

NEW SPIRITUALITIES
Apologetics
Zavadka, 16th March 2019

Mk 13:5-6 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἤρξατο λέγειν αὐτοῖς· βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ· ⁶ πολλοὶ ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου λέγοντες ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ πολλοὺς πλανήσουσιν.

Mk 13:5-6 And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. ⁶ Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray.

Eph 4:14 ἵνα μηκέτι ὦμεν νήπιοι, κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐν πανουργίᾳ πρὸς τὴν μεθοδεῖαν τῆς πλάνης

Eph 4:14 ...so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

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0. INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

- "We hear much about new religions; many of them based on the very latest novelties of Buddha and Pythagoras."¹
- "Holistic"; "Progressive"; "spiritual but not religious"...

0.1. BASIC DEFINITIONS

- **Spirituality**: (1) inwardness (2) perception of the unseen, (3) identification with transcendence, (4) sense of mystery, (5) experience of unity with nature, wholeness...
- "...humanistic line of thinking bringing attempts at defining **secular spirituality** as a spirituality without any need for a religious or God component."²
- personal, subjective, relational, holistic...

¹ G. K. Chesterton *The Thing*, Sheed & Ward: London, 1946, p. 170.

² Marian de Souza, Leslie J. Francis, James O'Higgins-Norman, Daniel G. Scott, *International Handbook of Education for Spirituality, Care and Wellbeing*, Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg London New York, 2009, p. 71

- **Christian spirituality:** (1) revelation in the Scriptures, (2) regeneration through the Cross of Jesus Christ, (3) communion with God in the Holy Spirit, (4) life of obedience in community with other believers, church
- Christian spirituality: inseparably connected to facts and reason, then transcending it by submitting all the the gospel and the Holy Spirit
- counterfeit spirituality: experience of inward powers at the expense of objective facts and reason...

0.2. THE TWO MYSTERIES

0.2.1. THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

- **1Tim 3:16** Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: **He** was **manifested** in the **flesh**, **vindicated** by the Spirit, **seen** by **angels**, **proclaimed** among the **nations**, **believed** on in the **world**, **taken** up in **glory**. (καὶ ὁμολογουμένως μέγα ἐστὶν τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον· ὃς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκί, ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι, ὤφθη ἀγγέλοις, ἐκηρύχθη ἐν ἔθνεσιν, ἐπιστεύθη ἐν κόσμῳ, ἀνελήμφθη ἐν δόξῃ)

0.2.2. THE MYSTERY OF LAWLESSNESS

- **2Thes 2:7-12** For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. ⁹ The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, ¹⁰ and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹ Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, ¹² in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας· μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται. ⁸ καὶ τότε ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος, ὃν ὁ κύριος [Ἰησοῦς] ἀνελεῖ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ καὶ καταργήσει τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ, ⁹ οὗ ἐστὶν ἡ παρουσία κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ σατανᾶ ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν ψεύδους ¹⁰ καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀπάτῃ ἀδικίας τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, ἀνθ' ὧν τὴν ἀγάπην τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἐδέξαντο εἰς τὸ σωθῆναι αὐτοῦς. ¹¹ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πέμπει αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς ἐνέργειαν πλάνης εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψεύδει, ¹² ἵνα κριθῶσιν πάντες οἱ μὴ πιστεύσαντες τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἀλλὰ εὐδοκήσαντες τῇ ἀδικίᾳ.)

1. THE “OLD” SPIRITUALITY → TRANSFORMED INTO THE NEW

- ancient practices are being “resurrected” and presented as something modern, even scientific
- the dangers of misunderstanding and misapplying the traditional spiritual practices in the spirit of the *Zeitgeist* of today
- **Traditional spirituality:** was linked to *community, nation, religious worship, institutions* (temples, altars, rituals)

1.1. NATURE WORSHIP

- paganism: “Paganism was not creedal, but a matter of observing systems of ritual.”³

1.1.1. PAGANISM

- the Old Testament practices judged severely
- Spiritism
- Witchcraft – the essence of sorcery and witchcraft: manipulation; control by spiritual forces

1.1.2. ANIMISM

- Edward Burnett TYLOR (*Primitive Culture*, 1871) required a “minimum definition of religion” and found it in “the Belief in Spiritual Beings.”

