

THE ORIGINS OF 'NEW AGE' RELIGION BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS*

STEVEN SUTCLIFFE

After the war of 1914–18, wherever I went, no matter whether in England, on the Continent, in America or the far East, conversation was likely to turn to supernatural subjects. It looked as though many people were feeling that their daily lives were only an illusion, and that somehow there must somewhere be a greater reality. (Landau 1935:4)

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 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. The period is therefore historically determinative of powerful currents in recent Anglophone religious history.¹ It is marked on the whole by a conservative Christian establishment, particularly in the UK (Wilkinson 1978; Mews 1994) but also, according to Winter (1998), in Europe more widely, where denominations tended to cope with reactions to the carnage of the western front through appeal to the authority of tradition. But there was also a more diffuse reaction to the perceived stasis of 'organised religion'—a phrase increasingly used—in the shape of re-invigorated demand for new religious sources and resources. A 'quest culture' emerged, structured by the role of the 'seeker', the social institution of 'seekership', a supply of exotic religious authorities, and a new concern with 'mystical' experiences and 'occult' exploration. Within this culture, seekers pursued a distinctively modern, psychologised, 'post-Protestant' form of religion, which they increasingly referred to as 'spirituality' and set over against dominant traditions. In addition to

* This chapter develops material first presented in Sutcliffe (2003:31–54), and is published with the permission of Routledge.

¹ This chapter is confined to 'new age' religion. It is based largely on anglophone sources and on UK evidence, and should be supplemented by other contextualised histories.

the quest culture of middle and upper class social elites, a more popular religious culture consolidated around astrology, divination, healing and positive thinking. Hence the ‘non-official’ religion of the interwar period, like religious formations generally, was heterogeneous, affected by class, gender, ethnicity and other social variables and marked by internal debates over nomenclature and interpretation. As a cluster of self-consciously ‘alternative’ religious attitudes in the face of both establishment Christianity and secular culture, non-official religion was expressed pre-eminently as *popular* religion: that is, as a set of informal, non-professional practices, legitimated by self-elected ‘lay’ authorities, and disseminated in *ad hoc* networks whose nodes rarely grew beyond the size of a small group.

A ‘quest culture’, both elite and popular, was not entirely new. The Edwardian period (1901–10) had been exposed to the ‘magickal’ exploits of Aleister Crowley (1875–1947), in addition to witnessing what one commentator called a “rising psychic tide” of “enthusiasm, trance and ecstasies” promoted by various “seers and soothsayers and prophets” (Mead 1913:236). Spiritualists and Theosophists had fashioned the skeleton of a post-Protestant cosmology in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its expressions of ‘occult’ and ‘spiritual’ religion were predicated on the role of the practitioner as a quasi-scientific ‘experimenter’, and of religious practice as a ‘search for truth’ in a re-sacralised but recondite cosmos. This existing culture of non-official religious experimentation acquired salience under the intense conditions of the interwar period, in which the utopian idea of a ‘new age’ emerged as a common unit of currency across economic, political, cultural and religious domains.

As I have argued in detail elsewhere (Sutcliffe 2003), the so-called ‘new age movement’ of the later twentieth century can be traced back, through networks of use and exchange of the emblem ‘new age’, to a widespread interwar debate amongst intellectuals and popular ‘experts’ alike on the shape of the coming ‘new order’, ‘era’ or ‘epoch’. A distinctive element in this debate, especially in its ‘religious’ or ‘spiritual’ aspects, is the discourse on ‘new age’. While this was already in use in certain Theosophical sources, it acquired a particular form in the writings of a Theosophical Christian, Alice Bailey, in the 1930s; the later connotations of ‘new age’ very largely derive from this context and cannot be reliably reconstructed before the interwar period. The partial exception, inviting further detailed research, is the Order of the Star in the East (OSE), a Theosophical organisation set up in 1911 to foster messianic interpretation of, and devotion to, its central figure,

Jiddu Krishnamurti. Dixon writes that the OSE's "expectation of a new race and a new Messiah produced a millennialist anticipation of a New Age" (Dixon 2001:139). But while boasting at its peak in the 1920s an impressive membership—30,000, according to Campbell (1980:128)—the OSE was formally dissolved in 1929 by its leader, Krishnamurti. It therefore lasted only 18 years and its influence beyond 1929 has been negligible, even amongst Theosophists, many of whom have looked askance on its messianism, and favoured Krishnamurti's own radical 'break' with the cult of 'world teacher', which the OSE had created around his personality.² In contrast, in 1932 Alice Bailey began to produce a distinctive 'new age' discourse that was independent of a messianic leader, yet succeeded in tapping into a generalised eschatological sensitivity—of which interwar discourses provide manifold examples. The lines of descent of Bailey's 'new age' discourse amongst particular user groups in the 1940s and 1950s can be traced into the 1960s and 1970s; in some cases, especially in connection with her teaching organisation, the Arcane School (see below), into the present period.

Of course, there had also been scattered modern use of either the trope 'new age', or a broadly utopian or millennialist surrogate, before the period in question, and independently of Theosophy: for example, Crowley's claim that his 'magick' had inaugurated a 'new aeon' in 1904, or William Blake's use of the phrase 'new age' in the preface to his 1804 poem 'Milton' (Hanegraaff 1996:95, footnote 6). But such uses were relatively isolated and idiosyncratic, with little acculturating power. It might also be argued that the apocalyptic fervour of marginal social groups has periodically generated not dissimilar popular millenarianisms (Cohn 1957; Harrison 1979). However, apart from the obvious difficulties of comparing pre-industrial and post-industrial historical contexts, these groups differ markedly in social status from contemporary 'new age' religion. The "holistic milieu" mapped (in small-town England) by Heelas and Woodhead (2005), for example, is typically a "revolt of the unoppressed", to appropriate Musgrove's (1974:19) felicitous characterisation of post-1960s counterculture, in marked contrast to the plebeian character of the popular millenarianisms reconstructed by Cohn and Harrison.

However, the fact that the connotations of the trope 'new age'

² For a vivid memoir of the 'spiritual ferment' of the OSE between 1911 and 1929, see Lutyens (1957), and for a detailed cultural history, see Dixon (2001); for Theosophical responses to OSE messianism and its aftermath, see Schuller (1997).

permeate across institutional and audience divides qualifies dogmatic identification of Alice Bailey as its unique author. Interwar connotations include Modernist metanarratives on a ‘new order’ in art and aesthetics, the folk recovery of a resacralised, animist cosmos in the face of a culture of death and mourning (Winter 1998) and—most directly—a utopian rhetoric, across ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ boundaries, of a new world of material and emotional security to offset past horrors (and future anxieties). In short, the phrase ‘new age’ evokes the manifold uncertainties, but also possibilities, of the moment. And that moment, while redolent of the interwar period, is not confined by it. Simply put, as Heelas (1996:15) points out, the term ‘new age’ has been widely used in modern economic, political and cultural discourses alongside “similar formulations such as ‘new times’, ‘new era’ or ‘new world’ ... to convey the idea that a significantly better way of life is dawning.”

