of the individual is intimately linked with that of all humanity as well as of the plant, mineral and animal kingdoms, and indeed of the planet, one's efforts with regard to one's own development eventually benefit the whole.

Some interviewees did, however, point out that their own development is the first priority. 'One first has to love, accept and forgive oneself, before one can be of use to anyone else' (T22:1:208). Or, in the words of Shirley MacLaine (1983: 353): 'Inner reform must precede social reform.' This, of course, implies that one's own development should in time culminate in service to others, and this was confirmed by the above-mentioned participant when she referred to 'service and love for humanity' which will, however, eventually result in 'raising one's own vibrations' (T22:1:204) - a perpetual spiral therefore, where one's own growth impels one to

service, which then again enhances one's development. Another person was, perhaps, on rather less stable ground when she pointed out that 'you can't deny yourself ... you must fulfil *your* destiny' and added 'you are not your brother's keeper' (T1:1:231).

Donald Keyes (1982: 78) sums up the view of many New Agers in his explanation of Rupert Sheldrake's hypothesis of morphogenic fields¹³:

The Earth system is a field of energies in which we are embedded, and ... any perturbation or movement in any part of the field immediately is telegraphed and felt throughout the field, whether or not consciously perceived. Therefore the growth toward inner realization of any individual results in a modified global field: any circumstance more expressive of love is more conductive and affects the conductivity of the entire system. Any expression of wider inclusiveness by any part of the system broadens the channels of communication and raises the synergy of the whole. *The enlightenment of any one person will necessarily raise the response quality of the field, and it becomes easier for others to follow. Thus, when we achieve inward realization, our ultimate responsibility, we are discharging some part of our responsibility toward the whole* (italics added).

a Responsibility towards oneself

(i) Developing one's unlimited inner potential

One participant observed that the most important aspect of his work was to lead people to 'use their lives in a way that they are fulfilling what is deepest in them' (T20:2:480). And most participants would agree that the first statement in the Theosophical Society's credo describes quite aptly 'what is deepest' in them:

The soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendor have no limit.

As was seen in 6.2.1 a, the idea of human divinity was expressed in a variety of different ways. Some emphasised that humans were a part of God, while others remarked that humans were made 'in the image of God' (T20:1:213). This concept of the inner divine spark led almost a third of the group to remark on humanity's unlimited potential. Some pointed out that Jesus had said 'That which I do, you too will do', (T6:2:150)¹⁴, and some argued that humans are 'gods in the making' (T7:1:387). For example, one wrote that 'the innermost self in man ... is nothing less than the nature of the Divine Self, Man is Deity in becoming' (F30:2:85).¹⁵

MacLaine (1983: 347) summarises what many New Agers feel when she reflects on the nature of humanity:

Maybe the tragedy of the human race was that we had forgotten we were each Divine. And if we re-realized that, we could dispel fear from our lives. In dispelling fear, we could dispel hate. And much more. With the fear we would rid ourselves of greed and war and killing. ... Perhaps our belief in death was the gravest unreality of all. If we could truly know that we never really died, that we always got another chance, that no pain, no humiliation, no loss, was ever final, total and forever, maybe we could understand that there was nothing to fear. It could be that human beings were using their talent for complexity as an excuse to avoid the responsibility for being what we really understood we were from the beginning - basically part of what we called 'God', and without limitation, masters of our own divine potential.

Spangler (1977: 59) remarks that the true revolution now taking place is the 'redefinition of the true nature of man'. He continues:

For centuries we have worked and struggled under a short-sighted view of what we are. We have set our sights at too low a level of defining the nature of man. Because man is as he thinks, we have fulfilled all too ably that inadequate definition. We have made it come to pass. Now with many opportunities about us we can make a new definition come to pass in our own lives and in the lives of the communities that we create in our world, a new humanity from which can spring a new heaven and a new Earth'.

This concept of humanity's inner divinity and the unlimited potential that can be explored and developed, owes much to the growth of Fourth Force psychology (see 3.3.3) and the ensuing human potential movement, as well as to the phenomenal growth of the holistic health movement. Considering that fourteen of the participants in this study offered some type of service pertaining to the individual's spiritual, mental and physical wellbeing (see 7.3), it is clear that many participants lay tremendous stress on personal development while others evinced an apparent disregard for others.

(ii) *Cosmic consciousness*

The term 'cosmic consciousness' was first used by Richard Maurice Bucke [1901] (1951) in *Cosmic consciousness: a study in the evolution of the human mind*. He defines cosmic consciousness as 'a higher form of consciousness than that possessed by the ordinary man' (1951: 1). The central characteristic of cosmic consciousness is

'a consciousness of the cosmos, that is, of the life and order of the universe' (Bucke 1951: 3). With this consciousness comes 'an intellectual enlightenment or illumination which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence' but added to this is 'a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elevation, elation, and joyousness, and a quickening of the moral sense' as well as 'a sense of immortality, a consciousness of eternal life, not a conviction that he shall have this, but the consciousness that he has it already' (Bucke 1951: 3).¹⁶

Some participants described experiences that evidenced some similarities with the above exposition. One writes:

The ultimate, transcendental truth, revealed to those who have attained all-knowingness, is that God is all and that God is love. All men who even temporarily attune, or at-one with the Love-nature, experience a sense of completion, fulfillment, joy and peace which constitutes a glimpse of the actual consciousness as expressed through the higher planes of His Earth manifestation. For a brief space that individualised fragment of the Divine which is man's true self realises at-one-ment with the whole. In this state of conscious unity with the God Nature, which is all-powerful as well as all-loving, he cannot fail to bless all those upon whom his thoughts rest, whether it be a person, child, animal, the country of his birth, or anything else that claims his attention, compassion or aid. It is in this state that spiritual healing is brought about (F30:2:27-8).

Participants used the expressions 'cosmic consciousness' and 'Christ consciousness' interchangeably. An instance of this is found in the highly esteemed work of Barbara Marx Hubbard (1982: 68), who writes:

Now millions are attempting direct personal contact with a deeper creative reality through meditation, prayers, yoga. We want to feel the Force. We want to work with the Force. We want to become the Force *Cosmic* consciousness will be established. The limited period of self-consciousness will be over. Evolution has been, still is, and will be a consciousness-raising experience (italics added).

And elsewhere she adds that the inner Christ principle which lies dormant in all humans eventually reveals itself to the person. She proceeds:

This process of growing recognition of the inner Christ leads to *Christ* consciousness in the individual, who is now, through the inner working of the Christ, on the path of return to the Father (Hubbard 1982: 213-214) (italics added).

Matthew Fox (1988: 154-5) combines the terms in his use of the concept 'Cosmic-Christ' which he defines as 'the revealer of the divine "I am" in every creature' and adds 'we must all birth the Cosmic Christ in our being and doing for that is why we exist.'

An idea that is closely related to that of cosmic consciousness was expressed by a participant who remarked that the essence of her group's work is to teach that humans must 'resurrect whilst still incarnate' (F25:1:4) (see 5.2.6 b ii). She pointed out that this notion is not new and then quoted the Gnostic *Gospel according to Philip* to substantiate the claim. Here we read:

People who say they will first die and then arise are mistaken. If they do not first receive resurrection while they are alive, once they have died they will receive nothing (Layton 1987: 345).

This is also stressed in *A course in miracles* (1985 II: 347) which asserts: 'Why wait for Heaven? Those who seek the light are merely covering their eyes. The light is in them now.' Another interviewee emphasised the comparable notion that the Kingdom of God is not a future state, but an experience to be realised here and now. He writes:

Just be at Peace.
Be inwardly Free.
Be loving and kind.
Be generous in Service.
Be at-one with God.
Cease struggling and Be.
Personify Real Being.

Be inwardly detached and impersonal towards the things of the senses and possessions. Render service to humanity through every possible avenue, free from the mental exclusiveness of race, religion, political ideology, organisation, sect or denomination (F30:2:154).

Another allied notion came from a participant who declared that the purpose of life is to 'let your light so shine that men might see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven' and added that this is to be accomplished in one's everyday life (T11:1:183). This leads us to the individual's responsibility to others.

b Responsibility towards the other

On the whole participants seemed aware that the new vision of wholeness points to certain social, political and ecological duties.^{17 18} For instance, the credo of the Liberal Catholic Church states:

Man's ethical responsibility embraces tolerance, love and brotherhood and must, because of one-ness of all life, extend beyond nations and colour to fellow-beings of all religions, of no religion and even to those who deny the existence of God. As elder brethren, men should, as a sacred trust, protect and nurture the plant and animal creation (F8:2:1).

Another participant wrote:

He must increase his sense of individual responsibility and come to recognise the similarity of men's needs everywhere, and that his own survival must include that of all other men (F30:2:46).

New Ager Barbara Marx Hubbard (1982: 135) points out that this principle of unity and interrelatedness places an urgent responsibility on those who realise this interconnectedness. They are the vanguard of the New Age and are responsible for precipitating transformation. She assures her readers (1982: 135): 'You are not progressing for yourself alone. Everyone grows, as each of us learns how to take our own next step.'

And Donald Keyes (1982: 99) summarises as follows:

You and the world are not separate; the world will achieve only if you achieve.

(i) Social and political responsibility

Planetisation

The theory of 'the Brotherhood of Man' (or Right Human Relations) (see 4.4.3) according to which one sees oneself in the other, and the other in oneself (F30:2:81), is an axiomatic part of the Bailey teachings, and although only a few participants used this exact phrase, the idea of oneness with all of humanity was stressed by at least two-thirds of the interviewees.

Participants held that, despite the external inequalities in people's life circumstances, humans are equal in the eyes of God since God created all of humanity (T2:1B:104). This is so because humans are created in the image of God (T3:1:400) and are divine in essence (T8:1:12). One pointed out that:

If we are true to the Self - the I AM presence within - then, with the help of our fellow world-servers, we must strive to improve conditions for all peoples on Earth - earnestly preparing for a civilisation yet unborn! This must be our aim and purpose, to serve God by serving man made in His image (F30:2:81).

Other prominent authors in the New Age orbit have stressed the necessity of a global approach to the problems that beset the world in its entirety, such as the danger inherent in the mere existence of thousands of nuclear warheads, the debilitating poverty and widespread famine in much of the Third World, and the destruction and pollution of the environment. Fox (1983: 255-6) comments:

What is newest about our times is the global demand on our consciousness. The global pain, the global interconnections of beauty and pain. The invitation to create a global civilization of love/justice and ecological harmony is a new invitation. And so are the global means to carry out this New Creation.

A few of the participants referred to the United Nations as a vehicle for confronting these problems, and one suggested that this organisation was Hierarchically inspired (T14:1B:244). Only two participants referred to globalisation as such, which was delineated by one as follows:

One thing is unquestionable in these momentous days, and that is that an ever-increasing number of people are being compelled to think in terms of the Universe, with its vast unlimited power.

On earth this universalist vision is finding expression amongst people who are thinking and working for one world order, with ideas and ideals that embrace:

- A World University;
- A World Currency System;
- A World Language;
- A World Parliament;
- A World Flag;
- A World Council of Churches;
- A World Fellowship of Faiths.

Here is the collective herald of political and religious unity, to mention but a few endeavours to express harmony (F30:2:62).

The quotation above touches on an aspect of the New Age movement that has been severely criticised by some Christian authors (Brooke 1989: 200ff; Groothuis 1987: 91ff; Martin 1989: 79ff). The idea of a New World Order originated in the Bailey teachings (Bailey 1958: 185ff), but in the interviews for this study it featured only peripherally. It is, however, by no means an insignificant part of the New Age movement as a whole.¹⁹

Planetary Citizens is an organisation that works towards planetisation. It was established in 1972 by Donald Keyes, with U Thant as a founding co-chairman (Keyes 1982: 66).²⁰ In 1982, this organisation launched a consciousness raising project called Planetary Initiative for the World We Choose,²¹ which culminated in a well-publicised and well-attended Planetary Congress in Toronto in June 1983.

In the Bailey teachings there is much emphasis on the 'New Group of World Servers' whose stated responsibility is to be 'the builders of the New Age' (Bailey 1934: 330).²² In that Donald Keyes dedicated his book *Earth at Omega* (1982) to, among others, Djwhal Khul (the Tibetan who is said to have channelled through Alice Bailey), it may be surmised that Planetary Citizens forms part of the activities of the World Servers.

Another organisation whose headquarters are stationed at the United Nations Plaza is World Goodwill (see 3.3.1 b xxiii). This organisation is directly linked to Lucis Trust, which controls and promotes the Bailey teachings. The regular newsletters sent out by this organisation are received by many of the participants in this study, and a number of them have kindly added my name to their networking systems.

According to Bailey (1969: 78) the task of the New Group of World Servers is 'to usher in the New Age', and their work falls into the following categories:

- (1) the production of a human synthesis or unity, which will lead to a universal recognition of the *one humanity*, brought about through right human relations
- (2) the establishment of right relations with the subhuman kingdoms in nature, leading to the universal recognition that there is *One World*

(3) the anchoring of the Kingdom of God, the spiritual Hierarchy of our planet, in open expression on Earth, thus leading to the universal recognition that the *sons of men are one*.

One of the participants also linked the World Servers (which he referred to as 'the Called', 'the Chosen' or 'Knowers of the Plan') with the establishment of 'the Plan' on Earth (F30:2:159).

Much is made by some Christian critics of 'the Plan', which is said to be inspired by the anti-Christ. An example is Marrs (1987: 98), who writes:

The conspiratorial impulse is the throbbing vibration, or heartbeat, that universally grips the minds and souls of the New Age believers. It is the spirit of the Antichrist, the philosophy of seducing demons who work every minute of the day to drive The Plan to ultimate success.

However, in reply to a question on what exactly 'the Plan' represented, one participant remarked that speaking of 'the Plan' is 'like saying "Let God's will be done"' (T14:1B:402). The Plan, he explained, filters down from Shambhala (where the will of God is known), to the Hierarchy which relays it to the New Group of World Servers and subsequently to 'great thinkers' on earth who can utilise the ideas that filter into their auras in this way (T14:1B:140). The participant observed that these people are often not aware that they are being assisted in their endeavours by the Hierarchy (T14:1B:187) (see 4.3.2).

Bailey (1955: 371) wrote of the Plan that it 'is as much of the divine Purpose as can be brought into expression upon the planet', and elsewhere she elaborated:

From the standpoint of average humanity, who think in terms of earthly happiness, the Plan should be something joyful and something which would make material life easier. To the spiritual Hierarchy, the Plan involves those arrangements or circumstances which will raise and expand the consciousness of mankind and enable them, therefore, to discover the spiritual values *for themselves* and to make the needed changes *of their own free will*, and thus produce the demanded betterment of the environment, consistent with the unfolding spiritual recognition (Bailey 1957: 670).

Very little was said on the subject of the Plan during the interviews, but since three of the people interviewed in this small sample work full time and without compensation towards this end, one cannot but conclude that it is of extreme importance to some New Agers.

World peace

A few participants highlighted the necessity of working for world peace. The motivations for this were, however, not the same in all cases. While the longing for peace needs no justification, it was noteworthy that one person linked this as a condition for the reappearance of the Christ and the externalisation of the Hierarchy (F18:6:1).

Another participant represented The Society of Prayer for World Peace, which has erected in excess of 60 000 peace poles in 100 countries across the world. These poles are inscribed with the words: 'May peace prevail on earth' in the language of one's choice. Some of these poles have been erected in South Africa. The city of Pretoria, however, declined the organisation's offer of a peace pole and the two that were erected in Cape Town have subsequently been chopped down by Christians who objected to the organisation's ecumenical nature.

Still another participant represented the Global Co-operation for a Better World project, of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University. This is an international project that offers people the opportunity to participate in the creation of a better world. It is a continuation of the work of the United Nations International Year of Peace 1986, and in particular The Million Minutes of Peace. The Honorary Chairperson of the Global Co-operation project is Mrs Marcela Perez de Cuellar and the main coordinator is The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (F21:2).

Two participants who underscored world peace represented Transcendental Meditation (TM) and the World Plan Executive Council. The founder of the TM organisation, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, in 1990 extended an invitation via international publications such as *Time* magazine and a special worldwide television broadcast (relayed by M-Net in South Africa) to all governments of the world 'to form an alliance with nature's government through his Vedic Sciences to create Heaven on Earth in their countries' (F19:1:1). A report in a TM newsletter (Autumn 1990: 1-2) reads:

The world is in the midst of a dramatic transformation from enmity to friendship. Hope and freedom are dawning in many countries and there is an upsurge of joyfulness everywhere.

Maharishi said this transition from fear and suffering to happiness and peace was the result of the rise of coherence in world consciousness - called the Maharishi Effect - created by millions of people practising the programmes of his Vedic Science and Technology - Transcendental Meditation (TM) and

the TM-Sidhi programme. ... With the programmes ... governments could now educate their citizens to think and act spontaneously from the level of the unified field and thereby avert all negativity for both the individual and society.

Any government can now create peace, prosperity and fulfilling progress in the life of its nation, and Heaven on Earth for the whole world family (F19:1).

See also 7.4.1 a, on the beneficent effects of meditation conducted for the welfare of the whole.

(ii) Ecological responsibility

Keyes (1982: 84) observes that 'new consciousness people' often exhibit a true reverence for life which extends to all life forms, even those which are not generally recognised or accepted in the dominant culture. This is an accurate assessment, and in this sample about a third of the participants stressed ecological responsibility. One participant remarked that this obligation flows naturally from the conviction that:

humans are the link between the Higher Spiritual Empires and the lower kingdoms of the minerals, plants and animals. Humans therefore have a responsibility towards the creation of their evolution process on Earth (F18:1:15).

Another participant commented that although the different kingdoms (human, animal, vegetable and mineral) are all in different evolutionary processes, they are also interdependent (T12:1:190). According to this person the actions of humans influence not only the human kingdom, but all the other kingdoms as well as the evolution of the planet itself (T12:1:200). As we have seen in the section on Cosmology (5.3), the fact that many New Agers revere the earth as sacred shapes their attitude towards nature.

One participant strongly condemned the slaughter of animals for human consumption and likened a butchery to a concentration camp (T6:1B:293). She apparently did not object to the consumption of meat or the utilisation of animal hides for producing leather articles, but felt that humans ought to work with the earth's cycles - using meat and skins as these became available when animals died naturally. She also expressed the interesting opinion that there was a time when even the big cats (lions and tigers) were herbivores, but that humans had taught them to become carnivores (T6:1:432).

None of the participants referred to the Christian tradition as having contributed to the systematic destruction and pollution of the planet, although this is a view that is often aired in New Age literature. This view is, however, also held by some Christian authors, and Regenstein (1991: 135), in a book on the different religions' treatment of nature, mentions Arnold Toynbee's suggestion that it is monotheism and western civilisation's loss of awe and wonder (probably prompted by Genesis 1:28) that have led to the contemporary ecological crisis. He quotes Toynbee as saying:

Some of the major maladies of the present day world - in particular the recklessly extravagant consumption of nature's irreplaceable treasures, and the pollution of those of them that man has not already devoured - can be traced back to a religious cause, and this cause is the rise of monotheism

Monotheism, as enunciated in the book of Genesis, has removed the age-old restraint that was once placed on man's greed by his awe. Man's greedy impulse to exploit nature used to be held in check by his pious worship of nature (Regenstein 1991: 135).

Matthew Fox (1988: 34) places the blame squarely on the patriarchal system that has held sway in western civilisation since 4500 BCE. He suggests that this system has led to the matricidal characteristics that dominate the western mind, western institutions and western decision-making.

