

AN EXAMINATION AND EVALUATION OF THE JESUS OF THE NEW AGE

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS
AN EXAMINATION AND EVALUATION OF THE JESUS OF THE NEW AGE
by Kenneth K. Pak

This thesis examines and evaluates the predominant view of Jesus "the Christ" among the prominent New Agers. This view--that Jesus was only a man who acquired mystic knowledge and power from his experiences with the Essenes and other mystical religions of the East, and that he manifested and exemplified the divinity which can be found in each person--generally opposes orthodox Christian teachings of the monotheistic divinity of Jesus Christ.

The thesis argues that various claims of these New Agers are inconsistent (e.g. the reliability of Akashic Record), unverifiable (e.g. esoterism), and contrary to factual data (e.g. Notovitch's account of Jesus' travel to the East). While many New Agers argue that the monotheistic divinity of Jesus is a fabrication of the true teachings of Jesus, the thesis argues for the validity and superiority of the New Testament and especially Paul in their attribution of monotheistic divinity to Jesus. The thesis concludes that the New Age view of Jesus "the Christ" must be rejected.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

THE IMPORTANCE, OCCASION AND LIMITATIONS ON THE TOPIC

First introduced to American thought in the early 1800's, the New Age movement (although not called by this name then) has become one of the most popular forms of religion today. The popularity of the New Age movement is visible in various aspects and levels of society; the movement is so successful in permeating the American culture--media, music, literature, business, education, and even Christian organizations (which traditionally opposed the pantheistic New Age teachings)--that both irreligious and religious people are practicing and/or accepting at least some of the teachings of the movement.

This popular New Age movement is not a centralized religious system, but a coalition of various pantheistic religious sects to spread their beliefs to others. Their fundamental belief is that each person, on his own, must reach his higher consciousness of Christhood (as Jesus of Nazareth has reached his Christhood). In their view, Jesus is merely a man who became "divine." Therefore, like Jesus, we must become "divine."

This teaching is exactly opposite of the central teachings of traditional orthodox Christianity which holds to the need of each person to depend on Jesus Christ for

salvation. Traditional Christianity asserts that Jesus of Nazareth (who is divine) is the Christ, the only Son of the monotheistic God; the monotheistic divinity (the divinity which applies to that of one God, opposed to that of many gods or to the god that is equal to all things that exist) of Jesus Christ affirms that, among humans, only Jesus of Nazareth is God.

The New Age movement and its teachings (especially the pantheistic teachings on Christology) are a serious threat to Christianity and its fundamental teaching. If one were to hold the New Age view of Jesus, then he must reject the traditional Christian view, since it is logically impossible to hold both views. Therefore, in order for the traditional Christian view even to be possible, one needs to reject the New Age view (1).

The need for scholarly evaluation and critique of the major New Age view of Jesus Christ, therefore, is evident; especially since the New Age movement is growing more rapidly than that of Christianity. But since it would be almost impossible to represent a unanimous New Age teaching on Jesus Christ (or for any topic, for that matter), this thesis will focus mainly on the teachings of the most influential, and what this writer considers to be the best representative individuals of the New Age movement. The main individuals

1. Here, the discussion does not deal with establishing the Christian view by the falsity of another (New Age view), but only with the possibility of setting forth the case by Christianity.

whose teachings the thesis will treat are: Helena Petrona Blavatsky, Annie Besant, Levi H. Dowling, Alice Bailey, David Spangler, Benjamin Creme, Holger Kersten, and Upton Ewing. These individuals, on whom the thesis will mainly focus, are well noted for their writings and works on the topic. In addition to these individuals, however, the thesis will also treat the writings and works of a Russian Scholar, Nicolai Notovitch, whose claim of discovery of the writings of the life of Jesus in India is heavily relied on by many New Agers who argue for Jesus' life in the East. And finally, the thesis will, occasionally, refer to other New Agers' writings when necessary.

THE TEST FOR TRUTH

The New Age view of Jesus must be critically examined and evaluated. In order to do this, an objective and adequate test for truth must be established. And based on whether the view stands in the light of the test for truth, the truth or falsity of the view can be determined.

The tests for truth that the thesis will utilize is one that was argued by Professor Norman Geisler (2). This test may not necessarily determine the truthfulness of a view, but it does necessarily determine the falsity of a view.

2. Norman Geisler, The Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1976), chapter 8.

In order for a view to be valid, it must--at least--be systematically consistent. The systematic consistency includes internal and factual consistency. If a view fails to be systematically consistent internally, it is necessarily false. Furthermore, if a view contradicts known factual data, then it must be false.

A point should be made in that since no one is infinite or perfect in his knowledge, no one has all the facts in the world. Therefore, as Geisler says, the "probability" must become the guide; as he further argues, "whichever view 'best' fits and is 'most' consistent must suffice" (3).

These tests will at least determine the falsity of the view (if the view is false). Based on these tests, the thesis will examine the New Age view of Jesus Christ, and determine whether the view is false.

As long as the New Age view of Christology is considered true, the traditional Christian view of Christology should be considered false (since they are opposing views). However, when the New Age view of Christology is shown false, then it is possible for the traditional Christian view to set forth its case and claim to be true.

3. Ibid., 146-147.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT: BACKGROUND

BRIEF OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

During the last few decades, Western culture has been gradually embracing various Eastern philosophies and practices. As will be seen later in this section, one of the major contributors to this successful permeation of the Eastern philosophies and practices in Western culture is an occult movement known as the New Age movement. One of the leading New Age promoters, Marilyn Ferguson, in her book, The Aquarian Conspiracy, writes the following about the New Age movement:

A leaderless but powerful network is working to bring about radical change in the United States. . . . Broader than reform, deeper than revolution, this benign conspiracy for a new human agenda has triggered the most rapid cultural realignment in history. The great shuddering, irrevocable shift overtaking us is not a new political, religious, or philosophical system. It is a new mind--the ascendance of a startling world view. (4)

The New Age movement has its roots in ancient mystical religions. According to Walter Martin, in The New Age Cult, "[the New Age Cult] holds historical ties to Sumerian, Indian, Egyptian, Chaldean, Babylonian, and Persian religious

4. Marilyn Ferguson, The Aquarian Conspiracy (Los Angeles, CA: J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1980), 23.

practices" (5). Many of the practices by the New Age movement, such as astrology, sorcery, and magic were practiced by these mystical religions, and were condemned in the Old Testament (Isa. 47, I Kings 21).

The purpose of the New Age movement is to take part in bringing about the "New Age"--the Age of Aquarius. These New Agers claim that they are waiting for the Master (such as Buddha, Confucius, Moses, Krishna, Jesus, Mohammed, and others) of the Aquarian age who will reveal the truth of becoming one with God. This coming Master of the Aquarian Age is, for some, known as the Lord Maitreya, which is the reincarnation of Buddha.

During the late nineteenth century, Helena Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Society, in which Blavatsky promoted a basic Hindu philosophy. Since Blavatsky interpreted Christianity based on the Hindu philosophy, she ignored historical, biblical Christianity while embracing mystical Christianity. Blavatsky was succeeded by influential persons such as Alice Bailey and Annie Besant.

Another early influential proponent of the New Age philosophy was Levi Dowling. He has written a book titled The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ which is considered by many New Age thinkers as their Bible. Levi was known to have studied and meditated for forty years, and then "found himself

5. Walter Martin, The New Age Cult (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1989), 15.

in that stage of spiritual consciousness that permitted him to enter the domain of these superfine ethers and become familiar with their mysteries" (6).

Today, the popularity of the New Age movement is at an all-time high. In America, some 60 million people are involved with some form of New Age practices or thinking. Also, there are at least 2500 New Age bookstores, and some 3000 publishers in the United States whose main emphasis is to advocate the New Age movement (7). Moreover, celebrities such as John Denver, Merv Griffin, Linda Evans, and most notably Shirley MacLaine claim that the New Age philosophy and practices are an essential part of their lives. In fact, Shirley MacLain strongly advocates the New Age view of life in her best selling books such as Out on a Limb. Further, MacLain also holds extravagant seminars in which she promotes the New Age thinking and practices such as reincarnation and yoga.

THE NEW AGE VIEW OF GOD

In the New Age view of God, the idea of the traditional orthodox Christian God is rejected. Instead, New Agers generally hold to a pantheistic idea of God similar to Eastern

6. Levi Dowling, The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ (Marina Del Rey, CA: DeVorss & Co., 1964), 8.

7. These bookstores and the publishers are committed to spreading the New Age beliefs. See Walter Martin, New Age Cult, 21.

religions such as Hinduism or Buddhism. In their view, there is no distinction between God and the world; everything that exists in the universe is God. There is nothing in this world that is not God. Benjamin Creme writes in The Reappearance of the Christ:

God is the sum total of all that exists in the whole of the manifested and unmanifested universe-- everything we know and see and hear and touch and everything we don't know or hear or see or touch, everywhere, in the totality of the cosmos. Every manifested phenomenon is part of God. And the space between these manifested phenomena is God. So, in a very real sense, there isn't anything else. You are God. I am God. This microphone is God. This table is God. All is God. And because all is God, there is no God. God is not someone that you can point to and say: "That is God." God is everything that you have ever known or could ever know--and everything beyond your level of knowing. (8)

Creme believes that one of the major teachings of the Christ is the immanence of God in all creation, even in mankind, in that men are part of a great being of God (9). Conversely, Alice Bailey in The Reappearance of the Christ argues that God would not be complete (as he or it is now) without men for the existence of a certain part of God depends on the existence of men (10).

8. Benjamin Creme, The Reappearance of the Christ (North Hollywood, CA: Tara Center, 1980), 115.

9. Ibid., 134.

10. Alice Bailey, The Reappearance of the Christ (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1948), 147.

The pantheistic New Age God is an energy which is omnipresent, infinite, eternal, and immutable. This energy is also equated with Love. Creme says that "'God is energy' is equally a fact. Love--what we call love--is great energy, a great magnetic all pervading energy" (11). By being an immutable energy, God is impersonal.

David Spangler, however, argues that the immutable energy does change. Spangler believes that God, through the dynamic process of revelation, communicates to men. He says:

[God] is revelation and revelation is an ongoing, ever-revealing, dynamic process. Revelation is the mirror that shows us what we are so that through that understanding we can continually unfold and reveal the divine. That is the best definition of God: that which is dynamically unfolding and revealing the wholeness that is. (12)

THE NEW AGE VIEW OF REVELATION

According to a common New Age view of revelation, the historical accounts and the teachings found in the New Testament are different from what orthodox Christianity has affirmed--that they are not accurate (13). Regarding the latter (the teachings found in the New Testament), some New

11. Creme, Reappearance, 44.

12. David Spangler, Reflections of the Christ (Findhorn, Scotland, 1978), 44

13. This will be discussed in detail in the section on the historical life of Jesus and in the section on the teachings of Jesus.

Agers adhere to most of the teachings in the Gospels, but most of the teachings in the Epistles are rejected. These New Agers argue that Paul misinterpreted the teachings of Jesus. They believe that the original teachings of Jesus are "alien" to what Christianity has taught. Regarding this, a German New Age theologian, Holger Kersten, writes in Jesus Lived in India:

What we call Christianity today has very little to do with the teachings of Jesus and the ideas that he wished to spread. It is really something quite different, and could rather be designated "Paulinism." Many tenets of the dogma are essentially alien to Christ's message. They are, in fact, primarily the legacy of Paul, who totally differed in his way of thinking. So-called Christianity as we know it developed when Paulinism became accepted as the state religion. (14)

Regarding the teachings and life of Jesus portrayed by the writers of the Gospels, the New Agers argue that orthodox Christians have focused too much on the historicity that they have missed the true meaning. Many of the Gospel accounts are not necessarily historical, but they are meant to convey spiritual truth in an allegorical manner. On this, Upton Ewing writes in his book, The Essene Christ:

Those who read the Bible intelligently will find that many of the narratives therein were constructed to convey certain spiritual truths. It is not always necessary that they represent actual happenings. . . . Jesus himself originated many of the parables he used

14. Holger Kersten, Jesus Lived in India: His Unknown Life Before and After the Crucifixion (Munich, W. Germany: Droemer/Knaur, 1983), 10. (

in his teaching to convey or stress certain moral or spiritual truths. The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, as described in Matthew, is pure allegory. It illustrates Jesus as wrestling with a problem concerning only his own personal decision. (15)

Therefore, the gospel accounts of the New Testament are not meant to be taken literally all the time; instead, they need to be interpreted symbolically. Alice Bailey argues that "little as the orthodox Christian may care to admit it, the entire Gospel story in its four forms or presentations, contains little else except symbolic details about the Mysteries" (16). By focusing mainly on the historical aspects of the gospel account, traditional Christianity has failed to see the real message which Christ wanted to communicate to us--the message of Love.

Regarding interpretation of the revelation (such as the Four Gospels' accounts of the teachings and life of Jesus), New Agers generally believe that it must be done in an esoteric manner; this is the way that all the revelations were meant to be interpreted. Instead of just factually comprehending the revelation, men must experience the revelation. Bailey argues that:

When, however, the inner wisdom teaching is forgotten and the esoteric side is ignored, then the spirit and the living experimental experience disappear. We

15. Upton C. Ewing, The Essene Christ: A Recovery of the Historical Jesus (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1961), 91, 92.

16. Bailey, Reappearance, 126.

have been occupied with the details of the outer form of the faith, and have sadly forgotten the inner meaning which carries life and salvation to the individual and also to humanity. (17)

In this New Age view, however, the accounts of the teachings and life of Jesus are not limited to the New Testament or the Four Gospels. The New Agers believe that there are other writings, such as apocryphal and gnostic gospels, that are as authoritative and as reliable as the Four Gospels. Kersten writes:

The New Testament contains four gospels, which have been named after Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. They are an arbitrary selection from among a great number of gospels that were in use in the various communities and sects of early Christianity. The rejected texts were called apocryphal, and many were destroyed, but some of those that have survived shed a strange and mysterious light on the personality of Jesus of Nazareth. (18)

In fact, when there is a discrepancy between the New Testament Gospels and other writings such as gnostic gospels, the New Agers tend to deny or explain away the New Testament Gospels' account, and accept the account of other writings. Based on the accounts of Jesus' life and teaching found in non-New Testament writings, the New Agers formulate the life and teachings of Jesus. Furthermore, one such New Ager, Upton Ewing wrote what he calls "The Gospel of the Covenant of Love"

17. Alice Bailey, From Bethlehem to Calvary (New York: Lucis Publishing Company, 1965), 6.

18. Kersten, Jesus in India, 24.

(19) (Ewing also calls this a "Fifth Gospel") which is based on and adheres to the non-New Testament writings.

But how do men receive revelations? The revelations are obtained through what is known as Akashic Records. "Akasha is a Sanskrit word, and means 'Primary Substance,' that out of which all things are formed" (20). This primary substance is of "exquisite fineness and is so sensitive that the slightest vibration of an ether any place in the universe registers an indelible impression upon it" (21). This primal substance is scattered everywhere in the universe. Therefore, when a man's mind is in exact accord with the "Universal Mind," he can recognize the Akashic impressions, in which, he can translate it into his own language. Man can obtain this understanding of Akashic impressions from Akashic Records--the Supreme Intelligence (this Supreme Intelligence is also called "the Book of God's Remembrance" by Hebrew scholars) (22). Regarding this, Levi writes:

The imperishable records of life, known as the Akashic Records, are wholly in the domain of Supreme Intelligence, or Universal Mind, and the Akashic Record order must be in such close touch with the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Breath, as the ancient masters call this of Supreme Intelligence, that every thought

19. Ewing, Essene Christ.

20. Levi, Aquarian Gospel, 10.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

vibration is instantly felt in every fiber of his being. (23)

This is the way Levi has acquired the information in the content of his The Aquarian Gospel of the Christ.

As it has been since the beginning of time, revelations are still being given today. Many New Age writers claim to have received revelations. These revelations are said to be the messages of the Lord Maitreya, the Christ of the Aquarian Age. Regarding his revelation, David Spangler says:

It is through a process of my own meditation in which I experience something and then it is up to me to put the experience into words and to put it in as best a context of verbalization as I can manage. Therefore, the words that I am going to quote are words inspired in my consciousness by the experience I was having, but are not to be considered actual direct quotes from the divine. That which the divine says is essentially wordless and each of us cloak it in whatever form is most appropriate. (24)

THE NEW AGE VIEW OF THE TWELVE AGES

According to the New Age view, "we are in process of passing from one religious age into another" (25). The main goal of the New Age movement is to bring about this new age.

The New Agers claim that the sun and the planets in this solar system require some 16,000 years to make one revolution.

23. Ibid., 11.

24. Spangler, Reflections, 77.

25. Bailey, Bethlehem to Calvary, 3.

This orbit is known as the Zodiac, with its' twelve divisions. The signs for each division are familiarly known as Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagattarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces. Due to what astronomers call "the procession of the Equinoxes," the sun would move in a reverse order. In order to pass through one sign, it takes a little more than 2,100 years. The period is called a "dispensation." Although Eva Dowling (wife of Levi) admits that there are some disagreements regarding the exact time of the beginning of an age, she says that:

It is conceded by all critical students that the sun entered the zodiac sign Taurus in the days of our historic Adam [of Genesis] when Taurin Age began; that Abraham lived not far from the beginning of the Arian Age, when the sun entered the sign Aries. About the time of the rise of the Roman empire the sun entered the sign Pisces, the Fishes, and Piscean Age began, so that early in the Age Jesus of Nazareth lived. (26)

The Christian dispensation began during the Piscean age. The term pisces represents fish, and the sign is known as water. The water is a symbol of purification, in which both Jesus and John Harbinger (the Baptist) baptized (27).

As the Piscean Age comes to an end, we are entering the Aquarian Age. Aquarius is signified by electricity and magnetism. The word "aqua" means water in Latin. Aquarius is the water-bearer. This is symbolized by a man carrying a

26. This section was, in fact, written by the wife of Levi, Eva Dowling. Levi, The Aquarian Gospel, 3-4.

27. Ibid., 4.

pitcher of water in his right hand (28). Levi writes what Jesus has said about the beginning of the Aquarian Age:

And then the man who bears the pitcher will walk forth across the arc of heaven; the sign and signet of the Son of Man will stand forth in the eastern sky. The wise will then lift up their heads and know that the redemption of the earth is near. (29)

In the Aquarian Age, men will be taught great lessons, and mankind will comprehend the message and will advance spiritually (30). David Spangler adds:

As we enter into the New Age, what we are entering into is a cycle, a period of time, a period of unfoldment when truly humanity is the world initiate, the world savior, and ultimately it is upon the shoulders of humanity that the future and the translation for the entry into light of this planet rest. (31)

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, we have briefly discussed the ideas that are necessary to understand the New Age view of Jesus Christ. The New Age movement, as a whole, is a broad religious movement, attempting to bring in the new Aquarian Age in this world. The New Age view is rooted generally on the pantheistic view of God and of the world (everything in the

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., 218.