Evidently, the multiple cultural referents and historical ‘portability’ of the trope entail that eschatological questions of whether the ‘new age’ will be secular or religious, (human) made or (divinely) revealed, and when exactly it will ‘come’ (if not already ‘here’), typically remain open. Such ambiguity, even nonfalsifiability—for how can a ‘new age’ be conclusively disproved?—only augments the trope’s richly connotative power. Nevertheless, there are cumulative grounds for locating the origins of ‘new age’ religion in the interwar period, and in the 1930s in particular, since we find here both a distinctive *context* and a distinctive *discourse*. In what follows I map some principal currents in the non-official religious formations of the period in which I then locate Alice Bailey’s authoritative discourse on the coming ‘new age’. I argue that an increasingly self-conscious constituency of non-official religious practitioners formed the prime audience, by the 1930s, for Bailey’s modernist yet ambiguous utopian trope. In due course, via circuitous but traceable routes, these seekers transmitted it to the post-World-War-Two ‘baby-boom’ generation.

Context: Conflict and Reconstruction

The often-repeated calling for a ‘New Age’, heard both before and after the war, can refer either to a practically conceived plan for social betterment, or to a religious revelation. (Webb 1976:28)

In the 1930s, Europeans had barely recovered from the so-called ‘Great War’ of 1914–18, which cost Britain 800,000 lives (more than half

under the age of thirty), France more than a million and a half, and Germany nearly two million, before international conflict was again rearing its head (Hobsbawm 1995:26). The human casualties, material damage, political instability, territorial extension and psychological impact of this first 'world' war—supposedly “the war that will end war”, according to H.G. Wells in 1915 (Wilkinson 1978:188)—was on a scale and intensity hitherto unknown. “Never again” (Plowman 1936:1ff) became the motto.

But fresh anxieties followed the Armistice. The economic 'slump' of 1929–34 generated unemployment on an unprecedented scale in the USA, Germany and the UK. Revolution in Tzarist Russia in 1917 vanquished the *ancien régime* in favour of an unprecedented 'Union of Soviet Socialist Republics', or USSR. A wave of economic-political projects ensued, from Lenin's New Economic Policy (1921) and Stalin's Five-Year-Plans (1928 onwards), to Roosevelt's 'New Deal' in the USA (1933), and from varieties of Fascism in Mussolini's Italy, Franco's Spain and Hitler's Germany, to proposals for the radical economics of Social Credit in Canada and the UK. Many in particular were sympathetic to the Fascists' intoxicating mix of strong leadership, planned corporate economy and national-cultural renewal. A rhetoric of 'world crisis' attended this combustible mix of anxiety and excitement. Its futurist thrust and brittle edge is vividly captured in 1933 by the popular English philosopher and broadcaster, C.E.M. Joad:

The nineteenth century believed in progress, yet, believing also that it knew the main lines upon which progress would proceed, it was little interested in what was to come... Our interest [is] in what is to come, which expresses itself in a constant stream of books and pamphlets on every possible aspect of the future... This looking forward is, I suggest, an outcome of the felt uncertainties of the present. We have come, we feel, to a definite break in the tradition of our civilisation. The nineteenth century was the end of an epoch; we, it is increasingly evident, are at the beginning of another. (Joad 1933:23–4)

But what Joad called the “felt uncertainties of the present” increasingly included not only hopes for a 'better future', but awareness of the potential for renewed world conflict. As Hobsbawm (1995:35) puts it, by the 1930s “a new world war was not only predictable, but routinely predicted.”

One response to the pressure of these conditions was to embrace innovation for innovation's sake. Reconstructing the impact of the 'Great War' on formations of modernity, Eksteins (1990:16) writes of a “preoccupation with speed, newness, transience, and inwardness—with

life lived, as the jargon puts it, ‘in the fast lane’”. This shock of the new manifested in popular and elite cultures alike. The 1920s was popularly dubbed the ‘jazz age’—for example, in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922)—named after a new form of dance music³. In ‘high’ art, Dada and Surrealism propagated semiotic play: Marcel Duchamp displayed a signed urinal in 1917, and René Magritte, in his painting *L’usage de la parole* (1928–9), depicted a smoker’s pipe infuriatingly entitled “ceci n’est pas une pipe” (“this is not a pipe”).

A useful index of tensions between new aesthetic, cultural and political orders is the fate of A.R. Orage (1873–1934), a gifted but restless literary editor influenced by Theosophy and Nietzsche, who with Holbrook Jackson took over a literary journal entitled *The New Age* in 1907 and turned it into an idiosyncratic organ of contemporary ideas. Their first issue contained an editorial statement, which Webb (1980:206) describes as a “hymn to the Life Force”. Acknowledging the existence of a “universal will of life”, the editors write that their journal’s remit will henceforth be to “co-operate with the purposes of life” and the forces of “the new contemplative and imaginative order”.

Orage published many influential voices in *The New Age*—literary, economic and political (Mairet 1936; Martin 1967). But in 1922 he abruptly renounced his editorship and moved to a religious community of international émigrés near Paris under the direction of G.I. Gurdjieff, one of many independent gurus proselytising in Europe in the wake of the 1914–18 conflict. The psychological turmoil of many interwar intellectuals who tried to reconcile socio-economic and religious utopias is encapsulated in Orage’s introspective remarks on his own career change: “It would be saying too much to affirm... that I resigned from the *New Age* and from active participation in social reform in order to find God. I only wish that my motives could be as clearly conscious as that would imply.” (Mairet 1936:90)

In the political realm, revulsion at the carnage of the western front, coupled with internationalist and co-operativist aspirations, were brought together under the rubric of the League of Nations, set up in 1919 to broker a fragile peace. Its political successes were limited: it had

³ The etymology of ‘jazz’ is uncertain—one derivation is from Black American vernacular for sexual intercourse. In another use, by c1935, ‘jazzy’ meant ‘brightly-coloured’, ‘loud’.

neither sufficient commitment from its constituent states, nor recognised international jurisdiction, to enforce its recommendations. Perhaps more significant was the idealistic, even utopian, capital invested in the League. For example, the popular writer H.G. Wells (1866–1946) was a supporter of the League, and he expounded visions of social progress and technological innovation in books like *Men Like Gods* (1922), *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1931) and *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933). Like other European utopian/dystopian narratives of the interwar period,⁴ Wells' writings were preoccupied with the impact of new economic, cultural and political orders. *The Shape of Things to Come* paints an epic vision of the future (from 1929 to 2106) in which a new world war causes sustained global chaos. A group of intellectuals then instigates a world state. Following a thirty year plan and a world council, a utopian settlement is finally achieved. *The Shape of Things to Come* epitomises pronounced trends in 1930s attitudes. The 'world council' and related totalistic solutions envisaged by Wells had clear affinities with the aspirations of the League of Nations and reflected key obsessions of the 1930s: the need for social and economic planning, the role of 'strong' individuals and cadres to take decisions in the face of the paralysing stasis of 'mass society', and a desire to create an international basis for the rule of law. In *The Open Conspiracy: Blue Prints for World Revolution* (1929), Wells proposed a model of a diffuse network⁵ of thinkers and activists working towards practical realisation of a 'world state'. In an address to Young Liberals in Oxford in 1932, Wells went further, calling for a 'liberal fascism' (Coupland 2000) by which he meant the strategic use of 'fascist' means—that is, leadership by an elite, such as the airmen and the intellectuals represented in *The Shape of Things to Come*—to realise 'liberal' ends of economic abundance and political stability. In the didactic closing sentences of *The Shape of Things to Come*:

⁴ In the UK, see E.M. Forster, *The Machine Stops* (1928), A. Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932), Lord Samuel, *An Unknown Land* (1942; "planned and largely written before the war"); in continental Europe, see E. Zamyatin, *We* (1920) and H. Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* (1945). For a convenient summary of interwar English utopias, see Morton (1978: chapter 7); for a critique of H.G. Wells' authoritarian utopianism, see Carey (1989:118–151).

