WHAT IS NEW AGE SPIRITUALITY?[1]

By RICHARD WOODS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The spiritual dimension

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Righteous reaction

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

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

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

Divine novelty and the arrow of time

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

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

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

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

Christian centuries

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

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

Montanism: the 'New Prophecy'

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

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

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

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

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

The perils of Priscillian

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

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

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

Joachim of Fiore

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

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

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

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

In the wake of Reform

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

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

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

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

The twentieth century

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christianity in crisis

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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

NOTES

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

[2] New York, 1987.

[3] Ann Arbon, Michigan, 1992.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[24] *Ibid.*, p 59.