

## Characteristics of the New Age movement, Christianity and Gnosis

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Below is a brief summary of the main characteristics of New Age, a movement inspired by ancient Gnostic sources and whose main adversary is Christianity. Despite the diversity of New Age forms, we can find common underlying themes.

New Age presents itself as an informal "nebula", with multiple influences that are impossible to exhaustively describe, but whose contours we can attempt to define and, above all, discern its structural axes.

Indeed, constants emerge within the diversity of this movement's proposals, which we summarize here:

- Refutation of Christianity (Catholicism): Jesus' message would have been betrayed by the Catholic Church.
- Recovery of Christ and his "true message": neo-Christianity, christic energies<sup>1</sup>, etc.
- These true teachings are transmitted by entities of a hidden spiritual hierarchy who come to reestablish the truth.
- This transmission is carried out through channeling: spiritism, automatic writing, visions, mediumship, etc.
- Anonymity of the recipients, who claim this is due to humility, but this makes it impossible to verify the sources.
- Gnostic background and "Orientalist" sources interpreted by Westerners from the 19th century and early 20th century in Anglo-Saxon countries and their colonies...
- Knowledge comes through initiations, masters, and the development of "techniques" of personal evolution that require secrecy and an esoteric and occult approach.
- The practice of magic is vindicated by the fact that it is "white," that is, oriented toward healthy ends, justifying the means by the end.
- Claim to the universalism of a new, single religion that would unite all previous spiritual approaches.
- Shame or reserve regarding the death of the "masters," described as "transition," "passage," "decorporation," "victory of ascension," "rebirth in the light."
- In the most recent proposals, a claim to consistency with contemporary science (especially quantum physics).

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<sup>1</sup> "Christic energies", a popular term in the New Age, allow us to recover the spiritual aura of Christ by purging it of any connection with traditional and ecclesiastical Christianity.

In short, anti-Catholicism is the source of the entire New Age approach and is therefore part of a dynamic that began long before the modern era. Jesus is accepted, but the Church is not, which is supposed to have distorted his message for purposes of power and domination. This acceptance of Jesus does not include recognition of his divinity, his incarnation with his death on the Cross and resurrection, and his participation in the Trinity. Jesus is a teacher, a prophet, a Buddha, an enlightened one, a great sage... in short, an exceptional man, but only a man. The time has finally come to know the true message of Jesus, falsified by the Church, and transmitted to a chosen human being (founder of a group, teacher, guru) to whom invisible beings chosen from the spiritual hierarchy reveal it through mediumship (channeling). This knowledge is then passed on to disciples or followers through a series of initiations that allow them to ascend in the group's hierarchy and access the highest secrets. This knowledge would prepare a universal religion.

Evidently, each group, with its prophet, ultimately declares itself the chosen one of the heavenly hierarchies to transmit the true doctrine. Competition is fierce, and these various groups denigrate each other for sharing the same claim to the "final revelation." Thus, all these schools or currents argue among themselves, split off, generating new schools and branches, denounce each other, and are eager to detect false prophets, false transmissions, falsifications of the original message<sup>2</sup>, unwittingly renewing the criticisms leveled against Christianity.

Indeed, is the reincarnated Messiah Krishnamurti (according to Anne Besant) or Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière (according to the GFU)?

We will also note how these different "masters" are fond of honors, diplomas, medals, pompous titles, pseudonyms with spiritual or aristocratic connotations, frequenting personalities from the entertainment industry, politics, and intellectuals. As an illustration, Circular XXXVII of March 21, 1960, of the Great Universal Fraternity details the official presentation of its founder, Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière, who was 45 years old at the time, and which includes no fewer than 64 references, including five doctorates (in Science, Social Sciences, Psychology, Philosophy, and Theology), and countless medals, diplomas, and titles from multiple institutions, from Commander of the Temple of the Order of the Rose and Cross of the New Jerusalem to Knight Spurred of the Lordly Order of Lili of Sarnia. Serge Raynaud, who does not actually have a doctorate, has ennobled himself by adding to his surname "de la Ferrière", the name of a village in France where he is originally from, but which never had the castle where he claimed to have been born<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, the New Age approach returns to the ancient currents of Gnosis. Gnosticism is the doctrine that affirms that accessing certain hidden knowledge brings salvation to the human being. This would then result from one's own effort to acquire this esoteric knowledge through successive initiations.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, the site <https://sites.google.com/site/maitresaintgermain/> insists on the authenticity of Master Germain's transmission by specifying in its header: "Master Saint Germain, the true one" and further specifies: "Below are links to books on the authentic original Teaching of Master Saint Germain on the Victory of the Ascension in this existence as He gave it, in its purity of origin, to Godfré Ray King and Lotus Ray King. (Beware of unauthorized texts and translations found everywhere on the Internet...)" (*the underlining is ours*).

<sup>3</sup> Louise Baudin, *Los Falsos Maestros, Mi Vida con Serge Raynaud de la Ferrière*. Caracas: Editores Individuales; 1991, pp. 258-261.

This self-knowledge easily leads to self-referentiality, another characteristic of the New Age, as illustrated by the presentation of a typical book of this movement:

*"The Root of the Messiah leads one to discover within oneself the little Messiah whom, in some way, according to the author, we all carry within." "At the depths of the human mind lies the essential wisdom of the great solitary thinker of Persian origin called Zoroaster, also known as Zarathustra. There are many writings about this important figure, but not all references are faithful to his story. Those who have proven to be more dedicated to scrutinizing their backgrounds indicate that Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity and Islam, to name the most well-known religions, are based on Zoroaster"<sup>4</sup>.*

Gnosticism is primarily characterized by the belief that humans are divine souls imprisoned in a material world created by an evil god (the demiurge). To its followers, Gnosticism promised secret knowledge of the divine realm. Sparks or seeds of the divine Being (aeons) fell from this transcendent realm into the material universe, which is prey to evil, and became imprisoned in human bodies. Awakened by this knowledge, the divine element in humanity can return to its normal place, the transcendent celestial realm. Gnostics equated the god of Evil with the God of the Old Testament, which they interpreted as a record of this god's efforts to keep humanity in ignorance and in the material world and to punish its attempts to appropriate knowledge. The doctrine that the body and the material world are evil led certain sects to renounce marriage and procreation and to engage in onanistic practices.

