



ANSWERING THE EVOLUTIONARY UNDERSTANDING OF
HUMANS AND NATURE IN NEO-SPIRITUAL MILIEUS

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The Master's Light

Defining new spiritualities is almost impossible, just as finding the right taxonomy for the phenomenon is difficult. In the 1980s and 1990s many people were satisfied with 'New Age' and later on with the 'Holistic Movement'.¹ I use 'new spiritualities' or 'neo-spiritual milieus' because 'New Age', which is a modern construction, does not cover for instance neo-Pagan movements, which are a post-modern construction, and have an important role in today's spiritual world.² New spirituality, however, might also be a difficult nomenclature as spirituality is a very broad term covering Christian spiritual practices, the practices of other religions as well as non-religious spirituality in the culture of well-being and wellness. The non-religious spiritualities have recently also been called Spiritualities of Life because of their focus on practices which enhance life e.g. therapy, healing, wellness, and massage, seeing life as the spiritual ground of existence.³ At least in Scandinavia, humanistic atheism should be understood as a non-religious spirituality, creating rites of transition.⁴

The new spiritualities might be understood in the light of the history of Western esotericism as suggested in Wouter Hanegraaff's *New Age Religion*.⁵ The rise of neo-spiritual milieus might also be understood as a part of a spiritual revolution and a drifting away from traditional, doctrinal religion to a non-sectarian spirituality as implied in the writings of Paul Heelas et al.⁶ New spiritualities thus may be seen as a reaction against Christianity or at least the institutional church as is apparent in some practitioners of neo-Paganism.⁷

The world view involved in the neo-spiritual milieus may be only vaguely implied or found more consciously worked-out expressions as in

many neo-Pagan groups and among practitioners of complementary medicine/alternative healing and spiritualities of life. In theosophical/neo-theosophical groups and among trendsetters and teachers the world view is expressed as more or less developed philosophies.

In the neo-spiritual milieus there is found a focus on nature, on the role of humanity in nature, as well as on the evolution of the human person, the human race, the planet, the solar system, the galaxy, the universe, and even the godhead. This is especially evident in the neo-theosophical groups as shown below, but also takes the form an environmental concern; in particular, Pagan groups explore the humans-nature relationship.⁸ The focus on evolution is often seen as a transformation of consciousness, whether this is the transformation on a personal, social, planetary or cosmic level.⁹

Following Hanegraaff's assumption that the neo-spiritual milieus arise from Western esotericism, the attempt to develop a Christian response to different aspects of the new spiritualities must take this milieu into consideration. I have found that the neo-spiritual movements in the legacy of Theosophy provide concepts and practices which are fruitful in an encounter with new spiritualities. The problem which arises in dialogue with practitioners of new spiritualities however is that even though theosophy and esotericism have formed the concepts of the New Age movement, these concepts are too theoretical, intellectual and philosophical for many. Thus insights and practices in the broader milieu have to be taken into account if Christians want to address the concerns and experiences of today's spiritual reality theologically and practically.¹⁰

As I begin I will focus on the concepts and practices of neo-theosophical movements with some view towards the broader holistic and neo-spiritual scene in order to gain as much clarity as possible on the specific topic.

Concepts of Neo-Theosophical Movements

The neo-Theosophical movements have provided new spiritualities with several spokespersons who have advanced many of the ideas which prevail in neo-spiritual milieu. One of the more outstanding is David Spangler, who for a period was associated with the New Age Findhorn Foundation. The roots of the neo-theosophical movements are found in the Theosophy Society, founded in 1875 by Madam H. P. Blavatsky. Theosophy has split up in numerous groups and schools; one of the major divisions was the formation of the anthroposophical movement of Rudolf Steiner. The works of A. A. Bailey have been a bridge from classical theosophy to introducing the concept of the New Age. The neo-theosophical movements are groups and schools of thought who



acknowledge the legacy of Theosophy while adding their own insights and inspirations, e.g. Summit Lighthouse (Elisabeth Claire Prophet) and the Scandinavian Den gyldne Cirkel (The Golden Circle, Asger Lorentsen).¹¹