30. Ibid., 10-11.

31. Spangler, Reflections, 11.

world is part of God). The New Agers' authority is strongly based on Akashic Records and other Gnostic and "lost" documents--however, Some New Agers do claim to rely on the Bible to some extent, but only in an esoteric way. The New Agers also believe that God has not left mankind without revelation. In each dispensation, God has provided a leader of that age who would guide mankind to divinity (32). And regarding the future history of the world, a new dispensation (the New Age) is about to take place in which mankind's goal is to bring about the New Age.

32. Here, it should be noted that the New Agers seem to cross back and forth between a personal and impersonal God. They seem to imply an impersonal God by portraying God as an immutable energy. On the other hand, they also imply God as being personal by portraying God as the one who interacts, communicates, leads, etc..

CHAPTER THREE

THE NEW AGE VIEW OF THE CHRIST

JESUS CHRIST AND THE CHRIST

According to the New Age view, the traditional teachings regarding Jesus Christ, that Jesus Christ is the unique Son of God who was sacrificed to save mankind from sin, are strongly rejected. The New Agers argue that it is impossible for modern people to accept this view which stems from the old Jewish dispensation. Creme says that this view ". . . doesn't tally with our knowledge of history, of science, and of other religions" (33).

Christ and "the Christ"

The word "Christ" (Kristos) in Greek means "anointed." This word can be translated into the Hebrew word meaning "Messiah." In the New Age view, when the word Christ is by itself, it does not refer to any particular person. However, when the definite article "the" is accompanied by the word Christ, it refers to the Son in the Trinity. This member of the Trinity has existed since the eternity past with the Father and the Mother. "According to the teachings of all ancient masters this Son is Love; so the Christ is Love and Love is God, since God is Love" (34).

33. Creme, Reappearance, 47.

34. Levi, Aquarian Gospels, 6.

So who or what is the Christ? David Spangler answers this in the following quotation:

Within all life there exists a quality, an energy which has as its basic characteristic irresistible growth, irresistible and inevitable expression of divinity. . . . The Christ is the basic evolutionary force within creation. (35)

Therefore, in the typical New Age view, Christ is the divine force or energy.

The name Christ is not the only name for the divine Love or the divine force. This force is "known in the East by other names: as the Lord Maitreya to the Buddhists, as the Bodhistattva to the Hindus, the Iman Mahdi to the Moslems, the Messiah to the Jews" (36).

The Christ force or energy is opposite that of Lucifer. While the force of Christ and the force of Lucifer are opposite, neither is good or bad. They simply are as they are--they are impersonal.

This Christ force is not a certain person (as Christians claim). Instead, the Christ is an office in the Hierarchy which guides the spiritual aspect of humanity. This hierarchical position was filled by Jesus of Nazareth. Just as Ronald Reagan was not always the president of the United States, even so, Jesus was not always the Christ.

35. Spangler, Reflections, 13.

36. Creme, Reappearance, 28.

Jesus and the Christ

Jesus was only a man--a Jew, born in Bethlehem. He was, however, a man who had experienced and overcome many carnal tendencies during his past lives. Throughout his life, he realized that he must further overcome various temptations and suffering. Through his strenuous preparation, however, he became qualified to be the Christ. He was given the authority of Avatar (the savior of the world) to show mankind the full expressions of divinity. He became the model for mankind to follow in attaining divinity (37).

The position of Christ that Jesus acquired is not an exclusive position for Jesus. This position is available to all men. In fact, according to Benjamin Creme, the Christ spirit has dwelt in such perfect men as Hercules, Krishna, Buddha, and others who have succeeded in discovering their innate divinity (38).

THE CHRISTHOOD IN EVERY PERSON

The New Agers believe that all men are divine. They derive their divinity from their belief that all things in the world are divine. Since all things in the world are part of God (in fact, the world is God), and since God has divine nature, all things in the world are divine. And since men are things in the world, they are divine.

37. Levi, Aquarian Gospels, 7-8.

38. Creme, Reappearance, 28.

According to the New Age view of men, men can also partake in Christhood. Just as those who have discovered their innate divinity have acquired Christhood, all men can acquire Christhood by accomplishing their own divinity. The New Agers argue that orthodox Christian churches misrepresent the divinity of Jesus Christ and of men--that they have overemphasized the divinity of Jesus while ignoring the divinity of men. The New Agers believe that Jesus Christ is divine only in a way that men are divine. The difference is that Jesus has already manifested his divinity while men have not (39).

Jesus has shown the divine potential in all men by "having perfected Himself and [manifesting] the Divinity potential in each us" (40). Further, Jesus has said that "what I have done all men can do; and what I am all men shall be" (41). Therefore, as Jesus acquired Christhood by overcoming the carnal tendencies, and as he became Christ, we have the potential to do and become likewise.

The reason why most men have not acquired Christhood is due to their ignorance of their divinity. Despite all the examples of Christs that lived in the history of mankind, men have still not realized their divinity and its potential. Therefore, instead of searching their own consciousness, they

39. Ibid., 47.

40. Besant, Esoteric Christianity, 143.

41. Levi, Aquarian Gospels, 255.

have looked elsewhere. Shirley MacLaine points out that "maybe the tragedy of the human race was that we had forgotten we were each Divine" (42).

In order for men to unite with God, therefore, men must come to realization of their own divinity within their own consciousness. As a tool for accomplishing this task of searching their own consciousness, the New Age movement promotes such practices as Yoga, meditation, drugs, and ecstatic dancing (43).

INITIATION TO DIVINITY

In order for men to become one with God, argue many New Agers (prominently Alice Bailey), they must pass what is called initiation. Initiation is a process in which a person's consciousness "passes through" to each steps in order to advance from one level of understanding to the next level. By advancing one level to another, one becomes closer and closer to God.

In his five steps of initiation, Jesus Christ has shown mankind the procedures in which all men can become divine

42. Shirley MacLaine, Out on a Limb, (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), 347.

43. Martin, New Age Cult, 19.

(44). Jesus' process of initiation is built around five events:

1. The Birth at Bethlehem, to which Christ called Nicodemus saying, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see.
2. The Baptism in Jordan. This is the baptism to which John the Baptist referred us, telling us that the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the fire must be administered to us by Christ.
3. The Transfiguration. There perfection is for the first time demonstrated, and there the divine possibility of such perfection is proven to the disciples. The command goes forth to us, "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.
4. The Crucifixion. This is called the Great Renunciation in the Orient, with its lesson of sacrifice and its call to the death of the lower nature. This was the lesson which St. Paul knew and the goal toward which he strove. "I die daily," he said, for only in the practice of death daily undergone can the final Death be met and endured.
5. The Resurrection and Ascension, the final triumph which enables the initiate to sing and to know the meaning of the words: "Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh grave, where is thy victory?" (45)

In initiation, there are three initiators. The first initiator is one's own soul. One must be able to deal with his own soul before any further initiation can take place. After this, and until the second and third initiation, "Christ-life unfolds and develops in the man" (46). During the same time, the person is initiated by the Christ of

44. The five step initiation process will not be discussed in detail in this section. The indepth treatment of the five initiation step process will be given in chapter four.

45. Bailey, Bethlehem to Calvary, 22-23.

46. Ibid., 42.

history, in which time, the person consciously sees Him face to face. During the fourth and fifth initiation, the person is initiated by an ancient mystery Being, such as Melchizedek in the Old Testament (47).

The five initiation processes are not only found in Christianity, but also in many other religions. In many of the Eastern religions, similar processes can be seen. Alice Bailey writes:

There is nothing but a valuable gain to us, and enriching of our consciousness, when we realize the unity, and at times the uniformity of the teaching as it is given in both the East and the West. For instance, the fourth event in Christ's life, the Crucifixion, finds a parallel in the fourth initiation of the Oriental teaching which is called the Great Renunciation. There is an initiation, called in the Buddhist terminology the "entering of the stream," and there is the life of Jesus an episode which we call the "baptism in Jordan." The story of Christ's birth at Bethlehem can be paralleled in practically every detail in the lives of earlier messengers from God. These proved facts should surely evoke from us the recognition that though there are many messengers there is only one Message. . . . (48)

CHRIST IN EACH AGE

Throughout history, argue many New Agers, God has never left without any witnesses for mankind. According to Alice Bailey, "the fact of the 'mystic' Christ, appearing again and again down the ages, proves that God has never left Himself

47. Ibid., 41-43.

48. Ibid., 13.

without witness and that always there have been those who have achieved" (49).

During each cycle of the Zodiac, God has provided mankind with a chief religion. And with the chief religion, there was the chief messenger of the dispensation. During the Piscean age, the chief religion was Christianity and the chief messenger was Jesus, who became the Christ. During the last 2000 years, Jesus had been the supreme teacher and an example to mankind.

However, the world is now at the end of the Piscean age, and is about to enter into the new Aquarian age. With its new age will be a new supreme religion and the supreme messenger. Benjamin Creme writes:

In the esoteric tradition, the Christ is not the name of an individual but of an Office in the Hierarchy. The present holder of that office, the Lord Maitreya, has held it for 21,600 years, and manifested in Palestine through His Disciple Jesus, by the occult method of overshadowing, the most frequent form used for the manifestation of avatars. He has never left the work, but for 2,000 years has waited and planned for the immediate future time, training His disciples and preparing himself for the awesome task which awaits Him. He has made known that this time, He Himself will come. (50)

At the festival of June 1945, the world teacher, the Lord Maitreya, proclaimed that he should appear to the world on

49. Ibid., 21.

50. Creme, Reappearance, 30.

condition that humanity would "put its own house in order" by its own free will (51). The conditions He demanded were:

That a measure of peace should be restored in the world;
 That the principle of Sharing should be in process of controlling economic affairs;
 That the energy of goodwill should be manifesting, and leading to the implementation of right human relationships;
 That the political and religious organizations throughout the world should be releasing their followers from authoritarian supervision over their beliefs and thinking. (52)

When the Lord Maitreya appears, he will teach mankind the way in which they can regenerate themselves and create a civilized society based on the brotherhood of mankind (53).

The recognition of the Lord Maitreya it appears, however, would be up to each individual. Creme argues that"

The Christ is the Embodiment of the energy we call the Christ Consciousness or Principle, the energy of the Cosmic Christ. It is released into the world for us by Maitreya, the Christ, and to the degree that it manifests itself in us, we will recognize him. (54)

51. Regarding the role and the identity of the Lord Maitreya and his appearance to the modern world, the New Agers have a divergence of views between one another. In fact, for example, as a result of such disagreement regarding this issue, Rudolf Steiner--who was a prominent member of the Theosophical Society--was denounced by Annie Besant who was the leader of the Theosophical Society. For a clear examination of the issue, see Ron Rhodes in his article, "The Christ of the New Age Movement," Christian Research Journal, Vol. XII: No.1. (Summer 1989).

52. Creme, Reappearance of the Christ, 31-32.

53. Ibid., 25.

54. Ibid., 48-49.

He continues:

When the Lord Maitreya first starts his teaching, his teachings will not be very different from the teachings of Jesus. The only difference would be that Maitreya's teaching would be much broader in scope.

(55)

THE SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

According to the New Age view, the term "Christ" means anointed. When this term is used with the prefix "the", it refers to the eternal divine Love that is a member of the Trinity. This love, however, is attainable by all men--all men have potential of becoming the Christ. The path to the divinity is by the way of initiation. The initiation is a process that men must go through to be united with the eternal Love. And in each age, Christ has revealed himself and showed the mankind of that Age the way to become divine.

55. Ibid., 64.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NEW AGE VIEW OF JESUS OF NAZARETH

In this chapter will be the presentation of the New Age view of Jesus of Nazareth as a person. The chapter will discuss the New Age view of the historical background and life of Jesus--Jesus' encounter with divergent religions of the world which, the New Agers claim, have influenced his thinking. The chapter will also present the New Age view of Jesus' acquisition of Christhood and/or initiation. Then finally, the thesis will present the New Age view of Jesus' pantheistic teaching which was derived from many religions.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND LIFE OF JESUS

This section will be a presentation of the New Age view of the historical background and life of Jesus. Before the presentation, however, it seems it would be profitable to examine the sources and evidences from which the New Agers formulate their views.

The New Agers' Source of Jesus' Biographical Information

According to many New Agers, the Four Gospels in the New Testament are not valid sources for the historicity of Jesus' life and background. These New Agers argue that the Four Gospels lack historicity, and often are inconsistent with one another. Kersten writes:

The canonical gospel named after Mark contains a few accounts, however, that are not to be found in the gospels of Matthew or Luke; and here they substitute other stories which are often inconsistent with, or at least phrased very differently from the accounts in the gospel according to Mark. . . .

The gospel according to Mark very clearly indicates a secret about Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus does not announce that he is the Messiah and in fact even forbids his disciples to declare this (Mark 8,30).

In the gospel according to Matthew, however, Jesus is portrayed as the fulfillment of the religion of Moses, and as the Messiah announced by the prophets. . . . The writer of the gospel account according to Matthew was evidently neither a historian nor a very exact biographer of Jesus. (56)

As for Luke, Kersten admits that the Gospel of Luke does contain some historical events. Nonetheless, he argues that the Gospel lacks biographical information of Jesus.

Although the writer of the gospel according to Luke mingles historical events with those in the life of Jesus, no cohesive biography emerges. Here, as in the other gospels, a chronological, historical foundation is missing because of the lack of biographical information, The historical figure of Jesus had already been pushed back into the background and his religious image favored. (57)

As for the Gospel of John, these New Agers question John's authorship of the Gospel. Kersten argues that "the simple fisherman from Galilee could hardly have been educated extensively enough in theology, philosophy or Greek epistolary style to have written the work unaided" (58).

56. Kersten, Jesus in India, 25.

57. Ibid., 25, 26.

58. Ibid., 26.

As presented earlier, New Agers generally believe that the Four Gospels are merely arbitrary selections from many other writings concerning Jesus. They argue that the Four Gospels were canonized by the Church to enforce their own teaching. Therefore, since all four Gospels are considered historically not trustworthy, these New Agers obtain their information from other sources.

One of the primary sources from which the New Agers obtain information about Jesus is early gnostic writings (59). They believe that these gnostic writings, such as "The Gospel According to Thomas" and others, give much more accurate information about Jesus. They argue that most of these writings portray accurate pictures and teachings of Jesus. They argue that Jesus was influenced heavily by the Essene community near Qumran, and that the finding of the Dead Sea Scroll supports this (60).

Another primary source from which the New Agers obtain biographical information about Jesus is (as discussed in chapter two) nineteenth and twentieth century mystical writings. The New Agers argue that these writings are historically reliable. Writings such as "The Covenant of Love," written by Upton Ewing, is one example of these

59. It would be impossible to present the topic of gnostic writings in detail. Therefore, the reader is referred to Elaine Pagels book, The Gnostic Gospels (New York, NY: Vintage Books/Random House, 1979).

60. See Ewing, Essene Christ, 29-74.

writings. Ewing argues that ". . . much of ["The Covenant of Love" is] founded upon documented historical evidence which seems to favor truth in principle as well as, to a large degree, in fact" (61). One of the most respected New Age sources of information among the nineteenth and twentieth century mystical writings about Jesus, however, is Levi's The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ. Regarding this text, Kersten argues that The Aquarian Gospel corresponds more closely to historical evidences:

Of course, modern and "rational" people are hardly likely to be impressed by a text like the Aquarian Gospel, conveyed as it was in an occult fashion to a religious person acting as a medium. The prophetic pronouncements of the canonical writings in the Bible are, however, generally accepted wholesale. Perhaps this is partly due to reverence for an old age, which accords the biblical pronouncements a special status. It is nonetheless of interest that the Aquarian Gospel corresponds more or less to the texts found by Notovitch. (62)

This brings us to the next source of the New Agers' view. They generally argue that there exist numerous writings which they believe are writings about Jesus and his stay in India.

Defending this position, New Agers such as Kersten utilize the findings in 1887 by Nicolai Notovitch, a Russian historian, who wrote The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ (63).

61. Ibid., 93.

62. Kersten, Jesus in India, 21.

63. Nicolai Notovitch, The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ (Boston, MA: Commonwealth Pub. Co., 1895(?)).

After the Russo-Turkish war, Notovitch traveled through Central Asia, Persia, Northern India and Tibet, which Edward Hale says, in the forward of Notovitch's book, is the same path that "the Saviour travelled over eighteen hundred and eighty years ago" (64).

While traveling through the border regions of Northern India and Tibet, Notovitch was informed that the manuscripts of the life of Issa--which is Jesus in Tibet--existed in the monastery of Himis. Therefore, Notovitch visited the monastery (he stayed there for many days due to his alleged accident--he broke his leg), and inquired about the life of Issa and the scroll that contained it. Notovitch claims that he was told by the Lama of Himis that the scroll of the life of Issa actually exists--that the "Convent of Hemis possessed the Tibetan translation, while the original was said to be in the library of Lhasa (the traditional capital of Tibet)" (65). Furthermore, Notovitch asserts that during his stay at the monastery of Himis, he had an opportunity to examine the scroll in the monastery, persuaded the Lama of Hemis to read him the scrolls, and also had a lengthy discussion about the life of Issa with the Lama through an interpreter. In his book, The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ, Notovitch compiles the

64. Edward Hale, from the Forward of Nicolai Notovitch's Unknown Life, 1.

65. Ron Rhodes, "The Jesus of the New Age," Christian Research Journal, Vol. XII: No. II. (Fall 1989). 16.

life of Jesus Christ from the scrolls and from his conversation with the Lama.

Many New Agers argue that writings such as discovered by Notovitch exist throughout the East. These legends are utilized by the New Agers to formulate a historical life and background of Jesus.

Most of the historical events in the four Gospels, however, do not contradict the New Age view of the historical background and life of Jesus (66). The New Agers grant most of the events during Jesus' childhood and during his ministry as written in the four Gospels. The main difference in the background and life of Jesus between orthodox Christianity and the New Agers is the combining of the Gospel narratives with the mystical writings. As will be seen in the discussion following, for example, by mixing the Eastern mystical legends to the the eighteen silent years of Jesus, the New Agers derive a very different view of Jesus.

Jesus' life was composed of various influences throughout the ancient world. From the mystic culture in Egypt and the Essene community, to the Buddhist culture in India, Jesus encountered various cultures, events, teachings and experiences. The following is an examination of the New Age

66. This is not the case with the teachings in the four Gospels. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

view of various influences and experiences that Jesus encountered (67).

The Life of Jesus as a Baby

According to the prominent New Age view of the life of Jesus, Jesus' life began in a cave in Bethlehem where animals were kept. But when Herod Antipas heard of the birth of the new King, and also of John who would prepare the way for the King, Herod wanted to kill them.

However, both infants, John and Jesus, were taken by their parents (Mary, Joseph, and Elizabeth, but not Zacharias) to Zoan (Egypt). They stayed in the house of Elihu and Salome (a Brahmic prophet and a prophetess in the Buddhist community in Egypt) (68). As Elizabeth and Mary marveled at their deliverance from Herod, Elihu said "From olden times it was ordained that you should be with us and in this sacred school be taught" (69).

During their three years stay in Zoan, Elizabeth and Mary were extensively instructed in Egyptian, Brahmic or Buddhist, Persian and Jewish doctrines by Elihu and Salome. They were taught about God and Tao, love, life, man and woman, the dual nature of man, unity of life, the savior of man, Buddha, and

67. In discussing this topic, the main focus will be given to those events that are crucial to the New Age view, but are not written in the New Testament (e.g. Jesus' experience with mystic religion in Egypt or his experience in India).