⁵ Compare in the context of 'new age' religion Alice Bailey's new group of world servers (see below) and Marilyn Ferguson's post-1960s model of an Aquarian conspiracy (Ferguson 1982).

[H]istory must... continue to be a string of accidents with an increasingly disastrous trend, until a comprehensive faith in a modernised World-State... takes hold of the human imagination. When the existing governments and ruling theories of life, the decaying religious and the decaying political forms of to-day, have sufficiently lost prestige through failure and catastrophe, then... will world-wide reconstruction be possible. And it must needs be the work, first of all, of an aggressive order of religiously devoted men and women who will try out and establish and impose a new pattern of living upon our race. (Wells 1974/1933:493)⁶

A rather different, but equally idealistic, response to contemporary European uncertainties came from the Pacifist movement in the 1930s. It can be argued that interwar pacifism was modelled upon a similar notion of the morally heroic individual differentiating herself from within a ‘mass’ consciousness, in order to combine with like-minded others in exemplary group witness and practice. The pacifist ‘new order’, however, would be built on elective ethical repudiation of war. In October 1934 the Anglican clergyman ‘Dick’ Sheppard (1880–1937) wrote an open letter to British newspapers requesting sympathisers to send him pledges of support for a resolution that “we renounce war and never again, directly or indirectly, will we support or sanction another” (Ceadal 1980:177). Sheppard’s initiative evolved into the Peace Pledge Union in 1936; by October 1937 it had gathered 120,000 pacifist pledges (Ceadal 1987:91). High-profile supporters including Aldous Huxley, Vera Brittain, John Middleton Murry and Bertrand Russell (*ibid.*). But rational individualism and religious conscience were sometimes uneasy partners in the pacifist coalition. For example, Max Plowman (1884–1941) became a conscientious objector after surviving the Battle of the Somme, and was later secretary for the Peace Pledge Union. But unlike Bertrand Russell and other secular radicals, his model of pacifism was predicated upon the renewal of a vitalistic, subjective experience of religion. “New religion will only come about through the self-examination of him who desires it,” he wrote in an article called “The Test of Religion” in 1937, since “the recovery of vital religion lies at the heart of every insurgent problem of modern life” (Plowman 1942:59). In *The Faith called Pacifism* (Plowman 1936)

⁶ For a history of the (qualified) acculturation of Fascist values and ideas in the UK between the wars, such as (for a time) influenced Wells and (many) others, see Pugh (2006).

he argued that pacifism should be based upon a “religious attitude... in which the individual himself accepts the burden of the incarnation of new value” (ibid.:40). The pacifist “faith”—his choice of word is significant—required “conversion” (ibid.:44) to a position which held “a religious reverence for the human spirit” and “the sacredness of human consciousness” (ibid.:48). The practical goal of pacifism would be a “solid phalanx of people”—admittedly “numerically negligible”—which would nevertheless “provide a nucleus for the new way of life which man must find or perish” (ibid.:58).

The idealistic initiatives of Orage, Wells, Plowman and others came against the backdrop of substantial cultural and political change. This included the election of the first Labour government in Britain in 1924 and full suffrage for women in 1928. And despite popular images of a period mired in widespread unemployment—defined by economic ‘slump’ and ‘Great Depression’—and in muddled, even cowardly ‘appeasement’ of Nazi Germany, there were material gains, especially for middle-class consumers. Stevenson and Cook argue that:

alongside the pictures of dole queues and hunger marches must be placed those of another Britain, of new industries, prosperous suburbs and a rising standard of living... For many salaried people affluence began not in the 1950s but in the thirties, when it became possible for an average salaried person to buy his own house, usually on a mortgage, run a car, and begin to afford a range of consumer durables and household goods hitherto considered quite out of reach. (Stevenson & Cook 1994:11, 13)

In this process of embourgeoisement, house building and home ownership expanded, as did travel by road and rail. Vigorous circulation of mail—four items were posted weekly by each British adult—signals an emergent mass communication culture. The publishing boom included intense newspaper circulation battles, paperbacks, book clubs and library schemes. Weekly cinema audiences in the mid-1930s averaged nearly twenty million (Thorpe 1992:107), and most homes had a wireless. This new popular consumer culture vied for attention with the totalistic solutions of utopian thinkers and technocratic planners, encouraging the pursuit of richly differentiated yet volatile subjectivities in everyday life. Religion was no exception.

Non-Official Religion: 'Occultism' and 'Spirituality' in Elite and Popular Culture

The British soldier has certainly got religion; I am not so sure, however, that he has got Christianity. (Army chaplain in 1917, cited in Winter 1998:64)

Like thousands of other ministers and clergy, I had glibly uttered the second-hand truths and consolations of religion. But now I learnt what no college or university could possibly have taught me: *that in religion second-hand truth is futile*. (Davies 1961:107)

The interwar years are a key period in the development of non-official religion in twentieth century Anglo-American culture. In this section I map expressions of non-official religion, which bolstered the emergence of a self-conscious constituency of 'seekers' practising a hybrid, popular, post-protestant form of religion increasingly called 'spirituality'. Shaped by improvements in communication and the migration of populations, this constituency functions as a prime interpretive community to receive Alice Bailey's seminal 'new age' message in the 1930s. 'Mysticism', preferably 'comparative', was one point of interest for seekers, evinced by the popularity of Evelyn Underhill's survey, *Mysticism* (Underhill 1911), which by 1930 had gone through twelve editions. By then it was 'fashionable to regard oneself both as a 'Mystic' and a 'Modernist', as the historian of modern Catholic heterodoxy, Peter Anson (1964:343), remarks. Here I focus on the related field of 'occultism', organised around the notion of 'spiritual development' (Webb 1976:15). Occultism's introspective psychology, closely related to the interests of 'mysticism', combined with belief in a re-enchanted, animist cosmology to form a receptive loam for Bailey's prophecies of a 'new age'.