The Breath of Brahmâ

To understand the concept of creation in the neo-spiritual milieu as influenced by neo-theosophical thought in the framework of Theosophy it is beneficial to turn to the concept of Creation as a process, which in the words of Madame H. P. Blavatsky is called the breath of Brahmâ, evolving through cycles of incarnations. Madame Blavatsky in her *Secret Doctrine* said that beyond manifest and conditioned existence is the undifferentiated "Be-ness," which is her term for the divine ground of being. Divine thought is resting within the night of Brahmâ; creation starts with the idea of differentiation, the duality of spirit (consciousness) and matter, which are both aspects of the absolute, unconditioned and unmanifested Be-ness. Thus, duality of spirit and matter is the essence of the manifested universe. Our consciousness comes from Spirit or "Cosmic Ideation," and from Cosmic Substance comes "the several vehicles in which that consciousness is individualised and attains to self."¹² The unifying energy is *Fohat*, which has various manifestations, yet is "the mysterious link between Mind and Matter, the animating principle electrifying every atom into life."¹³

The universe, of which we are part, is only one of "numberless Universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing"¹⁴ periodically as the breathing out and breathing in of Brahmâ. This breathing out and in are called the "Days and nights of Brahmâ," and cover 311,040,000,000,000 years.

The *Secret Doctrine* further states that all souls are identical with the universal "Over-Soul," which itself is an aspect of "the Unknown Root," i.e. the triad of the Absolute, Spirit (or Consciousness) and Matter. Every soul as a spark of the "Over-Soul" has to make an "obligatory pilgrimage... through the Cycle of Incarnation... in accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law."¹⁵

Somehow it is not totally right to speak of creation as described in the *Secret Doctrine*. Nothing has been created; "it is only on this plane of ours that it commenced 'becoming,' i.e. objectivising in its present materiality."¹⁶ The Universe evolved out of its ideal plan following the hermetic insight, as above so it is below, or "from *within outwards*." This

evolution is guided and animated by endless series of hierarchies of sentient beings, each of which either *was*, or prepares to become, a man, if not in the present, then in a past or a coming cycle.¹⁷

Even if all the details of Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* are not taken into account in today's New Age religion or neo-spiritual movements, the overall understanding of evolution and of the part humans play in it is present in the neo-spiritual milieu. This is of course most obvious in neo-theosophical groups and movements, but it has also influenced the thinking of the neo-spiritual milieu as well. Evolution, karma and reincarnation are part of the common beliefs in the neo-spiritual milieu. In today's spiritual concepts it might take this form:

The creational process is going on in the consciousness of the godhead. Every single entity of our planet is thus a part of this process, and itself an aspect of god on a long spiritual journey. This is also true of humans as individuals, as nations and as humanity as such, and it is true of our planet and solar system.¹⁸

Humans have a specific role within the evolution of the Earth. The human is a microcosmic being, reflecting the cosmos or even the universe. Humans have to conduct their lives in ecological co-existence with nature, and they have a mediatory role in the evolutionary process towards the attainment of a planetary consciousness. As such humanity becomes the global brain of mother Earth.¹⁹ This role of humans is further explored below and referred to as *planetary holism*.

Because evolution happens from inside outwards or according to the hermetic principle, and because of the micro-cosmic nature of humans, nature might be read as a book of revelation; nature and everything in it has a sign character. This is an important part of the legacy from Theosophy. Creation is at the same time understood as going on in the consciousness of the godhead and nature and evolving from the infinite and unknowable Being, identifying each divine spark on its pilgrimage through incarnations with each other, yet understanding the manifested universe as an illusion (*maya*). Thus the holism in this part of the neo-spiritual milieu tends to be monistic. I would call it a *monistic holism* or *non-dual monism*.