An astute observation comes from Lynn White (Regenstein 1991: 136) who proposes that religion, rather than science or technology, holds the answer to the present ecological crisis. This, he says, will stay unresolved until we find a new religion, or rethink the old. 'Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not'. Fox (1988: 2) concurs when he remarks that 'the peril of Mother Earth and our children will not be alleviated without enlisting our spiritual heritage in the struggle'²³.

6.2.3 The basic attitude for fulfilling human responsibility

In this section only the recommended attitudes and mind-set for successfully fulfilling one's responsibility are examined, while the many techniques and practices for acquiring these attitudes of forgiveness, unconditional love and positive thought are discussed in chapter seven.

a Positive thinking

In consonance with numerous New Age authors, about half of the participants expressed the idea that thought is causal and that therefore one's state of mind is one's own responsibility. Not only are people themselves and those closely related to them affected by their thoughts (whether positive or negative) and attitudes, but ultimately human thought is seen to influence the whole of creation. The exhortation to 'pray unceasingly', observed one person, 'means [to] watch your thinking all the time - no negative thoughts should be allowed, since it affects everyone' (T7:1B:210). 'We affect everyone', said another, who pointed out that since we are all related, the nature of one's thought has a domino effect on everything and everyone around one (T6:1B:512). Another asserted 'I am the creator/thinker' and if she didn't like the results of her thoughts, 'I could change my thought and have other results - results that will take me out of the victim situation' (T15:1:080). In a leaflet on the power of mind, one respondent wrote:

Did you know that every creation, good or bad starts within your own MIND as a THOUGHT or an IDEA and no matter if for 40, 50, 60 or more years you have thought negatively, you CAN CHANGE YOUR THINKING RIGHT NOW AND IN KEEPING IT CHANGED, BRING NEW POSITIVE EXPERIENCES INTO YOUR LIFE (F7:1:3).

Belief in the power of thought is ubiquitous in the New Age movement, and one of its main sources is New Thought. As was discussed in chapter three, the New Age movement and New Thought are independent movements, with New Thought predating the New Age movement by about a hundred years. The central premises of New Thought - that one's life, one's circumstances, and the welfare of the world in general are predicated on thought - are also espoused by many New Agers, like the followers of *A course in miracles* (1985). The course states:

I *am* responsible for what I see.
I choose the feelings I experience,
and I decide upon the goal I would achieve.
And everything that seems to happen to me
I ask for, and receive as I have asked (ACIM 1 1985: 418).

And further:

Every thought you have makes up some segment of the world you see. It is with your thoughts, then, that we must work, if your perception of the world is to be changed.

If the cause of the world you see is attack thoughts, you must learn that it is these thoughts which you do not want. There is no point in lamenting the world. There is no point in trying to change the world. It is incapable of change because it is merely an effect. But there is indeed a point in changing your thoughts about the world. Here you are changing the cause. The effect will change automatically (ACIM II 1985: 34).

These interpretations of the power of thought differ in essential ways. *A course in miracles* (1985) teaches that thought is causal and that by changing one's thought so that inner peace becomes the single goal in life, one can gain this peace *despite* one's circumstances. Thus, Gerald Jampolsky (1985: 43), well-known proponent of the teachings of *A course in miracles*, says: 'What we experience is our state of mind projected outward', or, as the course expresses it: 'As a man thinketh, so does he perceive. Therefore, seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world' (ACIM I 1985: 415). New Thought, on the other hand, emphasises the fact that one can indeed change one's circumstances in order to achieve whatever one desires, be this peace, companionship, forgiveness, courage, guidance, healing, employment or weight loss (F7:3).²⁴

Not all proponents of positive thought have only noble spiritual aspirations in mind - for some the purpose of their mind change is gain of a decidedly materialistic nature. Although one participant stressed that one 'treated [a term more or less synonymous with 'prayed'- HCS] for one's needs and not one's greeds' (T7:1:479), articles such as *Praise heals the sick pocketbook* by well-known New Thought author Catherine Ponder (F7:4:6) are not uncommon. Ponder writes:

In this era of rising food prices, higher taxes and dollar fluctuation, it is good to know there are metaphysical methods we can use to gain inner and outer control of our world.

One simple method that has been used by many with great success is to do just the opposite of what most people are inclined to do when they first hear about economic problems. Instead of condemning - which means 'to damage' - let us deliberately invoke the prospering power of praise. What we praise increases. What we condemn decreases. *A sick pocketbook always responds to the law of praise and thanksgiving. ... We have all had hardships because we neglected 'the attitude of gratitude'. If you are having financial problems, it is probably because you have gotten ungrateful and cynical* (F7:4:6).

Ms Ponder then relates a tale of a woman who was caught up in serious financial difficulty, and who had become cynical. Realising her error, 'she went into a room alone and began privately speaking words of praise. Taking her unpaid bills in her hand, she affirmed: *I praise you as the perfect creation of divine bounty now*' (F7:4:6). She then did the same with her clothes that had not been paid for, the water faucet, the electric globe and the walls of the apartment (which represented the unpaid water, electricity and rent bills). Ponder then reveals how the problems were solved 'within the next hour' (F7:4:46).

One participant summarised the view of many New Agers thus:

Examining your thoughts and changing limiting thoughts into life-affirming ones, is a ludicrously simple, yet powerful game (F15:1:4).

b Unconditional love

Enormous emphasis was placed on unconditional love as a prerequisite for a fulfilled life. One participant quoted the great Hillel who said: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself - this is the whole of the Law - the rest is commentary' (T20:2B:160).²⁵ This person also stressed that loving kindness and compassion are qualities that are inherent in the whole and integrated human being (T20:2B:116). Another writes that the laws of life are:

- 1st Love God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and so be completely surrendered to His will.
- 2nd Love one another, loving and serving our neighbours as ourselves.
- 3rd Uphold human rights by putting the love and wisdom of God into action, manifesting the sharing spirit, and seeking the happiness and well-being of all the Father's creatures.

This threefold activity is truly to love; and to love is the supreme law and commandment of the infinite God, obedience to which raises the consciousness to heaven in all people that on earth do dwell (F30:2:29).

One interviewee provided me with a document in which she had noted all the verses from the world's holy scriptures that confirm the Golden Rule. This, she stated, was a truth found in all religions. She also held that the theme of this creation was Love, and that everyone was responsible for restoring unity and love on this planet (T18:2:104). And in a leaflet from a Bailey group, we read: 'Love is the key and goodwill the technique which, when wielded with humility and understanding, will awaken true unity and cooperation between men' (F12:3).

The origin of the idea of unconditional love lies in the God concept - which for many New Agers is synonymous with love (see 5.2.2 b). One explained that: 'God means Love - ever present universal flow of energy which carries the vibration of unconditional love' (T22:1:176), and another declared: 'God is Love - the two are identical' (T6:1B:560). This equation between love and divinity is predominantly derived from western religious teachings, but has been incorporated as a necessary ethical principle for a fulfilled life by the human potential movement which grew out of Fourth Force psychology. However, eastern philosophies, with their emphasis on compassion for all creatures, also reinforced the idea of unconditional love for all. In addition, the notion of the oneness of all also contributed towards the emphasis of this principle. As Joseph Campbell (1988: 225) says: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself because thy neighbour is thyself'.

A course in miracles is clearly also a major promoter of this idea and many channelled entities have also stressed love as crucial. The *Course* admonishes the reader to 'teach only love, for that is what you are' (ACIM I 1985: 87), and 'Love, which created me, is what I am' (ACIM 1985 II: 396). Singh (1985: 41), an exponent of the course, explains:

Can you conceive of how many billions upon billions of breaths are taken every second? And all that breathes grows. Can you see the energy behind Life? That energy is what Love is; and the whole of creation is an extension of it. Its first impact dissolves all words, and brings one to innocence, to the purity of the saint. The state of being that knows the Real has the right to use the word 'Love'. Nothing else has.

Lazaris, who channels through Pursel (1988: 102), states that:

Love is an emotion and a state of being. It is both a feeling and a level of awareness. Further, it is the only feeling/awareness that transmutes, transforms, and transcends all energy. It is universal. It is the only feeling/awareness that transmutes, transforms, and transcends every level of consciousness. *Love is the only 'line of communication' that reaches all the way to God/Goddess/All That Is.*

Lazaris also gives detailed instructions on the art of love, which include giving to yourself and others, responding to yourself and others, respecting and honouring the emotions of yourself and others, taking time to know and reach out to others, having the humility to be close, tender and vulnerable with yourself and others, as well as having the courage to commit to and care honestly for yourself and others. These seven things are, however, practised in order to provide the seven necessary prereq-

quisites for creating love: security, pleasure, honesty and vulnerability, trust, reduced fear of loss, intimacy and caring, and knowing (Pursel 1988: 110ff).

c Forgiveness and a refusal to make judgments

Several participants stressed the importance of forgiveness - of oneself and others - and its corollary of not judging one's self or others. Forgiveness is again a key element in *A course in miracles* (ACIM II 1985: 212), which states that:

Forgiveness is the key to happiness.
I will awaken from the dream that I
Am mortal, fallible and full of sin,
And know I am the perfect Son of God.

And:

What could you want forgiveness cannot give? Do you want peace? Forgiveness offers it. Do you want happiness, a quiet mind, a certainty of purpose, and a sense of worth and beauty that transcends the world? Do you want care and safety, and the warmth of sure protection always? Do you want a quietness that cannot be disturbed, a gentleness that never can be hurt, a deep, abiding comfort, and a rest so perfect it can never be upset?

All this forgiveness offers you, and more. ... Here is the answer! Would you stand outside while all of Heaven waits for you within? Forgive and be forgiven. As you give you will receive (ACIM II 1985: 213).

On the matter of judgment, one interviewee remarked that 'we have a clear instruction - judge not' (T11:1B:417) and that we just do not know and cannot blame or judge 'no matter what the situation' (T11:1B:398).

Nevertheless, David Spangler (1984: 158), with his unfailing discernment, warns: ^{? Yet we believe that he is God! The illogical of parables!}

When everything is seen as perfect, nothing is. In an atmosphere where all is considered right just because it exists and a critical discernment is considered an imposition of limits, evil can flourish. For the new age to prosper, it needs people willing to accept the reality of their creaturehood, the value of certain kinds of limits, the blessing of definition; it requires people who with loving and vigorous minds and hearts can exercise a rigorous and loving discrimination, who can call a fault a fault and a mistake a mistake, not just a 'learning experience' ... it needs people who can see and speak clearly, who can look evil in the eye and call it by its name.

6.2.4 Conclusion

The main themes that have emerged from this consideration of New Age anthropology are the principle of the *inherent divinity* of human beings; the belief in reincarnation and karma as mechanisms in the *evolutionary process* towards the eventual merger with the Source; the idea of humans' *responsibility* towards the self; the other and all life; and lastly, the notion that this is to be accomplished through a *radical personal transformation*.

In this study the majority of New Agers gave humans high status as divine spiritual beings who together with God are involved in bringing about the process that will eventually lead to the ultimate merging of all with God.

The belief in the unity, interdependence and interrelatedness of human beings and of all life, together with the belief in reincarnation and karma, are pervasive in the movement and represent key elements in the anthropology of New Agers. In the east, where these beliefs derive, this usually implies an absorption of the individual into the whole with the subsequent loss of individuality. However, in the New Age movement human beings are elevated to divine status and individuals are exhorted to develop their unique inner potential. This emphasis on individualism stands in contradiction to eastern metaphysics in which ultimate unity implies a total loss of distinction.

One of the most important themes, which is woven through New Age thought like a golden thread, is that of human responsibility. Despite indications of pantheism which imply a deterministic universe, responsibility for one's own circumstances, life events, actions and reactions, as well as responsibility for all life, are emphasised by almost all New Agers in this study. These responsibilities to oneself and others are seen to be so important that one can safely say that this is an axiomatic theme in New Age thought. This persuasion that individuals are responsible co-creators with divine potential again stands in stark contrast with the pantheistic philosophies of the east.

Responsibility to the self as opposed to responsibility to the other is, however, a contentious issue. Some New Agers emphasise responsibility to oneself to the virtual exclusion of responsibility to the other and justify this by referring to the ultimate oneness of all, thus when the self benefits, *all* benefit. This somewhat escapist perception often overlooks the importance of moral action in the quest for the Ultimate Merger.

Other New Agers, however, do stress service to the other as an indispensable part of one's own growth. They emphasise the interdependence of one's own and one's neighbour's growth, and among these subjects there is little indication that they promote the ethical commitment to the other at the expense of the transcendental experience.

Spangler (1977: 135) gives a fitting summary of New Age views on anthropology when he suggests that the three keys to New Age consciousness are silence, service and synthesis. Silence, he contends, 'is the well-spring of creativity through which humans can draw the love and wisdom and intelligence required in order to externalise God's will.' Service, on the other hand, is only true service if it is performed in order to meet, not simply one's own need to serve, but a true need of another. Service is seen to proceed from silence. Thirdly, synthesis, or synergy (which means a state in which energy is produced through the union of many different elements), refers to the ability of disparate and separate elements to learn to work together harmoniously.

And Donald Keyes (1982: 92) reiterates:

The world needs large numbers of constructive-social-change persons who can stand strongly as the old order crashes down about them causing dismay and pessimism in the minds and lives of those who lack vision and who do not understand the nature of the transition. ... These warriors will need to be synthesists, generalists, networkers, communicators and integrators.

The ideal-type South African New Ager can, in summary, be said to be aware of her inherent divinity and consequent responsibility towards herself and the creative process of evolution.

6.3 THEODICY

Closely allied to one's beliefs concerning the nature of God is the question of evil. Since New Agers hold a predominantly panentheistic concept of God, in which the divine presence permeates every atom and every deed on earth, the interviews on which this study is based usually turned to a discussion of theodicy. Participants' overwhelmingly positive view of God as an omnipotent Being of light and love made it necessary to probe the origin of the devastating suffering and pain which humans endure on earth.

The problem of theodicy arises from systems of ethical monotheism in which God is regarded as both omnipotent and good. However, in a broader perspective theodicy can also refer to the rationale offered by nontheistic religions to explain suffering. David Hume (1947: 198) presents the problem concisely with these questions about God:

Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?

In the face of the logical inconsistencies inherent in the three propositions (God is good, God is omnipotent, evil exists), philosophers and theologians usually follow one of two courses. Some seek to *dissolve* the problem by denying one of the three basic propositions, while others insist that all three propositions are in fact true, and they therefore offer various *justifications* for the existence of evil and suffering.

On the whole this was the topic which generated the most diverse opinions as well as the most confusion among participants. The *origin of evil* was clearly the facet of this problematic that caused the most turmoil. Contradictory views were often expressed by participants, and I sometimes offered alternatives when interviewees seemed nonplussed. This created considerable difficulty in analysing and categorising the data.

Nevertheless, the responses can be divided into the classical categories, namely those who dissolve the problem and those who seek to justify it. Many of those who sought to justify the existence of evil pointed out that good and evil are concepts that have meaning only in this world and that ultimately they will be recognised as meaningless.

6.3.1 The problem dissolved

Many participants sought to dissolve the problem by denying the reality of evil, while others denied God's omnipotence - if only by implication. No-one in the study opted for the alternative of denying God's goodness.

a Evil as an illusion

The concept of evil as an illusion is predominantly an eastern one that has recently gained significant popularity in the west, and numerous participants in this study remarked that 'evil is an illusion'.

The view that this entire reality is an illusion necessarily entails that any perceived evil is also illusory. Thus participants who had been influenced by the *Advaita Vedanta* teachings, Buddhism, Taoism, Christian Science and *A Course in miracles*, usually held that suffering could be eliminated by changing one's perception. 'On our plane, nothing is real, not good nor evil', said one person (T28:2:154), and, declared another:

Neither good nor evil exists - they are polaric things we dreamed up when we fell into our nightmare (T25:2:036) We founded our own nightmare and God is not in it - God is not concerned - it is not relevant (T25:2:092).

Similarly, the student's workbook of *A course in miracles* (1985 II: 351) states that:

Pain is a wrong perspective. When it is experienced in any form, it is a proof of self-deception. It is not a fact at all. There is no form it takes that will not disappear if seen aright.

Elsewhere the course's source explains:

The separated ones have invented many 'cures' for what they believe to be 'the ills of the world'. But the one thing they do not do is to question the reality of the problem. Yet its effects cannot be cured because the problem is not real. The idea for today has the power to end all this foolishness forever. And foolishness it is, despite the serious and tragic forms it may take.

Deep within you is everything that is perfect, ready to radiate through you and out into the world. It will cure all sorrow and pain and fear and loss because it will heal the mind that thought these things were real, and suffered out of its allegiance to them.

You can never be deprived of your perfect holiness because its Source goes with you wherever you go. You can never suffer because the Source of all joy goes with you. You can never be alone because the Source of all life goes with you wherever you go. Nothing can destroy your peace of mind because God goes with you wherever you go (ACIM 1985 II: 63).

It is clear that this view does not imply that suffering is an illusion in the sense that people do not experience pain, but rather that the Self need not be affected by physical and mental suffering. Or as Ramtha (Weinberg 1986: 159) says: 'Can utopia live alongside pain and sorrow and hellish situations? Indeed it can. It is only an attitude away.'

As will be seen further on, many participants felt that any action that inhibits life is evil (see 6.3.3). In contrast Ramtha instructs a student (note that he chooses to address his students as 'Master') as follows:

Master: So you don't even think that *killing* someone is evil?

Ramtha: That is correct. Because I have not limited myself by believing in the ending of any one thing, for *nothing* is ever destroyed. Ever! The Father, in his isness and eternalness of ongoing life, has not created any one thing greater than himself that could disturb the guarantee of all existence. What the Father created, master, *nothing* can put under; it will eternally live (Weinberg 1986: 126).

He continues to explain that laws, rules and regulations cannot control people and that sometimes an entity '*needs to experience that [killing or being killed - HCS] for his purposeful understanding*'. He explains further:

And I wish you to understand that the entity who participates with the slayer in his expression is not the victim of the slayer. For perhaps he has contemplated the possibility of being burned, or cleaved in two, or molested. And because he has contemplated it and it is fearsome, he has drawn it right to his doorstep. Thus the one who needs to slay and the one who needs to be slain - because he needs to understand it - draw each other together ... for the experience (Weinberg 1986: 126).

He amplifies and then concludes:

In the understanding called God, nothing is evil. Everything is an experience that provides wisdom. That is my answer to you. And when man is no longer condemned by his brothers, and realizes that he is not evil in his being, that he is *God* in his being, and understands that he is wholly loved and supported by the Life Force called God, he will no longer need to experience war or rape or murder, or other such acts, in order to understand his worth and power and immortality of being. And when man frees himself from this restrictive consciousness, with its laws and plans and rules, he will find the joy and peace of being that will allow him to love himself and the whole of mankind, and allow all to be in the freedom of their own willful designs. Then he will love as God loves. Then he will be as God is - the platform which nurtures and supports all life (Weinberg 1986: 127).

b God's omnipotence denied

No-one in the study explicitly denied God's all-embracing power (indeed it was often confirmed), but the popular and greatly emphasised notion of humans beings as co-creators with God (see 6.2.1 c) does in fact implicitly limit the power of God.

Usually this view is encountered in cosmologically dualistic systems that postulate an equal and opposite force to God (such as Zoroastrianism and Manicheism) but this hypothesis was absent in this study although there were occasional references to the forces of Light and Darkness as locked in a cosmological struggle (F30:2:4). On the whole participants' views coincided more with those of process theologians like David Griffin²⁶, who argues that God acts only persuasively, and is therefore limited.