Theosophy and Spiritualism are premier organisational indices of this occult worldview in the period. These class-differentiated, competing ideologies were then at the height of their twentieth century membership and influence. The aestheticised dispositions in the Theosophical movement, originating in the work of the Theosophical Society under Blavatsky and Olcott from 1875 (Campbell 1980), were bound up with a series of progressive political causes from women's suffrage to Indian independence. "To be a Theosophist," recalls one female practitioner, "you had to take part in all the big problems and questions that were going on around you in society" (Akhtar & Humphries 1999:19). In Webb's (1976:46) gloss, "Theosophy was Progressively respectable;

often Christianity was not.” Drawing eclectically and strategically upon Hindu and Buddhist sources, Theosophy proposed a multi-layered cosmos within which humankind could explore its ‘occult’ or ‘hidden’ potential. The main section of the Theosophical Society, based in India, reached a membership peak in 1929 of some 45,000 worldwide (Campbell 1980:128). The movement also supplied a *lingua franca* for non-aligned ‘occultists’, evident in the clusters of ideas, beliefs and practices eagerly discussed in the pages of British journals like *The Quest* and *The Occult Review*. The parent Theosophical Society also generated several influential schismatic movements, including Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophical Society in Germany in 1913 and Alice Bailey’s Lucis Trust in the USA in 1922 (the future matrix of ‘new age’ discourse); and it strongly coloured the Liberal Catholic Church, a secession within the Old Catholic Church, from 1918 (Anson 1964:342–67).

Theosophy also influenced the development of Buddhism in England: the Buddhist Lodge of the Theosophical Society was set up in 1924 by the English Buddhist convert, T. Christmas Humphreys (1901–83). Originally a “confirmed and deeply practising Christian” (Humphreys 1978:31), his commitment was shaken by his brother’s death on the western front. Before embracing Buddhism, Humphreys “tried available religions”, including Roman Catholicism, the Religious Society of Friends and the local Theosophical Lodge (*ibid.*:38–43). His occult approach to Buddhism was not unique: Alan Watts (1915–73), a prolific populariser of ‘oriental’ religion and later a hero of the ‘Beat’ movement in the USA, partly learnt his trade as editor, from 1936, of the Buddhist Lodge’s journal *Buddhism in England* (later renamed *The Middle Way*). But Watts was also contributing articles to publications like the *Occult Review*, *The Modern Mystic* and *New Britain* (Snelling et al. 1988:13), and he frequented Watkins’ bookshop in central London, where the founder’s son served as Watts’s “trusted adviser” on “the various gurus, pandits, and psychotherapists then flourishing in London” (Watts 1973:107). Through the careers in the occult milieu of figures like Humphreys and Watts, the new Buddhist Lodge reflected wider currents in non-official interwar religion.⁷

⁷ A Theosophical flavour to Anglophone Buddhism is one outcome, glimpsed in Humphreys’ eccentric exposition of the Buddhist doctrine of *anatta*/no-self, in which he postulates a “greater Self” that can be accessed beyond the perishable everyday ego; see also the plates of Blavatsky and other Theosophists in Humphreys (1978), and of Olcott, co-founder of the Theosophical Society, in Humphreys’ influential Pelican paperback, *Buddhism* (1951).

Theosophy partly defined itself over and against a perceived ‘vulgar’ search for material proofs of survival after death such as defined the more plebian Spiritualist community, an equally prominent star in the non-official religious constellation (Oppenheim 1985; Barrow 1986). Within the trenches of the 1914–18 war “a host of spiritualist images, stories, and legends proliferated... about the dead... [and] about magical forces affecting the living” (Winter 1998:65). Interest in Spiritualism was boosted by the post-war culture of bereavement, when war memorials quickly became “part of the landscape” (ibid.:79) and pilgrimages were organised to war cemeteries at Ypres and Verdun (ibid.:52). In the late 1920s there were around one quarter of a million practising Spiritualists and some two thousand Spiritualist societies in the UK alone, according to Nelson (1969:161). Unlike the middle and upper class affinities of Theosophy, Spiritualism was favoured by working class and lower-middle-class communities. Like Theosophy, however, interwar Spiritualism was a revival rather than an innovation: a revisionist consolidation of existing trends in Victorian and Edwardian occult cosmology.

Theosophy and Spiritualism therefore provided tangible institutional bases for the acculturation of occult cosmology in twentieth century Anglo-American society. Despite differences and some rivalry, both movements expounded the recondite, magical powers of the individual in an expanded cosmos. And they had affinities with existing folk beliefs: as Hazelgrove (2000:23) puts it, interwar Spiritualism found reinforcement in “a variety of fugitive and fragmented supernaturalisms buried in modernity”. Astrology in the form of the ‘horoscope’ was one popular face of folk belief: its stellar blueprints challenged traditional Christian theodicy in the uncertain moral order, which followed the 1914–18 war. R.H. Naylor cast the first UK newspaper horoscope in the *Sunday Express* for the newly-born Princess Margaret in 1930; a regular column followed in the *Daily Express* in 1931.

There were inevitably many levels of engagement with astrology and related practices, from the recreational to the psychotherapeutic. In 1935 the *Daily Express* published a compendium called *The Book of Fortune-Telling: How to Tell Character and the Future by Palmistry, Cards, Numbers, Phrenology, Handwriting, Dreams, Astrology, Etc.* (Daily Express 1935). The volume promised the reader that “you are quite sure of being in demand at all parties and gatherings if you can put on a mysterious air and read the future!” (ibid.:5). Psychological diagnosis and historical forecasting were more respectable applications of astrology, the former vigorously defended by the Theosophical astrologers ‘Sephariel’ and

'Leo', by Alice Bailey in her posthumous *Esoteric Astrology* (1951), and by the Swiss psychologist C.G. Jung, who studied astrology and *I Ching* extensively in the period (Main 1997:11–14). Astrology could span both everyday concerns of love and happiness and theories of meaningful coincidence and hidden significance. The inscrutable workings of Fate were the common denominators. As one member of a London astrological society in the 1930s recalled, “[P]eople were feeling the need for additional information to help them plan their lives. It gave clues that you got nowhere else” (Akhtar & Humphries 1999:112).

In sum, the charismatic but hidden powers of the individual in a re-animated cosmos were the common features of non-official religion in the interwar period. Theosophy and Spiritualism helped to popularise an ideology of ‘spiritual development’ (Webb, op. cit.) in the face of what H.G. Wells called, “the present wide discredit of organised religions” (Wells 1933:24). The preferred religious role was no longer ‘member’, ‘congregant’ or ‘communicant’, but ‘seeker’.