68. Levi, Aquarian Gospel, 18-21.

69. Ibid., 21.

other mystical teachings. Levi writes that "[for] three years [Elihu and Salome] taught [Elizabeth and Mary] in the sacred gove, and if their lessons all were written in a book, lo, it would be a mighty book. . ." (70).

Regarding the Buddhist community in Egypt, the New Agers argue that it existed long before the time of the Christ. Kersten argues this by referring to Professor Hassanin:

Buddhist missionary schools were said to have even existed in Alexandria long before the Christian era. They were called Viharas, which is translated by the Sanskrit Chinese Dictionary as a place "that is either an academy, a school or a temple and serves the study of practice of Buddhism. . . ." (71)

Kersten even suggests that even Jesus might have learned from these scholars during his childhood stay in Egypt.

After about three years stay in Egypt, Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary took John and Jesus back to Judea. Elizabeth and John stayed in the Engedi hills, while Joseph, Mary and Jesus went to the town of Nazareth (72).

The Life of Jesus at Nazareth and the Influence of the Essenes

Nazareth was a community that was on the trade routes between Egypt and the East; many travelers from Egypt, India, and other countries rested at Nazareth. Ewing claims that:

70. Ibid., 27.

71. Kersten, Jesus in India, 92.

72. Levi, Aquarian Gospel, 28.

Young Jesus walked among the travelers and talked with those who had knowledge. He learned of the great healing powers of the Therapeutae in Egypt, of the ethics of Confucius, Buddha, and other profound mystics of the East, and he felt at peace with the words of these great teachers." (73)

During his childhood in Nazareth, Jesus was instructed by Mary of the things that Elihu and Salome taught. Furthermore, Jesus was also influenced by the Essene culture and teachings. This is supported by Levi's Aquarian Gospel. Levi claims that Joseph "was an upright man, and a devoted Essene" (74). There is no doubt that Jesus was influenced and taught by Joseph about the Essene doctrines during his early childhood.

Regarding the Essenes, the New Agers argue that the Essenes were one of the three Jewish religious sects that existed during and before Jesus' time; two others are well known, the Pharisees and the Sadducees (75). The Essenes are believed to have resided primarily in a desert community called Qumran (only the ruins remain today) which is only a few miles from the discovery sight of the Dead Sea Scrolls (76). Kersten says that the Essenes:

73. Ewing, Essene Christ, 105.

74. Levi, Aquarian Gospel, 15.

75. The New Agers believe that the New Testament writers intentionally left out or did not mention the Essenes (whose numbers were as significant as the two other sects).

76. Many New Agers argue that the Dead Sea Scrolls support the Essene influence on Jesus--that the Dead Sea Scrolls contains many Essenic teachings that are similar to the teaching of Jesus. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

. . . called themselves "The holy community", "The poor ones", "God's chosen ones", "Men of truth", or most often "Sons of Light". The Essenes surpassed the demands of Jewish law in their spirituality, but at the same time deviated so much from it. . . .

Astonishingly enough, the Qumranians did not pray facing the temple of Jerusalem, as prescribed by Jewish law, but turned eastward in their prayers, which they said thrice daily. (77)

Nazareth, however, was also composed mainly of this religious sect. Not only Joseph but most people in Nazareth were Essenes. This can be seen in the New Agers' argument regarding the title "Jesus of Nazareth." Ewing argues that:

of all cities, towns, and villages named in the Old Testament, a place called Nazareth is nowhere indicated. It seems to have been brought to our notice as the home neighborhood of Jesus which later got its name through its people, they being mostly "Essenes," "Nazarenes," later called "Ebionites."
(78)

Since Jesus was influenced by the Essenes, New Agers believe that Jesus should be called "Jesus the Nazarene" instead of "Jesus of Nazareth." In fact, they argue that based on all the Greek manuscripts, "The Jesus of Nazareth" should be translated as "Jesus the Nazarene." Kersten argues that "the Greek manuscripts contain no such statement [as Jesus of Nazareth]. The correct version, contained in the

77. Kersten, Jesus in India, 106.

78. Ewing, Essene Christ, 79, 80.

Jerusalem Bible, is 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you shall follow'" (79).

The New Agers claim that the word "Nazarene" has its origin in Aramaic. Kersten writes:

In a figurative sense, the word also means to vow or to bind oneself to serve God. Thus a "Nazarene" was a keeper or celebrant of the sacred rites. "Nazaria" were a branch of the Essenes. . . and like the Ebonites, they were probably one of the first early Christian communities, all of which were referred to as "Nozari" in the Talmud. (80)

The Life of Jesus During the "Silent Years"

Regarding the New Age view of Jesus' life after his visit to the temple in Jerusalem, there are primarily two views. Some New Agers believe that Jesus was further taught in an Essene tradition. Others believe that Jesus traveled throughout Egypt and many Eastern countries, mastering their religions and teaching people (81).

According to the first view, after his visit to the temple, Jesus was sent to an Essene community to learn from the Essenes. Annie Besant writes:

[Jesus'] fervent devotion and gravity beyond his years led his parents to dedicate him to the religious and ascetic life, and soon after a visit to Jerusalem, in which the extraordinary intelligence and eagerness for knowledge of the youth were shown in his seeking the

79. Kersten, Jesus in India, 93.

80. Ibid., 94, 95.

81. As will be seen later, the view held by New Agers of Jesus' travel to the East has variations.

doctors in the Temple, he was sent to be trained in an Essene community in the southern Judean desert. (82)

Furthermore, Besant argues that Jesus later went on to an Essene monastery to further his learning:

When [Jesus] had reached the age of nineteen he went on to the Essene monastery near Mount Serbal, a monastery which was much visited by learned men travelling from Persia and India to Egypt, and where a magnificent library of occult works-many of them Indian of the Trans-Himalayan regions-had been established. (83)

In this monastery, Jesus mastered the religions of Egypt and the East. Here, he acquired the wisdom and teachings which he displays during his ministry--wisdom and teachings of the Essenes.

The New Agers claim that the Essenic background of Jesus cannot be mistaken, for they are different from other Jewish teachings. As illustrated in the Four Gospels, Jesus' hostility toward the Pharisees shows that he was not of the Pharisees--neither of the Sadducees; therefore, he must have been one of the Essenes. Ewing argues:

According to what the gospels indicate, his background was anything but Sadducean. Also, in view of his apparent aversion to the practices of the Pharisees, it is not likely that he had been "mothered" or instructed by members of this sect.

In consequence, the only remaining source for his astounding knowledge of the scripture must have been the "Essenes." for as Josephus "thrice" emphasizes:

82. Besant, Esoteric Christianity, 88, 89.

83. Ibid., 89.

"There were but three sects among the Jews." They were known for their industrious instruction and their zest for full knowledge of God's word. (84)

These New Agers, furthermore, argue that not only Jesus, but John the Baptist, and the followers of both John and Jesus were of Essenic background. They believe that John the Baptist, who was brought up in the desert in Judea, must have been taught by Essenes who lived in the same area. Ewing writes:

Can we any longer imagine [John] wandering about (from childhood) sustaining himself somehow in solitude in the unrelieved desolation of this wilderness and then coming forth and preaching a doctrine that is only coincidentally similar to that of the covenanters whose monastery was in the area where John is reported to have lived?

Where else shall we look when the evidence points so plausibly to the Qumran monastery? That John was, in the broader sense of the term, an Essene can scarcely be doubted. In the same broader sense were not his followers also to be numbered with the Essenes? (85)

Not only John and his followers, argue the New Agers, but James the brother of Jesus, Peter, John, Andrew, Matthew, Thomas, and perhaps even Philip and "other disciples mentioned in John" were of Essenic background. These people practiced a high ethical system and opposed sacrifice as the Essenes did (86). Ewing writes:

84. Ewing, Essene Christ, 77.

85. Ibid., 48, 49.

86. Ibid., 89.

Again, let us be reminded the Essenic background from out of which the Apostles must have come. Circumstantial evidence, as set forth in the Four Gospels, supports the validity of this examples. For example, in the various narratives wherein Jesus meets up with those who were to become his disciples, He usually is reported as saying merely, "Follow me," and they do so almost without hesitation. It is common sense to assume that these men must have had some previous briefing on the coming of the anointed one. The Essenes were the only people expecting this thing to happen, and at any moment. Being religiously schooled in the expectancy of such an event, any one of them might have been somewhat fearful not to obey the command of one whose manner and bearing indicate that he was not just an ordinary man. It seems therefore that only an Essene or one sympathetic to Essenic customs and beliefs would have reacted to the call of Jesus. Certainly no Sadducee or Pharisee would have. (87)

The second New Age view regarding Jesus' life after his visit to the temple at the age of twelve claims that Jesus acquired his wisdom and teaching from many foreign lands (88). His travel and experience is illustrated in The Aquarian Gospel.

At the age of twelve, Jesus went to the temple in Jerusalem where he disputed with the teachers of the law.

87. Ibid., 84, 85. This quotation has two problems which need to be pointed out briefly. First of all, the Essenes were not "the only people expecting" the "anointed one." For example, both Simeon and Anna of the Jerusalem temple were expecting the anointed one as well. Secondly, contrary to the passage, Pharisees such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimethia responded to "the call of Jesus."

88. The best representatives of those who hold to this view are Notovitch and Levi. Between these men, however, there is a slight difference. While Notovitch claims that Jesus went to the East with merchants, Levi claims that Jesus was taken to India by the prince Rivanna who became Jesus' patron. Except for this slight difference, the following presentation is claimed by both.

During the dispute, an Indian royal prince, Rivanna of Orissa, who was there for the feast, heard Jesus and marveled at him. So, he asked who Jesus was, and the chief of the Sanhedrin named Hillel told him that:

We call this child the Day Star from on high, for he has come to bring to men a light, the light of life; to lighten up the way of men and to redeem his people, Israel. (89)

Impressed by Jesus' wisdom, the prince invited Jesus to India in order for Jesus to deepen his study. Rivanna, therefore, became the patron of Jesus.

Jesus, then, followed Rivanna to the province of Orissa. He became a pupil in the temple of Iagannath, and studied the laws of Veda and Manu. In Orissa, Jesus became a student of Udraka, the greatest healer in India. Jesus learned the art of healing. However, due to his disagreement regarding the Brahmic doctrine of caste, Jesus was driven out from the temple. Thus, Jesus went around the region teaching the equality of men and the emptiness of Brahmic doctrine. As a result, enraged Brahmic priests drove him away from India.

Jesus went around various regions of Nepal and Persia and Assyria learning their religion, healing people, and teaching his doctrines. From Babylon, Jesus headed for home. When he arrived at Nazareth, Jesus' mother was full of joy, but his

89. Levi, Aquarian Gospel, 39.

brothers were displeased with the attention he was given--they considered him a "sheer adventurer."

Regarding the historicity of Jesus' stay in India and other countries, the New Agers refer to the manuscripts that exist in various parts in the East which contain the teachings and events that are similar to that of Jesus. As seen earlier, the New Agers argue that findings, such as that of Notovitch, support this.

From Nazareth, however, Jesus headed for Athens. Jesus desired to study the Greek philosophy which was "full of pungent truth." The Athenians, especially Apollo, who was well known as a Grecian sage, welcomed Jesus, for they heard of Jesus as a teacher and philosopher. So, throughout Greece, Jesus taught.

From Greece, Jesus sailed on to Zoan--the home of the prophet and prophetess Elihu and Salome. After dwelling there for a few days, Jesus went to the temple in Heliopolis and became a pupil. There, Jesus encountered seven tests. By successfully passing the seven tests, Jesus acquired "Christhood" (90).

Whether Jesus acquired his wisdom from the Essene community in Judea, or through his experience throughout the East and Egypt, Jesus was influenced by teachings of the mystic Eastern religions. At the age of thirty, nevertheless,

90. Further examination on these seven tests to Christhood will be done later in the section on "Initiation."

Jesus was ready to take on the task of his ministry in Judea with the teachings that are different from what is portrayed in the Four Gospels.

The Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Jesus

Throughout the three year period of Judean ministry, Jesus taught and healed many people. Most of the events that took place during these years are seen in the Four Gospels as well (91).

Regarding the crucifixion of Jesus, some New Agers agree with the accounts in the Four Gospels--that Jesus died on the cross. They also believe that Jesus, after his death, frequently visited his disciples in a spiritual body and continued teaching them. Besant writes:

[Jesus] did not forget His promise to come to [the disciples] after the world had lost sight of Him, and for something over fifty years He visited them in His subtle spiritual body, continuing the teachings He had begun while with them, and training them in a knowledge of occult truth. (92)

The risen Jesus in the the view of many New Agers is very different from that of orthodox Christianity. In this New Age view, the resurrection of Jesus in his physical body is denied. Instead, they argue that Jesus was resurrected in his immaterialized or spiritual body.

91. However, as will be seen in the section on Jesus' teaching, the New Age view of his teaching during these years, is very different from what is seen in the Four Gospels.

92. Besant, Esoteric Christianity, 93.

Regarding the resurrected body of Jesus, Geisler, in The Battle for the Resurrection, shows the three distinctions between this New Age view and the orthodox Christian view. First, the resurrected body of this New Age view is different from the pre-resurrection body, but a body ". . . , composed of a different kind of substance, called 'flesh of God.'" Second, Jesus' body in this New Age view is "essentially invisible and immaterial." Thus when Jesus appeared to his disciples, he did not appear in his true body, but in a materialized body--"as angels (who are spirits) did in the Bible." Third, this New Age view results in a resurrection being a non-historical event. "It was a movement from the visible, historical realm to the invisible, nonhistorical realm" (93).

The New Agers such as Levi believe that Jesus' body was immaterialized after his death--his body was transmuted into the higher form. When Jesus' body was transmuted into the higher form, it became divine--it became the flesh of God. Levi calls this "the transmutation of the flesh of carnal man to the flesh of man divine" (94). This transmutation takes place when the Holy Breath "raise[s] the substance of the body to a higher tone, and make[s] it like the substance of the

93. Norman Geisler, The Battle for the Resurrection (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 85-86.

94. Levi, Aquarian Gospel, 253.

bodies of the planes above, which human eyes cannot behold" (95).

Once flesh of carnal man becomes the flesh of divine, the divine flesh can manifest itself to other forms. This was the case with Jesus and his body. According to Levi, ". . . Jesus said, Behold, for human flesh can be transmuted into higher form, and then that higher form is master of things manifest, and can, at will, take any form" (96).

The appearance of Jesus to his disciples was possible because Jesus, who was transmuted to immaterialized divine body, materialized himself. But in true essence, the body of the resurrected Jesus was not the same flesh which he had before his death.

There are, however, other New Agers, such as Kersten, who argue that Jesus did not actually die on the cross. Jesus only appeared to be dead. Kersten questions Jesus' death, for it seems improbable that Jesus, who was healthy, died within such a short time--a time span of approximately three hours (97).

Kersten believes that Jesus only appeared to be dead. He suggests that the "vinegar" that Jesus drank before he "gave up the ghost," might have been a liquid similar to a Persian or Indian cultic medicine. He continues that "the holy soma

95. Ibid., 255.

96 . Levi, Aquarian Gospel, 248.

97. Kersten, Jesus in India, 152, 153.

drink of India enabled anyone familiar with the drug to appear dead for several days, and to awake afterwards in an elated state that lasts a few days" (98).

Another reason for the position that Jesus did not die on the cross is the condition of Jesus' body. The body of Jesus, argues Kersten, was supposed to have been hung on the cross for three hours. He continues that according to the latest (99) findings in thanatology (the study of death), a man's body assumes rigor mortise where the muscles become rigid. Depending on the temperature (the higher the sooner), this process is completed within three to six hours. In Jesus' case, hanging three hours on the cross should have completed the process. Since he was on the cross for three hours, his body must have sagged, legs bent, and head fallen on his chest. But based on the impression on the Shroud of Turin, argues Kersten, Jesus' body was laid flat. "The fact that there was obviously no rigor mortise when Jesus was taken from the cross is proof enough that he was not dead" (100).

In addition, another evidence that Jesus did not die on the cross, is the blood circulation that is seen on the shroud. Kersten argues that medical evidences indicate that

98. Ibid., 153. For more detailed information, refer to 152-155 in Kersten's book.

99. Despite Kersten's claim of this being the most recent or latest finding, this has been known for probably centuries.

100. Kersten, Jesus in India, 56, 57.

corpses do not bleed (especially if the bleeding spot is positioned above the heart).

In Jesus' case, there were a total of twenty-eight wounds that continued to bleed even after his removal from the cross. It can be regarded as a fact that Jesus could not possibly have been dead when his body was laid in the sepulcher. (101)

These New Agers argue that Jesus, who was not dead, regained his consciousness after a few days in the tomb. In fact, they argue that Jesus went back to the East.

Jesus first went to Damascus with Thomas (one of the apostles) where he seem to have resided for sixteen years. Kersten argues that "there are various documents that refer to Jesus' stay in Persia" (102).

The Life of Jesus After the Crucifixion

From Damascus, Jesus is "supposed to have travelled [to Nisibis (Nusaybin)] with his mother" (103). From there, Jesus went to Andrapolis (Iskilip), and then to India. Throughout the Indian region, Jesus, with the assistance of Thomas, performed the ministry of teaching and healing (104).

By the time Jesus reached Kashmir (located in the northern region of India), Jesus became known as "Yuz Asaf".

101. Ibid., 169.

102. Ibid., 189.

103. Ibid., 179.

104. The Gospel According to Thomas contains the purported teachings of Jesus. Thomas wrote what Jesus said during their stay in India.

Jesus acquired this name by healing lepers. "Yuz" means leader, and "Asaf" is referred to some lepers that were healed by Jesus. Therefore, Jesus was known as the leader of the healed lepers (105). Furthermore, Jesus was also known as "Issa" to Islam. Kersten claims that this name which "commonly applies to Jesus in Islam, derives from the Syrian form Yeshu, being altered to conform to Musa (=Moses)" (106).

The New Agers argue that there are many evidences that support Jesus' stay in India and the East. Kersten argues that there exists what is assumed to be the tomb of Mary (mother of Jesus) in Mari/Pakistan--ruled by Hindu in Jesus' time. He claims that "the monument continues to be honored as the final resting-place of Jesus' mother by members of the Islamic faith, because Jesus (Issa) is also considered one of the most exalted prophets in the Islamic faith (107).

Furthermore, a wall in which the saying of Jesus was engraved was found in the ruined Indian city of Fatehpur Sikri. This writing was attributed to Akbar the Great (1542-1605) who built the city. The engraving reads "Jesus (Peace be with him) has said: 'The world is a bridge. Pass over it, but do not settle on it!'" Although many scholars attribute the saying to the influence of Islam, Kersten disagrees. He argues that the engraving and the sayings of Jesus contained

105. Kersten, Jesus in India, 184.

106. Ibid., 192.

107. Ibid., 187.

in the Gospel of Thomas are very similar, both in form and content (108).