The Evolution of the Individual Soul

What is said above somehow represents a great story, the great plan. But new spiritualities also have a very individualized expression. One may speak of the evolutionary process as the great plan as well as following the process of an individual soul through a chain of incarnations as a very personal story. Even though every divine spark is identical with each other and the Absolute (or Divine), every spark also



has its own pilgrimage, a long journey from the plane of love-unity through many incarnations and back again. The individual spark thus learns the reality of love by being incarnated on Earth in the human chain of incarnation; even entities following other chains of evolution, e.g. angels/devas, and entities from other solar systems, may have some incarnations as humans for personal training in compassionate love and as a stimulus to the general evolution of humankind.²⁰

This focus on the individual way is found in the practice of regression therapy, a form of therapy which makes the client experience regressive memories from the early childhood, the fetal stage and beyond. These regressive exercises are thus conveyed in the form of past-life experiences. The belief in past-life experiences and the concomitant doctrine of reincarnation is the closest one may come towards a neo-spiritual dogma. Some have a philosophical notion of reincarnation, usually with an optimistic evolutionary bias. Most seekers in the neo-spiritual milieu that I have met at alternative fairs and festivals and in counseling have what might be called a low key belief in reincarnation, i.e. vague memories of places and times, a belief in an afterlife, and the hope of another chance. To other people in the neo-spiritual milieu belief in karma and reincarnation is the only satisfactory explanation for the injustices in the world and the very different conditions of life for human beings. Some ridicule Christians because of their dogmatic clinging to their belief in resurrection and final judgment, while others are eager to stress the compatibility of Christian faith and belief in reincarnation, seeing it as more in line with the message of love and grace to help every soul to salvation having achieved holiness through the trials of many incarnations.²¹

Most observers discussing the new spiritualities stress the individualized spirituality or post-modern spirituality with its stress on experience and personal choice as if it was a narcissistic or egoistic/egocentric enterprise. Some observers even speak of consumerist religion/spirituality. Even though the individual way is stressed and the wellness trend has taken over spiritual language, and even though the spiritual quest seems to take place in what resembles a market place, e.g. alternative fairs, festival and exhibitions, such as the so-called Body Mind Spirit festivals, it is usually not only for personal gain or fun. The individual way is part of the evolution of mankind and serves the sanctification of the Earth and all her creatures, it takes part in relation to other than self, in groups or in a client-practitioner setting, and as we shall see below it is often connected with a concern for the unity of

humankind, nature and the environment.²² Thus it would be fairer to speak of *individual* or *personal holism*.

The Concept of Service / Healing of Nature

But the universal and the personal aspect of the new spiritualities must be held together ó not least in the discussion of the spiritual practice. The concept which at least in some parts of the neo-spiritual milieu combines the two tendencies is service/ministry or being channels for a new age. This is especially seen in the environmental concern of the neo-spiritual milieus:

Holistic people believe that it is normal for us to experience a deep sense of companionship with Earth and nature. Our physical bodies are essentially of the same matter and, whatever the particular history, we emerged together out of the same cosmic origin. In most people there is an instinctive understanding that nature is alive... But this mystic understanding is obviously worthless if our lifestyles remain selfish and harmful.²³

I would call this spiritual approach *planetary holism*.

In the theosophical and neo-theosophical movements we find the idea of world servers who commit themselves to work with the law of evolution under the *Hierarchy* or *Inner Government of the World* to further the coming new age. Some engage in the work of triangles, some gather for sun meditation at full moon. The three areas of service are: 1) to create human synthesis and unity through right human relations; 2) to establish a right relationship to the ðlowerö natural realms of the Earth, because there is one world; 3) to make visible the kingdom of God or the spiritual hierarchy of the planet, evoking a universal appraisal that the sons and daughters of men are one. This is done through group meditation according to the law of invocation and evocation. In some neo-theosophical groups this work takes the form of Earth healings services.²⁴

The theosophical way of serving the world may seem more mental than the practical, creative and bodily approaches which are found in some parts of neo-Paganism, shamanism, feminine spirituality, Wicca and eco-spirituality. Service in many of these groups may be described as celebrating the co-existence with nature and the connection with the Earth.²⁵

The feminist approachí means, in contradistinction to the masculine approach, a new appreciation of creativity, power, nurture, cycles and healing. It means an understanding of



spirituality that is not so much transcendent and external, but a fecund life force emerging out of the Cosmic Mother, out of the Earth, out of the womb and out of all of us.²⁶

Shamanic and magical traditions as well as nature-related rituals and spiritual practices at times mix with the spirituality of women as just mentioned. Shamanic and magical traditions have been suppressed by organized religions, just like the Goddess - it is said.