Quest Culture

Vast numbers of thoughtful and even spiritual people are turning away from ‘organised religion’ and looking in other directions for a sure foundation upon which to build their lives. (Baker-Beall 1932:300)

I was asking myself constantly the same questions that most younger people around me seemed to be asking themselves ... Was our earthly life a complete whole or was it merely a stage in a much longer journey? Was the belief in *karma* and in reincarnation more satisfactory than that in the Paradise and Purgatory of the Christian Church? ... Ought we to follow the conventional ethics of our day or try to discover ethics that might have a more spiritual significance? (Landau 1935:31)

An important influence on interwar occultism was the influx of various ‘eastern’ and ‘oriental’ gurus—to use the colonialist vocabulary of their audiences—to urban centres like Paris, London and New York. This was at least a ‘second wave’ of modern migration into Anglophone societies, following the pioneering visits of Vivekananda, Soyen Shaku and others to the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893. Amongst this new wave were the Indians Jiddu Krishnamurti, Mohandas Gandhi and Meher Baba, celebrated by their followers as

modern *mahatmas* (literally, ‘great souls’). Each in his way—as politician or messiah—illustrated counter-hegemonic forces unsettling European colonial establishments, both religious and political. Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986) was leader of the Order of the Star in the East, which—as noted above—commanded the majority of the 45,000 membership of the wider Theosophical movement in 1929 (Campbell 1980:128). As one woman remembered Krishnamurti then, “He was young, he spoke with fervour and he spoke with belief . . . He was to us a world teacher, the new Messiah” (Akhtar & Humphries 1999:21). In 1931, Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948) visited London to negotiate on Indian constitutional reform. He made a strong impression in cinema newsreels and newspaper photography by wearing sandals and homespun clothing, promulgating a philosophy of *satyagraha* (non-violent direct action) and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and choosing to stay in London’s impoverished East End.

Gandhi was followed in 1932 by Merwan Shehiar Irani, or ‘Meher Baba’ (1894–1969; literally, ‘Compassionate Father’). Meher Baba came from a Zoroastrian background. He took a vow of silence in 1925, claiming to be the *avatar* for the present age, just like Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and Muhammad had been in their time and place. His messianic teachings are recorded in Paul Brunton’s *A Search in Secret India* (1951/1934). Brunton (1898–1981), born Raphael Hurst, was a journalist who published a series of books from the 1930s onwards: titles such as *The Secret Path* (1935, subtitled ‘A Technique of Spiritual Self-Discovery for the Modern World’) and *A Search in Secret Egypt* (1936) indicate Brunton’s interests in ‘spiritual development’ and his target audience of ‘seekers’. In 1930 Brunton visited Meher Baba at his colony near Ahmednagar, shortly before his departure for Europe. The guru tells Brunton he has a “world-wide message” of “universal spiritual belief” to deliver: “As Jesus came to impart spirituality to a materialistic age, so have I come to impart a spiritual push to present-day mankind” (Brunton 1951:34). Apocalypse is forecast: “I shall break my silence and deliver my message only when there is chaos and confusion everywhere, for then I shall be most needed . . . when both East and West are aflame with war” (ibid.:35). Fortunately, however, global conflict will be short-lived: international acceptance of Meher Baba as messiah will restore world peace. “A long era of unique peace, a time of world tranquillity” will ensue, characterised by “universal brotherhood” and “disarmament” (ibid.:36).

Meher Baba’s arrival in London in 1932 brought a spectacular inter-

view on the front page of the *Sunday Express* in which he claimed, "I am one with God. I live in Him like Buddha, like Christ, like Krishna" (Landau 1935:131). Meher Baba thus joined a series of new religious authorities proselytising in the heart of post-Enlightenment Europe. This religious culture was surveyed by journalist Rom Landau, in *God is My Adventure: A Book on Modern Mystics, Masters and Teachers*. Reprinted seven times between 1935 and 1939 alone, Landau's book documents a 'drawing room culture' of intense temperaments and societal *ennui* located at the elite end of the spectrum of non-official religion.

Tellingly, Landau represents his "mystics, masters and teachers" in an exoticised, orientalist mode: in effect, as "wise men from the East". Included in his survey alongside Meher Baba and Krishnamurti are the Greek-Armenian G.I. Gurdjieff; his Russian follower, P.D. Ouspensky; the Austro-Hungarian founder of Anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner; and an Estonian aristocrat, Count Hermann Keyserling, founder of a School of Wisdom in Darmstadt. Not only teachings and practices but ethnic origins are at some variance to the staid British profile of clergy and congregation of the period (Mews 1994) and demonstrate the impact of population displacement and transcultural communication in the wake of the war's globalising force. More familiar to Landau's readers were his Christian representatives: the American-Swiss Frank Buchman, founder of the Oxford Groups movement; and George Jeffreys, Welsh principal of the Elim Pentecostal Church. However, a common appeal to 'lay' authority, concern with 'spiritual experience' and stress on the potency of religion in these evangelical Christian movements aligned them quite closely with the functionalist tendencies of Landau's exotic "wise men": namely, religion's ability to *work*. For example, two key practices of Buchman's Oxford Groups were "group sharing" and "inner guidance", described in a popular exposition of the movement by a writer with the apt pseudonym, 'Layman with a Notebook' (1933:27–35, 65–72).⁸ These were key evangelising methods, designed to spread "God's Plan": that is, "a new world order" (*ibid*:3; in the name of "Christ, the King"). Similarly, George Jeffreys' concern with the everyday healing power of "spiritual rays" in Elim Pentecostal theology (e.g. *Healing Rays*, Jeffreys [1932]) connotes the

⁸ Significant continuities in non-official religion can be seen from the fact that both practices were imported into daily practice in the 'new age' colony at Findhorn, Scotland, from 1962; two of that colony's main founders had been involved with the Oxford Groups' later incarnation as Moral Re-Armament (Sutcliffe 2003:59, 78–9).

kind of empirical occult energies familiar in Theosophically-inspired literature of the period, such as Alice Bailey's five-volume series, *A Treatise on the Seven Rays* (from 1936). "Healing Rays!" exclaims Jeffreys (1932: facing page 1): "We have been conscious of them as we have ministered in His Name, and have come under their vivifying, health-giving and invigorating properties."

Through its popular presentation of new voices, *God is My Adventure* targeted a developing public appetite for mystical, occult and 'vital' religion. By the close of the 1930s, dedicated Spiritualist, psychic and occult book clubs (Nelson 1969:162) were mining the popular readership opened up by Penguin paperbacks in 1935. A steady flow of periodicals came off the presses, including dedicated Spiritualist and Theosophical journals, and independent publications like G.R.S. Mead's *The Quest* (1909–1930) and *The Search* (1931–4), which spawned their own readers' societies. Other journals were more eclectic and transient, such as *The Shrine of Wisdom*—"a quarterly devoted to synthetic philosophy, Religion and Mysticism"⁹—and *Proteus*, concerned with "Dream analysis, Psychic phenomena, scientific astrology and herbalism."¹⁰

The most tenacious twentieth century occult periodical was *The Occult Review*, published by Rider for nearly fifty years from 1905, and distributed in the UK, USA and Australasia. A typical interwar issue included articles on astral travel, occult sources of healing, commentaries on 'eastern' religious texts such as the *Bhagavad-Gita*, interpretations of karma and reincarnation, and profiles of contemporary gurus. Advertisement pages included local groups and societies and services such as astrology and clairvoyance. Spiritualism and Theosophy were the enduring influences, the former usually as an object of critique by partisan editorials, which invariably critiqued fraudulent mediums, mused on teachings of 'the Masters', and discussed the potential of occultism to furnish a modern functional 'spirituality'. For example, a 1932 editorial, entitled "Linking Up", describes "true occultism" as, "the science of spirituality" which has "no concern with creeds, either religious or theosophical". It proposes setting up a "Spiritual League" to co-ordinate "scattered spiritual units" exploring "inner life and its manifold problems".¹¹ These "scattered spiritual units" were clearly

⁹ *The Shrine of Wisdom*, 1920 2.1, Autumn.