6.3.2 Theodicies to justify the existence of evil

Although the cliché that evil is an illusion was frequently voiced, most participants' explanations for this phenomenon implied rationalisations for the existence of suffering and evil, rather than an outright denial. In this vein, one person maintained:

From the soul point of view, one can look down and see all beings struggling for the light - even when they do so-called evil. One looks upon those who do the most ghastly things - they do it because they open themselves to invisible evil forces and although evil does not exist in reality, it does exist in the world of manifestation (T30:2B:233).

In a printed lecture provided by one of the participants, David Spangler (F18:67:10) states: 'For in the New Age consciousness there is not good and evil - there is Light and the manifestation of Light - either skillfully or not so skillfully'.

Various theodicies that were offered for the evil and suffering that 'exists in the world of manifestation' will now be considered.

a Necessary balance

If evil is approached as a necessary condition, the responsibility for evil is seen as lying with God. In this view God remains ultimately responsible for the 'evil' since he, being omnipotent, allows it. However, this only accounts for the *possibility* of evil and not for its actual existence. The latter is regarded as a consequence of human actions, and none of the participants attributed the existence of evil to any deficiency in God's goodness.²⁷

Closer investigation of the numerous declarations that evil is an illusion revealed that this labelling of evil as illusory was merely a way of denying God's responsibility for evil. 'There is no good or bad, but thinking makes it so', quoted one participant (T14:1B:511), while another explained that 'what usually pass as good and bad are opposites of the same action' (T3:1B:106). 'There is darkness in order that we might see the light', said another (T8:2:224).

From this view it follows that all phenomena have their opposites, such as life and death, light and dark, creation and destruction, and that good and evil are therefore also two sides of the same coin. In this view evil is a *necessary balance* to good and therefore cannot be evaluated negatively. This view holds that both positive and negative forces are necessary in the evolutionary process, and what people usually label as evil actually represents the necessary tension which provides the impetus for the development of the human ego. 'The whole of the Plan of God rests on this fundamental "*pull*"' (F12:1:1) explained one person, and added (in a footnote to an article which she generously agreed to write on the question of evil and the role of Lucifer):

It is a fact that certain evil exists, which is truly a mystery to us as it relates solely to our Logos and His evolutionary pattern. It does not relate to that which the various religions refer, i.e. Lucifer or Satan, but to the violation of the principles governing Evolution itself such as those monsters who, as psychopaths, negate all the Laws of Love, humanity and holiness (F12:1:1).

These 'psychopaths', of whom, according to this participant, Hitler was an example, 'will remain in suspension ... waiting for the next Creation'. She continues:

Many of us are remnants (forgive the term!) from the 'Moon Chain'. But those who have become irretrievably obsessed by that evil force will not reincarnate, but will have to wait in *pralaya* all those millennia until a new System is created (F12:1:1).

From the above it transpires that despite the disclaimer regarding the actual existence of evil, this view ultimately does not negate evil but seeks to justify it. The events and deeds that are usually interpreted as evil (now labelled as 'ignorance' or 'misuse of energies') are in fact seen as necessary stimulants to spiritual growth.

The crux of this theodicy is the denial of an ontological duality in which God is opposed by an equal, but evil, force. A few participants nevertheless emphasised the existence of 'satanic forces' or 'evil forces'. This does not refer to 'Satan as a person' but to evil influences in the world (T8:1:280). Another participant mentioned the

existence of a negative spiritual hierarchy, which she stressed is also ultimately part of the Godhead (T10:1:508). She also warned against evil extra-terrestrial entities who are active on Earth (T10:2:102).

These remarks suggest that these individuals do not regard God as all-powerful. However, all three stressed God's omnipotence and intimated that evil forces are subservient to God, who merely allows their existence and actions. As Benjamin Creme (1980: 103) states: 'The forces of evil are part of God. They are not separated from God. Everything is God.' And ultimately it is the responsibility of human beings to overcome these evil forces.

One warned that:

In the west we are haunted by a very potent Satan image which is a very terrifying thoughtform which we can manufacture to ever greater power. The image is getting power from our own fear of it (T21:2:478).

Spangler voices a similar caveat: 'Man is his own Satan, just as man is his own salvation' (F18:67:5), and explains that humans have come to fear Lucifer, not because he represents evil, but 'because he represents experience which causes us to grow and to move beyond the levels where we have been (F18:67:7).

At this juncture it seems appropriate to include a discussion on *the figure of Lucifer*.²⁸ Only three of the participants in this study ventured remarks on Lucifer, but in view of the allegations of numerous Christian critics that New Agers revere Lucifer, the inclusion of some relevant material seems warranted.

One of the participants, who represented the Bailey teachings in this study, wrote an essay on her views on Lucifer (F12:1:1-4), and in this document she points out that the word 'Lucifer' means Light bearer, and refers to 'the Angel who came to earth as the precursor of those manifesting "Beings" who undertook to prepare the way for the human race.' She continues:

We all accept that God is the Master of the Universe. If that is the case, where does Lucifer (or Satan) fit in? Do they consider him so powerful a being that he even challenges God Himself? I hardly think so. Therefore, we must accept that our Universe with *all that exists therein* is divine. Hence, Satan, too, is part of that divinity and has his own purpose in God's scheme - placed there, in fact, by God (F12:1:1).

She explained that Lucifer and his host of angels entered the bodies of apes and ensouled them. This resulted in a leap from one kingdom to the next - from the animal kingdom to human life. Lucifer, stated this person, is 'not Satan nor

demonic' (T12:1B:303) and explained that '(he) came to earth as a sacrifice in support of the Plan of God'. Furthermore, he is:

a force which provides the involutory development of the human being, giving him all those qualities that build his form and his personality and its attributes, such as ambition, self-development, worldly power, etc. He serves a most useful and important function throughout the early period of man's growth, finally supplying the needed tension or electric force between the soul and the personality These two meet and the battle of the final Pairs of Opposites creates that conflict which produces the triumph of the soul ... (F12:1:2).

In line with the above, another participant also suggested that Lucifer was branded as evil when in fact he had sacrificed himself for humanity (T8:2:224). This notion is confirmed by Spangler's commentary (F18:67:5) as follows:

And as long as man misuses (these energies), the impact of this misuse rebounds upon Lucifer. If man descends into greater inner darkness, Lucifer descends with him to keep giving man these energies. To give him enough rope to hang himself until he has had sufficient experience, sufficient pain, sufficient suffering to say, 'I've had enough of this. I've had enough of this isolation, of this pain, of this confusion, of this darkness, and I will seek the Light'. Lucifer will give to man the products of man's negative creativity that man may learn the wages of creative responsibility.

Spangler then points out that Lucifer and the Christ are the same force which, however, seems to move in opposite directions. While Lucifer assists with the creation of the light through various experiences, the Christ is responsible for the release of that light and wisdom into creation 'so what has been forged in the furnace of creation, can become a light unto the world, and not simply stagnate within the being' (F18:67:6).

This study did, however, reveal some confusion with regard to the relationship between Satan and Lucifer. For example, in the excerpts quoted above, one participant first used the names interchangeably, but elsewhere denied the equation ('Lucifer is not Satan - he is not demonic' T12:1B:303). Ultimately the denial seemed to hinge on the notion that Lucifer or Satan is not evil, but a part of God with a divine purpose.

It should not be construed from this that any of the participants condoned the worship of evil forces, of Satan or of Lucifer. 'New Agers do not worship Lucifer, participate in satanic rites, black magic, voodoo or witchcraft, but strongly denounce this'

(F13:1::4), asserted one participant, and adroitly turned the tables by alleging that 'youngsters are bored with Christianity and that is why they turn to Satanism' (T13:1:282).

Allied to the notion of evil as a necessary balance is the idea that there is evil inherent in human nature and that if individuals do not work through this evil and recognise it, it cannot be overcome (T18:2B:005). 'In the dark night of the soul we face everything negative which we have created in the past and transmute it through the power of love' (T14:1B:511), explained one person.

This touches on another issue frequently referred to by detractors of the movement (Marrs 1987: 74; Cumsey 1983: 140) - what David Spangler calls the 'Luciferian initiation'. According to Spangler (F18:67:7), Lucifer demands that humans confront their own creations squarely and accept responsibility for what manifests in their lives - only in this way can one be truly free and gain the light of wisdom. As long as people deny parts of themselves by blaming circumstances or their parents for their deficiencies, they will never be free. He adds:

At some point acceptance, integration, wholeness must take place. Lucifer demands this. He demands that man takes on to himself the full consequences of his creative actions Man must learn to accept responsibility for what he does and for what he is, for in this comes wholeness, from this come peace and freedom (F18:67:8) Lucifer works within each of us to bring us to wholeness, and as we move into a New Age, which is the age of Man's Wholeness, each of us is brought to that point in some way, which I term the Luciferian Initiation - the particular doorway through which the individual must pass if he is to come fully into the Presence of his Light and his Wholeness. All that this means is that at some point we have to accept wholly, without guilt, without shame, without fear, without anxiety, the sum total of our experiences on Earth (F18:67:9).

And:

At some point each of us faces the presence of Lucifer. We either fear it when we come to grips with what we term ancient evil, or the spirit of darkness, or we move through it, and we realize that we are, each of us, light and dark. Until we accept that fact, and realize that through the experience of light and dark, we gain the perception of the Greater Light beyond both of them, until such time we will be caught between the polarities, between the forces of struggle and opposition. But when we do accept it, then we can emerge into the radiance of our inner light, the light that can never be extinguished - the Light and Presence of God wholly active within the micro-

cosm, therefore, wholly uniting that microcosm with all that extends beyond. And at that point, that individual is well on the way to moving beyond the human kingdom into the kingdom of God, the superhuman kingdom of mastery, of adeptship, or simply the kingdom of the consciousness that is at home with itself, with its past, with its future, and with God (F18:67:9).

One participant strenuously emphasised that this did not imply that one is a 'disciple of Lucifer', but simply that one should recognise the shadow that lurks in one's own subconscious (T18:2B:010), and another stated: 'One has to face one's dark side and integrate it rather than deny it - or else one will never be free and whole' (T24:2:008). In response to my questions, these participants agreed that this notion closely resembles the concepts of the archetypal shadow in human nature and the collective unconscious expounded by Carl Jung (T18:2:040).

b Free-will theodicy

A few participants stated that evil originates from human free will (T29:2:173). Said one: 'God created the possibility of good and evil, but human beings exercise the choice' (T27:2:146). 'One either chooses to walk the path of light or chooses to walk the path of darkness - one is free to choose' (T30:2B:250). This ethical dualism holds that God created humans with a free will, and was therefore obliged to offer humanity the opportunity of exercising a choice between right and wrong. In this view God (despite the nature of his creation) is not held responsible for evil, but humans are.²⁹ Critics point out that this accounts only for moral evil and not for natural evils such as earthquakes and pestilence.

Given the preponderance of the belief in the law of karma and the view that humans are co-creators with God, it was surprising that so few participants elaborated on the free-will theodicy. The discussions on human responsibility, however, imply that humans are, in the final analysis, responsible for all events in their lives.

Some interviewees suggested that humans create negative states through thoughtforms of fear (T21:2:478), and another surmised that one attracts certain experiences through unconscious wishes. 'We are what we are, because we wish to be what we are' (T23:1:574). Another participant explained that persons with 'a strong death wish' will get themselves killed by others who also have 'death wishes' (T15:1B:261). On the other hand, 'someone with a strong life-urge will not have accidents or be murdered' (T15:1B:269). Similarly, a child may, out of love for parents who are 'not cleansed', decide to lay down its life for them, presumably because they need the experience of loss (T15:1B:267).

c God's blueprint

Many participants insisted that God is all there is, and if evil exists, it is also part of God (T18:2:067). These individuals usually held that if the *broader vision* could be had, one would realise that suffering and evil have a purpose (T18:2:034). Therefore, what seems like evil is at bottom not evil at all (T18:2:067). 'From God's view there is a purpose to evil and suffering - the broader vision will show the purpose', explained one (T12:1B:365). Popular New Age author-psychologist, M Scott Peck (1990: 299) writes: 'It was evil, for instance, that raised Christ to the cross, thereby enabling us to see him from afar.' On the other hand, Ramtha, the entity channelled by J Z Knight, teaches that there is no plan. 'The only plan that the Father has ... is to be, so that everything can express the life that the Father is' (Weinberg 1986: 121).

d Spiritual growth

Some participants alluded to the opportunity for *spiritual growth* inherent in suffering (T17:1:478). One person maintained that: 'Evil is not the end of the world ... these negative and impure energies push us back to God', and then insisted that: 'evil's existence increases the love of God' (T21:2:563). Another remarked that the only meaning in suffering is to get us back to where we fell asleep - evil is a means towards an end (T25:2:114).

This view resembles that of some Christian theologians. For instance, Jürgen Moltmann³⁰ emphasises the opportunity suffering offers for communion with God. God is seen as suffering with humanity and this provides an occasion to draw nearer to God and to experience his presence in the midst of sorrow and pain. John Hick³¹ suggests that this reality is '*a vale of soul-making*' where suffering affords humans the opportunity for spiritual growth. Critics have suggested that this is not a particularly 'cost-effective' system, since all too frequently people are embittered and devastated by much suffering instead of being enriched and fortified.

Nevertheless, Spangler (F18:67:5) asserts: 'no experience is lost. ... Whatever experiences create for you the realisation of the birth of the inner light ... are good.' Still, some participants emphasised that spiritual growth could also be accomplished through joy and pleasure, and that it was a mistaken belief that suffering is a prerequisite for growth (T25:1B:227). Lazaris (Pursel 1988: introduction) declares that:

... we³² are here to remind you ...that pain and fear are not the only methods of growth, that you can more elegantly grow through joy and love ...

e Mystery

A few participants admitted that they did not have adequate explanations for evil's existence in the world. One candidly remarked:

Intellectually I can accept that both good and evil are part of God, but with my heart I cannot accept this - I have not really thought this through (T9:1B:152).

This view reflects a school of thought which involves the acceptance of *the mystery of suffering* together with faith in God's ultimate goodness and sovereignty.³³ Here the problem is deferred and the adherent accepts that the mystery cannot be understood. However, this view is usually combined with a hope for eschatological recompense and understanding. Critics, however, object that future bliss does not compensate for present suffering, and eschatological recompense was never mentioned during the data-gathering interviews for this study.

A few of the participants who admitted that they did not understand the origin and prevalence of evil pointed out that there had been previous creations and that it was possible that the origin of evil lay in events connected with those creations (T18:2:057) or in the earlier stages of our Solar Logos' existence (T14:1B:428).

Another suggested that humans should stop asking why things are the way they are and accept that this is the nature of the life process and that humans do not have to understand it (T27:2:201).

6.3.3 The nature of evil and sin

The question as to what constitutes sin or moral evil was often answered by noting that 'we are at different stages - what is right for one is not right for another' (T1:1:50). This relativism was explained by referring to ignorance (T14:1B:428) or to a lack of understanding (T21:2:293). If one knows an act is wrong and one proceeds with it, this constitutes sin, but if one is ignorant of the wrongfulness of a deed, one is not accountable.

'All the suffering in our world is rooted in ignorance, ego, anger and attachments' (T21:2:501) declared one person, and, said another: 'the devil is very real - all self-centred activity, greed, hatred and delusion - that is the devil' (T26:1:156). It is obvious that most of the participants agreed that moral evil could be explained in terms of *misguided human actions* (T7:1B:301). One participant wrote:

Dynamic action on every level is the keynote of the present era. On all sides we find evidence of radical change, often accompanied by violence and ruthless self-assertion. Although deplorable in themselves, such manifestations are basically the ignorant misuse of the cosmic energies of which man is becoming increasingly aware.

The power is ever present, but until men are taught how to employ it in the right way, it will be used wrongfully as all too often it is today (F30:2:6).

And David Spangler (F18:67:5) adds:

Man holds the ultimate responsibility for the redemption for what we have come to call 'evil energies' - which are simply energies that have been used out of timing or out of place, or in a fashion not suited to the needs of evolution.

Another popular opinion was that any *harm to life* constitutes evil (T1:1:183). A platitude that was often expressed was: 'evil is simply "live" written backwards' (T7:1B:297).³⁴ Some agreed that one could discern between good and bad by deciding whether an act advances life or inhibits it (F8:1:3). Others felt that 'anything that is against life' is sin (T1:1:182). However, one person remarked that ultimately one cannot take life, since life cannot die (T3:1B:128) - which leads to the conclusion that in the final analysis murder is also simply a misguided action (see 6.3.1 a).

Some participants concluded that sin is '*separation from God*' (T8:1:440), which comes about because humans forgot who they really are (T19:2:048). Numerous New Age authors, among them Matthew Fox, hold that sin lies in the separation between humans and the Divine. Fox (1983: 49) explains:

The creation centered tradition, while it does not begin its spirituality with original sin but with original blessing, does indeed have an understanding of original sin or the sin behind sin. From Meister Eckhart to Mary Daly, the sin behind all sin is seen as dualism. Separation. Subject/object relationships. Fractures and fissures in our relationships. Take any sin: war, burglary, rape, thievery. Every such action is treating another as an object outside oneself. This is dualism. This is behind all sin.

With regard to punishment for sin, most participants agreed that one is not punished for misguided actions (T1:1:182) - some because they saw the law of karma as providing whatever is needed for the soul's development, others because 'the Sons of God are not sinners' (ACIM 1985 I: 88), thereby negating the sin.

6.3.4 Conclusion

It is apparent that the participants in this study synthesise eastern and western concepts in their efforts to come to grips with the problem of evil in the world. The eastern philosophies (such as *Advaita Vedanta*, Buddhism and Taoism) which relativise the question of evil do not propound a theistic belief system, but many of the participants, while accepting the eastern view of suffering, combine it with a belief in a benevolent and omnipotent God with whom one can have a personal relationship.

Furthermore, all participants exonerate God from responsibility for evil and suffering in the world, either by negating evil or by justifying its existence. These justifications include all the usual theodicies found in the Semitic religions (such as the notions of a necessary balance, the free-will argument, the 'soul-making' contention and the blueprint theory).

All agreed that the responsibility for the presence of evil in the world lies with humans, and it is interesting that no-one held out the hope for eschatological recompense, since this conflicts with the ubiquitous belief in the law of karma and the cyclic view of time. As was seen in the discussions on humans as co-creators with God and the law of karma (6.2.1 c and e), suffering and misfortune are generally explained as self-generated experiences. Either human souls are seen to need certain experiences which are karmically determined, or people are seen to create their experiences through their thought processes. In both of these views God is righteous and the responsibility for suffering is placed firmly at the door of the individual - here there are no victims.

This view seemed at times to function as an excuse for not resisting the injustices of life, as when one participant remarked that 'I am not my brother's keeper' (T1:1:295). Furthermore, the threat and injustice of evil are tempered when one can blame the victim for bringing misfortune and suffering upon him or herself. In contrast, however, some participants accentuated the fact that the integrated human being naturally has the qualities of loving kindness and compassion established in the self (see 6.2.3).

Finally, the ideal-type New Ager can be described as not overly perturbed about the phenomenon of evil, since it is either seen as illusory or as a natural part of the evolutionary process. The evil of suffering, pain, disease, death and tragedy is seen as part of the harmony of opposites that shape this reality. In the same way that spring emerges from the desolation of winter and day follows night, good and evil are seen as integral parts of a whole that transcends both.

Notes

1 One participant maintained that this view is confirmed by other verses as well. She quoted the following:

Philippians 2:13 ... for it is God who works in you.