A central belief of both shamans and magicians is that the world is made of energy, that every object and living thing has its own energetic vibration, and that the human mind can manipulate this energy to produce tangible results. The shamanic and magical approaches are directly relevant to psychology and healing. In fact, the idea that *energy follows thought* is the basis of many self-help and visualization techniques which are now popularly used.²⁷

Holistic health, spiritual healing and complementary medicine belong to the sphere of holistic spirituality because of its intention of cooperating with the body and nature and seeing body, mind and spirit as a whole.

A Christian Theological Response

A Christian theological reflection answering the neo-spiritual concerns might find points of contact and a common background in the roots of Western esotericism by focusing on creation in a Trinitarian manner.²⁸ What is needed is not just a creation theology dwelling only in the first article of the Apostolic or Nicene Creed. God creates the world through God's divine Logos (John 1:1-5; Col 1:16) breathing the life-giving Holy Spirit into the created world (Gen 1:1-2). An attempt to make an outline of the content of such a theological approach may be suggested in the following paragraphs. The starting point is the interpretation of Genesis 1 which is found in the prologue of St. John's gospel. Here we find the term Logos which means word, reason or the rational order of creation;²⁹ Logos which is the Son of God is thus God's self-communication in creation and redemption (the Logos made flesh). The way I speak of the Holy Spirit draws from the meaning of the word as breath (of God) and breath of life as in Psalm 104 and as wind in John 3.

The original nature of the created world is reflecting the Logos and the Spirit. The Logos is reflected in the *logos* or order of the created world, which may be called the law of servant love which means that it is a condition for life and for the unity of the world that each created being serves each other and the whole in love. The original nature of humankind, as created in the image of God in a microcosmic way serves, reveals and establishes this *logos*, understood as order, of earthly creation. Thus humankind is closely linked to nature and all fellow creatures of the Earth. Everything lives, breathes and moves in the Spirit or Breath of God. The original nature of humans is restored in Christ (Eph 2:4-10) after suffering from original sin³⁰ or the sin of Adam (Gen 3; cf. Rom 5:12).

A Christian theology of creation affirms a planetary and personal holism in the understanding of the role of humans and in the understanding of the human person. It also affirms the idea of nature as a book of divine revelation, proclaiming the glory or presence of the Lord. The created world was thus meant to be a sacrament. It does not, however, affirm a monistic or non-dual holism, because the world is understood exactly as created by a God who acts in a personal way, and who created the world and humanity for a relationship with God. Christian theology does not see the created world as illusion (*maya*), but as real and as a revelation of God. A Christian theology views a world full of true relations, a network of relations between humans and between all creatures as a reflection of the love of God.

Christian theology, however, does not stop here, but takes the fact of sin into account. The original nature of humans and of nature is disturbed by original sin as a pattern which distorts the revelation of God through God's created works, breaks the relationship between God and humans as well as uproots the loving network of relations between all earthly creatures. The incarnation of the *logos* of God restores the original nature of humans created in the image of God; Jesus as the son of man/true man reveals the law of servant love and re-establishes the microcosmic nature of the human person. It is a personal matter to become part of the restoring work of the *logos* of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit; it is universally established in Jesus Christ, because he is truly human and truly God, but to reach its goal every human person has to respond and commit her/himself to the servant love of God in Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, entering into right relations to the human race and our fellow creatures.