¹⁰ Advertisement in *The Search Quarterly*, 1931, Vol. 1.

¹¹ "Linking Up", *Occult Review* LVI/1, July 1932, 2ff.

meant to include *The Occult Review's* readers. Addressed in this way, the private hermeneutics of solitary readers could be reconfigured as a vital contribution to a common occult praxis, since in the materialist metaphysics of occultism, the 'life of the mind' was no metaphor but a real location in which to perform mental work to change the world.

Compelling evidence that these and other texts functioned as a practical resource for a geographically dispersed readership can be found in the preface to the 1945 revised edition of *God is My Adventure*. Here, Landau attributes his book's success to a healthy market amongst "seekers" for "the spiritual experiences of a fellow seeker", so long as they do not feel "pontifically forced by the author into accepting a certain point of view"; this is because "in spiritual research the utmost personal freedom is a *sine qua non*" (Landau 1945:7). Landau's new preface is clearly addressed to a distinctive readership: an audience who consider themselves "seekers" yet avoid closure in their occult "research". The fact that *God is My Adventure* was reprinted eleven times in as many years is evidence of the buoyancy of the market. Similarly, Brunton's *A Search in Secret India* (1934) had been reprinted six times by 1938. Further evidence of the vitality of print culture in non-official religion is the London publisher Rider's sixty-four page book catalogue from the late 1930s. The subject headings within the catalogue illustrate contemporary market niches (many of which have expanded and diversified into the present period): for example, one quarter of the contents is categorised under 'Spiritualism', and around one fifth under a combination of the headings 'Occult' and 'Psychology' (Bowen nd: endpapers 64pp). Another strong heading is 'Mind and Body Handbooks', including titles such as *Self-Reliance*, *The Secret Power* and *Studies in Self-Healing*. The latest titles could either be obtained direct from the publisher or browsed in specialist bookshops: for example, 'Atlantis' and 'Watkins' in central London. The owner of the former, Michael Houghton, led his Order of the Hidden Masters in the shop's basement; the proprietor of the latter, John Watkins senior, had been a student of H.P. Blavatsky. Such establishments not only supplied books but functioned as contact points, even ritual venues, in a common 'seekership' culture.

Alice Bailey's 'New Age'

Man is emerging into an era of peace and good-will, but a great effort is needed to force wide open the Door leading into the New Age. (Alice Bailey, letter, *The Occult Review*, 1932)¹²

“I work under no labels,” wrote Alice A. Bailey (1880–1949) in the *Occult Review* in 1935. Bailey was born into a wealthy Manchester family and received a privileged Anglican Christian upbringing (Sinclair 1984; Sutcliffe 2003:46–49). Bailey encountered the Theosophical Society in California, which she described as “the opening of a new spiritual era in my life” (Bailey 1973:133); she became editor of the Theosophical Society magazine, *The Messenger*. Around 1919, she claimed occult contact with a “Master” called Djwhal Khul, known thereafter as “The Tibetan”. This contact marked the beginning of Bailey’s career as a clairaudient “secretary” for the Tibetan’s scripts. Controversy in the Theosophical Society concerning the legitimacy of these new revelations prompted Bailey’s departure in 1920. She continued a sustained ‘secretarial’ practice until her death in 1949.¹³

Bailey’s contact with a Master was both traditional and innovative. As mysterious, superhuman, semi-divine figures, the Masters had entered occult lore by the second half of the nineteenth century, and were given a special place in Theosophical cosmology by H.P. Blavatsky. Speculation concerning their identity and plans peppers the interwar pages of *The Occult Review*. “Who, then, are the Masters?”, asks one editorial, replying: “They are God-realized beings, whether embodied or disembodied... constituting a spiritual Brotherhood whose task it is to foster every budding germ of spirituality in man... and by Their inspiration to forward the upward development of the human race.”¹⁴

According to Sinclair (1984:15), the Masters “exert their influence on behalf of the spiritual maturing of all sentient beings [and] the general welfare of the whole planetary life”. This patrician vocation is accomplished through a “chain of communicating relationships stretching through the dimensions of consciousness”, akin to a “network along

¹² *Occult Review* LV/2, 1932 125, from a 5-page letter entitled “Fear: A World Problem”.

¹³ There is a substantial corpus: the quantity of text ‘received’ from the Tibetan comes to 9,271 pages, and Bailey also published several texts under her own name.

¹⁴ *Occult Review* LXIII/4, October 1936 236.

whose grid enlightened ideas can pass into manifestation” (ibid.:41). A reverse vector in this neo-platonic “chain of being” also holds: students can, with proper training, follow this “grid” back to its source, treating it as a “pathway of ascent or liberation from the frustrating limitations of the human state” (ibid.:16). Thus the Masters are not remote “Gods-in-paradise” (ibid.:47), but beings who have “progressed a bit further than some of us . . . in terms of handling themselves and finding out what life may be all about” (Sinclair 1984:47). As such, the Masters constitute role models for the “advanced human being”: the ideal agent for “the magical work of the new age” (Bailey 1991a:610).

Legitimated by her occult source, Bailey set up the Lucis Trust in New York in 1922. This developed into three linked projects: the Arcane School, World Goodwill, and Triangles.¹⁵ The foundation institution, the Arcane School, was set up in 1922 as a private correspondence school, offering “training in new age discipleship”.¹⁶ This offers further evidence of ‘seekership’ culture in the period, since those contacting Bailey apparently “wanted to know more about meditation and how to practise it” and “asked for guidance in their search for truth”.¹⁷ Men of Goodwill was set up in 1932 to engage in political and cultural debates, including in the early 1940s championing the cause of the United Nations as a new international organisation to replace the discredited League of Nations. Renamed World Goodwill in the 1950s, it promotes the idea of a “new group of world servers”: a group “of all races, classes and creeds” who “serve the Plan, humanity, the Hierarchy and the Christ”. From this project came the idea of “Units of Service”, small groups of meditators quietly promoting Bailey’s vision (Sutcliffe 2003: chapter 6). In 1945, Bailey’s most familiar text, the “Great Invocation”, was published.¹⁸ Its closing line, “Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth,” encapsulates interwar preoccupations with accessing superhuman power to restore a lost universal order or Plan.

Bailey’s organisation thus amalgamated three contemporary cultural currents: secular ‘planning’, Theosophical cosmology and—as we shall see—Christian millennialism. She shared interests in psychology, social engineering and international relations with H.G. Wells and other utopians. Her occult cosmology and epistemology are indebted

¹⁵ Leaflet: *Lucis Trust* (London nd). For a note on Triangles, see Sutcliffe (2003:48).

¹⁶ In the words of the standard advertisement in the endpapers of Bailey’s texts.

¹⁷ *The Arcane School: Entrance Papers* (London nd:2).