1 John 4:16 ... he who dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him.

Ephesians 3:17-19 ... that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

James 2:26 ... the body without the spirit is dead ...

John 4:23-24 ... worship the Father in spirit ...

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 ... therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (F18:71:2).

2 This clearly resembles the anonymous Christian author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* who wrote: 'He is thy being but thou art not his.'

3 Another esotericist whose work is highly regarded by some participants is Corinne Heline. See for instance *Occult anatomy and the Bible: healing and disease in the light of rebirth and the stars* [1940](1985) in which the subtle bodies are discussed in the light of esoteric science and the wisdom of the Bible.

4 The constitution of humans is dealt with by various authors, but since they do not all use the same terms for the various planes and bodies, and because of small differences which enable some to speak of eight aspects in stead of seven, the subject remains somewhat abstruse (see Bailey 1970: 118; Crawford 1990: 55ff; Hall 1979: 42).

5 This theory was developed by Erich von Däniken in his bestselling books such as *Chariots of the Gods?* (1970) and *According to the evidence* (1977).

6 For more information on the latent psychic abilities of humans, see Edgar Mitchell (1974) (*Psychic exploration: a challenge for science*), Stuart Holroyd (1977) (*Psi and the consciousness explosion*), and Andrew Neher (1980) (*The psychology of transcendence*).

An interesting volume by popular Christian theologian Morton T Kelsey (1976) is *The Christian and the supernatural*, in which the author propounds the view that extrasensory perception is a natural part of human knowing which has been ignored

and neglected in the modern world. He hypothesises that most people have some sensitivity to this non-sensory type of knowing and that some individuals have great gifts in this area - which might be used for good or evil purposes. This view, according to Kelsey, should help the modern Christian understand classical Christianity in which these abilities were very visible.

7 See New Ager Gina Cerminara (1978) (*Many mansions: the Edgar Cayce story on reincarnation*) and Sylvia Cranston and Carey Williams (1984) (*Reincarnation: a new horizon in science, religion, and society*).

8 Interesting volumes on reincarnation in Christianity are those by Geddes MacGregor *Reincarnation in Christianity: a new vision of the role of rebirth in Christian thought* (1978) and *Reincarnation as a Christian hope* (1982). MacGregor is an Anglican priest who graduated from the University of Edinburgh and received his doctorate from Oxford. He taught philosophy of religion at the University of Southern California from 1960 to 1975 where he was also dean of the university's School of Religion. Friedrich Rittelmeyer, a Christian pastor in the Lutheran tradition, also wrote on reincarnation in Christianity (*Reincarnation: philosophy, religion, ethics* [1931] (1988)). In contrast with MacGregor, he postulates that reincarnation was *not* a traditional Christian teaching, but that this knowledge has been concealed from humankind until now, when it has become a necessary teaching if Christianity is to survive.

9 Gershom Scholem's (1955) Eranos lecture entitled *Transmigration and the sympathy of souls in Jewish mysticism* deals with this aspect of Jewish tradition.

10 Helen Wambach (1980: 60), an American psychologist who had researched past life recall under hypnosis, reports that about half of her subjects told of at least one brief lifetime in which they died before the age of five. She quotes one of these persons' explanations: 'I seemed to know after I'd been born that I'd chosen the wrong parents. Apparently, I knew this wouldn't work out well, so I just left' (Wambach 1980: 76).

11 Presumably 'new souls' have to 'start at the bottom', in a state of deprivation - and in time and over many lives, work their way up to more comfortable physical circumstances. Another participant also linked high social and financial status with good karma (T5:2:103). Very few participants made such a strong connection between comfortable material circumstances and previous lives.

12 Blavatsky, Cayce and Wambach differ considerably regarding the time that is thought to elapse between lives. Blavatsky mentions that souls reincarnate at intervals of 1 000 to 1 500, and many of Cayce's readings suggest that his clients had lived three or four times previously. Helen Wambach (1980: 122) found that the time between lives ranged from four months to two hundred years, with the average subject returning to embodiment after an interval of only fifty-two years.

13 See Sheldrake's (1981) *A new science of life: a hypothesis of formative causation*.

14 Matthew Fox (1983:19-20) writes:

How much pure projection wanders about the church pieties of today? How much of the piety of 'Jesus is my best friend' or 'Jesus saves' comes perilously close to pure projection - when in fact Jesus, like all the prophets, taught people to heal themselves and others, to be instruments of New Creation, and to do works greater than he did?

15 This is reminiscent of Eckhart (Fox 1980: 118) who wrote:

The seed of God is in us. Given an intelligent and hard-working farmer, it will thrive and grow up to God, whose seed it is; and accordingly its fruits will be God-nature. Pear seeds grow into pear trees, nut seeds into nut trees, and God seed into God.

16 Bucke contended that the experience of cosmic consciousness was becoming more common and this heralded the development of a new kind of consciousness which would eventually lift humanity beyond its present position of ignorance and fear. According to Buck (1951: 65) this consciousness 'appears in individuals mostly of the male sex, who are otherwise highly developed - men of good intellect, of high moral qualities, of superior physique.' He also hypothesised that the cases of cosmic consciousness were becoming more perfect and pronounced. The most striking cases in history were found in the lives of Gautama the Buddha, Jesus, Paul, Plotinus, Mohammed, Dante, Las Casas, John Yepes, Francis Bacon, Jacob Boehme, William Blake, Honore de Balzac and Walt Whitman. Although the author accepted that his is not a popular opinion, he still maintained that 'Walt Whitman is the best, most perfect, example the world has so far had of the Cosmic Sense (Buck 1951: 225).

17 Ram Dass and Paul Gorman's (1985) book *How can I help?* is a good example of the 'compassionate service' that is emphasised in some quarters.

18 These matters are also dealt with by Christian theologian Hans Küng (1991) in his book *Global responsibility: in search of a new world ethic*.

19 See *Earth at Omega* by Donald Keyes (1982); *New Age politics: the healing self and society* by Martin Satin (1978); and *New genesis: shaping a global spirituality* by Robert Muller (1982). Dr Robert Muller is the Assistant Secretary General to the United Nations and was awarded the 1989 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education (F18:58:2).

20 Keyes (1982: 96) reports that Planetary Citizens was established with U Thant and Norman Cousins as honorary chairmen. It is a tax exempt, non-profit organisation with the following objectives: firstly, to help people around the world cross the threshold of consciousness from a limited, local perspective to the inclusive and global view required in a planetary era, and secondly, to show them how to participate in the process of planetarisation. These ends are accomplished through informal education programmes, workshops, seminars and conferences and also by the personal examples and life-styles of members and interns.

21 The co-sponsors with Planetary Citizens were the Association for Humanistic Psychology, The Club of Rome, and Global Education Associates.

22 See Bailey's *A treatise on white magic* (1934: 398-434) and *A treatise on the seven rays: Vol II - Esoteric psychology* (1942: 632-701).

23 In January 1990, at the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary leaders in Moscow, USSR, renowned scientist Dr Carl Sagan presented a statement entitled 'Preserving and cherishing the Earth', signed by 32 leading scientists, in which they make an appeal for a joint commitment in science and religion 'to preserve the environment of the earth'. The document, referring to 'crimes against creation', points out that:

the historical record makes clear that religious teachings, example, and leadership are powerfully able to influence conduct and commitment. As scientists, many of us have had profound experiences of awe and reverence before the universe. We understand that what is regarded as sacred is more likely to be treated with care and respect. Our planetary home should be so regarded. Efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment need to be infused with a vision of the sacred'.

A response was organised in which leaders of all the major religions affirmed that

'the environmental crisis is intrinsically religious' and that:

All faith traditions and teachings firmly instruct us to revere and care for the natural world. Yet, sacred creation is being violated and is in ultimate jeopardy as a result of long-standing human behaviour. A religious response is essential to reverse such long-standing patterns of neglect and exploitation (Regenstein 1991: 167).

24 According to one participant there are three principles for success, which she describes as follows:

1. Having a burning desire - be honest with yourself and feel that you are ready to receive it NOW. Do not project into the future or you will never receive it. If you cannot accept the 'thing' now - accept the IDEA of it NOW.
2. To keep it burning brightly - ABSOLUTE SECRECY - tell no-one - because letting out the energy of accomplishment through telling nullifies it. The Subsonscious level of Mind does not know the difference between fact or fancy or accomplishment and telling about it, and if you talk it thinks IT IS DONE and does not need to work for you any more. YOU HAVE SCATTERED THE POWER.
3. INTEGRATE almost everything that happens to you e.g. books you read, things you do, etc. as part of your desire. In other words become SINGLE MINDED in what you want because this ADDS TO THE POWER THAT WANTS EXPRESSION THAT WILL MOTIVATE YOU. LIFE IS ACTION and energy must find an outlet. If not sure what you want - ask God for guidance and then act upon it to the very best of your ability. Do what you think is right for you WITHOUT HURTING OTHERS. Never try to force results but TRUST THE CREATIVE POWER OF THE UNIVERSE to bring your desire to you. Your work is to convince yourself that IT IS ALREADY DONE and your complete ACCEPTANCE keeps the door open for it to come to you. The LAW will create the ways and the means. When you FEEL inside that it is done - no need to keep on repeating your treatments [translate with 'prayers' - HCS] - just a simple THANK YOU FATHER - reaffirms the treatment and your gratitude (F7:3:11-12).

25 What Hillel in fact said when he was asked by a heathen to explain the whole Torah while standing on one leg, was: 'The essence of the Torah is the command:

Do not do unto others as you would not want them to do unto you - the rest is commentary' (Fromm 1967: 11).

26 See Griffin's *God, power and evil* (1976) and *Evil revisited* (1991).

27 This view is encountered among protest theodisists such as Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel (1979) (*The trial of God*) and Christian theologian Frederick Sontag in *The God of evil* (1970) and *God, why did you do that?* (1979).

28 The myth of the rebellious angel who fell from heaven is not exclusive to Christianity. It is also found in, among others, the ancient Sanskrit scriptures, the Zoroastrian tradition, and in pre-conquest Mexico (Cramer 1979: 152ff). The origin of the name Lucifer for the 'evil one' can be traced to the Vulgate translation of Isaiah 14:12-19, where the 'bright morning star' was translated with the Latin name Lucifer, which means 'light bearer' - a title usually reserved for the Christ. This then became the name that the patristic writers used for Satan before his fall from heaven (Cramer 1979: 152ff).

Russell (1977: 196) points out that the identification of fallen angels with stars is not uncommon in the Old Testament, and that the Apocalyptic writers elaborated on this theme. In the early Hebrew tradition the fallen angels are still granted the right to continue their dissension and are regarded as an aspect of God's personality, as can be seen in the the Book of Job. But during and after the exile, God is seen to evolve into a 'divine doublet consisting of a good and an evil principle' (Russell 1977: 219). This duality, however, never becomes complete and the ambivalence can be seen to persist in Christian thought. Christianity rejected dualism despite the similarities between Zoroastrianism and the powers ascribed to the Devil in the New Testament. Ultimately it is believed that Satan will be defeated and the kingdom of God will be established. In the interim the function of the Devil is as counter-principle to Christ - Christ saves humanity from the power of the Devil, but if his power is negated, Christ's mission becomes meaningless (Russell 1977: 229).

29 This view is also expounded by Jacques Maritain (1966) in *God and the permission of evil*.

30 See Moltmann's (1967) *Theology of hope*.

31 John Hick's theodicy is traced to Irenaeus (c130-c202), and more recently to theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). See Hick (1978).

32 Lazaris refers to himself in the plural, not in an imperial sense but rather because he is aware of the many selves of his own reality. Humans are said to share this characteristic but presently experience each of the selves 'one at a time' (Pursel 1988: introduction).

33 This is the 'faith solution' of which the *Book of Job* is an example. In recent times, Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner has also held this view. See 'Why does God allow us to suffer?', in his (1983) *Theological Investigations*, XIX.

34 This saying is often repeated in the popular literature. See MacLaine (1988: 345) and Peck (1990: 280). In the *Encyclopedia of the occult* (Spence 1988: 186) we read:

... in almost all languages, the name of God consists of four letters. ... According to the Kabalists (sic) the name of the Evil one consisted of the same four letters spelled backward, signifying that evil is merely the reflection or shadow of good.

CHAPTER 7 - KNOWLEDGE, HEALING AND TRANSFORMATION

*Better to see the face
than to hear the name*

Zen saying

7.1 THE AIM OF THE CHAPTER

Healing and transformation are of central importance in the New Age movement. Healing is important on different levels - the healing of the body, of the mind, and furthermore of the world. But ultimately the aim of life is spiritual transformation and enlightenment, which can only be achieved through gnosis. Direct experiential knowledge of the Oneness of All is regarded as salvific in that it leads the individual to higher levels of consciousness and ultimate transcendence of the everyday reality. In the interim, however, innumerable techniques and practices are available for bringing about physical and mental healing and for attaining a higher level of consciousness, so to transform one's life on the way to ultimate enlightenment.

This chapter therefore first explores the epistemology of participants. This includes a discussion of the various internal and external sources of knowledge, with special reference to revelation in the form of channelling. Secondly, the issue of healing (of the body and of the mind) as an interim step towards transformation is examined. Although the holistic health movement is a powerful movement in its own right, many of its followers also identify with the New Age movement. Since this thesis focuses on the spiritual dimension of the New Age movement, the techniques and practices involved in the pursuit of healing receive only very limited attention. Lastly, the methods that are said to lead to the attainment of gnosis and ultimate transformation are probed.

7.2 Sources of true knowledge

In the scientific worldview of the west it has for many years been accepted that valid knowledge is attained only through reason and the senses. This one-sided dogmatism denies the possibility of obtaining valid knowledge through either divine revelation, religious tradition or mystical experience.

However, in the religious traditions of the world, both external sources such as revelation and tradition, and internal sources such as mystical experience, have always been regarded as valid sources of knowledge. In the west, particularly in the Semitic tradition, revelation as received by different prophets has been of primary importance, and although accumulated tradition as expressed in religious dogma and doctrines has also been highly esteemed in some quarters, mystical insight has never been especially valued as a source of knowledge, and in some circles has been tolerated only with a certain apprehension (see 1.1.1 a).

In the subsequent analysis it will become evident that although the participants generally give primacy to the internal sources of knowledge, the external sources are not absent from their philosophies. Furthermore it will be seen that their diverse views on epistemology lead to the different types of religion (positive, negative and absolute) distinguished by Krüger (1985: 11ff).

7.2.1 Internal sources

Father Enomiya-Lassalle (1988: 142), although not strictly speaking a New Ager, expresses the views of many New Agers when he addresses the question of the validity of religious experience and concludes with the question and answer:

What assurance is there that what we find in our search is truly the teaching and experience of Christ? If there is any assurance, it can only lie in the individual religious experience encountered in deep prayer and contemplation. It is only here that the answer has a chance of coming directly from Christ. And it is for this reason that the search for sources and new forms must be closely bound with religious experience.

In similar vein, virtually all the participants agreed that religious knowledge is directly linked with 'inner experience', 'direct perception', 'intuition' or 'total immediate perception' of Ultimate Reality (IT14).¹

One participant explained that 'my own experiences in other dimensions of altered states of consciousness are very important to me and underwrite my faith' (F18:1:5), and another articulated what many intimated: 'Man in the new Aquarian Age, will rise and say: I know the Truth, and the Truth has made me free' (F30:2:95). These

statements reveal the presence of negative religion, which denies that Ultimate Reality can be known by way of our ordinary senses. Nonetheless, knowledge of the transcendent is possible and accessible to anyone who pursues it through silence and spiritual discipline (Krüger 1985: 11ff).

Closely allied to this is the view of some participants that there is an ontological unity between the human being and Ultimate Reality and that knowledge is to be discovered at the deepest levels of the individual. One participant referred to this experiential awareness as 'a deep gut knowing' and added that 'through practice (meditation) comes the awakening of that area (of the person) that *does* know' (T11:1:219).

A further clarification of this notion was presented by an interviewee who said:

... I must rely on the soul contact that I have. ... I set store by insight which I gain in meditation and inspirations or intuitive flashes. ... I only accept what I read when there is an inner resonance (F18:1:5).

This person expanded on this 'inner resonance' by explaining that with some of the transmissions received through channelling from Jesus Christ² she experienced a definite *re*-cognition. She then speculated that these teachings might have formed part of her knowledge in a previous lifetime. She continued: 'There is an inner joy and surge which cannot be ignored. A deep acceptance of what is Truth for me' (F18:1:5). This notion was further clarified by another participant who said he agreed with Socrates that all knowledge already resides within the human being and that it can be coaxed out and recognised as true knowledge (T20:2B:019). Similarly, another explained:

Knowing is a state of at-one-ment with the Supreme Knowing. The true way of knowing is what initiates call intuitive - this is not a vague hunch - it is a divine seed within the knower. This divine seed has latent power within it - all that is in the infinite knowing just waiting to be awakened and released (T30:2B:147). [The] knower knows because it is divinity itself that knows (T30:2B:184).

One person warned that it is, however, only the enlightened mystic, knower or gnostic who has sought for the truth with all his or her heart, who can say:

I speak as one who knows, I do not merely believe but *know* that God *is*. I can declare it to be the truth, because it is within the range of my innermost experience (F30:2:32).

This approach reflects the way of knowing that leads to absolute religion, in which the concept of two separate realms of reality is transcended. The division between the subjective and the objective is transcended and the individual realises that there is no separate identity. The 'I' is abandoned to 'the great oneness that lies beyond our differentiated thinking and feeling' (Krüger 1985: 33). In this mystical 'experience' one realises that the kingdom of God is here and now, and *nirvana* is in *samsara* (Krüger 1985: 33).

7.2.2 External sources

In positive religion as described by Krüger (1985: 11ff), a transcendent Other Reality is postulated. Despite its transcendence, however, this Other Reality can be cognitively known. In this kataphatic tradition, knowledge of the Other Reality is possible through various analogies and correspondences that exist between the two realities, and the presence of the Other is revealed in this world through various theophanies. Dogma, church tradition and revelation are some of the ways in which humans are believed to receive knowledge of the transcendent reality.

a Dogma and tradition

A particularly popular conviction among participants in this study, as well as in New Age literature, is that ultimately dogma is subordinate to the inner experience of the individual. Alice Bailey (1961: 5) explains:

Much of what we see around us today of unbelief and criticism, and the negation of our so-called truths, is based upon the fact that religion has been largely superseded by creed, and doctrine has taken the place of living experience.

Some participants apparently felt an intense animosity towards ecclesiastical structures and functionaries. One person said 'I don't like being told things, and I don't like being told by priests, *especially*' (T14:1B:047). Another maintained that she 'could not see God's love or God's justice in organised orthodox religion' (T3:1:222).

Rather than accepting doctrinal or ecclesiastical authority, participants emphasised that: 'If it appeals to you, you are entitled to believe it - time will tell if it is true' (T4:1B:185), and: 'Don't accept anything I say to you, meditate on it, and if it feels right to you, accept it and if not, shelve it for now' (T7:1:360).

A course in miracles also exhorts its readers to follow its prescribed practices but not to feel pressured to accept its teachings intellectually:

Remember only this: you need not believe the ideas, you need not accept them, and you need not even welcome them. Some of them you may actively resist. None of this will matter, or decrease their efficacy. But do not allow yourself to make exceptions in applying the ideas the workbook contains, and whatever your reaction to the ideas may be, use them. Nothing more than that is required (ACIM 11 1985: 2).