Thus Christian theology affirms the individual/personal way of transformation / sanctification, preparing for the kingdom of God being fully established among humans as the brother-sisterhood of redeemed humankind, the body of Christ, and fulfilling the longing of all earthly creatures for the freedom of the children of God. Through the Holy Spirit



Christians recognise the original sacramental nature of their fellow creatures, and restored to their own original nature in Christ they call their fellow creatures into a renewed relationship to God. As microcosmic beings humans reveal to nature, the Earth and their fellow creatures what is the nature of the created world. If humans live in original sin and in a distorted relationship to God and one another, this is reflected to the world and submits creation to corruption and death. If humans are restored in the image of God, this is the restored image of what the world is meant to be. This understanding is enacted in the liturgical life of the Church and in pastoral care/soul care.

A Christian Liturgical Response (Servants / Stewards)

Christian liturgy is a microcosmic event; this is the core of a sacramental understanding of the liturgy. In classical Lutheran and Catholic theology a sacrament is understood as a practice which is instituted by Christ, having an outward/creational element, e.g. water, bread and wine, which transmits a spiritual benefit. A sacramental understanding of liturgy gives value to created elements as bearers of the presence of Christ through the graceful working of the Holy Spirit. This understanding is easily explained to the esoteric neo-spiritual groups referring to the sign character of creation (nature as a book of revelation). The church sacraments, e.g. baptism and eucharist in a Lutheran tradition, and the lesser sacramentals, i.e. blessings, which are similar to sacraments, but not instituted by Christ, are honouring the sacramental character of all of creation, and are founded in the sign character of nature and will thus provide for a Christian interpretation of the re-enchantment of nature which is happening in the neo-spiritual milieu. Thus they are an antidote to consumerism, because they acknowledge the created world and its elements as gifts. Giving thanks for creation and its restoration and salvation through Christ is most clearly established in the Eucharist. Invoking the Holy Spirit on bread and wine as elements and as gifts taken from the Earth, the Church receives bread and wine as the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Thus the created world in Christ is reunited to the Creator.

In this way the Church may understand the role of its sacraments and spiritual practices in the light of sanctification, prefiguring the transformation of humankind and the reestablishment of the balance/harmony of nature. Partaking in liturgy is partaking in a process of mediation: ðThrough Jesus Christ, God is persuading the church in the direction of greater union with Godself. Through the church and the

liturgy, Jesus Christ is luring the world in the direction of greater humanization.³¹

Christian liturgy also has a therapeutic dimension which focuses on the immanence of God's presence, e.g. in praying for a sick or suffering person the liturgy focuses on the re-establishing of the *logos* (the created order) of the malfunctioning organs of the body and asks the *Logos* (Word) of God once more to call the organs back into their natural order. In the therapeutic model there will be much more room for the body and the bodily expressions in the liturgy such as dancing, healing touch, foot washing, incense, aromatic oils and fragrances, and healing music. Rituals may in some instances be shaped as a kind of role playing, resulting in a catharsis of the persons involved. Modern pilgrimages could be seen as rites of catharsis as well as celebrations of the relationship with nature, and pilgrimage is an obvious place for Christians to celebrate with spiritual seekers as fellow pilgrims.

In developing a spiritual practice in the context of new spiritualities Christians will have to acknowledge that new rituals and liturgies will only be a full answer to spiritual seekers if it is also able to address individual concerns of spiritual growth and to be seen as a means towards achieving a higher consciousness. The priesthood of all believers may involve their privilege to create their own rituals as part of their disciple relationship to Jesus.

On the basis of our own spiritual and liturgical tradition Christians could create liturgies, which express the concern for the Earth and the human race, which is common to new spirituality's adherents and Christians;³² solidarity in concern, uniqueness in faith. Thus the Danish Christian organisation *In the Master's Light (IML)*³³ invites these adherents to services on the days of the full moon, which is the time when many people in the neo-spiritual milieu meet to invoke the light of the Hierarchy, the spiritual world, the Sun-Logos, or the Universe and thus open themselves to be channels of this light to the world, evoking an answer from the Universe, the Sun-Logos etc. In the Christian service, God, as we know God in Jesus Christ, is called upon, acknowledging Jesus Christ as the light of the world, and asking that his disciples mirror his light as they may themselves become lights of the world:

The Christian full moon service opens with a light ritual in which the service leader quotes John 8.12 and Matt. 5.14-16. The participants each light a candle at the Easter candle and place the candle in front of an icon. During the ceremony praise song are sung, usually choruses from the Taizé community in France.