1.1.3. IDOLATRY

- “Idolatry may be defined as the worship of an idol (eidolon, image, portrait) considered as a substitute for the divine” (M. Delahoutre, “Idolâtrie,” Dictionnaire des religions, Paris, 1984)
- zoolatry, divinization of humans (rulers, saints, ...)

1.2. RITUALISM

1.2.1. SPIRITUALITY OF THE FLESH

- “spiritualita telesnosti” /spirituality of the flesh

³ Ken Dowden, *European Paganism*, Routledge: London&New York, 2000, p. 2

Think of all the people who in recent years have read (or seen) *The Da Vinci Code* – not just as a popular page-turner but as an experience in shared frustration with the status-quo, male-dominated, power-oriented, cover-up prone organized Christian religion. Why is the vision of Jesus hinted at in Dan Brown's book more interesting, more attractive, and more intriguing to these people than the standard version of Jesus they hear about from churches? (McLaren *The Secret Message of Jesus*)

1.2.2. THE NEED FOR FORMS AND RITUALS

- symbolism; expressing inwardness → Old Testament theology of worship
- structure; regularity → order; safety
- visibility; shared values → communication; community;
- dignity; celebration → worship; beauty;

1.2.3. THE DANGERS OF FORMALISM

- **Isa 29:13** And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, (וְלִבּוֹ רֶחֶק מִמֶּנִּי) while their hearts are far from me (בְּפִי וּבִשְׂפָתָיו כְּבָרִינִי) (וְיִרְאֶהֶם אֲחֵי מִצְוֹת אֲנָשִׁים מִלְמָדָה), and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men
- Calvin

In regard to the worship of God, CALVIN was opposed to splendid churches, and to all ritualism. He retained psalm-singing, but abolished the organ; he removed the altar, the crucifix, and muniments from the churches, and closed them during the week-days, unless the minister was present. He despised what we call art, especially artistic music; nor did he have much respect for artificial sermons, or the art of speaking. He himself preached *ex tempore*, nor is there evidence that he ever wrote a sermon. (04_ReligionsCults/www.worldspirituality.org/calvin.html)

- The Reformation

As interpersonal relations have become less ceremonious, so have private religious acts. Since the **Reformation**, Christian prayer has become more like intimate conversation. The ceremoniousness, or ritual character of religious activity in traditional cultures is not analogous in the world or the practice of science. (*Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*)

1.2.4. THE POWER AND EMPTINESS OF RITUALISM

- the allure of ritual as an art-form → prayer as physical-emotional performance;
- the *ex opere operato* magic of sacramentalism
- the suppression of the mind and the frenzy of a trance → The prophets of Baal against Elijah

1.3. MYTHOLOGY – OLD AND NEW

Myth has a narrative structure; certain repeatable events are narrated that lie beyond space and time, and are deposited at certain nodal points of human existence. In a broader sense, myth is a recounted history (of gods and demigods) by means of which a body of knowledge is handed on that grows from generation to generation. Today, a distinction between myth and other narratives is regarded as impossible, and seen rather as a late construct. (Christoph Jamme *Myth/Mythology*. In Kocku von Stuckrad (ed.) *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, Leiden: Brill, 2006, p. 1285)

2. “NEW” SPIRITUALITY → A “NEW AGE” MIX

- Douglas Groothuis: (1) Evolutionary optimism, (2) Monism, (3) Pantheism, (4) Consciousness Transformation, (5) Counterfeit Morality, (6) Unlimited Human Potential, (7) Spirit Contact, (8) Masters from Above, (9) Religious Syncretism⁴

2.1. ORIGINS OF THE “NEW AGE” MVMT

- [Gary Norht *Unholy Spirits*] “C. S. Lewis makes the observation in *The Abolition of Man* (1947) that occultism and humanism appeared in Western history at about the same time, during the Renaissance. Humanist philosophy and occultism were two sides of the same revival of paganism.”
- the term “New Age” by Alice A. Bailey
- “The interwar period in Europe, 1918–1939, has arguably been understudied in the history of religion; certainly in the history of alternative and non-official religion. But it is a key period in explaining the roots of

⁴ Douglas Groothuis *Confronting the New Age*, Downers Grove: IVP, 1988, pp. 20-32.