¹⁸ Composed in the mid-1930s, it is the last of three Invocations (Bailey 1944:xvi).

to Theosophy; she acknowledged that “none of my books would have been possible had I not made a very close study of [Blavatsky’s] *The Secret Doctrine*” (Bailey 1973:215). But Bailey also drew on a millennialistic Christology influenced by her youthful Anglicanism. Where Blavatsky was explicitly anti-Christian, Bailey was merely dismissive of her early fervour, describing her younger self as a “rabid, orthodox [and] exceedingly narrow-minded Christian” (Bailey 1973:1). Like Annie Besant and other post-Blavatsky Theosophists, Bailey was anti-ecclesial rather than anti-Christian: an important distinction, which allowed her to infuse a latent evangelical piety into her occult cosmology. Thus the Great Invocation fervently prays, “May the Christ return to Earth”; in 1936 she wrote “the Christ is being born today in many a human being” (Bailey 1991b:45); and in 1947, “no man has ever been saved by theology, but only by the living Christ” (idem). This millennialistic thrust is central to her distinctive ‘new age’ discourse.

According to Bloom (1991:2), Bailey’s output contains 285 passages referring to a ‘new age’. Three of her book titles are explicit on this score: the two volumes of *Discipleship in the New Age* (1944, 1955) and *Education in the New Age* (1954). Her first reference comes in 1932:

We are now one people. The heritage of any race lies open to another; the best thought of the centuries is available for all; and ancient techniques and modern methods must meet and interchange. Each will have to modify its mode of presentation and each will have to make an effort to understand the underlying spirit which has produced a peculiar phraseology and imagery, but when these concessions are made, a structure of truth will be found to emerge which will embody the spirit of the New Age. (Bailey 1987/1932:4)

A 1936 volume, *Esoteric Psychology*, supplies the missing millennialistic dimension: “There will be a pouring in of light upon mankind, which will alter his conditions of living [and] change his outlook upon world affairs” (Bailey 1991b/1936:276). This “advent of Christ” may take the form of “an actual physical coming” or a “tremendous inflow of the Christ principle” (ibid.:46). *The Reappearance of the Christ* (1948) is devoted to this exegesis.

Proper education of the individual is a crucial factor in preparing for this new dispensation. In 1932 Bailey wrote, “The individual must be given his full heritage, and special culture provided which will foster and strengthen the finest and the best amongst us, for in their achievement lies the promise of the New Age” (Bailey 1987/1932:27–8). Such

'strengthened' individuals will act as a 'bridging body of men' between eastern and western cultures. They will be "practical men of affairs with their feet firmly planted on earth and yet, at the same time... mystics and seers, living also in the world of spirit and carrying inspiration and illumination with them into the life of every day" (ibid.:45).

A Treatise on White Magic in 1934 modelled such individuals as a "new group type" who possess the following highly developed powers: "a universal touch, an intense sensitivity, a highly organised mental apparatus, an astral equipment... responsive to the higher spiritual vibrations, a powerful and controlled energy body, and a sound physical body" (Bailey 1991a:416). These "pioneers of the New Age" are enjoined to organise themselves into loose networks of "little groups" which "spring up here and there... as a man in this place and another in that place awakens to the new vision" (ibid.:426). In the first volume of *Discipleship in the New Age*, Bailey (1944:786) dates the beginning of this group work to 1931. Later described as "seed groups in the New Age" (Bailey 1957:26), these cells are "not interested in dogmas or doctrines" (Bailey 1991a:426) but in "world needs [and] world opportunities" and "the initiation of humanity into the spiritual realities" (ibid.:427). The sum of this programme in occult education will be an "oligarchy of elect souls" that will "govern and guide the world" (Bailey 1991a:400).

Bailey's discourse therefore served to harness to a singular end—the coming 'new age'—the many disparate, potentially fissiparous 'quests' pursued by seekers in the wider occult culture. Her programme offered a hierarchy of ascending cadres, from the humble "unit of service" meditators to the supernatural pantheon of Masters, each in their place functioning as a guide or placeholder for those coming after. The result can be read both as a neo-platonic chain of being leading back to the divine source, and as the power of social hierarchy to bring structure and direction to the popular egalitarianism of seekership culture.

*Conclusion: The Emergence of 'New Age' Religion Between the
Two World Wars*

This chapter has shown the development between the two world wars of a potent utopian discourse by Alice Bailey on an imminent 'new age', which fused existing secular, Theosophical and Christian elements.

At the core of the discourse was a causal link between the cultivation of subjective and ‘spiritual’ states of awareness by an *avant-garde* group, and the achievement of trans-national—‘world’—economic and political order. The exposition is patrician, and the privileging of social elites—inscribed in the language of ‘oligarchy’, ‘race’ and ‘spiritual hierarchy’—is in some tension with the democratic ideology of more recent forms of religion which derive from this and related sources (for example, the post-1960s ‘holistic milieu’ portrayed by Heelas & Woodhead 2005). But as I have shown, Bailey’s discourse took shape in a particular historical context, marked by changing economic theories and social policies, an idealistic internationalism and—not least—by the double shadow of war—past and future. Bailey was familiar with non-official religious constituencies, especially the occult ‘spirituality’ of social elites, and there is clear evidence that her message of a ‘new age’ was principally directed, and received, here. Her mature adult career is intimately bound up with the events of the 1920s and 1930s, during which she set up institutions—a correspondence school, an educational project, a meditation network—to propagate a distinctive ‘new age’ vision. Bailey’s expositions of group work and ‘spirituality’ are consistently related to secular, modern criteria of efficiency and effectiveness, and her occult hermeneutic invariably seeks to correlate with scientific and political events. For example, a 1950 publication retrospectively claimed that the League of Nations had been invisibly guided by the “Masters” (Sinclair 1984:42), and in 1947 she wrote that “the release of the energy of the atom” at the bombing of Hiroshima signalled the dawning of the ‘New Age’ (Bailey 1991b:279). Esoteric and exoteric, or psychological and historical, realms were for Bailey, as for other occultists, inextricably interlinked, but their relationship needed to be revised: the former was really the ‘inner’, ‘spiritual’ cause of the latter. European reconstruction could therefore only properly be realised as the outcome of ‘psychic’ or ‘spiritual’ growth. Social and economic recovery had to be reformulated as the organic end of properly valorised and co-ordinated subjectivities, rather than a function of sterile technocratic schemes. This vision of the causative power of ‘inner’, occult realities is encapsulated in a magisterial millennialistic passage published posthumously in 1960, reminiscent of H.G. Wells’s *The Shape of Things to Come*:

All the post-war planning... and the seething turmoil reaching throughout all levels of the human consciousness, plus the inspiration of disaster and suffering, are blasting open hitherto sealed areas in the minds of men,

letting in illumination, sweeping away the bad old conditions. This is symbolised for us in the destruction of ancient cities, and by the intermixture of races through the processes of war; this also signifies progress, and is preparatory to great expansions of consciousness [which] will, in the next one hundred and fifty years, completely alter the manner of man's thinking; they will change the techniques of religion; they will bring about comprehension and fusion. When this work has been accomplished, we shall record an era of world peace, which will be symbolic of the state of the human spirit. (Bailey 1991b:278)

Bailey's vision of a looming 'New Age' emerged in a particular period in twentieth century history: within a considerable turn in interwar Anglophone religion towards popular and alternative beliefs and practices, articulated by seekers in small groups, employing a meta-religious discourse on 'spirituality'. The range of interests in this non-official religious culture—'secret' lore, 'esoteric' schools, 'occult' powers, 'mystical' experiences, 'psychic' abilities, 'oriental' wisdom—anticipates a shift in the function of religion from cementing traditional communities to legitimating new identities, with a bias towards the middle and upper social classes and towards post-protestant dispositions. This turn to the legitimating of bourgeois identities must be set in the context of significant economic, social and cultural change, overshadowed by memory of one world war and anticipation of another. Under such constraints, the notion of religion as a mysterious, recondite quest—not just for oneself, but with elective fellows, and in preparation for a 'new age'—offered an expanding population of 'seekers' an empowering role in their everyday lives to counter the emergent totalitarianisms of Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin on the one hand, and the perceived doctrinal dullness and social conformity of the traditional Christian churches on the other.