The next step is prayer of transformation in the Light of Jesus Christ. All pray the Jesus-prayer 3 times (Jesus Christ, Son of



God, have mercy upon us!) aloud, and continue silently following their breathing in and out.

We then focus on the unity of all disciples of Jesus and men and women of good will, praying a prayer of discipleship.³⁴ This leads to a meditation on this unity and on the longing and prayer from this brother-sisterhood for the healing of mankind and the Earth.

Then the Bible word of the day is read, followed by a short sermon and a time of the meditation of the word of the day, integrating it, and preparing for sharing the insight in God's will and our experience of the healing presence of him who is the Light of the World and of his Spirit. This is a silent meditation concluded with music.

This leads up to the actual prayer for the healing of the Earth and the human race, including Our Lord's Prayer and a prayer of refuge and dedication.³⁵

The Christian full moon services conclude with *Nunc Dimittis* or *Magnificat*, a blessing (e.g. Phil. 4.7), and a hymn.³⁶

The full moon service is one step in assimilating a neo-spiritual practice of ritual following the cycles of nature in a creative way giving the nature related spirituality a Christian interpretation. IML is widening this practice to embrace the so-called 8 Sabbaths, which are celebrated in neo-Pagan groups as well as Wicca.³⁷ These nature related services will reveal to spiritual seekers that Christians are concerned with the healing of nature and humanity, and that we are engaged in channelling the Light of God to our fellow creatures in a practice of invocation and evocation, to use the theosophical vocabulary. This is in an IML setting further expressed in establishing triangles that are committed to a daily prayer for the Earth, our fellow-creatures and the human race.

A Christian Pastoral Response (Soul Care)

Soul care and spiritual direction as well as a healing ministry including prayer for the sick, inner healing and deliverance of possessed persons are very important if the Gospel will meet the needs of neo-spiritual seekers and the broader well-being culture. The Church has a rich experience and tradition. In my own work I have found city retreats

with the liturgy of hours and silence between the participants to be a good setting for soul care and spiritual direction.

In the scope of this paper I cannot deal more specifically with this broad field; I will just point to a special subject in the counselling situation and in the dialogue with holistic and neo-spiritual seekers, which is significant to *individual holism* and the concept of the evolution of the individual soul. How are we to deal with the past life experiences and the belief in reincarnation?

First of all we will have to listen to the story and recognize the experience of the confidant/client as important and real, not in the meaning that this is their personal past life, a factual earlier incarnation, but an image of what is going on in their psyche, a process and an indication of what to work with in their present situation (ōincarnationō). Painful memories might be clothed or symbolised in these experiences, being a projection into the past of present problems, traumas or hopes. These past life experiences are like meaningful dreams. Some seekers will accept it as an acceptable explanation that the experienced past lives are not their own personal lives, but the lives of other persons which in one way or the other arise from the past through the collective unconscious because of affinity with their own actual situation. Thus the experience of past lives may not be a proof of reincarnation as a fact.

Some confidants do not feel at home in their present life; they feel as if they have come from another planet or solar system or may be angels or devas that take a series of incarnations in the human world. Others are haunted by guilt, maybe from a severe religious upbringing, but intensified by a heavy karma from earlier incarnations. They feel they have to take responsibility for their own lives, health, and success and seek to find the root of their present misery, illness and misfortune in the karma of past lives. To many of these seekers it seems too easy to expect God to forgive them. It is no help to argue, but the non-judgemental listening to their story, and a prayer reflecting their story and concerns may help them to see the value they have in the eyes of God in their present life and as the person they are, and that the love of God for them as they are ó body, soul and spirit ó is an eternal love that will keep them in God's fellowship as the person recognizable from their present life.