In addition, Kersten argues that "there are at least twenty-one historical documents bearing witness to Jesus' stay in Kashmir" (109). On the other hand, "it has finally become possible to assert that it is not possible to disprove Jesus' stay in India in view of the body of knowledge which current research on Jesus provides" (110).

In the New Age view of Jesus, Jesus encountered various religions in the East and was influenced from them. Therefore, due to this purported background, Jesus is portrayed as a mystic.

THE ATTAINMENT OF CHRISTHOOD AND INITIATION OF JESUS

According to the New Age view, Jesus was an ordinary man, who was born in a poor but well-cultured family. Jesus had the same carnal nature just like other men. Like an ordinary man, Jesus had a dual nature. Within Jesus was a "natural man" which is the lower nature. Co-existing in him was a "spiritual or divine man" which is the higher nature. Bailey says:

That divinity is there, and nothing can touch or hide it; it is radiance and pure white light. But the

108. Ibid., 190.

109. Ibid., 200.

110. Ibid., 19.

manhood is there also, a guarantee to us of our opportunity and of our potentialities, and endorsement of our faith. (111)

Through his experience and his devoted effort, Jesus' higher nature conquered the lower nature; the two natures were unified or integrated. "It is integration which Christ so fully exemplified, thus resolving the dualities of higher and lower in Himself, making 'of twain one new man,' . . ." (112). By unifying the two natures, Jesus "became divine." By unifying the two natures, Jesus became one of the Masters of the Wisdom--like Moses and Buddha. Jesus became the Christ.

Initiation to the Christhood

The process of Jesus' initiation to Christhood is accounted in the Aquarian Gospel (113). Jesus became the Christ by successfully completing the seven tests in an Egyptian temple. The three years of Jesus' ministry, as seen in the Four Gospels, took place after Jesus has attained the Christhood.

By successfully overcoming each of the seven tests at the temple of Herapolis, Jesus acquired various titles--the degrees of brotherhood. All the six tests led up to the seventh and final test. By successfully overcoming the seventh test, Jesus earned the title of the Christ.

111. Bailey, Bethlehem to Calvary, 55.

112. Ibid., 139.

113. Levi's account of Jesus' initiation will be summarized in the next several paragraphs.

When Jesus sailed to Egypt from Greece, Jesus went to the temple of Herapolis where he pleaded for admission. Once granted an admission to the temple, Jesus went through seven tests in a mystical setting. The first six tests were taken in various dark rooms or halls within the temple during midnights when Jesus seems to have been in a sleep. The seventh test, however, took place at the place called the "Chamber of Death."

The first brotherhood test that Jesus encountered took place in the "chamber of hypocrisy." On one midnight during these days of testing in the temple, a tempter appeared to Jesus and told Jesus that the priests were plotting to keep him in the temple, and that only way he could escape is by deceiving them. But by refusing to practice deceit, Jesus successfully passed the test, and earned his first degree of SINCERITY.

At the second test, Jesus was left alone in a dark chamber. At midnight, two men dressed as a priest appeared to Jesus, and told him that the priests in the temple would sacrifice Jesus. They told him that he should break away with them. But Jesus refused their suggestion by telling them that he would not prejudge the priests in the temple. Jesus then earned his second degree of JUSTICE.

The third test took place in the "Hall of Fame," a chamber that was luxuriously decorated. A demon disguised as a priest appeared to Jesus, and tempted Jesus to stop the

search for uncertainty and reach for the evident fame to which the world would tribute to Jesus. After the bitter battle, the battle between Jesus' "higher nature" and the "lower nature," the "higher nature" overcame the "lower nature." Jesus reaffirmed the vanity of the world. Thus, Jesus earned his third degree of FAITH.

After a few days, Jesus was taken to the "Hall of Mirth," which was richly furnished. A man dressed as a sage appeared to Jesus and told him that he should seek for pleasure. He told Jesus of the foolishness of living for other men. Jesus, however, refused and insisted that he found pleasure in helping his poor brothers and sisters. Therefore, Jesus was given the fourth degree of the brotherhood, PHILANTHROPY.

After about four days, when Jesus was walking through the temple grove, someone bound Jesus and cast him into the dark den of wild animals. There, however, Jesus showed his courage. When Jesus erected himself in the midst of the beasts, the chain that bound Jesus broke loose. Jesus, who knew that light is only the breath of God, stirred up the ether and created the light in the den. Jesus then realized that one need not fear anything. He said:

. . ., of what are souls afraid? Fear is the chariot in which man rides to death;

And when he finds himself within the chamber of the dead, he learns that he has been deceived; his chariot was a myth, and death a fancy child.

But some day all man's lessons will be learned, and from the den of unclean beasts, and birds, and

creeping things he will arise to walk in light.
(114)

Jesus is now awarded the brotherhood degree of HEROISM.

When Jesus overcame the fear, he had earned the right to enter "the Beauty Parlours of the temple of the sun." In the "Hall of Harmony" Jesus' carnal love had been tested when he saw a maid singing. "A love-flame had been kindled in his soul, and he was brought to face the sorest trial of his life" (115). Jesus' two natures were in conflict between the companionship of the maid and the the work that he was sent to do (to show the divine love). At the end, however, Jesus' "higher nature" triumphed again. He said that "although my heart shall break I will not fail in this my hardest task; I will be victor over carnal love." He was then given a scroll which said LOVE DIVINE.

After the sixth test, Jesus became a private pupil of the hierophant. From the hierophant, Jesus leaned the ". . . mystic lore of Egypt land; the mysteries of life and death and of the worlds beyond the circle of the sun" (116). When his learning was over, Jesus went into the Chamber of the Dead, hoping to learn the ancient method of preserving dead bodies. In the chamber, Jesus encountered a little girl from whom Jesus heard the following:

114. Levi, Aquarian Gospel, 79.

115. Ibid., 80.

116. Ibid., 81.

. . . that grief and selfish love, and hopes and fears are but reflexes from the lower self;

That what we sense are but small waves upon the rolling billows of a life.

These all will pass away; they are unreal.

Tears flow from hearts of flesh; the spirit never weeps; and I am longing for the day when I will walk in light, where tears are wiped away.

. . . all emotions are the sprays that rise from human loves, and hopes, and fears; that perfect bliss cannot be ours till we have conquered these. (117)

When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said "for days and months and years I've sought to learn this highest truth that man can learn on earth, and here a child, fresh brought to earth, has told it all in one short breath" (118).

When the duty at the Chamber of the Dead was complete, Jesus, who was dressed in a purple robe, stood before the hierophant and other priests. There, he was given the last degree. The hierophant confirmed the Christhood to Jesus. He said:

Upon your brow I place this diadem, and in the Great Lodge of the heavens and earth you are THE CHRIST.

This is your great Passover rite. You are a neophyte no more; but not a master mind.

Now, man can do no more; but God himself will speak, and will confirm your title and degree.

Go on your way, for you must preach the gospel of good will to men and peace on earth; must open up the prison doors and set the captives free. (119)

117. Ibid., 82.

118. Ibid.

119. Ibid.

During this, an event that took place during Jesus' baptism occurred. "A pure white dove descended from above and sat on Jesus' head. And then a voice that shook the very temple said, THIS IS THE CHRIST; and every living creature said, AMEN" (120).

When Jesus acquired the Christhood, the Christ dwelt in the man Jesus, in order to display the divinity of each man. Besant writes:

The historical Christ, then, is a glorious Being belonging to the great spiritual hierarchy that guides the spiritual evolution of humanity, who used for some three years the human body of the disciple Jesus; who spent the last of these three years in public teaching throughout Judea and Samaria; who was a healer of diseases, and performed other remarkable occult work; . . . and who was finally put to death for blasphemy, for teaching the inherent Divinity of Himself and of all men. He came to. . . proclaim the existence of the "Kingdom of Heaven," of the Initiation which admits to that knowledge of God which is eternal life. . . . (121)

Five Initiation Processes

As discussed above, some New Agers (such as Levi), in arguing for the acquisition and/or realization of Jesus' divinity, stress Jesus' acquisition of his Christhood at the temple of Herapolis. However, others (such as Bailey whose teachings will be discussed following) stress the "five initiation process" in which he demonstrated to all men the divinity in himself and in all men.

120. Ibid., 89.

121. Besant, Esoteric Christianity, 96.

Jesus' mission concerned the Whole (the creation)--to serve the world. Jesus' mission was to exemplify the potentiality of humanity and lead people to discovering their own divinity.

Initiation is a point which one advances from one level to the next level--becoming closer and closer to the divinity. At the initiation, one realizes the divinity in himself, and the duty which he is to perform. Bailey writes:

The gradual revelation of the Plan and its service always accompanies the initiation process; the individual learns to subordinate his life to the Will of the Father, and to become--as Christ became--the servant of that Will. (122)

At each of Jesus' initiations, Jesus realized his divinity more and more, and was revealed his mission to the world. Jesus' initiation process, however, also exemplified the divinity in each man. Through his initiation, Jesus manifested the potential of humanity. He showed how each man can become divine by finding the divinity in him.

In the life of Jesus the Christ, there were five initiations. The five initiations were his birth, his baptism, his transfiguration, his crucifixion, and his resurrection (123). Bailey writes:

122. Bailey, Bethlehem to Calvary, 48.

123. See also the section on "Initiation" in the chapter three of this paper.

In these five episodes the whole story of initiation is told; birth, subsequent purification in order that right manifestation of Deity may follow, revelation of the nature of God through the medium of a transfigured personality, and finally the goal--life eternal and unending because decentralized and freed from the self-imposed limitations of form.(124)

The story and the first initiation of Jesus begins with the birth in a cave in winter. This event, however, is not unique to Jesus, but is common to the birth of other sages who led the humanity--these sages are called "Sun-Gods" or "Solar Gods." Bailey writes:

In this continuity (which is the basis of our faith in the love of God) there have been, as we have seen, many Words sent forth from the Center. Many Sons of God, down the ages, have given to humanity a progressively revealing vision of the "heights of possibility," The uniformity of their life story, the appearance again and again of the Virgin Mother (whose name is frequently a variation of the name Mary), the similarity in detail of the birth story, all indicate to us the constant re-enactment of the truth, (125)

Jesus' birth in the winter is similar to the birth of these sages. Besant writes that the "Sun-God" "is always born at the winter solstice, after the shortest day in the year, at the midnight of the 24th of December, when the sign Virgo is rising above the horizon. . ." (126).

124. Bailey, Bethlehem to Calvary, 137.

125. Ibid., 57.

126. Besant, Esoteric Christianity, 107.

Virgin birth is also common with the birth of Sun-God.

Besant argues that:

Isis of Egypt like Mary of Bethlehem was our Immaculate Lady, Star of the Sea, Queen of Heaven, Mother of God. . . . The Virgo of the Zodiac is represented in ancient drawings as a woman suckling a child--the type of all future Madonnas with their divine Babes, showing the origin of the symbol. Devaki is likewise figured with the divine Krishna in her arms, as is Mylitta, or Ista, of Babylon, [And] in the Chinese account [Buddha] is born of a virgin, Mayadevi. . . . (127)

Thus, Jesus was born of a virgin as Buddha, Krishna and other sages were born of a virgin.

Another similarity between the birth of Jesus and of other sages is that they were all born in a cave. The New Agers argue that the stable that Jesus was born is actually a cave. Bailey argues:

In the symbolic language of esotericism, a cave is regarded as the place of initiation. . . , and we are told that "it is well known that where as in the Gospels Jesus is said to have been born in an inn stable, early Christian writers, as Justin Martyr and Origen, explicitly say He was born in a cave.

(128)

The first initiation of Jesus, therefore, showed the appearance of God. It showed the birth of God who became flesh.

127. Ibid., 108-109, 111.

128. Bailey, Bethlehem to Calvary, 59. Here, Bailey quotes from J. M. Robertson's Pagan Christ, 338.

The second initiation of Jesus is the baptism at Jordan River, which served as the initiation of purification of Jesus' consciousness. In this initiation, "the keynote is purification, and it closed a period of preparation of quiet service, and inaugurated a cycle of strenuous activity" (129).

At the Jordan River Jesus entered the river and let the water pass over him. This is the actual symbol of purification. Bailey argues that the same initiation in India is called "entering the stream," and the ones who go through the experience demonstrated the purity of body and soul (130). Without this purification, one cannot discover his divinity. Bailey writes:

The word "purity" comes from the Sankrit word pur, which means freedom from alloy, from limitation and from the imprisoning of the spirit in the chains of matter. There can be no achievement without purification; there is no possibility of our seeing and manifesting divinity without passing through the waters that cleanse. (131)

At the initiation of the purification, Jesus proved his maturity to God and men. Jesus stood before God and men, and manifested the readiness to undergo his mission. Jesus, as purified and matured divine man, stood before God:

At the second initiation Christ stood before God, . . . , with all these aspects purified and matured; His

129. Bailey, Bethlehem to Calvary, 96, 97.

130. Ibid., 98.

131. Ibid., 97.

mechanism was adjusted and ready for the task, and thus enabled to give proof of that purification and tension in attitude which would enable Him to carry through His mission. . . . This He had to prove to God and man through the purification which the baptism could give, and through the subsequent temptations in the wilderness. (132)

After his manifestation of purity, Jesus realized his mission as the Christ. He sought for solitude where he could meditate and reflect on his divinity and duty. There, however, Jesus faced three temptations during forty days. The temptation was aimed at Jesus' physical or lower nature. Bailey writes:

The crux of the situation, as far as Christ was concerned, was that these three temptations were climaxing tests, in which the three aspects of the lower nature were involved. They were synthetic temptations. In them was no petty, trifling, silly tempting, but the gathering up of the forces of the threefold lower man--physical, emotional and mental--into one last effort to control the Son of God.
(133)

By overcoming the temptations, however, Jesus conquered his lower nature(s), and manifested the divinity.

. . . [Jesus] had conquered the extremes of His nature, its highest and lowest aspects. He expressed now the quality of divinity. The divine reality which He sensed and upon which He relied was potent to penetrate the maya and dispel the glamour. Pure desire was left--desire for God. He had been tried in two aspects of His nature--the material and the

132. Ibid., 89.

133. Ibid., 110.

divine--and as God-Man He overcame the evil one.
(134)

By conquering the lower aspects of his nature, Jesus had proved that the purified God-Man was ready to take on the mission that lie ahead--He was ready to perform his duty as the Christ.

The third initiation took place at Jesus' transfiguration on the Mount of Olive. This third experience, like any other things, is not unique to Christianity. In the Orient, this event is called "hut" initiation (135).

At this initiation, Jesus the Christ manifested the "at-one-ment" between soul and body. Jesus unified the lower nature of man and the higher nature of divinity--the unification of God and Man has been made within himself.

Bailey writes:

Christ, therefore, at the Transfiguration, unified in Himself God and Man, His developed Personality blending with His Individuality. He stood forth as the perfect expression of the uttermost possibility to which humanity could aspire. The dualities of which mankind is so distressingly the expression, met in Him, and resulted in a synthesis of such perfection that, for all time, He determined the goal of our race. (136)

The glory of Jesus the Christ, the unified duality, was manifested at the transfiguration as was never has done before

134. Ibid., 127.

135. Ibid., Bethlehem to Calvary, 159.

136. Ibid., 142.

by his predecessors (at least not to this degree)--the manifestation of Jesus' glory was an evolutionary development which begun even before the time of Buddha. When Jesus was glorified, the disciples that were with him saw God in Jesus.

The third initiation, however, was more than just the manifestation of God in Jesus. It was also the occasion of the revelation of what is to come--Jesus, perhaps for the first time, clearly saw the suffering that lay ahead. Jesus saw "the via dolorosa of a World Savior stretched out before him; the destiny of all pioneering souls climaxed in His experience, and He saw Himself rejected, pilloried and killed, as many lesser sons of God" (137). This was also the time of testing. Jesus was faced with the decision of facing the suffering, death, and rejection by people (138). Jesus, nonetheless, overcame the test and was ready to face his next initiation--the initiation of crucifixion.

The New Agers argue that the crucifixion event was Jesus' ultimate sacrifice for the world. Throughout his life, according to the New Agers, Jesus taught men to become divine. On the cross, Jesus showed mankind "that divinity can manifest and can truly express itself only when man, as man, has died in order that the hidden Christ may live" (139). Therefore, on the cross, Jesus bore a testimony to his teaching.

137. Ibid., 165.

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid., 94.

The New Agers argue that the crucifixion event is not an individual event, but a cosmic event (140). Jesus' dying on the cross represents the cosmic Christ--the idea that existed in many pagan religions. The cosmic Christ "personifies the immolation or sacrifice of spirit upon the cross of matter, of form or substance, in order that all divine forms, including the human, may live" (141). This idea of the cosmic Christ being crucified existed earlier than Christianity. Bailey writes:

If symbolism of the cross is traced far back, it will be found that it antedates Christianity by thousands of years, and that finally, the four arms of the cross will be seen to drop away, leaving only the picture of the living Heavenly Man, with His arms outspread in space. North, south, east and west stands the cosmic Christ upon what is called "the fixed cross of the heavens." Upon this cross God is eternally crucified.
(142)

The final initiation in the life of Jesus is his resurrection (143). When Jesus rose from the dead, Jesus

140. The New Age view of sacrifice, however, is different from that of Orthodox Christianity. The New Agers reject the blood sacrifice of Jesus and the idea of sin. See Bailey, Bethlehem to Calvary, 194-197.

141. Ibid., 181.

142. Ibid.

143. As seen in the last section, this New Age view of the resurrection is different from the orthodox view of the resurrection. The New Agers believe that Jesus did not rise from the dead in his own physical body, but that his resurrected body was immaterial.

manifested his immortality--immortality resulting from his divinity (144). Bailey says:

[Jesus'] immortality was based upon His divinity. His divinity expressed itself through human form, and in that form evidenced value, destiny, service and purpose. All of these He demonstrated perfectly and therefore death could not hold Him, nor could the chains of the grave prevent His liberation.

(145)

Jesus not only manifested his immortality and divinity, but also testified to the immortality and divinity in each man. This is seen when Jesus said "What I have done all men can do, and what I am all men shall be" (146). By his resurrection,

144. In general, immortality, in New Age view, refers to survival of a person's consciousness beyond death. When a person dies, he leaves his physical body, but retains consciousness. The physical body is a temporary container of consciousness. Thus, even if one's body is dead, consciousness remains.

The goal for a person, in the New Age view in general, is to unite his consciousness with God or the consciousness of God. However, a point should be made in that since God's consciousness is impersonal, and since the ultimate goal of a person is to be united with God's consciousness, it seems that the person's consciousness becomes impersonal when the ultimate goal is achieved. (As a reflection of divergency of the New Age movement, some New Agers hold to the typical Buddhist view in which a person's consciousness is lost and that he experiences next to nothing, while other New Agers hold to the typical Hindu view in which a person experiences a spiritual bliss. Nevertheless, both views still lead to the impersonal consciousness of a person when at the achievement of the ultimate goal.) This is different from the Christian view of immortality which believes that a person survives death and remains in the state of personhood.

145. Bailey, Bethlehem to Calvary, 194-197.

146. Levi, Aquarian Gospel, 255.

Jesus showed that there is no death to those who follow the leading of the Christ.