Nevertheless, despite this emphasis on critical inner testing, there were a few persons who admitted that their doctrines and leaders were, in fact, regarded as authoritative by some members of their groups. One explained: 'The Master and past Masters point the way, but in the final analysis it is the experience that counts', nevertheless 'some [members of our group] are very dogmatic' (T3:1B:172).

Only one participant warned that 'a little dogma and infrastructure, as well as ethics are necessary - one should not throw away one [dogma] if one does not have the other [direct experience]' (T21:2:250).

In general, participants also reasoned that structures of authority were necessary for some people 'at certain stages of development' and although they themselves did not experience the need for church structures they did not condemn those who did (T8:1:197). These structures were seen to be 'spiritually limited but since they taught people good values', they were not entirely useless (T8:1B:039), and there is thought to be 'some truth in all of them' (T10:2:278).

On the whole, though, participants sided with Marilyn Ferguson (1980: 370) who declares triumphantly:

Ironically, every organized religion has been based on the claims of direct experience of one or more persons, whose revelations are then handed down as articles of faith. Those who want direct knowledge, the mystics, have always been treated more or less as heretics, whether they were the medieval mystics within Christianity, the Sufis within the borders of Islam, or the Kabbalists within Judaism. ... Now the heretics are gaining ground, doctrine is losing its authority, and knowing is superseding belief.

b Sacred scriptures

On the issue of the status of the holy scriptures of the different religions, the predominantly Christian roots of the participants were clear. The Bible was the text that was most often mentioned when quoting important scriptures, followed by the Bhagavad Gita. Other writings that were particularly valued were the Theosophical teachings of Blavatsky and Bailey. Two participants declared that they 'embrace all

the holy scriptures' (IT 15), and two others remarked that one can see a common thread running through all the world's scriptures (IT 15). Only one confessed to sometimes finding the scriptures confusing (T27:2:260).

Several participants evinced hostility in discussions on the Bible. One person stated that the Bible could not be accepted as absolute or as the only authority, since it reveals inner inconsistencies and there are obvious signs of manipulation by humans for their own gain (F18:1:5).³ This participant also contended that the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi texts cast doubt on the orthodox interpretation of the Biblical message, but nonetheless maintained that 'the Bible is still one of the most important books' (F18:1:5). Furthermore, this person was of the opinion that truth could be found in the Bible when it was read 'with soul' (F18:1:5). Father Enomiya-Lassalle (1988: 67) elaborates on this and points out that Christians who practise Zen meditation often find a new appreciation for the Scriptures through a non-rational understanding of them. He writes:

This understanding does not take the form of some new interpretation that occurs to them as the result of reading or considering a scriptural text. ... Rather, it is a matter of reading the words with attention while at the same time seeing through them, so to speak, to the reality behind those words and concepts. The entire person is addressed here The result is an understanding that cannot be expressed in words although the experience is nevertheless accompanied by an authentic and deep joy ... because the truth has been grasped directly (Enomiya-Lasalle 1988: 67).

On the whole, all those who held the Bible in high esteem urged that it should be interpreted in new ways (T4:2B:054). Only one participant thought that *properly interpreted* scriptures (such as the Bible, the Gita and the Koran) were more important than one's own experience. In reply to my question whether these texts did not contradict one another, he remarked that that was why proper interpretation should be emphasised (T21:2:271).

New Ager John Randolph Price (1987: 34) voices a popular view on sacred scriptures when he writes of the Bible:

The inspired, infallible Word of God is the Christ indwelling each individual. The Bible was not intended to be interpreted literally in all its parts. It must be read through the heart and interpreted through the spirit.

c Revelation

Although participants displayed a disregard for the external authority of dogma, tradition and revelation as encountered in the sacred scriptures of the different religions, it was noteworthy that channelled revelations from numerous sources were accepted with much enthusiasm. Revelation through channelled entities such as Ramtha, Lazaris, Seth and a myriad other sources are of particular significance in the New Age movement.⁴ New revelations for a new era are therefore not only acceptable, but of particular value to New Agers.

(i) Channelling

Jon Klimo (1987: 2) defines channelling as:

the communication of information to or through a physically embodied human being from a source that is said to exist on some other level or dimension of reality than the physical as we know it, and that is not from the normal mind (or self) of the channel.

Five of the participants in the study claimed contact with discarnate entities and although another five expressed some scepticism regarding the phenomenon, approximately two-thirds of the interviewees viewed channelling in a positive light. One observed that 'many people are getting obvious touchings ... and are expressing it in the best way they can' (T21:1:570), but then warned that 'just because someone hasn't got a body, doesn't mean they know everything' (T21:1:578).⁵

Among those who claimed to serve as channels, three were available for private consultations (for a fee) by people who are in need of advice from the channel's sources. One participant practises as a medium⁶ and would usually consent to invite a specific departed spirit or entity of the client's choice to make contact (she emphasised that they did not 'call up the dead' but waited to be contacted). Should contact not prove possible, the medium's own spirit guides would be available for consultation. What was interesting about this case was that this person admitted to consulting other mediums whenever she was in need of advice regarding her own life decisions. When I asked why she did not consult her own guides in such matters, she answered that 'one often doubts oneself' and added that 'my guides know by now that I need proof' and therefore consultation with other mediums as well (T2:1:542).

Another participant teaches a course in 'mindfitness' which she claimed is channelled from the archangel Metatrone (T6:1:276). The angel was also said to be of much use in her daily life and guided her in offering the appropriate material in her courses to fulfil the specific needs and requirements of those who attend (T6:1:410).

One participant provided information on a tape-recording, and at one point his tone of voice suddenly altered significantly. I was later informed that at that stage he had started channelling his source. This channelled message prophesied a glorious and peaceful future for South Africa (see 4.3.2 for the full message).

Types of channelling

The manner in which material is channelled differs in significant ways. Channelling can be intentional or spontaneous, but often what has started as spontaneous channelling can develop into intentional channelling - as found in the case of J Z Knight who channels the entity Ramtha. The phenomenon can be further differentiated according to how little or how much self-awareness the channel appears to possess during the channelling process. In *prototaxic* experiences the channel is totally unconscious and in full trance, and does not have any recall of what takes place during channelling; in *parataxic* experiences the channel is semiconscious or in a mildly altered state and is aware of the content of the material received; and in *syntaxic* experiences or open channelling the channel is fully conscious of the information which is received as intuitions and inspirations (Klimo 1987: 186). In this study none of the channels had experiences of the prototaxic variety.

The messages

In his book on channelling, Klimo (1987: 150-167) examines the messages that are channelled and categorises them under the following headings: information on the Ageless Wisdom; guidance for daily living and other personal messages; various 'proofs' from the sources; descriptions of the realities experienced by the sources; information about the past and future; subject matter for artistic and creative expression; and scientific, technological and medical/healing information.

The messages of the channels in this study were not exhaustively studied but on the whole they could be categorised as guidelines for daily living, information about the past and future, and medical and healing information, with only one person addressing the larger issues of the Ageless Wisdom and prophecies on a national and planetary scale.

The sources

Participants in this study mostly referred to their sources as 'discarnate entities' or 'ascended masters', although one claimed to channel the archangel Metatrone (see 5.2.3). This person further alleged that she is in contact with certain extra-terrestrials. In New Age literature there are ample precedents for these claims and

individuals like Jach Pursel, J Z Knight and Jane Roberts have become famous for the channelled messages they convey.

There are two further sources in New Age literature which are particularly relevant here, since their channels are both from the United States and both presented papers at the Planet in Change symposium in Johannesburg during October 1992. They are: the archangel Michael (through Orpheus Phyllos), and the Pleiadians, a group of extra-terrestrials from the Pleiades star system (through Barbara Marciniak).

The belief that certain technically and spiritually advanced extra-terrestrials are committed to assisting human beings in their unfolding evolution and spiritual development was held by almost half the participants. Information received from one participant who networks extensively contains messages from 'space brothers' in which they attest to their deep desire to assist humanity in its evolutionary process (see 5.3.3). Benjamin Creme (1980: 206) explains that:

Since the war, they have played a major role in preserving this planet intact The space people have placed around this planet a great ring of Light, which holds it intact and protects it from an overflow of force from the cosmic astral plane and negative cosmic evil. ... Their work is continuous and endless and we all owe them a tremendous debt.

One participant claimed that she was, in fact, an alien (New Ager Brad Steiger [1973] calls them 'Star people') who had been sent to this planet to share her wisdom and experience with humanity.

Another warned that it is not only benevolent aliens that are involved with this planet, but that some extra-terrestrials are of evil origin and have over the years been responsible for innumerable abductions with the purpose of conducting scientific experiments on human beings.⁷

To conclude, channelling as revelation can be seen to function as a source of valid knowledge although some participants emphasised that this too should be accepted as truth only if there is an inner resonance. David Spangler (1984: 67) (who himself claims contact with a spiritual being) concurs and relates that from the beginning of their association, his 'guide' warned that he was not a guide in any spiritualistic sense and that he could not tell Spangler what to do. He was simply there 'to strengthen our capacity to decide for ourselves and to make skillful use of our God-given faculties of intelligence and free will'.

7.3 Healing

J Gordon Melton (1990: 214) points out that in the United States the holistic health movement exists independently of the New Age movement, but shows that the two movements share one central concept: that the individual person is responsible for his or her own life and for seeking out the means of transformation needed to achieve a better quality of life. Although spiritual healing and transformation through gnosis is the ultimate goal there are many levels on which the healing process takes place. Most participants agreed that when there is physical disease or mental illness the causes of these have to be addressed for the process of spiritual transformation to be successful. Healing of the body will therefore take place naturally when the person is brought back into harmony with the whole. Nevertheless, there are many healing therapies that concentrate on the body, although it should be borne in mind that many New Agers view the body as a multi-levelled organism. With this in mind, the causes attributed to physical disease, the healing therapies and practices, and the healers themselves receive attention in this section, while the ultimate healing as encountered in transformation and illumination are discussed in the following section.

7.3.1 The causes of disease

In general, participants attributed physical illnesses to various interrelated causes, namely negative attitudes, spiritual dis-ease and karma. The latter is closely linked to the perception that humans choose their own diseases, probably in order to undergo certain necessary soul experiences (IT 23). However, participants who follow the teachings of *A course in miracles* denied the reality of illness as this course teaches that sickness is 'not-right-mindedness', which arises from the belief that what is amiss on one level can adversely affect another level (ACIM 1985 I: 19). Nonetheless, in all these cases it is clear that people themselves are perceived to be responsible for their afflictions.

Notwithstanding this agreement, it is interesting that one of the pillars of the movement, Alice Bailey ([1953] 1978: 9), teaches that the ultimate cause of disease, as with evil, lies far back in the history of the planet and in the career of the planetary Logos. She explains:

Given the postulate that every form is a part of a still greater form, and that we do indeed 'live and move and have our being' within the body of God ... we, as integral parts of the fourth kingdom in nature, share in this general limitation and imperfection ... (since) Deity itself is on the road towards perfection (Bailey 1978: 10-11).

Following this philosophy, one can therefore only deal with the secondary causes of disease and not the primary causes, which lie beyond human cognition. On this subordinate level, then, Bailey (1978: 15) divides the causes of disease into three classes, namely psychological causes, causes emanating from group life and karmic causes. Similarly, the ways of healing are divided into the methods of medicine and surgery, the use of psychology, and the activation of the soul (Bailey 1978: 32).

7.3.2 The healers

Six of the participants in the study regarded themselves as healers and were available for private consultations. One is medically qualified and practises homeopathy, while the others claimed that they were spiritual healers who had received the gift of healing. On the whole these people emphasised that it is not the healer who heals, but that he or she is merely a catalyst for God, who does the healing. Related to this is the view that the body has its own healing mechanism and that this should be stimulated in order that the body might heal itself.⁸ One of the participants explained that 'all healers attune themselves to the God Force and allow this energy to flow through them, to stimulate the patient's body to heal itself' (F13:1:18). (The principle of freeing the universal energies to restore balance and effect healing does not apply only to humans, and was also encountered in the cosmological views of New Agers in the context of Gaia's ability to effect homeostasis (see 5.3).

One person explained that healing functions in three ways: 'the patient carries a cross and the healer can (a) strengthen the patient, or (b) can take the cross away for a recuperation period, or (c) can take it away completely because the debt has been paid' (T13:1:150). Exactly why a healer is necessary in the last instance was never satisfactorily explained.

Different healers claimed competence in different diagnostic methods, such as aura reading, clairvoyance, clairaudience and intuition. One healer explained that spiritual healers are usually able to diagnose, but that the laws presently governing medical practice do not permit them to do so. One person, who claimed to be able to read auras, revealed that the patient whose illness is karmic will have an aura which appears hard and brittle (T13:1B:212). In these cases the healer is not allowed to interfere, but can nevertheless often help the patient cope emotionally (T13:1B:223). This person explained:

I am able to read a person like a book by assessing their aura. Sometimes I can see at a glance previous lives and future trends. I prefer to use this ability when administering spiritual healing, however, I am able to examine the aura and determine from this what is wrong with the client, mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically (F13:1:2).

An interesting view expressed by some participants was that 'every healer needs a healer' (T13:1:520) since they can be contaminated while healing. One claimed that healers should protect themselves by the frequent washing and shaking of the hands during healing sessions (T16:1B:092), but also maintained that during the process of healing, he performs self-healing (T16:1B:108). Only one claimed that she 'takes collective material from their auras' into her own in order to clear their auras for her patients (T15:1B:253).

One participant claimed a success rate of 70 percent as a spiritual healer - successes which include healings of blindness, deafness, ulcers, asthma, manic depression, chronic pain and cancer (F13:1:3). And most agreed that the patient need not have faith in the healing ability of the healer, but emphasised that the patient must have a genuine wish to become well - and be prepared to do without the attention that the disease had accorded him or her (T16:1B:166).

7.3.3 Methods of healing

a Conventional medicine and surgery

On the whole participants, showed great appreciation for the medical sciences, but frequently expressed the view that medical practitioners focused too narrowly on diseased organs instead of penetrating to the underlying causes of the disease. In contrast with the approach of many medical practitioners, the holistic health movement holds that the individual must be recognised as a whole person with physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions and that good health is much more than merely an absence of disease. A person who is free from all disease might therefore still be a very unhealthy human being. One participant explained that 'spiritual healing is totally holistic in that spiritual healers are able to work at all levels of man's being' (F13:7:18), and added that 'the beauty of spiritual healing is that it reaches those parts that other therapies cannot reach and is always used "in addition to" and never instead of conventional or complementary medicine' (F13:1:18).

b Healing through unconventional therapies

Numerous therapies were advocated by the participants. These included aura cleansing, nutritional therapies, herbalism, homeopathy, reflexology, metamorphic technique, aromatherapy, music therapy, psychic surgery, rebirthing, spinal alignment, iridology, positive thought, visualisation, prayer, therapeutic touch, applied kinesiology, different types of massage therapy, hypnosis, acupuncture and acupressure.⁹

c Healing through attitudinal changes

Considering that the causes of disease are perceived to lie hidden in the psyche and karma of the individual, it was not surprising that great emphasis was given to therapies that influence the mind. In essence, most of these are based on the principle of healing through positive thinking. In accordance with their views on the causes of illness, most participants agreed that 'if you heal someone physically and not spiritually, then healing is not successful' (T13:1B:366).

An especially popular book with some of the participants, and highly regarded in New Age circles, is *You can heal your life* by Louise Hay (1984). Hay (1984: 5) summarises her philosophy, which many participants endorse, as follows:

We are each 100% responsible for all of our experiences.
 Every thought we think is creating our future.
 The point of power is always in the present moment.
 Everyone suffers from self-hatred and guilt.
 The bottom line for everyone is, 'I'm not good enough'.
 It's only a thought, and a thought can be changed.
 Resentment, criticism and guilt are the most damaging patterns.
 Releasing resentment will dissolve even cancer.
 When we really love ourselves, everything in our life works.
 We must release the past and forgive everyone.
 We must be willing to begin to learn to love ourselves.
 Self-approval and self-acceptance in the now are the key to positive changes.
 We create every so-called 'illness' in our body.

From this exposition it is clear that the solution to physical ailments is seen to lie in changing one's attitude towards oneself. It is said that self-love and acceptance will naturally be followed by vibrant health as well as by the love and acceptance of one's fellows. In line with this sentiment, Hay (1984: 150-191) lists numerous complaints and their probable causes, together with affirmations to be repeated so as to create new thought patterns that will heal the problem. For instance:

Abdominal cramps
 Probable cause: Fear. Stopping the process.
 New thought pattern: *I trust the process of life. I am safe.*

Abscess

Probable cause: Fermenting thoughts over hurts, slights and revenge.

New thought pattern: *I allow my thoughts to be free. The past is over. I am at peace.*

Accidents

Probable cause: Inability to speak up for the self. Rebellion against authority. Belief in violence.

New thought pattern: *I release the pattern in me that created this. I am at peace. I am worthwhile.*

Aches:

Probable causes: Longing for love. Longing to be held.

New thought pattern: *I love and approve of myself. I am loving and lovable.*

Following this line of thinking, one participant remarked: 'if you can find the cause, you can find the cure of every disease (T6:1B:186) ... for instance, if you have back problems, life is not supporting you (T6:2:343), ... and if you have asthma, there is a fear of living and probably a death-wish' (T6:2:383). Another (the immortalist) suggested that terminal diseases such as cancer and AIDS are merely socially acceptable ways of killing oneself - and that if one chose, one could be healed and 'master the physical body' (T15:1:330). Another, less radical, opinion was that 'if we are ill, we need to look at the message of the illness - why is the body manifesting this condition and not another?' (T24:1B:493), but this person then cautioned that this rule can be applied in a very insensitive way. She explained that in cases of terminal illness there is often healing of the spirit despite the ravages of the disease, and 'it is not our place to sit in judgment of others or tell them what their sins are' (T24:1B:567). This person emphasised that we do not really know why things are as they are and then related that in conversation with a Master, through a channel, she had asked whether accidents happen or whether everything was, in fact, precisely as it should be. The Master replied that accidents *do* sometimes happen and people *do* get hurt through no fault of their own (T24:2:037). In the discussions of health and healing, this was, however, a minority view and most participants insisted that each person is solely responsible for his or her own life experiences and that if healing did not occur, the person was doing something wrong and either wished or deserved the disease from which he or she suffered.

Many therapies whose aim is to still the mind and relieve stress, as well as to reveal the mental and psychic causes of disease, are available to interested people. These include meditation, rebirthing, yoga, dream analysis and past life regression.

d Divination

Although some participants agreed that different forms of psychism tend to obscure Truth, most evaluated these occult practices in a positive light or at least gave them the benefit of the doubt.

About a third of the participants mentioned *astrology* in a positive sense and four participants either practised astrology or taught courses on the subject. It was stressed repeatedly, however, that the purpose of an astrological analysis was to delineate the personality of the client and not to predict the future. One participant explained:

Properly understood, astrological psychology provides us with the symbolic framework through which to rediscover the basic principles and patterns that govern and describe our own unique development. If we listen, if we explore the birthchart, we are 'told' what we should know about ourselves (F1:1:5).

Four participants practised divination by means of *Tarot cards* and two offered courses on the use of the cards. Once again participants stressed that the cards were used to indicate necessary growth areas in terms of the client's overall spiritual purpose.

Only two participants raised the matter of *the power of crystals* during the interviews, although crystals were displayed in many of the homes where the interviews took place. One held that crystals have 'inherent consciousness' and 'could be programmed to bring you what you want in life.' They could also be 'utilised for amplification in the channelling process' (T6:2B:073).

Even a hasty perusal of a magazine such as *Odyssey* will confirm that other divination methods such as numerology, card reading, I Ching, palmistry, graphology and crystal ball readings are employed in these circles.