My sharing with seekers on the question of reincarnation and why I do not believe in reincarnation is focused on the experience of being loved by God, being God's precious child, as the unique creature that I am. And yet this is not a satisfactory answer to many seekers who believe in reincarnation, because they do not think a person might become a perfect and self-realized being in one incarnation. Concerning this objection I refer to the fact that we are not alone in the process of



sanctification, but part of the body of Christ; in the resurrection, together with all of redeemed mankind, we will be changed and experience the fullness and holiness which was God's original plan for humankind. In this redeemed mankind we will be recognizable ourselves and yet part of the whole, and we will see that our unique life has been a part of the building up of the body of Christ, and that we together with all the other members of the body by grace have achieved what no one will achieve in his or her one and only lifetime.

Conclusion

The new spiritualities have a focus on nature, evolution and the human person which has been described above with the terms monistic/non-dual monism, planetary holism and individual/personal holism. These aspects of a neo-spiritual world view may be encountered with a Christian theology, based on the Logos-concept of St. John, in the development of Christian liturgy as acts of service focusing on the healing prayer for all of creation and humankind, and in a pastoral care which takes seriously the spiritual quest of the neo-spiritual seeker.

¹Cf. William Bloom (ed), *Holistic Revolution. The Essential New Age Reader* (London: Penguin Press, 2000).

²Michael York, *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-pagan Movements* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995).

³Cf. Paul Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism* (Oxford, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

⁴Human-Etisk Forbund, www.human.no; Humanisterne in Sweden; Humanistisk Forbund in Denmark.

⁵Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture. Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996).

⁶Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, et al., *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

⁷An example is Asatrofællesskabet, cf. www.asatrofaellesskabet.dk which sees the old religion as more suitable to Norse people.

⁸Cf. Bloom, *Holistic Revolution*, 95-146.

⁹The subtitle is significant in the classic book of Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy. Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s* (Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, 1980). Cf. also Bloom, *Holistic Revolution*, 49-94.

¹⁰Cf. Ole Skjerbæk Madsen, "Theology in Dialogue with New Age or the neospiritual milieu," in *Theology and the Religions: A Dialogue*, Viggo Mortensen, eds. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 257-286.

¹¹The role of Theosophy in the transformation of Western esotericism into New Age religion is clearly demonstrated in Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, 411-513. Cf. also Sir John R. Sinclair, *The Alice Bailey Inheritance* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: TurnStone Press, 1984). Gerhard Wehr: Rudolph Steiner, in Peter Koslowski, ed., *Gnosis und Mystik in der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988); <http://www.findhorn.org/whatwedo/vision/history.php>; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Spangler, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Summit_Lighthouse. In Denmark the neo-theosophist Asger Lorentsen has been and still is one of the leading figures in the neo-spiritual milieu, and not the least his book *Det kosmiske menneske. Håndbog I et åndeligt livssyn*, Borgen, Copenhagen 1985 has been influential.

¹²H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine I* (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1988 [London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1888]), 11-18, 35-36.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid. 272-283, which resumes the first book of the *Secret Doctrine*.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Asger Lorentsen, *Menneskets åndelige rejse*. Borgen, København 1982. Per Bruus-Jensen, following this line of thought, explains the spiritual scientific worldview of Martinus in *Livet og det lukkede rum*. Nordisk Impuls, 1990.

¹⁹Cf. Peter Russel, *The Awakening Earth* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); David Spangler, *Towards a Planetary Vision* (Scotland: Findhorn, 1977/1983).



²⁰Asger Lorentsen op.cit; Asger Lorentsen has even written a novel *Mysterier på galens vej*. Den gyldne Cirkel, Frederiksværk 2007, which is based on information from clients in past life therapy; he follows a person through a chain of incarnations through which she/he is trained mainly in refining qualities of a priestess of the Earth. She has been sacrificed to a nature god, been a priestess of Isis, leader of a Gnostic community, a male incarnation as a bishop etc.

²¹Asger Lorentsen, *Reinkarnation i forskning og terapi*. (København: Borgen, 1982/1985), 57-109. Asger Lorentsen: *Stjernemennesker og englemennesker* (København: Borgen, 1997); Karl Aage Kirkegaard, *Reinkarnation er forenelig med Kristendom* (København Sankt Ansgar Forlag, 1999).

²²Cf. Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life*, 132-136.