Other Gnostics claimed that because their souls were totally alienated from this world, whatever they did had no consequences. Indeed, sometimes they even tried to "exhaust evil" by indulging in it to the very end. This was the case with the Khlysts sect, to which Rasputin supposedly belonged. Its members believed they could overcome sin with sin. Khlysts viewed debauchery as a kind of purifying step on the path to redemption. They rejected Scripture and the veneration of saints and believed in direct communication with the Holy Spirit, incarnated in all<sup>5</sup>.

In the Russian context, this fundamentally Gnostic path rejected Christ as represented by the Orthodox Church and therefore rejected its clergy, claiming to be the heir to esoteric practices that would have belonged to the early Russian Orthodox Church and that would have persisted deep into the Russian countryside, including flagellation, accompanied by ritual trances that sometimes took on orgiastic aspects.

Catharism ("pure" in Greek) is a Gnostic movement of the same order that took various forms over the centuries and was applied to the "Albigians" during their confrontation with Catholic orthodoxy in the 12th century. In this case too, the Cathars considered themselves the only true disciples of the apostles and sought to adopt the model of life, rites and sacraments of the first Christian communities. For the Perfects, as they called themselves, "*any act of the flesh indefinitely delayed salvation*"<sup>6</sup>, "*since God is absent from this world, God is confused with the spiritual world and the material world is seen as evil. The Cathar not only must not participate in this material world by having*

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<sup>4</sup> Presentation on the cover of the book "La Raíz del Mesías, Relato de Amor", Néstor Molina, 1996, Plaza y Valdés ed, Mexico.

<sup>5</sup> See Wikipedia "Khlysts".

<sup>6</sup> René Nelli, La vie quotidienne des Cathares du Languedoc au xiii<sup>e</sup> siècle, Hachette, 1969.

*children, which for him would be equivalent to imprisoning a soul in a body created by the principle of Evil, but the body and sexual pleasure are also evil: sexuality is an impurity*"<sup>7</sup>.

Modern Gnosticism, or neo-Gnosticism, includes a variety of groups that partially adopt the philosophy of the early Gnostic sects of the 2nd and 3rd centuries (based on information contained in Gnostic codices such as the Askew Codex<sup>8</sup> and the texts of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic Library) and combine them with different practices and concepts from various religions, cultures, Hermetic initiatory groups (Freemasons and Rosicrucians), and writings by Western occult authors.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, several occult authors revived ancient Gnostic postulates and fostered the development of various neo-Gnostic groups. Among these authors are figures such as the controversial occultist Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) founder of the "Universal Gnostic Church" and the philosophy of "Thelema", Arnold Krumm-Heller (1876-1949), German occultist, doctor and soldier, practicing Freemason and founder of the ancient Rosicrucian Brotherhood, and the Colombian Manuel Gómez Rodríguez (1917-1977) who used the pseudonym "Samael Aun Weor", usually shortened to Samael, and was the founder of the Universal Christian Gnostic Movement<sup>9</sup>.

Note also that the notion of initiatory knowledge by degrees imposes a hierarchical and therefore elitist system. There are those who know... and those who don't. This elective pattern is capable of reinforcing narcissism and inflating the ego. We are here at the antipodes of Jesus' statement in prayer to his Father: "*What you have hidden from the wise and learned, you have revealed to little ones*" (Matthew 11:25-27).

## **Conclusion**

The Western world is called to renounce its own modern magical thinking in order to achieve a true re-enchantment of the world that is neither artificial nor dangerous. Desecration in the context of the end of an era, or epoch of humanity, produces a kind of spiritualism disguised as materialism and superstitious science (scientism). By ignoring or denying the reality of evil spirits and their possible intervention in human life, false spiritualities are developed with two mirror "heresies": angelism (evacuation of the body, despised) or animalism or savagery (desecration of the body, idolized).

The "angelic" New Age should reconsider the philosopher Blaise Pascal's warning: "*Man is neither angel nor beast, and misfortune desires that whoever wishes to be an angel, becomes a beast*"<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Michel Roquebert, « Mouvement et doctrine cathares. L'exemplarité de Montségur (1204-1244) », dans Gabriel Audisio, Religion et exclusion (xiie – xviiiè siècles), Aix-en-Provence, Presses universitaires de Provence, 2001, p 41-48.

<sup>8</sup> The Askew Codex, or Pistis Sophia, is a Gnostic text discovered in 1773. It was possibly written in the 2nd century. This text is considered the Bible of modern Gnostic groups, in a version interpreted and "revealed" by Samael Aun Weor.

<sup>9</sup> "*Gnosis de Samael: Un lobo negro vestido de oveja, un artículo para mostrar la verdad oculta detrás de la doctrina gnóstica de Samael Aun Weor*", 2020, critical article written in Spanish by a former follower of this sect, see link: [https://takiwasi.com/docs/arti\\_esp/verdad-oculta-gnosis-samael.pdf](https://takiwasi.com/docs/arti_esp/verdad-oculta-gnosis-samael.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Blaise Pascal/ Pensées et opuscules (Br, 358).