The above-mentioned therapies are all regarded as valuable in the intermediate stages of healing, but in order to effect true transformation further spiritual practises are believed to be necessary.

7.4 Transformation

As we have seen in previous chapters, the underlying unity of God and humans is a central principle of New Age thought and all suffering and pain are seen to emanate

from the illusion of separation that has crept into humanity's perception. If, therefore, an individual can regain this knowledge through direct intuitive experience, this truth of the oneness and interpenetration of All will heal and transform the person.

This view is expressed in *A course in miracles* (1985 I: 69) where the source, which is supposedly Jesus Christ, states that:

Healing is not creating; it is reparation. The Holy Spirit promotes healing by looking beyond it to what the children of God were before healing was needed, and will be when they have been healed. ... The Holy Spirit is in you in a very literal sense. His is the Voice That calls you back to where you were before and will be again. It is possible even in this world to hear only that Voice and no other. It takes effort and great willingness to learn. It is the final lesson that I learned, and God's Sons [human beings - HCS] are as equal as learners as they are as sons.

And also:

So do we lay aside our amulets, our charms and medicines, our chants and bits of magic in whatever form they take. We will be still and listen for the Voice of healing. Which will cure all ills as one, restoring saneness to the Son of God [the human being - HCS]. No voice but This can cure. Today we hear a single Voice Which speaks to us of truth, where all illusions end, and peace returns to the eternal, quiet home of God. ... Only salvation can be said to cure, speak to us, Father, that we may be healed (ACIM 1985 II: 264-5).

New Age author Patricia Diane Cota-Robles (1990: 205) exhorts readers as follows:

To change from a consciousness of low self-esteem and unworthiness to the acceptance of our true God Reality often seems like an impossible task, but in fact, it is just a SLIGHT ADJUSTMENT IN AWARENESS. Remember, the separation from our God Presence is self-inflicted. It is a result of years of distorted programming and erroneous beliefs.

Our God Presence is ALWAYS patiently awaiting our return to Truth. It is but a breath away, and our acceptance of this knowledge is all that is necessary for this part of our true Being to take command of our four lower bodies.

With this end in mind various methods of transformation have evolved, and are practised by many of the participants in this study and by other New Agers interested in spiritual development.

7.4.1 Methods of transformation

Cota-Robles (1990: 205) again provides us with a summary of how the acceptance of one's God Reality through a change in awareness is to be effected.

True change begins *within* and gradually manifests outward. It is a process that is always available and operates on all levels simultaneously ... physical, etheric, mental and emotional.

There are several factors involved in the process of change. First, we need to center ourselves and go within to the Silence. This is accomplished through deep breathing, relaxation and meditation. When we reach the point of centeredness, we will more clearly perceive what beliefs and attitudes need to change in order for us to accept our own fears. Then, we will release limitations, old patterns and judgments. As we ask our God Presence for assistance, we will begin to Forgive ourselves for the separation we created. We will recognize the Truth of our Being, and accept our highest good, our true God Reality.

a Meditation

Only two participants in this study failed to emphasise meditation as an important practice in the life of the spiritual seeker. The remaining participants were about equally divided on the aim of meditation, one group underlining the *empowering of the self* and the other stressing the *obligation of healing the whole*. Many different ways of meditation were referred to, with some participants stressing that their way was superior to others and sometimes denigrating other types (this usually occurred with practitioners who practised meditation for altruistic reasons).

(i) Empowering the self

One participant explained that in teaching people to meditate she aims 'to get the self out of the way and so to access that part of God which is within' (T13:1:447), and another said that he taught meditation 'which enables people to find themselves' (T20:1:210). Still another remarked that 'meditation begins to empower the individual' since in meditation 'one realises the God-given power of determined thought' (T21:1:247). A participant who represented Transcendental Meditation

listed numerous benefits of meditation, including better memory, better health, more clarity of thought, more creativity, relief of stress, the purification of the heart, more love for one's neighbour, and therefore an automatic drawing closer to God - which results in becoming a better Christian, Moslem or Hindu, depending on one's own religious commitment (T29:1:168ff). This person also pointed out that all people have the inherent ability to perform miracles, and that Jesus had said that '[you] will do what I have been doing - you will do even greater things than these' (T29:1B:484). Another observed that after meditation 'I feel so fine, so pure, so good, so in tune with my fellow man, with nature, and with the universe - I feel at one - there is total at-one-ment' (T15:1:421).

The views expressed above amply support Daniel Goleman's observation, in *The varieties of the meditative experience* (1977: xxiii), that:

... meditation has been for millennia the path for the person who seeks to go beyond the limiting goals of the everyday world. Ironically, meditation is now touted as the best way to fulfill those everyday goals and live out worldly visions.

(ii) *The good of the whole*

Numerous participants claimed that their meditative practices are undertaken not for personal advancement but for the good of the whole. One unabashedly stated: 'Because we have greater understanding we have the responsibility for prayer - we are being used because of our greater understanding ... we can permeate and seed love into this planet' (T10:1B:098). In addition, explained this person, their meetings were not geared towards self-realisation: 'this is work, you are not here for yourself ... we work for the good of mankind' (T10:1B:273). She did, however, acknowledge that personal empowerment and growth may be a side benefit of performing one's meditational duty (T10:1B:280).

Another, in the Bailey tradition, explained that meditation is necessary in order to 'raise oneself up' (T12:1B:145) but that enlightenment is not the object of their meditative practice. 'Our meditation is service orientated' (T12:1B:163).¹⁰ As Aart Juriense (1985: 360) explains:

[correct meditation] should gradually lead to co-ordination and alignment of the physical, emotional and mental vehicles with the soul, and to a subsequent rounding out and symmetrical development *that will make the man of real use to the Master for serving humanity* (italics added).

Joel S Goldsmith summarises this attitude when he writes:

Every time you meditate, someone out in the world is being awakened ... this is our contribution to the nation and to the peace of the world (F25:17:2).

This view is also propagated by the followers of Transcendental Meditation (TM). In a TM-research report on TM and the TM-Sidhi programme, we read:

Extensive research has shown that individuals practicing the TM and TM-Sidhi program in groups produce an effect of coherence that not only benefits them individually but spreads throughout society. This phenomenon, called the Maharishi Effect, neutralizes stress and negativity and enlivens positive trends in national life. With the creation of a coherent national consciousness, the basic cause of war and violence - the build-up of stress in collective consciousness - is eliminated. The measured results of the Maharishi Effect include reduced crime rate, accident rate, and other negative trends in society, an improved quality of life. The most important research finding on this effect is that when the square root of one percent of the world's population - about 7 000 people - practice the TM and TM-Sidhi program together in one place, they radiate a global influence of coherence, which is reflected in reduced international conflicts and violence, and increased positive trends worldwide (F19:9:65).

With regard to South Africa the national co-leaders of the TM organisation in this country have said:

Let us, the citizens of South Africa, help our government fulfill its aspirations to create a just and peaceful society by our regular practice of Transcendental Meditation and the TM-Sidhis programme. ... Today's realities beggar even our most fantastic dreams of the Sixties and Seventies, for the world is substantially at peace. The Berlin Wall is gone and everywhere, at home and abroad, there is talk of reconciliation, negotiation and troop reduction. More and more, it seems as if the destiny of mankind is being guided by some unseen cosmic force. That unseen force is the Unified Field of all the laws of nature, currently being explored by quantum physicists. Maharishi has given us the practical technologies to enliven the harmonising tendencies of the Unified Field in our personal lives and our environment through the TM and TM-Sidhi programmes (TM newsletter, Autumn 1990 - F19).

Subsequent developments in Central Europe and in South Africa make the claim of a world at peace seem somewhat premature. Nevertheless, this excerpt highlights an

important facet of New Age thought inasmuch as its focus is on the positive and the constructive. New Agers, too, maintain that present events, when seen in the larger framework of cosmic development, are but temporary relapses and that ultimately the evolutionary spiral is ascending.

(iii) Transcendence

The interviewee with affiliations to a Krishnamurti group pointed out that 'if you meditate in order to become enlightened you will never become enlightened - the desire keeps you from enlightenment' (T26:1B:200). She explained that the aim of meditation is 'to become aware of one's motives' (T26:1:064) and 'to see what is and going beyond it' (T26:1B:002). Krishnamurti said:

Meditation is not a way to something. To discover in every moment of daily life what is true and what is false, is meditation (F26:5:7).

Although spiritual transformation is a stated aim among meditators in general, transcendence of this reality was not often reported by participants - the emphasis here being mainly on self-empowerment and service to humanity. A few persons did, however, relate experiences that could be categorised as 'transcending experiences'. One recounted the following:

I had an experience of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence. I was driving ... and suddenly I was in the dust eddy, in the bricks, in the tarmac, in the parking meters, in the crowd and in the people. It is difficult to tell you about it, because these things are ineffable. Revelations are always ineffable. ... I was consciousness, I was that leaf, that sand, that brick, that metal - I was all those things and it was perfectly natural that I was all those things. It was as it should be. And of course there was no vestige of [interviewee's name] This was after I had been arguing something out. Proof comes that way - revelation The difference between a revelation and a memory is that the revelation is almost always practically impossible to put into words - but it leaves you changed. It leaves you far less concerned and your compassion deepens and broadens. ... [In this experience] the outlines went - afterwards I have not looked at people in the same way - the outlines went, they are not delineated any longer into black, white, fat, grumpy, et cetera (T25:1B:155ff).

Ken Wilber (1981: 3) gives the following description of a similar experience of unity:

The most fascinating aspect of such awesome and illuminating experiences ... is that the individual comes to feel, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that he is

fundamentally one with the entire universe, with all worlds, high or low, sacred or profane. His *sense of identity* expands far beyond the narrow confines of his mind and body and embraces the entire cosmos.

Spangler (1977: x) also points out that attunement leads to the realisation that every moment of this life is lived in the 'living presence of God which is oneness' and one of the participants provided me with a leaflet in which a coming 'Attunement Workshop' is announced in the following manner:

The magic of attunement reveals the Magician/Alchemist who brings the stuff of the stars into the shifting sands of daily circumstance. Those who have experienced attunement know something of this (F11:1:1).

b Study

About a third of the participants emphasised reading and study as a means of acquiring knowledge which can expedite the transformative process. The majority of these had been influenced by the Theosophical teachings, in which study is regarded as a crucial aspect of the process of acquiring salvific knowledge. Juriaanse (1985: 235-6) elucidates:

It should ... be recognised that opposition to the esoteric approach is often engendered by mental laziness - a form of mystical inertia. It demands far less mental exertion to express one's aspiration and love to God by various forms of devotional ritual, than by a careful mental analysis of all the facts at the disciple's disposal, supported by studies that will lead to deeper penetration and understanding of the arcana of the subjective worlds. ... The path of the esotericist is that of reason, intellect and knowledge, and therefore of the head, in contrast to the path of the heart as expressed by the aspiration of the mystic.

Nevertheless, Juriaanse (1985: 236) also cautions that:

True understanding should therefore be the product and wise blending of intellect, love and devotion. Both the mystic and the esotericist should follow the balanced path of wisdom. The mystic will eventually find that his devotion must be guided by the intellect, and this will lead him to the path of the esotericist. The latter will, however, also fail to achieve his goal without retaining or recovering his mystic sense.

In all cases where study was emphasised it was with the proviso that knowledge acquired in this way is ultimately subject to inner experiential verification.

7.5 Conclusion

The gnostic element (direct experiential knowledge) in New Age thought is clearly of cardinal importance. In contrast with the scientific worldview which stresses the objectivist, positivist and reductionistic principles, the New Age view advocates a holistic, subjectivist and individualist approach to the validation of knowledge. The typical New Ager questions the grounds on which legitimacy is claimed for the authority of the church, the tradition and the scriptures since he or she is opposed to mere external authority, which is regarded as subordinate to the internal, subjective authority of one's own inner experience.

This experience of intuitive knowing provides the means of transformation by which the individual at last comes into contact with the Higher Self or the Divine within, and is healed and ultimately deified. Although this aim is not depicted as unattainable, the constructed ideal-typical New Ager will usually also be involved with the more mundane practices of healing the body and the mind through therapies that rely not on chemical drugs or surgery, but on natural remedies whose end purpose is to release the universal healing energy which heals and restores the person to a harmonious state with the Whole.

Notes

1 For a discussion of the mystical experience as a way of knowing, see Andrew M Greeley's (1974) *Ecstasy: a way of knowing*.

2 There are a number of trance channellers who claim to transmit messages from Jesus Christ. The most notable of these messages are the teachings of *A course in miracles* (1985), and Virginia Essene's (1986) *New teachings for an awakening humanity*.

3 See Price (1987: 26ff) for a discussion of this popular view of the evolution of the Bible.

4 The definitive book on channelling is by psychologist Jon Klimo (1987) - *Channelling: investigations on receiving information from paranormal sources*.

5 Klimo (1987: 179) writes:

The channeled material tells us that when individuals move to 'the other side', they maintain their level of spiritual development, their basic level of awareness and understanding, and even their essential personality traits. Discarnate human spirits therefore are likely to be as much a 'mixed bag' as people on earth. Therefore, in listening to channeled reports, discrimination on our part is called for. As para-psychologist and consciousness researcher Charles Tart puts it, 'dying does not necessarily raise your IQ'.

6 This participant still employed the archaic term 'medium', in contrast to the now popular term 'channel'. She had been a member of the Spiritualist Church for many years and her use of the term 'medium' is therefore not surprising. Whereas Klimo uses the terms synonymously, parapsychologist D Scott Rogo distinguishes between the terms. He uses 'mediumship' for 'the art of bringing through spirits of the dead specifically to communicate with their relatives' and 'channeling' 'as bringing through some sort of intelligence, the nature undefined, whose purpose is to promote spiritual teachings and philosophical discussion' (Klimo 1987: 5-6). One of the participants in the study explained that spiritualism refers to contact with astral entities and that the messages are mostly of a private nature, while channelling can be equated with the prophecies of the Old Testament (F18:101:2).

7 The subject of UFO abductions is one that has generated much interest in recent years. Despite the convergence of these beliefs and New Age thought in the work of Whitley Strieber (1989a; 1989b), ufologists are generally not New Agers and are often the fiercest critics of the New Age contactee/channelling beliefs. For an elaboration on the UFO abduction theories see Fuller's (1966) case study of such an abduction in *The interrupted journey* and Bullard's (1987) survey of abduction cases documented in *UFO abductions: the measure of a mystery*.

8 Although no-one in the study referred to the shaman as healer of individuals and community, this has obviously gripped the imagination of New Agers in the United States and many self-acclaimed shamans are presenting workshops for whoever can pay the fees to develop shamanic abilities. See Michael Harner's (1990) *The way of the shaman*; Sandra Ingerman's (1991) *Soul retrieval: mending the fragmented self* (1991) and Lynn Andrews' (1981) *Medicine woman*.

9 Many of these are discussed in *The alternative health guide* by Brian Inglis and Ruth West (1983). For a Christian critique of the holistic health movement, see *New Age medicine* by Paul C Reisser, Teri K Reisser and John Weldon (1988), and for a

South African 'New Ager's' account of her own experiences with numerous different mainline and alternative therapies in her search for a cure for multiple sclerosis, see Joy Inglethorpe's (1989) *The hope-merchants*.

10 See also Benjamin Creme's (1990) book on 'transmission meditation', entitled *Transmission: a meditation for the new age*.

CHAPTER 8 - CONCLUSIONS

*The inward voyage is the emergent sign of our times.
But ... not all who voyage are homeward bound.*

*Theodore Roszak
(1976: 44).*

In this concluding chapter the foregoing analyses are synthesised in order to furnish a profile of the ideal-typical New Ager in South Africa, following which the reasons for the growth of the movement are briefly addressed and issues for further research identified. A discussion of the future of the movement concludes the thesis.

It should be reiterated that this has been a study in the *qualitative methodological tradition* and despite the limited quantification that necessarily became part of this report, the constructed ideal-type South African New Ager is the product of an intersubjective process of dialogue. The aim has been to investigate the spiritual dimension of the participants' life-world and to try to come to an understanding of what this means to the individuals concerned. After initially *establishing the primary topics* for discussion and confirming these through *a content analysis of documents* gathered from New Age sources, thirty individuals were selected for *in-depth interviews*. Despite the care that went into the selection process, this study cannot be regarded as representative of the movement and its findings cannot be generalised to the movement as a whole. It does, however, provide a first exploratory step from where broader or deeper studies can be launched.

This depiction should not be seen as a description of a tangible external 'object', but a sketch of my own interpretation and understanding of the information that was presented to me during the interviews and discussions with the participants, as well as of the data acquired through *participant observation* and a *study of the literature*. In line with the *ideal-typical construction*, it is highly unlikely that all the specified characteristics will be found in any one partaker in the New Age consciousness. The description of the South African New Ager should not be regarded as complete and

final, but it does enable the reader to recognize manifestations of the movement. The descriptions of key elements in the movement as set out in the final report were also submitted to three participants for validation (see appendix 2).

It should be further emphasised that this movement is multifarious and complex, and unites many disparate ideas, from the deepest philosophies and religious convictions to superficial superstitions and practices. It defies final conceptualisation and to produce a fixed and rigid set of characteristics would go directly against the spirit of the new consciousness itself. Nevertheless, this study has brought forth a set of features that interconnect and mutually reinforce each other, and when combined there emerge the contours of a somewhat fluid and malleable worldview that has extensive, if not total, inner coherence.

Another warning that should be restated is that the movement should not be judged by focusing on the more sensational peripheral phenomena. If this is done the important issues that lie at the heart of the movement will not be addressed. Many critics have slandered the movement, and while it is easy to deride the explorer of these new territories, I suggest that the scholar of religion should seek to understand the unfulfilled needs that motivate countless numbers of people to turn to New Age related groups in their search for fulfilment.

The *profile of the New Ager* that emerges from this study presents fifteen highly distinctive features which are elucidated below. In line with certain findings of this study (for instance the fact that more women are involved and the strong emphasis on the feminine principle), the New Ager who is sketched is a woman.

- 1 ■ The ideal-typical New Ager has a *vision of a new age* that involves momentous evolutionary changes for humanity as a whole. These usually involve not only envisaged changes in the personal and social spheres, but also (and especially) in the spiritual dimension of humankind. There is however a tension between the astrological explanation for the coming new age, which implies a deterministic perception, and the belief that the new age will dawn only if humanity diligently works towards that goal. Acceptance of the inevitability of the new age leads to a 'sandbox syndrome' in which the individual need not actively strive and toil to bring the new age into manifestation.
- 2 ■ The New Ager adheres to a *holistic cosmology*. She considers the present scientific, dualistic worldview as the flaw at the heart of our ailing society. It can be said that her quest is to bring about a paradigm shift that will synthesise all aspects

of the worldview on a higher level beyond dualism. She believes that this new paradigm will restore wholeness to the fragmentation that the Newtonian worldview has brought about.

This new paradigm is marked by the assumption that All is One and One is All. This premise of holism lies at the foundation of all New Age thinking and leads to the conviction that all is interrelated and interpenetrated, and that there is no separation. From this comes the acceptance that each individual action resonates into the whole and that this affects all. Ultimately all that exists does so within a unified field of being, and reality extends beyond the realm of the manifest. This everyday reality is understood to be part of an infinitely larger Whole.

- 3 ■ The New Ager is a *panentheist* who sees this Whole as infused with the spirit of God. Thus all partake of God's holy nature and are therefore sacred. Despite the immanence of God that sacralises the world, God is also seen as transcendent and worthy of human worship. When the New Ager therefore proclaims that she worships the God within, this should not be interpreted as worship of the human being, but worship of the divine spark that also centres within the individual.