²³Bloom, *Holistic Revolution*, 97-98.

²⁴Kenneth Sørensen: *Fuldmåned meditation på tærskelen til en ny verdensreligion* (Copenhagen: Virgo Publishing, 1999), 87-98, 161-188. The inspiration of many groups comes mainly from the works of Alice A. Bailey, cf. *Ponder on this* (New York: Lucis Trust, 1971/1983), 358-367, 416-417. An example of this is the Danish theosophical group ðCenter for Livets indre Dimensionerö which gathers each Wednesday at noon for a peace meditation in a Church in cooperation with the national angel and the avatar of synthesis; the participants imagine how the world saviour sends peace and love into the light, passing it on into humankind and through the realms of nature to the Mother of the World in Earth's center, cf. <http://www.livetsindredimensioner.dk/meditation/fredstjeneste.html>.

²⁵Philip Carr-Gomm: ðDruidry celebrates the natural world, and rather than focusing on how to transcend our physical existence, it focuses on celebrating our life on earth and on encouraging our creativity, helping the Bard within us to sing the song of our hearts and souls.ö Quote in Michael T. Cooper, ðResearch observations: The Meaning of Life in Contemporary Druidry,ö *Sacred Tribes Journal*, Volume 3 Number 1 (2008): 36. See also the quote from James W. Maetens p. 43 which describes Druidry as a relationship to the natural world.

²⁶Bloom, *Holistic Revolution*, 215-216.

²⁷Ibid., 257-258.

²⁸Madsen, "Theology in Dialogue with New Age," 257-258, 264-285.

²⁹According to platonic and stoic philosophy of the time of St. John, cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John*. (London, S.P.C.K. 1967), 127-129.

³⁰I am not understanding original sin as a total corruption of human nature as in traditional Lutheran teaching but as a disturbance of our true nature; it is fatal and sets a pattern for human existence which results in death and alienation from God and our fellow creatures, but it cannot change that we are created in the image of God.

³¹James Empereur, *Models of Liturgical Theology* (Nottingham: Grove Booklets, 1987), 33.

³²How to use the principles of inculturation, dynamic equivalence and creative assimilation in relation to new spiritualities; cf. Ole Skjerbæk Madsen, "Kontekstuel liturgi in: IXΘΥΣ Dansk Tidsskrift," *Teologi og Kirke* (maj 2008, 35. årgang), 39-49.

³³Cf. Philip Johnson, Anne C. Harper and John W. Morehead (eds.), *Religious and Non-Religious Spirituality in the Western World. Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 45* (Sydney, 2004): 58-61, Internet resource available from www.imesterenslys.dk.

³⁴God, you who are ðI AMö!

I recognise the working of Your Spirit in the longing of humans for the peace of Your Kingdom,

And in their longing for Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

I recognise the presence of Your servant love in men of good will

And in everyone who dedicate themselves to walk the way of discipleship.

May the power of Your Holy Spirit flow in them (or us) and guide them (or us)

To the recognition of all Truth and into practical service.

May Your Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, inspire them (or us) to servant love

As co-workers of the Kingdom of God.

May I find my place in Your one work for the redemption of the Earth and the human race

- in a humble spirit, in purity, truth, and love.

³⁵This is a prayer of refuge by Karl Ludvig Reichelt:

L: Let us commit us and take refuge in God, saying:



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All: With all my heart I take refuge
 In God Most High,
 Who created all things,
 The merciful Father, source of all goodness.
 With all my heart I take refuge
 In Christ, the Redeemer from sin,
 Who restores my true nature,
 The perfect and mysterious Word.
 With all my heart I take refuge
 In the One who embraces the universe,
 Who at all times and in all places
 Responds to our needs,
 The pure and tranquil Holy Spirit.

³⁶ Ole Skjerbæk Madsen in an unpublished paper.

³⁷See for example Steven Hallam, John Smulo & Bill Stewart,
öSymbolically Foreshadowed: The Gospel and the Wheel of the Year,ö
Sacred Tribes Journal Vol. 2, Issue 2 (2005): 35-56.