Like other initiations, Jesus' resurrection was not an isolated event. The rising of Jesus on the third day is a familiar story. Many Sons of God have died and risen from the dead (many on the third day). Bailey says that one of the early Church Fathers, named Firmicus Maternus, claims that "the mysteries of Osiris bear a close resemblance to the Christian teaching, and that after the resurrection of Osiris his friends rejoice together, saying, 'We have found him'" (147). There are other sages, such as Tammuz, Zoroaster, Esculapius, Hercules, Mithra, and others, whose legends claim the similar story of Jesus' resurrection (148).

Through his attainment of the Christhood in Egypt, and through his five initiations, Jesus the Christ gave humanity the path in which each person can follow. By following this path, each person can find the divinity within him, and become God.

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS THE CHRIST

In the New Age view, the teachings of Jesus Christ is comprised of the best teachings prior to his time. His teaching, due to the influence of the Eastern religions on

147. Bailey, Bethlehem to Calvary, 237.

148. Ibid., 236-237.

Jesus, is very different from that of the orthodox Christianity.

The Teachings of Jesus and of Other Leaders of Humanity

In general, the teachings of Jesus (regarding such as God, man, love, and others), in the New Age view, are similar to that of other leaders of humanity prior to him. The similar teaching were given by Moses, Manu, Buddha and other sages who accomplished their mission to lead humanity. Jesus' teaching, however, is different only in that his teaching sums up all the best teachings in the past. On this Bailey says:

In the fullness of time Christ came and, if evolution means anything at all and if the race as a whole has developed and unfolded its consciousness, the message He gave and the life He lived must necessarily sum up all the best in the past, (149)

Thus, Jesus' teaching led people further than any other sages before him.

The Teachings of Jesus and That of Orthodox Christianity

According to this New Age view of Jesus' teaching, Jesus taught many things that are contrary to the orthodox Christian belief of the teachings of Jesus. First of all, the New Agers argue that, due to the Eastern influence, Jesus taught that all men are gods--he said that "the sons of men, even as the Scriptures affirm, are therefore gods" (150). As seen in the section on Jesus' initiation, Jesus revealed the divinity of

149. Ibid., 58.

150. Ewing, Essene Christ, 136.

each man and taught them to do likewise. This is contrary to doctrine of redemption through Jesus Christ in the orthodox Christian teaching. Secondly, Jesus taught love between brothers, and tolerance of others.

When one examines the Jesus and his teaching closely, it is evident that one cannot find any trace of the doctrine of blood sacrifice and salvation. Regarding this, Kersten writes:

There is no hint of the so-called Christian doctrine of salvation in the gospels, either in the Sermon on the Mount--the quintessence of Jesus' Message--or in the Our Father, or the traditional parables of Jesus. Were it really so important, Jesus would of course have given at least some indication that his "sacrificial death" meant the salvation of mankind. Any intentional withholdings of the facts would have been quite incompatible with his living ethics.
(151)

The New Agers argue that Jesus did not teach the doctrine of salvation, and that this is the fabrication of his teaching by his disciples.

In fact, argues the New Agers, most of the teachings on the Christian doctrine of salvation are formulated by Paul. Jesus never intended to teach this. Kersten argues that:

. . . it is precisely this salvation doctrine of traditional Christianity which rests almost exclusively on Paul, and was never promulgated by Jesus in this form.

Paul taught that the whole function of Jesus centered on his death which released the faithful from

151. Kersten, Jesus in India, 214.

burden of their sins, their misery and the power of Satan. (152)

Kersten believes that Paul's Epistles contain not even a single word of Jesus' teaching; "instead, [Paul] just spreads his own philosophy and his own ideas" (153).

By formulating the doctrine of blood sacrifice, Paul has caused Christianity to regress to "the primitive Semitic religions." Paul has made Christianity the religion of fear--the religion of fear that always demands obedience with the threat of wrath. This religion, argues the New Agers, "is largely an artificial doctrine of rules and precepts, created by Paul and more worthy of the designation 'Paulinism'. . . . it replaced Christ's gospel with a gospel about Christ" (154).

The New Agers believe that Paul's doctrine of salvation stems from the Pharisaic background of Paul. Despite his will to follow Jesus, Paul did not give up the practice of temple sacrifices. On this, Ewing writes:

Paul was a striking example of this inherited Phariseean influence for in spite of his 'spiritual illumination' he still publicly, if not within his own heart, subscribed to the temple sacrifices, the slaughter of animals for food, and the practice of slavery. (155)

152. Ibid., 212.

153. Ibid.

154. Ibid., 28.

155. Ewing, Essene Christ, 84.

Because of Paul's doctrine of salvation, Jesus' teaching of love and tolerance was replaced by the dogmatism of the orthodox Christianity. Throughout his life, Jesus taught "Tolerance, unprejudiced acceptance of others, giving and sharing, the capacity to take upon oneself the burdens of others, in other words unlimited love in action and service for one's fellow human beings. . ." (156). Paul's doctrine of salvation demanded the exclusivity or supremacy of the Christian faith--claiming that only by conversion to Christianity, a person will attain the salvation. Otherwise, one must face eternal damnation.

Essenes and Eastern Religions on the Teachings of Jesus

The New Agers believe that Jesus' teaching was greatly influenced by the teachings of the Essene community and/or the teachings of the eastern religions (mainly Buddhism). It is obvious that Jesus was influenced by the religions around which he grew up and traveled. The teachings of the Essene community and the eastern religions are similar in many ways.

Those who believe that Jesus spent most of his childhood in the Essene community and monastery, believe that Jesus' teaching reflects the teachings of the Essene community. The New Agers, first of all, argue based on the fact that many of the fundamental customs of the Essenes were practiced by the early Christians. The New Agers argue that the early Christians have carried over "the fundamental customs and

156. Kersten, Jesus in India, 214.

beliefs which characterized the religious practice of the Essenes. In fact, as some scholars have pointed out, early Jewish Christianity was Essenic Christianity" (157).

Secondly, argue the New Agers, Jesus' teaching on riches is very similar to that of the Essenes. Such sayings of Jesus as "Blessed are the Meek" or "Blessed are the poor in Spirit," and other passages are not found in any of the teachings in Judaism, "'except among the Therapeutae in Egypt, who may have had some relationship to the Essenes'" (158).

Thirdly, the New Agers argue that the ethical teaching of Jesus is similar to that of Essenes. Ewing argues that the following three ethical codes are not found in the teachings of the Pharisees, that of the Sadducees, nor any other religions throughout the near-eastern religions:

1. Freedom for all men from the bounds of forced servitude.
2. (a) Rejection of the whole sacrificial system in favor of mercy and the knowledge of God.
(b) Abstinence both from strong drink and the flesh of animals where life has been.
3. To do violence to no creature, nor to take up arms against one's brother but instead to teach that all men should love and be at peace with one another with God.

Ewing continues that "the many documentary and circumstantial 'evidences of proof'" show that the three ethical codes were

157. Ewing, Essene Christ, 75.

158. Ibid., 64. Here, Ewing quotes Duncan Howlett's An Interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls (N.Y., N.Y.: Harper & Brothers (date not given)).

strictly practiced by "the Esseno-Christian communities" (159).

Fourthly, the New Agers argue that the content of John's Gospel is closely connected with the ideas and teachings of the Essenes. Again, Ewing argues that "the language and ideas of the Fourth Gospel are so closely connected with Essene thought as represented in the Qumran documents that 'one may suppose that in John's portrayal of Jesus we have the Essene Christ" (160). Therefore, since the content of the Fourth Gospel is connected to Essene teachings, Jesus' teaching must have been influenced by Essenes.

There are, however, other New Agers who believe that Jesus' teaching was influenced by Eastern religions, mainly by Buddhism. They believe that Jesus obviously learned many truths during his travel throughout the regions of India (161).

One of the reasons for New Agers' argument for this is the comparison between Jesus and Buddha. They believe that the life of Jesus is very similar to that of Buddha. As Mary was visited by an angel to announce the virgin birth, so was Queen Maya. As the priest Simeon in the temple of Jerusalem waited for the savior, so did Asita. Also, both Jesus and Buddha begun their career at the age of thirty, and led

159. Ewing, Essene Christ, 64.

160. Ibid., 50.

161. This was discussed in the section of the life of Jesus.

disciples who were poor. And finally, both Jesus and Buddha criticized the meaningless ritualistic traditions (162).

The New Agers also argue that there are many Buddhist teachings found in the teachings of Jesus. Regarding their ethical teachings, they both teach against murder, stealing, etc., they both resist evil, they both encourage their followers to love their enemies, and to not focus on worldly goods. Furthermore, they both called themselves "Son of Man" while others called them "Prophet", "Master" and "Lord". When Buddha was called the "Eye of the World" Jesus was similarly called the "Light of the World." As did Jesus, Buddha also claimed to know God, and that he is the way to the salvation. Moreover, both Buddha and Jesus healed people miraculously. Regarding these and additional parallels, Kersten says that "The parallels are numerous and there are passages which coincide almost literally" (163).

The New Agers argue that the above evidences show that Jesus' teaching was influenced by Buddhism. Kersten believes that there are "far more than one hundred passages which give a clear indication that their roots go back to the older Buddhist tradition" (164).

In the New Age view of the teachings of Jesus, therefore, the orthodox Christian's claim that Jesus taught the doctrine

162. Kersten, Jesus in India, 75-76.

163. Ibid., 77.

164. Ibid., 74.

of salvation through blood sacrifice must be rejected. Instead, it seems that, with the influence of Essenic of Eastern religion, Jesus taught the tolerance and love of brothers, rather than the dogmatism of the orthodox Christianity.

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Since the New Agers disregard the New Testament, the main New Age source of the information concerning Jesus (other than Akashic Records and Gnostic writings) is the account by Nicolai Notovitch. During his expedition in Tibet and in India, he discovered the writings which contained the life of Jesus. Utilizing this finding, New Agers such as Kersten assert that Jesus traveled throughout the East and acquired the pantheistic philosophy which he taught.

According to the New Age view of Jesus, he was born in a family and culture that was strongly influenced by mysticism (such as Gnosticism and Essene doctrine, and Egyptian and Hindu religions). Jesus acquired his knowledge throughout his life from these religions.

Through his life, Jesus showed mankind the way to discover the divinity of individuals. Jesus manifested this through the process of initiation to his Christhood and/or divinity.

Due to the influence of the many Eastern religions, Jesus' teaching, as seen in the New Age view, is very

different from traditional Christianity. The New Agers argue that Jesus did not teach the doctrine of sacrifice, but of tolerance. Traditional Christianity, which affirms the doctrine of sacrifice and claims exclusivity, is the fabrication of Jesus' disciples--especially Paul.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE OF THE NEW AGE VIEW
OF JESUS CHRIST

As we have seen in the previous chapters, according to the New Age view, Jesus was a mere man who dedicated himself to be used by the Christ. Throughout his lifetime, Jesus was influenced by many religions of the world. This resulted in his pantheistic teaching of divinity of all men within himself.

This chapter will evaluate and critique the New Age view of Jesus Christ. The discussions in this chapter will be as follows: 1) the influence of the Essenes on Jesus; 2) Jesus' travel to the East; 3) the crucifixion of Jesus; 4) the reliability of the New Testament writers and documents; 5) Paul's doctrine of redemption and deity of Jesus; 6) the deity of Jesus; and 7) the New Agers' esoterism, confusing world views, and picking and choosing texts.

THE INFLUENCE OF ESSENES ON JESUS

Black and White Fallacy

One of the major New Agers' arguments for the influence of the Essenes on Jesus' life and on his teaching is based on the fact that Jesus was neither a Pharisee nor a Sadducee. Therefore, Jesus must have been of the Essenes--the only other

religious sect in that time besides the two previous mentioned.

This argument, however, must be rejected on the grounds of a logical fallacy--it is a clear example of the argument from ignorance (Argumentum ad Ignorantiam - an argument that assumes its proposition to be true on the basis that it has not been proven false), and commits the black-and-white fallacy. Their argument may be true if and only if there were only three religious sects in Palestine and that Jesus had to come from one of these sects. But this criteria is not granted to the New Agers. There may have been one or more additional religious sects during Jesus' time; but there is no reason why Jesus had to be associated with any of the three religious sects. There might have been other religious sects he could have come from. Furthermore, Jesus might not have come from any sect, but from God the Father, as He said (Jn. 17).

John the Baptist

Another New Agers' argument on the Essenic background and influence is that the teachings of both Jesus and John the Baptist are similar to that of the Essenes. Regarding the latter, the argument that John the Baptist is of the Essenes is purely based on the fact that John the Baptist lived near the community and that John must have acquired his wisdom from some place. This, again, commits black-and-white fallacy, and seems to be no more than mere speculation. John's living

close to the Essene community does not necessitate Essenic influence on John. Their argument is based on weak circumstantial evidence.

One circumstantial evidence that may support the New Agers' view, however, is that the baptism that John practiced is similar to that practiced by the Essenes in the Qumran community--therefore, John must have been influenced by them. On this, a well respected historian, Michael Grant, in Jesus: an Historian's Review of the Gospels writes:

Indeed, it is possible that he was once a member of the settlement. But if he was, he subsequently broke away; for he is later to be found not living its life of withdrawal from the world but attempting to address himself to all Israel. (165)

Furthermore, argues Grant, the baptism practiced by John the Baptist was a different kind from that of the Essenes. While they conferred baptism on themselves, John conferred it to others. Moreover, Qumran baptism was repeated over and over, while John never repeated baptism to anyone twice. The Qumran baptism symbolized the "moral cleansing of a nation by God." On the other hand, John's baptism is associated with "the Kingdom of God: it dramatized the repentant's obedient willingness to submit to the divine judgment on the day when the Kingdom would make its appearance" (166).

165. Michael Grant, Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), 46.

166. Ibid..

Similarities and Differences Between the Teachings of Jesus and of the Essenes

Regarding the teachings of Jesus, one can admit that similarities exist between the teachings of Jesus and that of the Essenes. But similarities exist in any two views or teachings. Even in politics, for example, there are certain similar aspects in democracy and socialism. This does not necessarily imply that one is borrowed from the other. Likewise, especially since almost all religions attempt to teach good to people, similarity is bound to exist.

Instead of focusing too much on the similarities of their teachings, as the New Agers do, we need to also examine the differences between the two teachings (167). In The Verdict of History, Professor Gary Habermas cites several differences in their teaching:

(1) Jesus opposed legalism, whereas the Essenes held strictly to it. (2) Jesus also opposed ceremonial purity, while the Essenes, again, adhered strictly to it. (3) The Essenes taught that even the Messiah would be purified from sin by suffering, while this opposes Christian teachings of the sinlessness of Jesus. (4) The Qumran community was looking for two (or even three) messiahs, while Jesus was both already present and had all messianic aspects combined in himself.

(5) The Essenes give little or no place to the concept of the Kingdom of God, while this is Jesus' central teaching. (6) "Love," as the major Christian

167. On this discussion, the New Testament will be referred to for the teachings of Jesus. For the sake of argument, we will assume that the teachings in the New Testament are accurate enough for this discussion. This seems valid since the New Agers refer to the New Testament in their argument for the similarities between the two teachings. The historicity of the New Testament will be discussed later.

ethic, does not appear in Essene teachings. (7) Jesus' ethics are judged to be closer to Rabbinic literature than to Qumran. (8) Jesus taught that salvation would also be extended to the Gentiles while the Essenes were more exclusive. (9) According to Josephus, the Essenes taught the immortality of the soul, which is contrasted with the Christian teaching of the resurrection of the body. (168)

The differences in the teachings of Jesus and of the Essenes are as convincing, if not more, as the New Agers' argument--that Jesus was influenced by the Essenes since Jesus' teachings are similar to that of the Essenes.

Indifference of Essenic Influence on Essenes

Another point that needs to be made about Essenic influence on Jesus is that this does not change the teachings of Jesus. This important point is made by Habermas, who argues that, Jesus had to be born and taught somewhere. Thus, it "is not necessarily critical of Christ or his teachings even if it was shown that he had affinities to Essene thought or even that he was a member of the group" (169). As long as the teachings and person of Jesus are not changed or modified, this New Agers' view is not necessarily critical to Christianity (170).

As we have seen, there are several difficulties in the New Agers' view of Essenic background on Jesus' life and on

168. Gary Habermas, Verdict (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988), 60.

169. Ibid., 61.

170. Here, again, we must refer to the accuracy of the New Testament regarding Jesus and his teachings.

his teaching. And even if Jesus had lived among the Essenes, his teachings would not have necessarily been affected.

JESUS' TRAVEL TO THE EAST

As for the New Agers' view on Jesus as the traveller during the silent years and after his crucifixion, it seems as if they are arguing from ignorance again. It seems that they formulated the life of Jesus during the time span which the New Testament does not mention, and formulated the life and teachings of Jesus to fit their views.

Evidence of the Life of Jesus in India

Many New Agers, however, claim to have evidences of Jesus' life throughout the East. The New Agers such as Kersten believe that Notovitch's findings provide historical and factual evidence to this view. Both Kersten and Notovitch claim that legends and documents that contain the story that is similar to the life and teachings of Jesus exist. Kersten even goes further by claiming that the tomb which "seems to be" that of Mary, the mother of Jesus, exists in the East. Furthermore, Kersten also claims that the writings of Jesus' teaching inscribed in a wall exists in India.

As for legends and documents, however, even New Agers admit that they are only "similar" to the life and teachings of Jesus. This, however, is not historical evidence. Besides, the dates of the origination of these legends and documents are difficult to determine. These legends and

documents may have originated after the introduction of Islam in India. For that matter, the writing of Jesus' teaching on the wall of Fatehpur could also have been inscribed after the introduction of Islam. In fact, even Kersten admits that "The form of introduction in the sayings, which is always the same, can be found in the later Islamic accounts about Jesus, so that most Orientalists have inferred that the saying can only have arrived in India via Islam" (171).

Notovitch's Account of the Life of Jesus in India

At this point, it would be beneficial to discuss the manuscripts found by Notovitch which allegedly contain the life of Jesus in the East. As seen earlier, during his travel throughout the regions of India, Notovitch discovered the manuscripts which contained the life of Issa. Notovitch's writing was criticized by many scholars.

Soon after the publishing of Notovitch's writing, Frederick Max Muller, a respected Orientalist at Oxford University, published a refutation of Notovitch's writing. Muller's refutation can be summarized as follows:

1. An old document such as discovered by Notovitch "would have been included in the Kandjur and Tandjur (catalogues in which all Tibetan literature is supposed to be listed)."
2. It is difficult to believe that "'those who had known Issa as a simple student in India saw at once that he was the same person who had been put to death under Pontius Pilate.'"
3. According to a woman who visited the monastery of Hemis, "'there is not a single word of truth

171. Kersten, Jesus in India, 190.

in the whole story! There has been no Russian here. . . . There is no life of Christ there at all!'"

4. "The great liberty Notovitch took in editing and arranging the alleged verses. . . . is something no reputable scholar would have done." (172)

Notovitch's response to Muller's criticism was published soon after Mueller's writing. This, however, "did little to satisfy [Notovitch's] critics" (173).