1960s developments in 'new age', and 1980s developments: in 'holistic' religion, as well as of the roots of Wicca, and hence of the twentieth century Pagan revival more widely."⁵

Elements of New Age culture have emerged from the underground to become a central part of everyday life for many in the West. The demand for organic foods and natural remedies; the growing general interest in spirituality and healing; the peace and anti-road lobbies; and the burgeoning global rave scene are all influenced by the variegated counterculture that New Age represents. (SUTCLIFFE *Children of the New Age*)

- spirituality of the individual choice, independent of religion, society, institutions...
- [VIOLA & BARNA *Pagan Christianity?*] shifting from-lifeless, institutional forms of faith to breakthrough. But what are they shifting to? House churches, marketplace ministries, cyberchurches, independent community wide worship gatherings, intentional communities.

There is an increasingly widespread perception that western society is undergoing one of its most significant religious transitions for many centuries. Book titles such as *The Spiritual Revolution*, *The Death of Christian Britain* and *Tomorrow's God* all suggest some kind of religious ferment. 'The times they are a-changin'', sang Bob Dylan and, as we begin to see the fruits of the seeds of change sown in the 1960s, his words remain remarkably apt for describing the fastchanging religious landscape of contemporary western life. (Gordon Lynch *The new spirituality*)

2.2. THE SELF IN THE CENTRE

- practical life spirituality: "individuals who use religious and spiritual coping efforts demonstrate greater physical and emotional well-being"⁶
- the self → Charles TAYLOR,

2.2.1. SELF-HELP

- "...the New Age spirituality has indeed sometimes been dubbed Self Religion. The basic symbolism of the Self is linked to a basic mythology, that narrates the growth and development of the individual soul through many incarnations and existences in the direction of ever-increasing knowledge and spiritual insight..."⁷
- titles: "Love Yourself into Life"; "True You";
- self-esteem (SCHULLER); healing techniques;
- positive thinking (Norman PEALE 1953)

[PEALE *A Guide to Confident Living*] In applying group therapy in services of public worship, many individuals are exposed to creative light energy in a spiritual sense. I want always to be on the side of common sense and factual realities. A crank is abhorrent to me. I believe always in being truly and completely scientific and rational in religious faith and practice. This does not mean, however, that one must be bound by materialistic science. Christianity, as will repeatedly be pointed out in this book, is itself a science. I positively believe therefore, that if a man will go to church and attune himself to the mood and atmosphere and if for only one minute of silence he will turn from the negative and destructive thoughts that agitate his mind and, if truly relaxed in body and in soul, he will affirm faith in God, he thereby opens himself to the recreative power that flows constantly through the universe.

2.2.2. PSYCHO-THEOLOGY

- JUNG → archetypes
 - "...what happens in the life of Christ happens always and everywhere. In the Christian archetype all lives of this kind are prefigured and are expressed over and over again or once and for all."⁸

2.2.3. THE POWER OF THE MIND

- [religion] It is impossible to live or to die without God, but it is not impossible to think that you are. If you think that you are living or dying without God, you will experience that you are. You may have this

⁵ Steven Sutcliffe *The Origins of 'New Age' Religion Between the Two World Wars*, In Daren Kemp and James R. Lewis, *The Handbook of New Age*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, p. 51.

⁶ Donald Meichenbaum, *Trauma, Spirituality And Recovery: Toward A Spiritually-Integrated Psychotherapy* www.melissainstitute.org

⁷ Wouter J. Hanegraaf *The New Age Movement and Western Esotericism*, In Daren Kemp and James R. Lewis, *The Handbook of New Age*, p. 48.