References

- Akhtar, M. & S. Humphries, 1999. *Far Out: the Dawning of New Age Britain*. Bristol: Sansom & Co/Channel 4 Television.
- Anson, P., 1964. *Bishops at Large*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Bailey, A., 1944. *Discipleship in the New Age Volume I*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- , 1948. *The Reappearance of the Christ*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- , 1954. *Education in the New Age*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- , 1955. *Discipleship in the New Age Volume II*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- , 1957. *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- , 1973. *The Unfinished Autobiography*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.

- , 1987/1932. *From Intellect to Intuition*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- , 1991a/1934. *A Treatise on White Magic*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- , 1991b/1971. *Ponder on This*. New York: Lucis Publishing Company.
- Baker-Beall, E. 1932. "Occultism as a Guide to Life." *Occult Review* 56.5 299–306.
- Barrow, L., 1986. *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians, 1850–1910*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Bloom, W., ed, 1991. *The New Age: An Anthology of Essential Writings*. London: Channel 4 Television/Rider.
- Bowen, P.G., nd[ca. 1938]. *The Occult Way*. London: Rider.
- Brunton, P., 1935. *The Secret Path: A Technique of Spiritual Self-Discovery for the Modern World*. London: Rider.
- , 1935. *A Search in Secret Egypt*. London: Rider.
- , 1951/1934. *A Search in Secret India*. London: Rider.
- Campbell, B., 1980. *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Carey, J., 1992. *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880–1939*. London: Faber.
- Ceadel, M., 1980. *Pacifism in Britain 1914–1945: The Defining of a Faith*. Clarendon Press: Oxford.
- , 1987. "The Peace Movement between the Wars: Problems of Definition." In Taylor, R. & N. Young, eds. *Campaigns for Peace: British Peace Movements in the Twentieth Century*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 73–99.
- Cohn, N., 1957. *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. London: Secker and Warburg.
- Coupland, P., 2000. "HG Wells's 'Liberal Fascism.'" *Journal of Contemporary History* 35.4 541–558.
- Daily Express*, 1935. *The Book of Fortune-Telling: How to tell Character and the Future by Palmistry, Cards, Numbers, Phrenology, Handwriting, Dreams, Astrology, Etc.* London: Daily Express Publications
- Davies, D.R., 1961. *In Search of Myself*. London: Geoffrey Bles.
- Dixon, J., 2001. *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England*. Baltimore, MY: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Eksteins, M., 1990/1989. *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. London: Black Swan.
- Ferguson, M., 1982. *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s*. London: Paladin/Granada.
- Hanegraaff, W., 1996. *New Age Religion and Western Culture*. Leiden: Brill.
- Harrison, J., 1979. *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism 1780–1850*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Hazelgrove, J., 2000. *Spiritualism and British Society Between the Wars*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Heelas, P., 1996. *The New Age Movement*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Heelas P. & L. Woodhead, 2005. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hobsbawm, E., 1995/1994. *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914–1991*. London: Abacus.
- Humphreys, C., 1978. *Both Sides of the Circle: the Autobiography of Christmas Humphreys*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Jeffreys, G., 1932. *Healing Rays*. London: Elim Publishing Company.
- Joad, C., 1933. *Guide to Modern Thought*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Landau, R., 1935. *God is My Adventure: A Book on Modern Mystics, Masters and Teachers*. London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson Ltd.
- , 1945. *God is My Adventure*. London: Faber and Faber.
- "Layman with a Notebook", 1933. *What is the Oxford Group?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lutyens, E., 1957. *Candles in the Sun*. London: Rupert Hart-Davies.

- Main, R., ed, 1997. *Jung on Synchronicity and the Paranormal*. London: Routledge.
- Mairet, P., 1936. *AR Orage: A Memoir*. London: J.M. Dent.
- Martin, W., 1967. "*The New Age*" under Orage. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Mead, G.R.S., 1913. *Quests Old and New*. London: G. Bell.
- Mews, S., 1994. "Religious Life between the Wars, 1920–1940." In Gilley, S. & W. Shields, eds. *A History of Religion in Britain*. Oxford: Blackwell, 449–66.
- Morton, A.L., 1978. *The English Utopia*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Musgrove, F., 1974. *Ecstasy and Holiness: Counter Culture and the Open Society*. London: Methuen.
- Nelson, G., 1969. *Spiritualism and Society*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Oppenheim, J., 1985. *Spiritualism and Psychological Research in England 1850–1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Plowman, M., 1936. *The Faith Called Pacifism*. London: J.M. Dent.
- , 1942. *The Right to Live: Selected Essays*. London: Andrew Dakers.
- Pugh, M., 2006/2005. "Hurrah for the Blackshirts!" *Fascists and Fascism in Britain Between the Wars*. London: Pimlico.
- Schuller, G., 1997. *Krishnamurti and the World Teacher Project: Some Theosophical Perceptions* (Theosophical History Occasional Papers, Vol. V). Fullerton, CA: Theosophical History.
- Scott, C., 1935. *An Outline of Modern Occultism*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Sinclair, J., 1984. *The Alice Bailey Inheritance*. Wellingborough: Turnstone.
- Snelling, J., D. Sibley & M. Watts, eds, 1988/1987. *The Early Writings of Alan Watts*, London: Rider/Century.
- Stevenson, J. & C. Cook, 1994/1977. *Britain in the Depression: Society and Politics 1929–1939*. London: Longman.
- Sutcliffe, S., 2003. *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices*. London: Routledge.
- Thorpe, A., 1992. *Britain in the 1930s: The Deceptive Decade*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Underhill, E., 1957/1911. *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*. London: Methuen.
- Watts, A., 1973. *In My Own Way: An Autobiography 1915–1965*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Webb, J., 1976. *The Occult Establishment*, La Salle, IL: Open Court.
- , 1980. *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Work of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky and their Followers*. London: Thames and Hudson
- Wells, H.G., 1933. *The Open Conspiracy and Other Writings*. London (no publisher).
- , 1974/1933. *The Shape of Things to Come*. London: Corgi/Transworld.
- Wilkinson, A., 1978. *The Church of England and the First World War*. London: SPCK.
- Winter, J., 1998/1995. *Sites of memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