Another main critic of Notovitch was Edgar J. Goodspeed. Goodspeed's arguments can be summarized as follows:

1. Goodspeed points out the literary dependence of Notovitch's writing (the manuscripts which he discovered) to the Gospels and Romans. Notovitch's manuscripts were allegedly written within four years after the death of Jesus--much earlier than the Gospels and Romans. The literary dependence of Notovitch is evident when Notovitch's writing "attempts to fill in the silent years of Jesus between the ages of twelve and thirty: 'these two ages are taken for granted by the author of this work, who unconsciously bases his scheme upon them. . . .'" (174)
2. Regarding Notovitch's description in Luke of Jesus "'in the desert until the day of his showing unto Israel'", Goodspeed argues that "'it is not Jesus but of John that Luke says this (1:80). At this point in Luke's narrative, in fact, Jesus has not yet appeared.'"
3. Regarding the interpreter, Goodspeed argues for incompetence of the Notovitch's interpreter. Goodspeed says that Notovitch evidently had no control over "'either the lama or the

172. Rhodes, "Jesus of the New Age," 17.

173. Notovitch's response to Muller is concisely summarized by Ron Rhodes in "Jesus of the New Age," 17.

174. Ibid. The latter part of the quotation is Rhode's quotation of Goodspeed's Modern Apocrypha, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1956), 5.

interpreter, to make sure that of of what the Tibetan manuscripts contained.'" (175)

Like Muller and Goodspeed, there have been many criticisms against Notovitch's writing. The most damaging refutation against Notovitch was probably an article titled "The Chief Lama of Himis on the Alleged 'Unknown Life of Jesus," written by J. Archibald Douglas, a Professor at Government College in India. During his three months leave from the college (shortly prior to 1895), Professor Douglas retraced Notovitch's travel. Douglas asserted that he is not "a religious teacher. . . , [and] cannot profess any enthusiastic sympathy with [missionaries'] aims. . . . [and] Notovitch cannot therefore charge me with 'missionary prejudice' or 'obstinate sectarianism'" (176).

According to Notovitch's account of his journey, near the village of Haiena, he was surrounded by panthers, tigers, wolves, lepers, etc.; in fact, a panther ate one of his coolies before his eyes. When Douglas, while traveling through the same region inquired about the incident, he was told by the "old inhabitants of Haiena" that within the last ten years they never heard or saw either a panther or a tiger,

175. Ibid.

176. J. A. Douglas, "The Chief Lama of Himis on the Alleged 'Unknown Life of Christ,'" The Nineteenth Century 35 (April 1896), 676.

nor a coolie travelling with a European who lost its life as Notovitch described (177).

Douglas, however, admits that there is no evidence against Notovitch's visit to the monastery of Himis. In fact, he writes that "the Chief Lama, or Chagzot, of Himis does distinctly remember that several European gentlemen visited the monastery in the years 1887 and 1888" (178). Nonetheless, regarding a Russian with a broken leg (as Notovitch claimed to have had), Douglas was told by the Lama who had been in charge of that monastery during the last fifteen years that "no European gentleman had ever been nursed in the monastery while suffering from a broken limb. . . ." In fact, continues the Lama, ". . .no European traveller had ever during his term of office remained at Himis for more than three days." To confirm this, the Lama called several elder monks to enquire this (179). In fact, after careful enquires, Douglas discovered that a Russian named Notovitch was treated by Dr. Karl Marks in Leh Hospital, not for a broken leg, but for a toothache instead (180).

At the monastery of Himis, Douglas had a lengthy conversation with the Chief Lama. The conversation took place through the interpreter named Shahmwell Joldan, a reputable

177. Ibid., 668.

178. Ibid., 668-669.

179. Ibid., 674.

180. Ibid., 669.

retired Postmaster of Ladekh who admits that "[he] can speak English, and Tibetan is [his] native language" (181).

Regarding Notovitch's interpreter, Douglas argues that there are only three or four interpreters who are competent to interpret such a religious and philosophical conversation; none of them has ever seen Notovitch. However, in Notovitch's account, he claims that he hired a shikari who was from the village of Gooned (approximately thirty-six miles distant of Srinagar) as his interpreter. This, argues Douglas, is very unlikely. He argues that a shikari is ". . . a simple peasant, whose knowledge of language is limited to his native tongue and a few words of Urdu and English, relating to the necessities of the road, the camp and sports, . . ." In fact, continues Douglas, it would be unlikely that such a peasant ". . . would be likely to be able to express religious and philosophical ideas such as are contained in the 'conversation' between M. Notovitch and the Lamas. These ideas are foreign to the Kashmiri mode of thought, . . ." (182).

After his discussion with the Lama, however, Douglas concluded that Notovitch's writing was a fiction. There were numerous contradictions between the Lama and Notovitch. First of all, when Douglas asked the Lama if he or other monks had shown a manuscript that contains the life of Issa, the Lama said that "[there] is no such book in the monastery, and

181. Ibid., 673.

182. Ibid., 674.

during my term of office no sahib has been allowed to copy or translate any of the manuscripts in the monastery" (183).

Second, when asked if he was familiar with any books that contain the story of Issa in any of the Buddhist monasteries, he replied:

I have been for forty-two years a Lama, and am well acquainted with all the well-known Buddhist books and manuscripts, and I have never heard of one which mentions the name of Issa, and it is my firm and honest belief that none such exists. I have inquired of our principal Lamas in other monasteries of Tibet, and they are not acquainted with any books or manuscripts which mention the name of Issa. (184)

If what the Lama said is true--that no manuscript that contains the life of Issa exists--then all the evidence that Notovitch, Kersten and others claim is false.

Thirdly, when Douglas inquired about Notovitch's discussion with the Lama regarding the ancient religions of Egypt, Assyria, and Israel, about seven or eight years ago, the Lama denied the incident. The Lama confessed that "I know nothing whatever about the Egyptians, Assyrians, and the people of Israel, and do not know anything of their religions whatsoever. I have never mentioned these peoples to any sahib." Furthermore, when Douglas read Notovitch's account of the discussion, the Lama "burst out with, 'Sun, sun, sun, manna mi dug!' which is Tibetan for , 'Lies, lies, lies,

183. Ibid., 671.

184. Ibid.

nothing but lies!'" (185) In fact, Douglas says that "I have read this to him as part of the statement which he is to sign--as his deliberate opinion of M. Notovitch's book. He appears perfectly satisfied on the matter" (186).

Finally, when Douglas asked if the name of Issa was respected by Buddhists, the Lama replied that they have never heard of this name. He said that they "know nothing even of his name; none of the lamas have ever heard it, save through missionaries and Europeans" (187).

The conversation between the Lama and Douglas was given a seal from the Lama, agreeing that all that was said is true. In fact, Douglas' interpreter also signed that there was no misunderstanding between the Lama and Douglas.

The arguments against Notovitch by Muller, Goodspeed, and especially Douglas enable reasonable students of the subject to see that Notovitch's accounts are not trustworthy. With the accounts of Notovitch, which probably was one of the strongest advocates of Jesus' travel to the East, considered not trustworthy, the New Agers' case is damaged substantially.

As for Mary's tomb, the New Agers argue on the basis that there is no tomb attributed to Mary in Palestine, and that there exists a tomb in Mari/Pakistan which seems to face West

185. Ibid., 672.

186. Ibid.

187. Ibid.

to Jerusalem. This, again, is an argument from ignorance and is nothing more than speculation.

In order for Jesus to travel to the East after the crucifixion, Jesus could not have died on the cross. In order to argue against the death of Jesus on the cross, the New Agers must argue for the "swoon theory" (188). Such a theory was popular in the nineteenth century, but is now considered outdated. So, for the sake of argument, since Jesus did not survive his death, he could not have travelled to the East.

The evidences that are utilized by the New Agers are, at best, weak "evidences." Kersten argues that there are over twenty such evidences. Nonetheless, these are still weak evidences, and adding weak evidences does not strengthen their argument.

With the case against Notovitch's account of Jesus' travel to East so solid, the New Age view is, instead, further weakened. Based on the testimony of the Lama of Himis, that he does not know of any manuscripts that exist in any Buddhist monasteries, and that he nor other Buddhists have heard of Issa except through missionaries, one can conclude that the New Agers' argument for the existence of the manuscripts becomes less viable (189).

188. The Swoon theory will be discussed next.

189. This is especially true when considering the fact that there is not the slightest evidence of Eastern philosophy in any of Jesus' teaching. If Jesus had spent so many years in the East and had been influenced by Eastern philosophy, Jesus'

Reliability of the Akashic Record

As for the New Age source of the life of Jesus in the East, another one of the primary sources of Jesus' travel throughout India (beside Notovitch's account) is Levi's Aquarian Gospel. Regarding Levi's writing, two noteworthy points are made by Ron Rhodes (190). First, Rhodes points out the historical errors committed by Levi in his writing. For example, according to Levi, Herod Antipas was the ruler in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus. However, Rhodes points out that Antipas "never ruled in Jerusalem but in Galilee. Dowling meant to say Herod the Great" (191). Furthermore, Levi mentions Jesus' encounter with Meng-ste. Rhodes, again, says that Levi probably was referring to "the great Chinese sage, Meng-tse (tse, not ste)." Nevertheless, "Dowling apparently didn't realize . . ., that Meng-tse died in 289 B.C." (192).

These two examples of Levi's errors are crucial. They are crucial since the introduction of the Aquarian Gospel claims that Levi's transcription from the Akashic Record is "true to the letter" (193). It is granted that texts that

teachings would have been characterized by some Eastern philosophy. However, this is not so.

190. Rhodes, "Jesus of the New Age," 19.

191. Ibid.

192. Ibid.

193. Ibid. Rhodes cites the introduction of the Aquarian Gospels.

contain minor errors (caused by men) can still be trustworthy. In fact, very few texts are without error. However, this does not apply to the text in which its transcription is "true to the letter."

The second point made by Rhodes deals with inconsistencies of the Akashic Record regarding Jesus' travel to the East. According to Cayce's interpretation of Akashic Record, Jesus was sent to the East by the Essenes. However, in Levi's interpretation of the Akashic Record, Jesus was, with the permission of his parents, taken by the Prince Rivanna of India. Therefore, from the Akashic Record, two different versions are derived. Regarding this, Rhodes argues as follows:

. . . both Cayce and Levi allegedly obtained their "revelations" by reading the Akashic Record, yet their readings blatantly contradict each other. Since both Cayce and Levi are highly respected in New Age circles, how do New Agers account for the obvious failure of at least one of them to properly "read" the Akashic Record? Furthermore, of one of these top rated New Age seers cannot be trusted, which one can be? (194)

Again, one should admit that two people who disagree on certain points may both still be trustworthy on other matters. However, as seen above, this does not apply to the Akashic Record who or which claims the accuracy of truth "to the letter." By claiming such an accuracy, the Akashic Record is

194. Ibid..

claiming to be inerrant. But, as discussed above, the Akashic Record is not inerrant.

The difficulty of the New Age view that is pointed out by Rhodes becomes more complicated when the account of Notovitch is added. Notovitch's account of Jesus' trip to the East is still different from either Cayce or Levi; Notovitch says that Jesus secretly "departed from Jerusalem, and with the caravans of merchants he betook himself toward Sindh in the hope of making himself perfect in the divine word, and studying the laws of the great Buddhas" (195).

The New Agers, therefore, are in an unescapable dilemma. If Notovitch's account is correct, then both Cayce and Levi are wrong--therefore, the Akashic Record is not trustworthy. Furthermore, if either Levi or Cayce is correct, then both Notovitch's account and the Akashic Record is not trustworthy (at least on certain points). Thus, whether it be Levi, Cayce or Notovitch whose accounts are correct, the Akashic Record still is not trustworthy. But if it is granted that either Levi or Cayce is correct, for the sake of argument, Notovitch's account of Jesus' travel to the East (which the New Agers depend heavily as their evidence) must be abandoned by the New Agers--or at least, the existence of historical error must be admitted.

195. Notovitch, Unknown Life, 6.

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

The New Age view, that Jesus did not die on the cross but feigned or swooned, has several monumental problems. Nonetheless, they claim to argue for this position based on medical facts. This New Age argument, however, has numerous problems.

Kersten argues that dead bodies assume rigor mortise within three to six hours of death, and that Jesus' body was not in this state even three hours after the crucifixion when he was wrapped with the shroud. First of all, if the time length of dead bodies assuming rigor mortise is up to six hours, then the process of Jesus' body may have taken longer. Jesus died at 3 PM, and was buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodorus prior to 6 PM. This is only three hours of time span. It is possible that the process of Jesus' body of becoming rigor mortise could have taken four or five hours. Secondly, Habermas, assuming the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin, argues that "The scientific team pathologist and other medical doctors determined that the man was crucified and was dead, with his body in a state of rigor mortise" (196). The team pathologist who determined the result was a member of "a team of well qualified scientists [who] applied a large battery of non-destructive tests to the shroud" in October of

196. Habermas, Verdict, 158.

1978 (197). Therefore, we can argue that Kersten is wrong, especially in the light of our discussion to follow.

There are various evidences that overwhelmingly support the death of Jesus on the cross. Even prior to his crucifixion, Jesus had been brutally beaten by the Roman soldiers. After the beating, Jesus was so weak that he could not carry his cross. Michael Green in Man Alive writes:

After a sleepless night, in which He was given no food, endured the mockery of two trials, and had His back lacerated with the cruel Roman cat-o'-nine-tails, He was led out to execution by crucifixion. This was an excruciatingly painful death, in which every nerve in the body cried aloud in anguish. (198)

Regarding the crucifixion, Habermas argues that "crucifixion is essentially death by asphyxiation, as intercostal and pectoral muscles around the lungs halt normal breathing while the body hangs in the 'down' position" (199). Therefore, even if Jesus tried to feign death or swooned (as the New Agers argue), it would have been eventually impossible for him to breathe. Therefore, if Jesus stayed in the 'down' position for any long period of time, he was dead.

This death by asphyxiation as seen above is conclusive proof enough that Jesus died on the cross. Further evidences, however, strengthen this position. According to Roman

197. Ibid., 157.

198. Michael Green, Man Alive (Downer's Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), 32.

199. Habermas, Verdict, 57.

crucifixion, Roman soldiers sped up the process by breaking the ankles of the crucified. When the ankles are broken, the crucified person cannot push himself upward to breathe (200). Since the Roman soldiers were convinced that Jesus was already dead, they did not break Jesus' leg bones. It is very improbable that these experienced soldiers could have mistaken a dead body for a live one.

The death of Jesus on the cross is further supported by medical evidences. Before taking down the body of Jesus, the soldiers pierced the heart of Jesus with a lance to finally insure his death. Green writes:

We are told on eyewitness authority that "blood and water" came out of the pierced side of Jesus. . . . Had Jesus been alive when the spear pierced His side, strong spouts of blood would have emerged with every heart beat. Instead, the observer noticed semi-solid dark red clot seeping out, distinct and separate from the accompanying watery serum. This is evidence of massive clotting of the blood in the main arteries, and is exceptionally strong medical proof. . . . The "blood and water" from the spear-thrust is proof positive that Jesus was already dead. (201)

Habermas supports this conclusion:

Medical doctors who have studied this issue [of the soldier piercing Jesus' heart with a lance] usually agree that this is a very accurate medical description. The water probably proceeded from the pericardium, the sac that surrounds the heart, while the blood came from the right side of the heart. Even

200. Ibid., 57.

201. Greene, Man Alive, 33.

if Jesus was live before he was stabbed, the lance would almost certainly have killed him. (202)

There is little hope that anyone can survive after being pierced through his heart.

The death of Jesus was verified by several men. Greene argues that "Four executioners came to examine him, before a friend, Joseph of Arimathea, was allowed to take away the body for burial" (203). Neither Joseph or Nicodemus had any doubt about the death of Jesus. If they did, they would not have taken Jesus to the cold tomb, but to somewhere else where they could treat his wounds. J. N. D. Anderson, when arguing against the Swoon theory, summarizes:

. . . [the Swoon theory] is very ingenious. But it won't stand up to investigation. To begin with, steps were taken--it seems--to make quite sure that Jesus was dead; that surely is the meaning of the spear-thrust in His side. But suppose for argument's sake that He was not quite dead. Do you really believe that lying for hour after hour with no medical attention in a rock-hewn tomb in Palestine at Easter, when it's quite cold at night, would so far have revived Him, instead of proving the inevitable end to His flickering life, that He would have been able to loose Himself from yards of graveclothes weighted with pounds of spices, roll away a stone that three women felt incapable of tackling, and walk miles on wounded feet? (204)

202. Habermas, Verdict, 58.

203. Greene, Man Alive, 32.

204. J. N. D. Anderson, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," Christianity Today (March 29, 1968), 7.

But suppose Jesus did roll the heavy stone "uphill out of its gulley" without any "edge against which Jesus might at least use his weight to push" (205), and walked a distance to the hiding place of his disciple after a Roman crucifixion. And suppose that Jesus did appear to his disciples who were hiding in fear, proclaimed his resurrection, and showed them his "glorified body." According to liberal theologian David Strauss, it is impossible to believe that the disciples would regard him as the risen and glorified Lord who conquered death. Strauss says in The Life of Jesus for the People:

It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulcher, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to his suffering, could have given to the disciples the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life, an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which he had made upon them in life and in death, at the most could only have given it an elegiac voice, but could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship. (206)

It is difficult to imagine that the disciples would be willing to give up everything they owned--including giving up their lives--for their faith in Jesus who appeared in this "glorified body."

205. Habermas, Verdict, 56-57.

206. David Strauss, The Life of Jesus for the People, Vol. I., Second Edition (London, England: William and Norgate, 1879), 412.

As seen above, the evidences for the death of Jesus on the cross is solid. The swoon theory, which was one of the most popular naturalistic theories against Jesus' death and resurrection, was silenced by David Strauss--who himself did not believe in the resurrection. Therefore, the view that Jesus did not die on the cross but merely appeared dead, as held by some New Agers, must be rejected.

UNIQUENESS OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

As discussed above, many New Agers, such as Alice Bailey (during her discussion on the "fifth initiation"), argue that the resurrection of Jesus is not an isolated event. She argues that there are many "Sons of God" whose legends claim the similar story of Jesus' resurrection. Among those "Sons of God" mentioned by Bailey is Osiris--a prominent characters of the Mystery religions (207).

There are, however, several problems against Bailey's argument of the resurrection of Jesus being equated with that Osiris or other mystery characters. First of all, these characters are "legends" without any credible historical data. Whereas the historical evidences (both biblical and extra-biblical) attest irrefutable credence to Jesus' resurrection, it is recognized by all that there are no historical evidences which display a slightest credence to the resurrection of

207. Bailey does mention other sages and/or the characters of "legend," such as Hercules, Mithra, Tammuz, Zoroaster, Esculapius. Bailey, Bethlehem to Calvary, 236-237.

these "Sons of God" (208). This point is supported by Sir Norman Anderson. He writes::

But the basic difference between Christianity and the Mysteries is the historical basis of the one and the mythological character of the others. The deities of the Mysteries were no more than 'nebulous figures of an imaginary past', while the Christ whom the apostolic kerygma proclaimed had lived and died only a very few years before the first New Testament documents were written. . . . And the difference between the mythological experiences of these nebulous figures and the crucifixion 'under Pontius Pilate' of one whom eyewitnesses bore testimony to both his death and resurrection is again obvious. (209)

Secondly, when examining the only clear and early teachings of resurrection among other sages, the story of Osiris, one must conclude that there are obvious differences between the story of Osiris and that of Jesus' resurrection. One difference can be observed when considering the physical aspects of the two accounts of the resurrections. As for Osiris, "'after his consort Isis had sought and reassembled thirteen of the fourteen pieces into which his body had been dismembered by his wicked brother. . . , through the help of magic she was enabled to re-animate his corpses'" (210). This

208. The scope of this thesis prevents a detailed discussion of the historical evidences for the life and the resurrection of Jesus. For more details, see Habermas' Verdict.