⁸ C. G. Jung *The Collected Works 11*, Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 89.

experience as long as you wish. You may end this experience whenever you choose. I believe those are holy words. I believe they came directly from God. (ReligionsCults\NewAge\Walsch\Home-With-God.pdf)

2.2.4. UNIVERSAL LOVE

That Kirpal showered such grace that he taught everyone the Message of Love. He taught everyone that we are the children of the same God, we are living under one sky, we are living on one earth, and we are all created by God; and that is why we should treat everyone with love and affection. (*The Coming Spiritual Revolution*)

2.3. ARTS

- the worship of artistic imagination (idol) → the power of spiritual experience

[SPRETNAK *The Spiritual Dynamic in Modern Art*] **Mondrian's** hard-edged grid paintings, considered by many to be the epitome of tough-minded modern art, were created to be modern visual expressions of the esoteric spiritual teachings of Theosophy. The reason **Renoir** loved to paint women, especially women in gardens, was that he considered the female face and body, along with nature, to be God's finest creation. **Brancusi's** sleekly modern sculptures of birds, eggs, and other natural forms were expressions of his admiration for the Romanian peasant culture's ancient, semi-pagan spiritual practices and symbols. In these examples and hundreds more, the **artist's spiritual sensibilities were central**, in concert with other factors, to the creation of celebrated works of modern art.

2.3.1. ROMANTICISM

- Hegel: "The reconciliation of the spirit with itself, the absolute history, the process of the truth, is brought to our view and conviction by the appearance of God in the world."⁹
- art → prophecy; religion; incarnation;
- Beethoven; Liszt...

2.3.2. SELF-EXPRESSION

- imagination

2.4. SCIENCE

- "The New Age has reopened a door closed since Christianity drove out the demons from the woods, desacralized the natural world and generally took a dim view of excessive interest in the affairs of Satan's kingdom of fallen angels. Now they are back, knocking on university dorm-room doors, sneaking around psychology laboratories and chilling the spines of Ouija players."¹⁰

[C.S.LEWIS *Screwtape*,] I have great hopes that we shall learn in due time how to emotionalise and mythologise their science to such an extent that what is, in effect, belief in us, (though not under that name) will creep in while the human mind remains closed to belief in the Enemy. The "Life Force", the worship of sex, and some aspects of Psychoanalysis, may here prove useful. If once we can produce our perfect work—the Materialist Magician, the man, not using, but veritably worshipping, what he vaguely calls "Forces" while denying the existence of "spirits"—then the end of the war will be in sight. [Já pevně věřím, že jednou dokážeme jejich vědu natolik citově zabarvit a mytologizovat, že do ní fakticky pronikne víra v nás (i když pod jiným jménem), a zároveň lidská mysl zůstane uzavřena před vírou v Nepřítele. „Životní síla“, uctívání sexu a některé rysy psychoanalýzy zde mohou vykonat mnoho užitečného. Náš zápas se přiblíží ke konci, jakmile vytvoříme své dokonalé dílo – čarodějníka materialistu: člověka, který neužívá, ale uctívá to, co neurčitě nazývá „silami“ – a zároveň nevěří v existenci „duchů“.]

2.4.1. PHYSICS

[CAPRA *The Tao of Physics*, 1975] The Eastern religious philosophies are concerned with timeless mystical knowledge which lies beyond reasoning and cannot be adequately expressed in words. The relation of this knowledge to modern physics is but one of its many aspects and, like all the others, it cannot be demonstrated conclusively but has to be experienced in a direct intuitive way. What I hope to have achieved, to some extent, therefore, is not a rigorous demonstration, but rather to have given the

⁹ G.W.F. Hegel *Aesthetics I*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 534

¹⁰ James Sire *The Universe Next-Door*, IVP: Downers Grove, 2004, p. 209

reader an opportunity to relive, every now and then, an experience which has become for me a source of continuing joy and inspiration; that the principal theories and models of modern physics lead to a view of the world which is internally consistent and in perfect harmony with the views of Eastern mysticism..

2.4.2. TECHNOLOGY

- Virtual reality; life in films...
- Sci-fi, Star wars UFO (*ufology*)...

3. TO REMEMBER

- Spiritual perception and experiences make us fully human.
- Christian spirituality connects everyday truth, reason, history, community through the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ and the gospel.
- To confront new spiritualities we need to offer better and more powerful spirituality that is based on the Bible. It is not enough to criticize and point out the negatives of the counterfeit.