This view has far-reaching implications for the New Ager's perception of all living beings and nature as a whole. The individual self is endowed with the sacred in the same way that all other creatures are, and thus humans and nature are perceived as parts of God and therefore divine. This understanding leads to the belief that humans possess qualities similar to those of God, and since God is the creator, human beings are deemed to be co-creators with God.

- 4 ■ It therefore follows that the New Ager has extensive power to *create her own reality*. This idea is often taken to its limits when the New Ager claims that she creates her own reality and that she has ultimate power over her life events, death and reincarnations. This ardent insistence on creating one's own reality may reflect a certain vulnerability and an associated need to be in control of one's life.
- 5 ■ Together with holism and the panentheistic concept of God, the New Ager accepts that there is a teleological dimension to the universe, and that all is in *a process of dynamic evolution* which will eventually culminate in the Omega Point - the goal of all evolution. This entails that the individual personally, humanity as a whole, and the entire universe are in a process of becoming. The individual is seen as a miniature of the macrocosmic form as expressed in the Hermetic principle 'as above, so below'.

In line with the view that humans create their own reality, the current evolutionary transition is regarded as a self-determinative phase of unfoldment in which humanity can fulfil its latent potential. If, however, this cannot be attained within this lifetime, the New Ager believes that all souls are granted as many opportunities as are necessary, through the laws of reincarnation and karma, to reach the ultimate goal. Universal salvation is therefore a necessary corollary.

- 6 ■ This imposes enormous *responsibility* upon the individual, but lest the burden should become unbearable, the New Ager is assured of support from the higher realms of reality where a spiritual hierarchy of discarnate entities (which are, however, all regarded as manifestations of God) wait anxiously to assist humanity in its evolution.

Although the New Ager takes this responsibility very seriously since she perceives the self as contributing to the evolution process, there is also much joy and enthusiasm in the acceptance of this duty. She accepts responsibility for all life events, and for the world and its eventual upliftment into higher vibrations and consciousness. The New Ager is an avid networker who disseminates channelled messages and information on psychotechnologies and specialised services to large numbers of like-minded people. The New Ager also channels her efforts into meditation which is geared towards the upliftment of the whole, and in this way accepts responsibility not only for herself but also for the rest of this creation.

She accepts all eventualities of her life with forbearance and fortitude since she herself must have chosen to undergo this experience for some unknown, but very good and imperative, reason. She does not regard herself as a helpless victim of circumstances, but knows that she needs to learn a specific lesson from any experience, and that should she succeed, she will not have to relive the same experience in a subsequent lifetime. Handling life experiences in a positive manner therefore ensures the smooth progress of the evolutionary process.

- 7 ■ The perception of the world as sacred and in process, together with the notions of co-creating and individual responsibility, lead the New Ager to a *deep ecological concern and commitment*. She accepts the mutual dependence of humankind and nature, and works actively against the exploitation of the environment that is characteristic of modern society.
- 8 ■ With reference to the epistemological position of the New Ager, it is clear that she does not submit to the authority of religious dogma, tradition, scriptures or ecclesiastical functionaries. For her the primary and definitive authority resides in her own *direct intuitive experience* during altered states of consciousness. Con-

sequently there is no uniformity of beliefs within the New Age movement, but only a common search and common aspirations. The emphasis on experience means that the ideal-typical New Ager follows the mystical tradition, which in its widest sense is merely an insistence upon a direct inner religious experience.

The mystical experience confers on the individual a new sensitivity to the sacred dimension of life and reduces the alienation and confusion precipitated by modern society. It provides the New Ager with a way of fulfilling her religious needs and once this experience has been integrated, she stands strengthened in her newfound convictions. At this stage it is vital to remember that for the ideal-typical New Ager, the essence of religion is not solely or even predominantly intellectual knowledge, moral values or practical works, but in fact a singular kind of experience.

It is, however, interesting that although the New Ager stresses the primacy of the inner authority, she often evinces uncritical acceptance of channelled revelations. In place of the discarded authority of biblical scriptures and church dogma, an alternative external authority is often accepted.

It is noteworthy that the New Ager exhibits an almost total lack of scepticism. The *unqualified* acceptance of the truth of channelled messages from angels and space brothers, notions of unlimited human potential, physical immortality, inherent divinity and total control over one's own destiny, testifies to a willingness to believe almost anything. This appears to be a matter of uncritical acceptance of beliefs that reinforce one's desires. If these desires of one's heart furthermore centre on one's own power, success and wealth, the ideal-typical New Ager is in serious danger of trivialising the sacred.

- 9 ■ Another concept that captures the essence of New Age thought is that of *transformation or healing*. The new worldview based on the concepts of holism, evolution and the creative powers of humanity implies that human beings can work towards transformation - not only personal transformation, but also social and planetary transformation.

With regard to personal transformation, the New Ager's perception of the human as inherently divine has shattered the older view of Christian orthodoxy in which the person is seen as fallen and helpless. The ideal-typical New Ager believes that, through the mystical experience of unity, she can be spiritually transformed and progressively deified until enlightenment is accomplished. The New Ager accepts that there is assistance from higher realms, and that there are instruments of transformation available, such as healing therapies and meditational practices.

A corollary of the realisation of unity and interdependence with all other humans is that social transformation becomes a necessity. Tolerance and cooperation with the other in order to address global problems and bring about constructive social change becomes imperative. The New Ager realises that she cannot rest in physical and spiritual comfort when other human beings are living lives of desperation and deprivation. The New Ager therefore accepts that she is obliged to work towards the upliftment of society as a whole. She may nevertheless exhibit an indifference to the suffering of others, as when they are seen to have karmically 'chosen their circumstances' and therefore need to progress at their own pace and in their own time.

The fate of the planet and planetary transformation are issues of concern to the New Ager. She realises that the world has indeed become a global village and that a crisis in one part of the world affects the whole. She is therefore committed to promoting the cause of world peace, and is involved in actions and networking that heighten people's awareness of the transformative processes that the planet is presently undergoing. Flowing from the perception of the sacred nature of the planet, she is also committed to the care of the planet.

The New Ager is, however, often preoccupied with the development and exploration of the inner self and although she generally expresses the need for a planetary consciousness, the emphasis in word and deed is more often on the development of the self.

- 10 ■ The new perception of the world has also led the New Ager to seek ways of personal empowerment through occult knowledge and practices, and she is characteristically distinguished by a *fascination with the unconventional, strange and occult*. The rise of this fascination must be seen against the backdrop of disenchantment with modernity and a concurrent weakening of authority structures that now allow previously censured religious exploration. Exotic and alien cultures, religions and practices hold a lure for the New Ager who hopes to find not only answers to existential questions, but also powers to control life experiences. The emphasis is, however, mainly on the acquisition and experience of hidden powers, and she focuses on herself rather than on the community.

It also follows that an integral part of the New Ager's activities is the extensive use of transformative psychotechnologies which are often practices imported from other cultures. The New Ager will participate in personal and spiritual growth programmes, practise transformative techniques (from scrying to meditation), and will consult astrologers, spiritual healers and other psychically gifted individuals.

Since these technologies predispose the person to knowledge of the higher self, which is equated with healing, the many psychotechnologies are perceived as prerequisites on the path towards ultimate transformation.

- // ■ Another distinctive feature of the New Ager is her *attitude of optimism*. Despite the alienation and dissociation the New Ager experiences in our South African society, her attitude is marked by an irrepressible and inspiring optimism. The New Ager replaces what she considers to be the guilt, suffering, punishment and self-pity of the 'old age' with joy, peace, beauty, truth, play, creativity, hope, faith, forgiveness, a new heart, a new mind and a new consciousness. She has a deep trust in the life process and accepts that everything is, at any point in time, exactly as it should be.

This acceptance of the status quo implies divine determinism and stands in opposition to the concept of humans as co-creators with God and the enormous responsibility this confers upon the human being. The view that all in life is exactly as it should be and that all, no matter how grievous their suffering, are exactly where they choose to be, also raises the suspicion of indifference. This approach might be a way of coping with the injustice of life - if one can blame the victim then the evil seems less threatening and unjust. This, of course, implies that there is an element of resignation and escapism in the New Ager's attitude.

It also appears that despite laudable international programmes, the South African New Ager is somewhat detached and impersonal when she addresses the suffering of humanity through meditation rather than in more tangible ways, for example through upliftment programmes or feeding schemes. The New Ager will often spend time and effort in meditation in order to keep the world on its axis, but neglect the plight of starving people in this country and elsewhere in the world. This observation is not intended to deny the valuable contribution that the meditator makes to society, but meditation and prayer, if they are to be effective, should be grounded in an understanding of and compassion for the suffering individual or group.

- 12 ■ A number of factors also combine in the next characteristic, namely the emphasis on *the feminine principle*. Given the acceptance of holism and the depreciation of the feminine aspect in our patriarchal society, the attempt to elevate the feminine on a par with the male principle is understandable. The sacralisation of nature which is generally associated with the feminine principle further strengthens this trend. The New Ager might, on occasion, seem to replace male dominance with female dominance but usually she opts for a society where neither will dominate but will combine in harmony.

- 13 ■ A further feature of the New Ager is her acceptance of *the perennial philosophy*. She believes that a common truth underlies all religions and that the core of esoteric wisdom, which is non-duality, is fundamentally the same in all religions although this is obscured by diverse doctrinal structures. This leads to an attitude of tolerance towards other religions, although there is also some antagonism towards the discarded belief system of her youth, mainly because she now perceives it as authoritarian and exclusive.
- 14 ■ Another distinguishing feature of the New Ager is her *eclectic syncretism*. Whatever belief or idea appeals to her will be incorporated into her worldview even though it may be logically inconsistent with her existing beliefs. The constructed type New Ager can therefore be said to shun institutionalised orthodox religion and to replace it with an eclectically devised private religion.
- 15 ■ The last distinction in the profile of the South African New Ager is that she has been in direct or indirect contact with *the Ancient Wisdom tradition* that forms part of the alternative tradition in the west. Many of the beliefs of this tradition are incorporated into her own belief system and she has probably encountered these through the Theosophical Society or one of its offshoots.

Following this construction of an ideal-typical New Ager, there are a number of further issues that warrant some comment. Firstly, this study clearly indicates that for the participants *the essence of the movement* represented a spiritual awakening. Their acceptance of key tenets of the movement was a reaction to the secularism, materialism and reductionism of modern society. A disenchantment with modernity had led them to a reexamination of existential questions and a subsequent reawakening of their inherent spirituality. This reexamination had also led to a new way of looking at the world and to experimentation with alternative sources of knowledge and experience.

The search for meaning in the modern world is pervasive and the core of the New Age movement can be seen as a popular manifestation of a new postmodern perspective that is currently being espoused by some of our foremost philosophers, theologians, sociologists and scientists. *It can thus be stated that at the heart of New Age consciousness there lies a search for a comprehensive and inclusive worldview, which will do justice to the inherent spiritual nature of humankind.*

With this *spiritual reawakening* in mind, it is clear that the findings of this study confirm the work of the social scientists discussed in chapter one. In many sectors of

South African society, a spiritual void has developed as a result of secularisation and stifling orthodox religious practices. The marginalisation of religion, and the concomitant neglect of the interior life together with the repression of transcendence in our culture, have left many people dissociated and alienated from the religious structures and conventional values of the society. In addition, orthodox Christianity has on the whole accentuated the acceptance of intellectual doctrines to the exclusion of inner religious experience. This emphasis on the cognitive dimension that strips religion of the mystery and wonder that constitute its essence, has often brought about a loss of faith. Out of this void there has emerged an awareness of the sacred and a search for spiritual healing and fulfilment. It is therefore evident that the New Age movement provides many people with a means of resacralising the world and has provided a spiritual home to many alienated human beings.

In some sectors of our society a fresh and new way of perceiving the world is leading to *the emergence of a new foundational orientation*. The old paradigm of scientific materialism that has guided western beliefs and values for the last 300 years is showing clear signs of crumbling, and a new paradigm is in the process of being born. This emerging paradigm is based on a new insight and understanding of the world as one indivisible, seamless, sacred Whole. It is all-inclusive and holistic. The whole person - mental, social and spiritual; the whole of nature - animal, plant and mineral kingdoms; and the whole of the universe - the seen and the unseen, are incorporated. The new worldview does not deny diversity but rather highlights the unity-in-diversity that prevails in this reality. Human beings are challenged to incorporate not only the reality of the outer reaches of the universe, but also of the inner reaches of consciousness. They are also confronted with the interrelatedness of all life and are challenged to explore their relationship with other humans and with all life, including the living earth. This new paradigm therefore rests not only on a spiritual awareness of holism but also on the realisation that the world is interconnected on a material level as well, and that global threats and problems can only be solved by global solutions.

The new paradigm involves a significant shift in perception with regard to knowledge. In addition to sense perception and rational knowledge, intuitive and spiritual perception is also acknowledged as a source of valid knowledge. This is a crucial aspect of the new worldview since *it facilitates a synthesis of religion, philosophy and science*. A universal religion (based on the perennial philosophy) and a holistic science complement and reinforce each other. Both science and religious experience are seen as avenues for exploration of the manifested universe which is one gigantic whole, pulsating life within life, interpenetrating, interdependent and indivisible. Each particle is not only unique but also part of the larger Whole that can be known (albeit never completely) through both science *and* religious experience.

Secondly, the aim of this study has been to provide a detailed and firsthand description in the form of an ideal-typical construction of a South African New Ager and, furthermore, to shed some light on the reasons for the movement's growth in our society. This has been done, but the investigation has led to *the identification of a number of issues that deserve further attention*. These are itemised below.

(1) A quantitative survey using a much larger sample of New Agers to confirm the findings of this study would be apposite.

(2) There appear to be considerable similarities between the New Age movement, the Christian charismatic churches and the African Independent Churches regarding such issues as channelling/prophecy/spirit mediumship; religious experience; and belief in the direct involvement of God and angels in this everyday reality. A cross-cultural study on these themes would contribute to our understanding of these religious phenomena.

(3) A quantitative survey to establish the extent to which these beliefs have spread to the general public would shed light on exactly how influential and pervasive the new consciousness is.

(4) Monographs on all the diverse groups that comprise the New Age movement would be valuable in furthering our understanding of the new religious movements in our society.

Thirdly, regarding *the future of the movement*, it can be stated that if the essence of the movement represents a spiritual re-awakening and the birth of a new guiding principle for western society, the New Age movement will have a significant influence on all the societies in which it is active, and if the paradigm shift is successful, a truly momentous change awaits humankind.

As to the future of the movement in South Africa, it is evidently part of a larger resurgence of religious forces. This reawakening of the religious impulse takes on many different guises in our society. As was pointed out in chapter one, many people feel threatened by the crisis of modernity and respond by reaffirming the traditional values; others turn to a revising of the tradition; and some respond by experimentation with new forms of spirituality. The religious ferment that is conspicuous in South African society, with its many new and fast-growing fundamentalist and evangelical groupings, its proliferation of African Independent Churches and thousands of small informal house-churches, as well as its interest in other religions and alternative practices, are all manifestations of this religious awakening.

The response of reaffirmation represents a return to a traditional society, while the reinterpretation of tradition and the emergence of a new spirituality represent a postmodern approach inasmuch as they are rejections of the modern worldview in favour of something radically new.

Much of the appeal of New Age spiritual thought lies in the hope, joy, wonder, love, forgiveness and bliss that it espouses. Given that social crisis instils insecurity, uncertainty and fear, it is only to be expected that this movement will grow in South Africa. The present crisis in this country - the social and political uncertainty and change, rampant violence, intolerance, suspicion and distrust, erosion of moral values and poverty - must lead to bewilderment, fear and chaos. This in turn leads to a deeper and greater longing for God and a preoccupation with the ultimate questions of life. This is accompanied by a deep yearning for deliverance, a hope of finding courage and security in times of fear and violence. The notion that all is exactly as it should be provides certainty and comfort, and allows the individual to resign from actively facing the problems of the world with a clear conscience, if he or she so chooses.

Seen against the background of the whole South African society, the New Age movement is presently not numerically sizable. The new charismatic and fundamentalist Christian churches, and the thousands of African Independent Churches, command followings that far exceed those of New Age groups. The movement's influence may, however, be more widespread than one may think. New Age thought is being steadily absorbed by the community at large. One way of establishing the truth of this statement is to examine the content of what is produced by the mass entertainment media, particularly in television programmes. Popular programmes on television constantly refer to concepts such as reincarnation, channelling, extra-terrestrial encounters, unlimited human potential, and to psychic experiences such as clairvoyance and precognition. The recent introduction of the 087 telephone lines has spawned advertisements for occult services like Tarot readings, numerology readings and the drawing up of horoscopes in many of the country's leading newspapers and magazines. To shed some light on this matter it is important that a survey of a carefully selected population be carried out in order to gauge the pervasiveness of these beliefs and practices.

The debate on the new, postmodern paradigm is intensifying in many diverse disciplines and this will probably remain a topic of unabated concern for some years to come. Many scholars in these different disciplines are grappling with the same

philosophical questions that are addressed in a more informal manner by New Agers, and it is remarkable that New Agers often intuitively arrive at the same conclusions as these scholars - as I have pointed out in this report.

It can therefore be concluded that the new consciousness is here to stay even if the New Age movement, in much the same way as its precursors (the subcultures of the fifties and sixties), fades into oblivion. The key notions of the movement are obviously being assimilated by major sectors of society and have struck a receptive chord in many hearts. Ultimately the influence of any religious movement does not depend on its numbers, finances or visibility, but on its ability to address the suffering, longing and aspirations of human beings.

APPENDIX ONE

THE DANCE OF THE AGES

a document compiled by a participant (F18)
(also see 3.3.1 b (xiii), 4.2.1)

The twelve glyphs of the Zodiac may be considered as the formula of a sequential life process applicable to every form of manifestation. As our sun moves out of the influence of one sign into that of another, so man, the microcosm, reflects the macrocosm with its particular energies, and a new age is born. This happens approximately every two thousand years.

From approximately ten thousand to eight thousand years B.C. the sun was in the sign Leo, The Lion. This is a sign of vital power and kingship. It is ruled by the sun, the source of light, the giver of life, the symbol of the Divine Father, the heart of the solar system. Under the influence of this Fire Sign, the Divine Flame stirred the heart and spirit, stimulating the human mind by the upward surge of spiritual energy. During this age, the spirit of the sun was worshipped, and the Father principle (Spirit) of divinity dominated.

From Leo the sun moved into Cancer, The Crab, and for the next two thousand years the evolution and growth of man was influenced by this sign. Cancer is the sign of the Mother (matter). It is therefore the sign of the family and the home. It is also associated with the inner soul life, and the emotional and psychic faculties. Its outstanding characteristics are of a nourishing, sustaining, reproductive and assimilating nature. The Mother principle of Divinity therefore held sway during this age. Cancer is ruled by the moon, and the Great Mother Goddess, symbolised by the moon was worshipped. Being a water sign, the Great Mother had a tremendous emotional impact on her 'children' who, close to her breast, felt safe and sustained. Ancient rock shrines, e.g. Mount Vaticanus and the Ka-aba were places of assembly from ancient times. (rocks are the haunts of crabs) Today we refer to this Mother principle or Matter as the forces of nature, or simply Mother Nature, the kingdom of the Devas (Angels) and Nature spirits.