209. Anderson, Norman, Christianity and the World Religions (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1984), 52-53.

210. Ibid., 54. Here, Anderson quotes Bruce Metzger's "Mystery Religions and Early Christianity", in his Historical and Literary Studies (Leiden, 1968), 19.

is a great contrast to the resurrection body that is described by the eyewitness of Jesus' resurrected and glorified body. Another evident difference between the two stories is that, in Osiris' story, Osiris never appears on earth, but descends to another world (as a mummy). On the contrary, Jesus, in his glorified body, appears to his disciples in the same world in which he died three days prior.

Thirdly, the differences between the resurrection of Jesus and that of other "Sons of God" is that, as Anderson points out, "[in] all the Mysteries which tell of a dying [god], [they die] 'by compulsion and not by choice, sometimes in bitterness and despair, never in a self-giving love'." Anderson further argues that "[there] is a positive gulf between [these gods] and the Christ who asserted that no man could take his life from him, but that he laid it down of his own will (cf. Jn. 10:17f; Mt. 26:53f.). . ." (211).

Fourthly, the uniqueness of the resurrection of Jesus was historically prophesied. His resurrection was prophesied by many prophets over hundreds of years prior to his birth (Ps. 2:7; 16:10; etc., cf. Acts 2:31; Mark 16:6; etc.). Jesus not only fulfilled the prophecies of his resurrection, but many dozens of other prophecies in the Old Testament that apply to the Jewish concept of Messiah (212).

211. Ibid., 53.

212. Regarding Jesus' fulfilling the prophecies, some argue that the fulfillment of the prophecies are mere coincidence or that Jesus, while he himself was not the Messiah, deliberately

The four points above show the differences between the resurrection account of Jesus and that of the "Sons of God" in "legends". It is historically irrefutable that Jesus' resurrection took place, after his self-sacrificial death, in this world, with his glorified body--in the human form, and fulfilling the Messianic prophecies. On the other hand, the resurrection stories of Osiris and other mystery gods are without the slightest credible historical evidence. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that Jesus' resurrection is unique, and that the above evidences negate Bailey's argument.

THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

There are some New Agers, such as Besant and Bailey, who adhere to the New Testament writings (including Paul's writings), although in an esoteric manner (213). However, other New Agers such as Kersten and Ewing denounce the New Testament writings, arguing that the New Testament writers distorted the life and teachings of Jesus. The New Testament, therefore, is not reliable.

The Reliability of the New Testament Writers

The New Agers argue that the New Testament is not reliable because the writers were biased toward the identity of Jesus since they were followers of Jesus. Instead, the New Testament attempted to fulfill the prophecies. These two arguments, however, are well treated and refuted by Norman Geisler in his Christian Apologetics, chapter XVII.

213. The discussion of esoteric interpretation will be treated later.

Agers argue that the writings such as those of the Essenes/Gnostics are more reliable (214).

When arguing for biasness of the New Testament writers and the reliability of the gnostic writings, however, the New Agers disregard the fact that the writers of the gnostic writings were, in some fashion, also followers of Jesus. Therefore, if being followers implies being biased, then gnostic writers were biased as well. The difference lies in the fact that the New Testament writers were influenced by Judaism prior to their meeting with Jesus, while the gnostic writers were influenced by the mystic religions of the East. The New Testament writers portrayed Jesus of being rooted in Judaism, while the New Agers portrayed him of being rooted in Eastern religions.

Between the writers of the New Testament and of the gnostic writings, it seems that it is more probable that the New Testament writers were correct. In order to discover a facts of the life and teachings of any great person of the past, it seems obvious to examine what is said about him by those who were close and were eyewitnesses to the person. And such were the writers of the New Testament.

The writers of the Four Gospels, which contain the accounts of Jesus' life and teachings, are reliable, for they wrote the accounts based on eyewitness and primary sources. The Gospel of Matthew and of John were written by Matthew and

214. See chapter two on esoterism.

John respectively (215). They were among the twelve apostles who were with Jesus--there is no doubt that they were direct eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus. Also, as recognized by most scholars, the writer of the Gospel of Mark was John Mark who recorded the testimonies of the apostle Peter--an eyewitness of Jesus and the leader among the apostles (216). And the Gospel of Luke and Acts were written by Luke (with the help of Paul). Luke's writings are based on the firsthand testimonies which he collected from the eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4) (217).

215. Among the scholars who argue for Matthew's authorship of the first gospel include: Robert Grant, An Historical Introduction to the New Testament (London, Great Britain: Collins Publishers, 1963), 129; and A. M. Hunter, Introducing the New Testament, 2nd edition (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1957), 55-56. John's authorship of the fourth gospel is argued by: Raymond E. Brown, New Testament Essays (Milwaukee, WI: The Bruce Publishing Company), 129-131; Hunter, Introducing the New Testament, 61-63; Robert Grant, An Historical Introduction to the New Testament, 160; and William Hamilton, The Modern Reader's Guide to John (New York, NY: Association Press, 1959), 13-15;

216. Among the scholars who argue for this position are: R. A. Cole, The Gospel According to St. Mark (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 28-50; C. E. B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to Mark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 5-6; A. M. Hunter, Introducing the New Testament, 41-43; and Robert Grant, An Historical Introduction to the New Testament, 119.

217. Luke's authorship of the third gospel and Acts is well established. Among the scholars who support this are: F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Book of Acts (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 19; Robert Grant, An Historical Introduction to the New Testament, 134-135; William Hamilton, Modern Reader's Guide to Matthew and Luke (New York, NY: Association Press, 1957), 14; Hunter, Introducing the New Testament, 49-50; and C. E. F. Moule, Christ's Messengers: Studies in Acts of the Apostles (New York, NY: Association Press, 1957), 10-13.

The disciples of Jesus, excluding Paul (218), witnessed the life and teachings of Jesus during his Judean ministry. They were the most zealous and visible followers of Jesus. On the other hand, the writers of the gnostic writings were not the primary followers of Jesus.

This can be seen when considering the dates of the gnostic writings. The earliest gnostic gospels are dated between 150-200 A.D. (219). By that time, all the eyewitnesses would have been dead. Therefore, gnostic writers could not have seen or heard Jesus who died over a century prior to their writings.

As seen above, the writers of the New Testament were the primary eyewitnesses and followers of Jesus. On the contrary, the writers of gnostic writings were--at best--distant or secondary followers who were not even eyewitness. Therefore, it is more probable that the writers of the New Testament are more reliable.

The Reliability of the New Testament Documents

The New Agers argue that the New Testament (especially the Four Gospels) is not a reliable source for the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Therefore, this section will briefly show the reliability of the New Testament by briefly skimming through and summarizing the cases for the reliability

218. Paul, however, learned about Jesus from the eyewitnesses who were with Jesus. This will be discussed later.

219. Habermas, Verdict, 63.

of the manuscript evidences and the comparison between the New Testament manuscripts with other works of antiquity, on the rejection of application of the radical Form Criticism, early church fathers' support of the manuscripts, secular testimony to accuracy, and archaeological support for the reliability (220).

Although there is some time gap between the death of Jesus and composition of the Four Gospels, the Gospels and all the other New Testament books were still written in the first century A.D.. There have been attempts to late-date these writings--even as late as the second century A.D., but this is not well-accepted by critical scholars. Most scholars argue that the three Gospels have a time gap of about thirty years, and the Gospel of John has about sixty-five years) (221).

The time gap between the death of Jesus and the compositions of the Four Gospels and other New Testament writings does not damage the accuracy of the New Testament. The New Testament records are still accurate, for the memory of the people in ancient time was much more developed than that of today--ancient people needed to utilize their

220. As for the eyewitness testimony of the writers of the Gospels, refer to the discussion above.

221. It is difficult to treat this issue in depth in this thesis. However, for a more in-depth treatment, see: Habermas, Verdict, 31-36; Michael Grant, Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels, 183-189; Robert Grant, An Historical Introduction to the New Testament, Chapters VII-XI; and A. M. Hunter, Introducing the New Testament, 41-63; and F. F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents.

repetitive memory a lot more than do people in modern days. Also, Jesus performed many unusual miracles which made it easy for the disciples to recall the events.

If the accounts of the life and teachings recorded in these books were incorrect, there were many eyewitnesses to all the major events pertaining to Jesus that others could check one's error in recording the events. As seen earlier, this, however, is not the case with the gnostic writers whose writings were written over a century after the death of Jesus. In addition, Jesus himself promised his disciples that he would "bring to their remembrance all that He had said to them" (John 14:26) (222).

Furthermore, contrary to the New Agers' accusation of the disciples' fabricating the story and the teachings of Jesus, the known facts about the apostles--their writings, their lifestyle, and their teachings--show that they were men of honesty and integrity (223). In fact, their testimonies were honest and firm even to the point of endangering all their worldly interests (social standings, material prosperity and even their lives). Therefore, there is no doubt that these honest eyewitnesses to the life and teachings of Jesus wrote the accounts honestly and accurately.

The manuscript evidences of the New Testament, which is far more superior than any of the gnostic (based on the late

222. Geisler, Christian Apologetics, 322.

223. Ibid., 315.

dating of the gnostic writings) or secular writings (as will be seen), also testify to the reliability of the New Testament. There are 5300 known Greek manuscripts, over 10,000 Latin Vulgate portions and at least 9700 other versions (MSS) existing today. In Our Bible: How We Got It, Charles Leach says that they all add up to 24,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament (224). It should also be noted that none of the New Testament is lost or missing. On the other hand, although there are several extant MSS, only nine or ten of Caesar's Gallic Wars (composed between 58 and 50 B.C) are good, and the oldest was written some 900 years after Caesar's day. Also, only 35 of 142 books of the Roman History of Livy (59 B.C. - A.D. 17) survived; only four and a half of 14 books of the Histories of Tacitus (A.D. 100) survived; and out of the 16 books of his Annals, only ten survived in full and two in part (225). These examples attest--to some degree--to the superiority of the manuscript evidences for the New Testament documents.

The superiority of the manuscript evidences of the New Testament over other ancient writings is further supported by

224. Charles Leach, Our Bible: How We Got It (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1898), 145. It should be noted that this book is written in the late nineteenth century, and therefore, may not be up-to-date; many new manuscripts have been discovered since then. Nonetheless, the the book still serves our purpose, for the abundance in manuscripts of the New Testament given in the book is unmatched by any other writings of antiquity.

225. F. F. Bruce, The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable? (Downer's Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1964) 16, 17.

the interval of time between the composition of the whole New Testament and date of the earliest copy. The earliest complete manuscript is from the fourth century which is 250-300 years after the original writings (226). In contrast, according to J. Harold Greenlee in Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism, the gap between the original MS (autograph) and extant MS (oldest copy) of Greek classical authors is--on the average--1000 years after the authors' death (227).

Furthermore, Bruce Metzger, in Chapters in New Testament Textual Criticism, says that among about 20,000 lines of the New Testament, only 40 lines (400 words which is .5%) of the New Testament are in doubt while 764 lines of Homer's Illiad (about 15,600 words which is 5.0%), are in doubt. Moreover, the national epic of India which is very respected by the New Agers and pantheists, the Mahabhrata (approximately eight times the size of Illiad, has about 26,000 lines which are in doubt (10 %) (228).

226. As for the incomplete or fragmented documents, a document which contains five verses from John is housed in The John Rylands Library in Manchester, and is dated between 117-138 A.D. As noted by Geisler, some scholars such as Adolf Deissman argue for even an earlier date (Geisler, Christian Apologetics, 306).

227. J. H. Greenlee, Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 16.

228. For detailed information on this, see Bruce Metzger, Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963).

The reliability of the New Testament is shown, as above, by comparison of its manuscripts to other Greek classical writings (which are considered more reliable than the gnostic writings and other sources of the New Age view of Jesus Christ). Therefore, if one doubts the New Testament, then he must also doubt all the classical Greek writings, for the New Testament has far more manuscript evidence, far less of a gap between the original copy and the earliest existent composition of books, and far more textual accuracy than any other classical writings.

The New Agers' charge that the New Testament writers obscured the life and teachings of Jesus is similar to what is called "Form Criticism" which was popularized by an existential theologian, Rudolf Bultmann (229). This theory, however, has several problems which this thesis cannot discuss in detail. We will hint at a possible response, however (230). First, if the Form Criticism theory is correct, then the New Testament writers who were known to be honest were deceivers, and that the eyewitnesses of the events allowed the distortion. Secondly, on the contrary to the Form Criticism

229. Bultmann argues that the life and teachings were obscured by the church for the sake of religious interests. Therefore, the New Testament contains very little historical fact. For Bultmann's position and his response to his critics, see Rudolf Bultmann, New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings, Translated and Edited by Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984).

230. Here, the thesis will basically summarize the problems with Form Criticism. For more details, see Geisler, Christian Apologetics 316-321; and Habermas, Verdict, 36-42.

theory, the Four Gospels and Acts do contain "historical, chronological, and biographical interest" (231). This is especially true with the writings of Luke. This leads to the third point. The New Agers and the Form Critics ignore Luke's prologue in which "Luke not only reflects a historical interest but he openly claims to have one and reveals that many others in the early church reflected the same interest in their written accounts (Luke 1:1-3) (232). Fourth, Geisler argues that the time gap between the death of Jesus and the writings of the first Gospel (one generation) is not sufficient time to "disseminate, collect, classify, and form the 'stories' and 'sayings' of Jesus out of their original context into the 'life-setting' of the early church" (233). Fifth, the Gospels reveal a clear difference when compared with the the apocryphal Gospels of the second and third centuries which are the writings of the myth and folklore (234). Sixth, Form Criticism wrongly assumes that the church fathers made no distinction between the words of Jesus and of their own (235).

The seventh criticism of the Form Criticism theory deals with the comparison between the New Testament and other

231. Geisler, Christian Apologetics, 318.

232. Ibid., 318-319.

233. Ibid., 319-320.

234. Ibid., 320.

235. Ibid.

ancient historical writings. The Form Critic argues that the New Testament lacks historical accuracy as opposed to other ancient historical writings. This, however, must be refuted, for, when evaluated by historians' criteria, the New Testament meets the criteria very well. Michael Grant supports this point:

But above all, if we apply to the New Testament, as we should, the same sort of criteria as we should apply to other ancient writings containing historical material, we can no more reject Jesus' existence than we can reject the existence of a mass of pagan personages whose reality as historical figure is never questioned. . . . To sum up, modern critical methods fail to support the Christ-myth theory. It has 'again and again been answered and annihilated by first-rank scholars'. In recent years 'no serious scholar has ventured to postulate the non-historicity of Jesus'--or at any rate very few, and they have not succeeded in disposing of the much stronger, indeed very abundant, evidence to the contrary (here, Grant credits G. Bornkamm in Hahn-Lohff-Bornkamm, What Can We Know about Jesus? (Saint Andrew Press, 1969), p.73). (236)

The reliability of the New Testament is also supported by the church fathers, whereas the New Age sources are not. The New Testament is quoted by church fathers as inspired Scriptures. The Scriptures that were quoted by the early church fathers "are so extensive that the New Testament could virtually be reconstructed from them without the use of the

236. Grant, Jesus, 199-200. For further discussion on this issue, which the thesis cannot treat in detail, see Grant, Jesus, 199-201; and A. N. Sherwin-White, Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1963), 186-193.

New Testament manuscripts" (237). In fact, Sir David Dalrymple, after searching the existing works of the church fathers of the second and the third century, has found the entire New Testament except 11 verses (238). Without including the fourth century writers, the New Testament is quoted 32,000 times prior to the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325). Moreover, according to Norman Geisler and William Nix in A General Introduction to the Bible, Eusebius, who lived prior to the Nicean Council, adds that by his time the New Testament had been quoted over 36,000 times (239). Furthermore, F. F. Bruce, in his journal article "Archaeological Confirmation of the New Testament," says that the New Testament is quoted a total of 1819 times by Irenaeus, 2406 by Clement of Alexandria, 17,922 times by Origen, 7258 times by Tertullian, 1378 times by Hippolytus, 5176 times by Eusebius, and 330 times with 266 allusions by Justin Martyr (240).

The reliability of the New Testament is also supported by secular testimony. Josephus (A.D. 37-100), a Jewish historian, names the figures who are well-known from the New Testament, such as the family of Herod, Roman Emperor

237. Greenlee, New Testament Textual Criticism, 54.

238. Leach, Our Bible, 35, 36.

239. Norman Geisler and William Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1968), 353, 354.

240. F. F. Bruce, "Archaeological Confirmation of the New Testament," Revelation and the Bible, edited by Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1963), 357.

Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, the high priest Annas, Caiaphas, Ananias, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and others (241).

Also, a Roman historian, Cornelius Tacitus, (A.D. 55) writes, ". . . , Christus . . . was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius . . ." (242).

There are a number of other secular historians, such as Suetonius (A.D. 120), Pliny the Younger (A.D. 112), and a Samaritan-born historian Thallus (A.D. 52) whose writings also support the reliability of the New Testament (243).

The facts of the New Testament are also supported by various archaeological data (244). According to William Albright in The Archaeology of Palestine, the court where Jesus was tried by Pilate was the court of the Tower of Antonia--a Roman military headquarters in Jerusalem. The place was left buried when the city was rebuilt in the time of Hadrian and the court was not discovered until recently (245). Also, Edwin Yamauchi says, in The Stones and the Scriptures, that a number of names in the Gospels (e.g. the Pool of Siloam

241. Bruce, The New Testament Documents, 104.

242. Geisler, Christian Apologetics, 323.

243. Ibid., 324-325.

244. Again, the thesis cannot discuss the issue in detail but can only mention briefly some of the data involved. For more detailed information, see William Albright, The Archaeology of Palestine, Revised Edition (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Pelican Books, 1960); and Edwin Yamauchi, The Stones and the Scriptures (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1972).

245. Albright, Archaeology, 141.

and the "judgment seat" near Corinth) have been verified by archaeology (246). There are other archaeological data that verify the facts recorded in the New Testament (such as the Roman census every 14 years during the time of the birth of Jesus (this, however, is not without some difficulties) and the journeys of Paul which can accurately be traced) (247).

As we have seen, the archaeological evidences, although they are rather spotty and verify only select portions, do support the reliability of the New Testament. To this, Sherwin-White says that "any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd" (248).

As seen above, the New Testament accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus are trustworthy. The writers of these accounts were eyewitnesses to the events, the evidences of the manuscripts show the authority over other ancient literatures while the application of the radical Form Criticism theory must be rejected, and the early church fathers, secular historians and the archaeological evidences support the historical validity and reliability of the New Testament accounts (especially the Four Gospels and Acts) of the life and teachings of Jesus.