When the sun moved into the sign of Gemini, The Twins, approximately six thousand B.C., the psychic and emotional qualities of Cancer were replaced by those of an entirely new and different character. Gemini is an Air sign, which is mental, and so reasoning power, ingenuity and invention came to the fore, further stimulated by

Mercury, planet of the intellect and ruler of Gemini. It is possible that writing had its beginnings in this age. Both Gemini and its polar opposite are dual signs, and therefore duality was the outstanding feature of this period. Man, (consciousness) and child of spirit and matter, is a creature of dual nature. Traces of dual organisation in both social and religious life existed in ancient civilisations, and appear to have formed the background for a set of religious ideas founded on the worship of dual entities, e.g. the ancient Assyrian gods Nebo and Tasmut his wife. Pairs of gods, identified with sacred pillars, are frequently found at the gates of Babylonian, Assyrian and Egyptian Temples. Man, composed of an immortal soul, functioning in a mortal body, is constantly torn in opposite directions. The higher is ever at variance with the lower. Unity between the two is the ideal to be achieved. In each age spiritual evolution is quickened and redirected by the teaching of the great Initiates. The 'Ramayana' the epic poem of which the theme is duality, the struggle between the forces of good and evil, most probably originated during this age.

The age of Taurus, The Bull four thousand to two thousand B.C. corresponds to that stage in individual development when the child seeks security in possessions, and the collecting of whatever seems precious to him. During this age Egypt rose to the height and glory of her power, and gives the most complete picture of contemporary life and thought, and is an example of the racial stage when the accent was on materialism. The imprint of Taurus can be seen in the size and magnificence of the Egyptian buildings. The influence of Scorpio, its polar opposite is evident in the preservation of bodies after death. Under the influence of Venus, ruler of Taurus, Egypt was a peace loving, artistic and prosperous nation, mostly concerned with material prosperity and practical philosophy. Religious ceremonies centered around a living animal, the Bull 'Apis', who was held as the earthly representative of the god Apis, who lived in the underworld. Apis was one of the many names of Osiris, the national Deity of the Egyptians, who traditionally was a divine Being who in remote ages reigned as king on earth. It is possible that Osiris was one of the great Initiates who, in the age of Leo, recreated the spiritual life of mankind, and who, in the age of Cancer, became the god of fertility, and the son of a Mother-Goddess, and again in the age of Gemini was a Brother-Wind god, and in the age of Taurus was known as the god Apis, Osirkapi or Serapis, a combination of Apis and Osiris. The latent force, secrecy and occult power of Taurus and Scorpio are apparent in the mysteries for which Egypt became famous.

During the age of Taurus, the Minotaur, half man, half bull, was the national deity of Greece. In Nineveh it was the human-faced winged bull. Bass reliefs in the British museum also show evidence of the cult of the bull in Assyria and Babylon. In this age, Britain was known as the 'Island of the White Bull', and today we have the prototype of 'John Bull'.

The age of Aries, The Ram, covers roughly the two thousand year period starting from the birth of Abraham to the birth of Jesus. Abram means 'light' and he was possibly one the king of Chaldea, and was endowed with the qualities which are common to great Initiates and spiritual leaders of all ages. The sign Aries is that which accentuates individuality, energy, courage, leadership, pioneering spirit and tenacity.

Aries is a fire sign, and is ruled by Mars the planet of war and dynamic energy. The turbulent history of the Jews, the migration, wars and conquests reflect the qualities of Aries and Mars in no uncertain manner. In this age the race experienced that stage, which, in the individual life, corresponds to the child becoming aware of itself as an individual, finding delight in exploration and adventure, and establishing its individuality. This sense of individuality was abroad during this age, and responding to the war-like spirit of Mars, resulted in lust for conquest, exploration and great activity.

This was the time of racial migrations, and the rise and fall of one empire after the other e.g. the Cretan, Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian and Grecian Empires. There was a remarkable change in both religious observances and the general attitude towards life under the influence of this fire sign. Sun Worship or Monotheism was revived. The Israelites worshipped Jehovah, a sun-god in the guise of a warrior - a god of wrath that demanded burnt offerings. The Ram or lamb was prominent in the Jewish rituals as sacrificial offerings. In Egypt, Aknaton introduced the worship of One Supreme Deity an invisible Being whose symbol was the sun. Later the gods Amon and Ra were hailed as Amon-Ra, the Ram Headed god of the hidden sun. Other evidence of the sign of the Ram was in Persia, where Mithra, formerly worshipped as the sacred Bull, was reborn as the unconquerable Sun, the slayer of the Bull. 'Astur', known as the great Bull in Assyria, became a god of war. In Greece, Apollo, god of the sun, was the most popular. Throughout their history, the Romans offered allegiance to Mars, god of war, and ruling planet of the age.

The exaltation of the sun in Aries inspired the spiritually minded to turn for enlightenment to the sacred religion of the mystery schools of Greece, Persia and Egypt. In these schools were taught the inter-relationship between our Spiritual Sun, the Creator of our solar system, and all the other sources of energies and forces on all planes and all areas -- cosmic, solar, and planetary. During this period the human mind was stimulated and quickened, and there resulted great cultural, scientific and spiritual progress.

The transition period from the age of Aries into the age of Pisces was also the transition into the new Great Year of approximately twenty six thousand years. The transition period was therefore exceptionally prolonged, and lasted from about

600 B.C. to 600 A.D. It was a brilliant epoch, and was also the inauguration of the present world religions, as the Founders were all born within this period i.e. Lao TSE, Zoroaster, Gautama Buddha, Jesus, Confucius and Mohammed. The teachings of these great Initiates welded the large numbers of tribal and national cults into five universal and international religions, and so laid the foundations for the progressive unification of spiritual concepts and for the possibility of the establishment of one universal religion within the Brotherhood of Man.

A significant change came over the world when the sun moved into Pisces, The Fishes. Gradually the creative activity and impetus to new ideas which characterised the opening of the Great New Year, disappeared, and the world entered the period called the Dark Ages - a period that is unequalled in history for misery, ignorance and superstition. The spiritual evolution of the race in Pisces may be compared to that 'dark night' of the individual soul, when a moment of vision is followed by a period of confusion in which all sense of direction is lost, and the truth itself is denied and rejected - the seed must first be hidden in the ground before it can put forth its shoots.

The suffering of Jesus, 'the man of sorrows', has been symbolic of the suffering of mankind in the age of Pisces. The drama of His birth, life, death and resurrection, is the drama of cleansing, renunciation and expiation, which heralds a fresh cycle of awareness.

Pisces is a water sign, and covers every reflection of feeling and emotion. Expansion of these causes pleasure, joy, happiness, and the contraction results in sorrow, grief and pain. In the age of Pisces the emotional nature was therefore highly sensitised, and responded readily to external stimulus. This stage in race evolution corresponds to that of adolescence in the individual life, with its imbalance and emotionalism. It was also the age of personality unfoldment, personality focus, selfishness and self-centeredness. The sense of individuality and separateness which had its beginnings in Aries, reached its highest expression in Pisces.

The positive qualities of Pisces are embodied in the teachings of Jesus - love, compassion, sympathy, the desire to alleviate suffering, affliction and distress. It is furthermore the sign of the mystic, and has qualities that can carry the soul to the most sublime heights of mystical experience. The mystical love of seclusion of this sign, brought forth the monastic orders, and large numbers of people retreated from the world.

The sixth Ray of Devotion was in power during the age of Pisces, and the way of spiritual attainment under its influence is the 'Way of Devotion through Feeling'. It is furthermore a specific religious way, and the influence of this Ray of Devotion,

combined with the quality of devotion of Pisces, produced the great religions of devotion. These influences and energies also resulted in devotional attachment to a spiritual teacher or divine saviour and blind faith. The keyword of Pisces is 'I believe'. This spirit of devotion also inspired the magnificent and beautiful cathedrals, as well as the Mohammedan Mosques and Buddhist Temples. The sixth Ray of Devotion is now rapidly passing out of manifestation.

Martyrdom, another characteristic of Pisces, found expression in the many who met their deaths in the arena in Rome. The glorification of martyrdom was not confined to the Christians only, but was also prevalent amongst the Mohammedans who believed that to die fighting for the Holy Faith assured the joys of Paradise.

Jupiter the traditional ruler of Pisces gave the church and Priesthood great power. Venus reaches its highest expression in Pisces, but unfortunately the negative qualities found greater outlet than the positive, resulting in sentimentality, sensuality and dissoluteness. Virgo, the opposite sign of Pisces, is outstanding for imparting knowledge and the desire to serve. These qualities were expressed in the zeal of the Christians, Buddhist and Mohammedan missionaries who went forth to convert the heathen.

The influence of this water sign replaced the burnt offerings of the age of Aries with mystical rites connected with water, symbolising purification as a preliminary to the awakening of the regenerated man. Baptism has been practiced by both Christians and Moslems. The 'Ram' of Aries was replaced by the 'Fish' of Pisces. Jesus was called 'the Fish'. Early Christians traced a fish in the dust as a sign of recognition and inscribed it in their tombstones in the catacombs. Many of Jesus' miracles are connected with fish and water. He also chose His disciples from local fishermen.

In the 15th century the introduction of printing led to the revival of ancient learning and a diffusing of knowledge. Also a renaissance of thought and art stimulated the world out of the apathy into which it had fallen. This was closely followed by the Reformation which brought an end to the long reign of the Popes. Commerce and industry arose, and scientific thought was revived by Copernicus and Galileo.

With the development of scientific thought, the world had once more entered another transitional period, and the energies of Pisces were being slowly superseded by those of Aquarius, the Age of Science. Uranus was discovered in 1781, and this 'Awakener of Slumbering Souls' further heralded the advent of a new age. Uranus, the ruler of Aquarius brought about remarkable changes. Mechanical inventions revolutionised the way of life, and Darwin's theory of evolution opened the history of the human race. Astronomy revealed the wonders of the stellar universe, and physics the wonderful world of the atom. The mechanical and inventive genius of

Uranus was first applied to the element of Pisces i.e. water. The power of water, as revealed in sea power and sea exploration, became the transitional power of steam, and revolutionised industry and transport. Later with the increasing influence of Aquarius, electricity was discovered, and with it the first revelation of the secret of the universe.

The action of Uranus is sudden, unexpected, explosive and revolutionary. It can and does affect lightning transformations in both individual and national life. The French and Russian Revolutions provide examples of the liberating action of this planet. The motto of the French Revolution was 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity' which expresses the combined keynotes of Aquarius and Uranus.

The world today is still experiencing tremendous changes resulting from the outgoing energies of Pisces and the ever-increasing and powerful energies of incoming Aquarius. The old form cannot contain the new energies, and their destruction will continue and intensify until the purification is complete, so that that which is more suitable for the evolving spirit of man can make its appearance.

Aquarius, The Man, is an air sign, and its influence is dramatically visible in the conquering of space. In less than a century from the time the Wright brothers flew their plane for the first time, mankind has reached the moon, Mars and far beyond. The ascendancy of the air has transformed our way of life and thought. The world has become physically inter-connected, but air is also the universal breath which unites all peoples. It is the symbol of the higher life in which freedom is experienced, and the soul comes into full expression.

The characteristics of Aquarius are synthesis, unity, so-operation, brotherhood and freedom. This means a conscious participation in the corporate life of the race, and only in this age will the true nature and understanding of 'The Love of God' come about - that free flowing, outgoing and magnetically attractive force which leads each pilgrim back to the 'Father's House'. This underlies the importance of synthesis, inclusiveness and concern only for the good of the whole.

Aquarius, the sign of Man, Humanity and Brotherhood, is the age when the race of men will move into maturity and understanding. Jesus had said 'When the sign of Man shall come, he will enlighten you in all things'. This is the age of enlightenment. The polarisation is shifting from the devotional-emotional level to that of the mind. Aquarius is a mental sign, and will bring about the full mental unfoldment and understanding of the race. As a leaf after growth in darkness breaks through into sunlight, so the human mind will expand into the full light, revealing the 'Son of God'. This period has been occultly called 'The Age of Restoration of what has been broken by the Fall'. The time when the separate parts can be re-united, and

the whole stand together again. The keyword is 'I know'. A scientific age in which all that has been hidden, will be revealed through scientific discoveries. In this time of his coming of age, the mind of man will assume its true function, which is to serve as a vehicle through which his Creator can manifest on earth. This is a time of action, of the building of a structure through which the divine qualities of Light, Love and Spiritual Will can be expressed. This means the conscious reception and reaction to newly released energies, and the active participation in the working out of the Divine Plan.

The power in the hands of individuals today is great, and never before has opportunity knocked so loudly and insistently. It is necessary to recognise the urgency of the issue, the necessity for a planetary viewpoint, and of personal responsibility. Every person who succeeds in helping himself, renders a service to the whole, for every heightened response increases the vibratory rate of the whole.

Humanity is standing at the portals of the spiritual or superhuman kingdom, and at this time all the forces of nature are gathered and aimed at helping those who are endeavouring to move out of personality focus and separateness into soul consciousness, the level from which the New Heaven and New Earth can manifest on Earth.

APPENDIX TWO

For validation purposes, three participants who were chosen for their penetrating knowledge of the movement, were requested to comment on the descriptive sections of the final report. The text of the original letter in which they were asked for their evaluations is included together with their replies.

2.1 Original letter requesting comments from participants

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to read the descriptive parts (chapters 4-7) of my doctoral thesis.

The qualitative approach that I employed requires the researcher to eventually return to the research field for validation purposes. My aim was to accurately describe the worldviews of the participants and it is for this that validation is required.

I would therefore appreciate it very much if you would read through the attached chapters and give me your honest opinion on the accuracy of the description.

It might help to situate the relevant chapters if I explain the outlay of the final report. The first chapter contains methodological issues and the second is a literature survey of relevant material. The third comprises a discussion on the many precursors of the movement. Chapters 4-7 contain the descriptions of the new consciousness worldview and chapter eight (which is as yet incomplete) provides a summary and conclusion.

Furthermore, please note that this is only a draft and the thesis will be professionally edited. You may therefore ignore any grammar, spelling or typing errors.

Would it be possible for you to let me have your written comments by the end of November, as this will have to be included in the final report. You will of course retain your anonymity despite this inclusion.

May I once again thank you for your participation in the project and especially for now reading the thesis for me. Your assistance is sincerely appreciated.

3.2 First reply

Chrissie Steyn has covered a wide field in her unbiased and thorough research of the New Age Movement. Her work clarifies and brings understanding to the confusion, misunderstandings, misrepresentations, and in some quarters fear of the paradigm shift which is becoming globally evident, including South Africa. She furthermore traces the spiritual insights and values of the New Age Movement to their roots in the Major philosophies and religions of the world, and shows that we are experiencing the culmination of a major cycle of evolution and the transition into a new age, a new era or a new dispensation.

3.3 Second reply

I have read the draft copy of Ms Steyn's thesis with great interest and appreciation. From the point of view of personal interest I was sorry not to have chapters 1 - 3 dealing with the historical roots of the New Age movement, the literature and the methodology of the thesis. But this does not affect my ability to assess whether the description and world view of the 'New Age' and the personal views and practices of 'New Agers' is accurately reflected in the thesis.

In the light of my experience in the expression of New Age activities and ideas it is my judgment that the thesis covers the subject very comprehensively and accurately. This was already evident when I carefully perused the content pages. I certainly have found the thesis very useful in the broadness of scope and comprehensive synthesis that it provides. It will be an important reference source for me.

One aspect of the thesis that concerns me a little is that the opinions of interviewees are freely mixed in with those of more authoritative voices. This is particularly disturbing when the opinions of isolated individuals are reported. This tends to give undue emphasis to the frequently idiosyncratic and cranky ideas which are undoubtedly prominent in the movement. I believe that it might have been better to separate out the views of individuals from the main stream of New Age ideas.

One of the characteristics of the movement is reflected by the statement of one of the interviewees quoted by HCS: 'If it appeals to you, you are entitled to believe it - time will tell if it is true.' I personally often cringe at the views and ideas expressed by new agers. There certainly is a fair amount of ignorance and confusion among them. I also have my own unorthodox and possible erroneous ideas. I wouldn't have it any other way. I continue to search. It is the only way to Truth.

Ms Steyn presents a sympathetic and accurate reflection of the currents at work in the New Age and is usually quite justified in pointing out inconsistencies in its

expression. Some of these are based in the limitations of individuals but much is also an expression of the paradoxical nature of the divine. Seemingly irreconcilable ideas may be valid in different ways in different circumstances and highlight different facets of a multifold and holistic truth. Dogma is dangerous. HCS does justice to the search in the New Age movement for the multifaceted nature of the divine design and process through the comprehensive coverage of the subject. No individual aspect is subjected to undue criticism or distortion. The lack of dogmatism, open-mindedness and universality of New Age thinking and practice is fairly well presented.

Some areas perhaps do not receive adequate coverage. Whereas the influence of Theosophy and the Arcane School of Alice Bailey are repeatedly referred to, I did not see Anthroposophy mentioned. This certainly is a very prominent movement in South Africa. I also think that topics such as divination, near-death experiences, touch and non-touch healing and attunement could have received more prominence. The wide-spread workshops and seminars dealing with spiritual and physical growth and well-being are not well covered. They form a very important part of the New Age movement. Sources of divination such as the I Ching are not prominently featured. The influence of Eastern teachings such as that of the Tao is also not given full recognition.

But perhaps it is not important to cover absolutely everything that could be considered to be part of the new age movement. The important thing is that it is accurately presented in its essential nature and in its core ideas and world views. In this Ms Steyn has succeeded emphatically, dispassionately, accurately and comprehensively.

PS A few more specific comments:

A lot of wild and quasi-authoritative opinions are voiced under the broad mantle of the New Age. It is important that this dimension of the New Age is presented but in some cases too much emphasis is given to these. For example I don't think footnote 18 on pages 206-207 merits the prominence it receives. There is a lot of ignorance, confusion and demagoguery in the New Age movement. I think it is important to separate this from responsible opinions such as those of Harman and Spangler. Perhaps this differentiation should be clearly spelt out in the Conclusions chapter.

The key insights and characteristics of the New Age movement and worldview offered in sections 4.3, 5.2.1 and elsewhere are well synthesised and structured. The discussion on panentheism is particularly good and was very useful to me to encapsulate my own worldview. It was also useful to encounter concepts such as the acosmic pantheism expressed in the ideas of Lazaris. It helps to distinguish between vari-

ous New Age insights which are often rather difficult to know how to deal with. They are often contradictory and by having them classified I can decide more easily whether or not to accept them.

I may not like all the ideas and material presented by Ms Steyn but then there is a lot in the New Age movement that does not sit well with me. I don't think she has been unfair in presenting them - that is how it is.

3.4 Third reply

I have read, with interest, pages 127-262 of your doctoral thesis, but have unfortunately not had time to go further than this with the four chapters that you sent me for comment.

From what I have read, you seem to have made an accurate and comprehensive study of your subject and have given fair coverage to the wide range of thinking of those involved in the consciousness movement.

You will notice that I do not use the term 'new age', It is a term I dislike and prefer not to use - this is a feeling that is widespread. If it cannot be avoided, I would not use capital letters for it. And I would definitely never use the word 'new agers'.

One of my reasons for this is that I feel these concepts should not be labelled, fixed or concretised into a set belief system. Reading this doctoral thesis, I felt a sense of sadness and concern that these diverse ideas were being analysed, codified and formulated into a system of thought. This kind of analysis, it seems to me, holds the potential for creating the antithesis of what the consciousness movement is about, and could lead to concretising something that is essentially of the spirit into yet another set doctrine or belief system.

But, having said that, I congratulate you on a job well done.

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