246. Yamauchi, Stones and the Scriptures, 100, 116.

247. Bruce, New Testament Documents, 95.

248. Sherwin-White is referring specifically to the Book of Acts. See Sherwin-White, Roman Society and Roman Law, 189.

VALIDITY OF PAUL'S RELIGION

The prior section dealt with the reliability of the New Testament writers. This section will discuss the New Agers' accusation (as seen in chapter four) that Paul perverted the true teachings of Jesus with his own philosophy-mainly the doctrine of salvation/redemption and the deity of Jesus of Nazareth. Therefore, since Christianity emphasizes this doctrine, the founder of Christianity is Paul, not Jesus. The following is the defense against these accusations of New Agers regarding Paul (249).

Source of Paul's Knowledge Concerning Jesus

Did Paul fabricate the true teachings of Jesus, or was he a true disciple of Jesus who followed the Master's teaching? In order to answer this, it would be beneficial to begin the discussion by examining and determining the validity of Paul's source of his knowledge of Jesus. According to J. Gresham Machen in The Origin of Paul's Religion, ". . . Paul had abundant opportunity for acquainting himself with Jesus' words and deeds, . . ." (250).

Even before his conversion, as a persecutor of the followers of Jesus, Paul was very interested in the facts of Jesus. Paul's envy and persecution of the Christians was

249. This discussion will build on the reliability of at least the Four Gospels and Acts as seen in the previous section.

250. J. Gresham Machen, The Origin of Paul's Religion (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1925), 165-166.

rigorous. Therefore, Paul must have had some knowledge, if not a great deal, about Jesus prior to his allying with the followers of Jesus. In fact, Paul may have been an eyewitness of Jesus as well (251).

After his conversion, however, Paul became acquainted with many followers and eyewitnesses of Jesus and his teachings. Immediately after his conversion, Paul was instructed of the teachings of Jesus by Ananias and other followers of Jesus in Damascus (Acts 9) (252).

Three years after his conversion, Paul was acquainted with the Apostle Peter and James, the brother of Jesus, who was also the leader in the Jerusalem church. Paul was with them for fifteen days in Jerusalem. It is obvious that the discussion of Jesus and his teachings was the center of their conversations (253). Paul must have learned the life and teachings of Jesus from two of the most qualified people. Peter was the leader of the apostles (his love for Jesus was of great zeal), while James, who became a follower of Jesus after his resurrection, was also a direct eyewitness of the life and teachings of Jesus.

251. This, however, is only a speculation, for the proof of Paul being an eyewitness of Jesus prior to his conversion would be somewhat difficult.

252. It is difficult to tell, however, whether these followers of Jesus were direct eyewitnesses of Jesus.

253. See Machen's Paul's Religion for more details.

Paul was associated with many other followers and eyewitnesses of Jesus. For several years, Paul worked with Barnabas, who was an influential member of the early Jerusalem church. Furthermore, Paul was associated with Mark, an eyewitness of Jesus--in whose upper room Jesus and the apostles had "the last supper"--who was the author of the Second Gospel. And finally, Paul was associated with Silas, who was also from the Jerusalem Church (254).

All the acquaintances of Paul mentioned above (which is not an exhaustive list of Paul's encounter with the followers of Jesus) were known to be sincere followers of Jesus and his teachings--most of them were direct eyewitnesses. Therefore, if Paul acquired information about the life and teachings of Jesus from them, and if Paul taught the same things as they did (provided that their teachings were in compliance with the teachings of Jesus--as discussed earlier regarding the New Testament), then Paul's teachings about the life and teachings of Jesus are reliable (255).

Paul and Legalism

The New Agers, however, argue that Paul's teaching of salvation--primarily on the blood sacrifice, and legalism--is exclusive to Paul. They argue that, because of his Pharisaic background, Paul regressed Christianity back to the "primitive

254. Ibid., 137-139.

255. Further reasons for confirming the accuracy of Paul's teachings will be shown later in the discussion of the testimony of disciples of Jesus regarding Paul.

Semitic religion" and made it the religion of legalism and fear of the wrath of God.

Regarding Paul's Pharisaic background and his legalistic teaching, it is true that Paul was a devout Pharisee prior to his conversion. However, after his conversion, he denounced the legalistic teachings of the Pharisees and embraced the doctrine of grace, which was taught by Jesus. Regarding this, Machen writes:

Salvation, according to Jesus, is a matter of God's free grace. . . . The same great doctrine really runs all through the teaching of Jesus; it is the root of His opposition to the scribes and Pharisees. . . . But it is the same doctrine, exactly, which appears in Paul. The Paul who combated the legalists in Galatia, like the Jesus who combated the scribes and Pharisees, was contending for a God of Grace. (256)

The doctrine of grace taught by Paul is exactly opposite that of both legalism and the idea of the fear of the wrath of God, as argued by the New Agers. The doctrine of grace implies that God accepts men regardless of their merits, but based on the merit of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in order to be accepted by God, one need not merit anything. It is God's love, not wrath, that accepts men as his own. This is opposite of the Eastern idea of "karma," in which each person must satisfy their karmic debt in order to be "one with God." In fact, when comparing Paul's doctrine of grace against the idea of karma, it is the Eastern religions, which the New

256. Machen, Paul's Religion, 164.

Agers also embrace, that requires legalism. It requires legalism in that karmic debts are satisfied by men by accomplishing good through their own efforts. It is through their own merit that they can reach their ultimate goal.

Testimony of the Disciples of Jesus

The New Agers, nevertheless, would argue that Paul's teachings regarding Jesus are different from those of Jesus--they are exclusive to Paul. This, however, is not true when the testimony of the eyewitness apostles and the followers of Jesus is examined. Machen argues that the followers of Jesus regarded Paul as a true disciple of Jesus--"With regard to the person of Christ, Paul appears everywhere in perfect harmony with all Palestinian Christians" (257).

If Paul's teaching of salvation was a fabrication of Jesus' true teachings, then the true followers of Jesus, such as the apostles, would have criticized Paul. It is true that there were some disagreements between Paul and certain followers of Jesus, but these were Judaizers who advocated Jewish legalism. Again, contrary to the New Agers' accusation, Paul advocated anti-legalism. And regarding Paul's doctrine of redemption, there is no criticism against it by the eyewitnesses of Jesus, nor is there any defense on the part of Paul. This, although it is not a conclusive proof, seems to indicate that there was no conflict between

257. Ibid., 130.

the the church leaders and Paul on the question of redemption..

In fact, Paul's teaching of the heavenly redeemer is also seen in the teachings of the Gospel writers. It is admitted by most scholars that the Jesus portrayed in the Gospels is not a mere person or a prophet--most scholars admit that Jesus is, at least, portrayed in the Gospels as a supernatural being. He is portrayed as ". . . a heavenly Redeemer come to earth for the salvation of men." This is inferred from the Gospels as a whole, for they "present a Jesus like in essentials to that divine Lord who was sum and substance of the life of Paul" (258).

The same point, that the Gospels portray Jesus as the heavenly redeemer, is argued by Ridderbos. Ridderbos argues that Jesus is a heavenly being:

From the gospels themselves it cannot be denied that Christ's pre-existence and therefore his coming from the heavens is either explicitly expressed (e.g., John 3:13, 17ff), or implicitly presupposed (e.g., the synoptic gospels). (259)

Not only a heavenly being, however, but also the redeemer--the heavenly redeemer. Ridderbos argues that:

"The Son of Man has not come to be served, but in order to serve," is the synoptic counterpart of Philippians 2. The humiliation which Jesus

258. Ibid., 153.

259. Herman Ridderbos, Paul and Jesus (Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1957), 115.

consciously took upon himself is in the first place related to what happened on earth, in his self-concealment, in his suffering and death and obedience to God's historical redemptive plan. (260)

Again, the scope of this thesis does not allow much room for more detailed discussion. However, it is sufficient to say that the Gospels, as in Paul's writings, portray Jesus as the heavenly redeemer, for "[so] much is usually being admitted to-day" (261). Therefore, since the Gospels (at least) portray Jesus as the heavenly redeemer, and since the writers of the Gospels were sincere followers of Jesus who taught the true teachings of Jesus, and since Paul's teaching of the heavenly redeemer is the same as that of Jesus' followers, a conclusion can be reached that Paul's doctrine of redemption is: 1) not exclusive to Paul, as the New Agers say, and 2) not a fabrication, but the true teachings of Jesus.

Regarding Paul's attribution of deity to Jesus of Nazareth, Paul was not the only person who taught the deity of Jesus Christ. There are numerous pre-Pauline creeds that attributed deity to Jesus Christ. First of all, the Old Testament taught the deity of the Messiah (Isa. 9:6, 7). Secondly, there were many pre-Pauline confessions and creeds. For example, I Corinthians 15:3f is perhaps the earliest pre-

260. Ibid..

261. Machen, Origin of Paul's Religion, 153. For more discussion, see 155-169, and Ridderbos, Paul and Jesus, 89-117.

New Testament creed (which dates approximately 35 A.D.) (262) which calls Jesus "Christ," or "Messiah." Thirdly, Jesus himself taught that he was deity by attributing to himself the titles which apply only to God (i.e. "I AM") (263). He further expressed his Deity by claiming to have the authority to forgive sins. All these testify to Jesus' claim of deity.

Paul's teaching of the redemption and the deity of Jesus seems to be in accordance with the teachings of Jesus' disciples. Since Paul's teaching agrees with the teachings of the other disciples, whose teachings agree with the teachings of Jesus, Paul's teaching is in accordance with Jesus' teaching. Therefore, since Paul's teaching is in agreement with the teachings of Jesus, the New Ager's accusation of Paul perverting the true message of Jesus does not stand.

262. Regarding the date of this creed, most scholars date it between three to eight years from the death of Jesus. It is well accepted by most scholars that Paul had received this creed from early Christians. For more discussion, see Habermas' Verdict, 124-129. The following list of some of the scholars shows the broad spectrum of scholars who agree to the above dating of the creed:: Oscar Cullmann, The Early Church: Studies in Early Christian History and Theology, ed. by A. J. B. Higgins (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1966), 64; Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, translated by Kendrick Grobel (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 80-82; Reginald Fuller, The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 10; Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, trans. by Lewis L. Wilkens and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1968), 366-367; Raymond E. Brown, The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1973), 81; and George Ladd, I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 104.

263. This will be discussed in the next section.

JESUS' CLAIM OF DEITY

One of the main accusations of the New Agers against orthodox Christianity is that Jesus never claimed to be God. The New Agers claim that Jesus is just a sage like Buddha, Muhammed, Krishna and others. The New Agers believe that Jesus did not claim monotheistic deity; instead, they argue that he claimed his deity to be an equal to that of all men when they realize their own divinity. The deity of Jesus Christ will be discussed in this section.

Jesus Claimed to Be the Deity

Contrary to the New Agers' argument, Jesus did claim to be the God of the Bible (264). His claim to be deity was clearly understood by both his enemies, who tried to stone and crucify Jesus for blasphemy, and his disciples, who followed and worshiped him.

Jesus' claim of his deity is seen in his identification of himself with Jehovah (YHWH) of the Old Testament. In Jn. 8:58, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was I AM" (John 8:58). The "I AM: here is referring to the "I AM" in Exodus 3:14. In Isaiah 44:6, God says, "I AM the first, and I AM the last; and beside me there is not God." To the Jews, God is a jealous God who would not share his glory with anyone. The name YHWH is so sacred to the Jews that they refuse to even pronounce this name. Since the Jews

264. Jesus' claim of deity is found in the Four Gospels and Acts which, as argued earlier, are trustworthy.

were aware that Jesus identified himself with YHWH, they responded violently to this claim. For them, the name implies that there is no other God, for Jehovah is a jealous God who is the "first and last," the light, the bridegroom, shepherd, and the Saviour. He is God who refuses to share his glory with others.

Jesus identified with Jehovah in more than one way. First, John quotes Jesus saying "I am the first and the last." This phrase, "first and last," occurs three times in Isaiah (44:4; 44:6; 48:12) and refers to Jehovah each time. Second, Jesus claimed to be the "light of the world" (Jn. 8:12). Third, Jesus claimed to be the bridegroom. Jehovah is often referred to as a bridegroom in the Old Testament. Hosea writes that Jehovah says, "You will call me 'my husband'" (2:16), and Isaiah says "as a bridegroom rejoicing over the bride, your God will rejoice over you" (62:5). However, this title was used by Jesus when depicting himself during his early ministry. In reply to the Pharisees, he said concerning himself, "can the sons of the wedding chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?" (Mk. 2:19). Fourth, Jesus claimed another title of Jehovah, the shepherd. Psalms 23:1 says "Jehovah is my shepherd," and Ezekiel 34:15 says "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep." Likewise, Jesus described himself as the "good shepherd" (Jn. 10:11). Fifth, Jesus also claimed to be the Saviour, which is the title only for God in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 43:3, God says, "for I am

Jehovah, thy God, the holy One of Israel, thy saviour," and also in Ezekiel 34:22, "and I [Jehovah] will save my flock and they will no longer be for plunder and I will judge between one sheep and another, and I will place over them one shepherd." Jesus claimed that he resembled this by claiming to be the shepherd. He said "I lay down my life for my sheep" (Jn. 10:17) and "there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (Jn 10:16).

Jesus also claimed his deity by claiming to fulfill the messianic prophecies; he claimed the Messianic deity for himself. Jesus claimed his messianic deity before Caiaphas, the high priest, by quoting the great messianic passage from Daniel 7:13. When the high priest asked "Are you the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of the Blessed one?" (Mark 14:61), Jesus answered, "I am. . . . And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62). When Jesus called himself "the Son of Man", he was referring to the Messianic passage from Daniel 7:13, in which the title implies the Messianic deity (265). From this reply, the high priests had no doubt about Jesus' claim for his deity. Upon Jesus' reply, the angered high priest tore his garment and said, "Why do we need any further witnesses? . . . You have heard the blasphemy: what do you think? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death" (Mk. 14:64). Regarding this, Geisler says:

265. Geisler, Christian Apologetics, 332.

In short, the Old Testament not only predicted the Messiah but also proclaimed him to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic passages (cf. Luke 24:27, 44: Matt. 26:54), he laid claim to possessing the deity these passages ascribed to the Messiah.
(266)

Jesus claimed his deity also by claiming to have the same power as Jehovah. He claimed to have power to forgive sins and raise and judge the dead. According to Jeremiah, God is the one who forgives sins, for he writes, "for I [Jehovah] will forgive their wickedness and will I remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:34). Jesus told the paralytic, whom Jesus healed, that his sins were forgiven (Mk. 2:5). The scribes who were present understood that Jesus was claiming to be God, and protested that only God forgives sins. They said, "why does this fellow talk that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mk. 2:7). Jesus also claimed the power to raise and judge the dead. But only God can give life and raise the dead (Ps. 2:7) (267). However, Jesus said "for just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it" (v. 21). He adds:

266. Ibid., 333.

267. One can argue there were other people in both the Old and the New Testaments who raised the dead. However, they did not claim to be the ultimate source for raising the dead; they did not claim to be the ultimate life giver. Thus, when Jesus claimed the power to raise the dead, he was implying that he is the ultimate life giver. Jesus was implying that he is able to raise the dead in the manner in which God raises the dead.

I tell you the truth, a time is coming, and has now come, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. . . and those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. (Jn. 5:25-28)
(268)

Jesus also claimed his deity by often placing his words on the level of God's words. Jesus repeated the phrase, "you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, . . . I tell you . . ." (Matt. 5:21-22), several times. He said that, although God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, "a new commandment I give you, you love one another" (Jn. 13:34) (269). He also added, "heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matt. 24:35). By this statement, Jesus seemed to have put his words on the same level as the Old Testament law of God.

The above statements seem to indicate Jesus' putting his words on the same level as that of God. Geisler believes that these statements, along with others, warrant this conclusion. He writes:

In view of [Jesus'] categorical and authoritative pronouncements we are left with but one conclusion:

268. F. F. Bruce and William Martin, "The Deity of Christ," Christianity Today (Dec. 18, 1964), pp.11-15.

269. Based on these claims, it may be objected that Jesus could only mean that he is greater than the other prophets. However, when one considers the nature of the commandments that were given to Moses by God, and that Jesus puts his words on the same level as these commandments, it is safe to assume that Jesus put his words on the same level as those of God.

Jesus intended his commands to be on the level with those of God. His words were equally authoritative with God's words. (270)

Jesus' telling men to pray in his name and accepting worship from them also show his claim of deity. He told men, "whatever you ask in my name, I will do it" (Jn. 14:13). He also added later that "if you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you" (Jn. 15:7). It is interesting in this regard that the disciples not only prayed in his name, but they also prayed to Christ (Acts 7:59) (271). Moreover, the disciples also worshiped Jesus. The Old Testament forbids worshiping anything other than God (Ex. 20:1-4); neither men or angels were allowed to be worshiped. However, Jesus accepted worship on several occasions. After he stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee, "those who were in the boat worshiped him [Jesus]. . . saying 'truly you are the Son of God'" (Matt. 14:33). Even the demons at Gerasenes, "when he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of [Jesus]" (Mk. 5:6).

Jesus' Enemies Understood Jesus as Claiming the Deity

There is no doubt that Jesus' claim of his monotheistic deity was correctly understood by the people in his days. The monotheistic Jews, his enemies, due to his claim, tried to stone him on several occasions, for they considered Jesus'

270. Geisler, Christian Apologetics, 334.

271. Ibid..

claims to be blasphemy. Jesus' followers, on the other hand, accepted his claim and regarded him as God.

Jesus' Disciples' Attribution of the Deity of Jesus

The disciples of Jesus, taught by Jesus, claimed Jesus to be God of the Old Testament. Although the disciples knew that only Jehovah is the "Lord of Glory," Paul in I Cor. 2:8 claims Jesus to be the "Lord of Glory" for Paul says, "for had [the leaders] known it they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." John attributes the title of "first and the last" to Jesus in Rev. 1:17, 2:8; 22:13. John, moreover, claims Jesus to be the light over five times in the first chapter of John. In Revelation, Jesus is also described as the bridegroom, and the church is depicted as a bride adorned for Christ who is her husband (21:2).

The disciples also claimed Jesus' deity by claiming him to be the Creator of the universe. According to the Old Testament, God alone is the Creator of the universe. However, John claims that Jesus is the Creator by saying that "through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (Jn. 1:2). Paul also adds, "All things were created by him and for him. . . and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:16-17).

The disciples also claimed that Jesus was the Redeemer and Saviour, titles used only for God in the Old Testament. In Titus 2:13, Christ is identified with God, for it says, "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for

us to redeem us from all wickedness." In Acts 5:31, Peter claims that Christ is one whom "God exalted at his right hand as Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Also, F. F. Bruce and William Martin say in an article titled "The Deity of Christ":

In Colossians 2:13, Paul speaks of God "having forgiven us all our transgressions," while in ch. 3:13, it is "the Lord [or Christ] has forgiven you." If the right reading here is Lord, it must stand for Christ, as is clear from such a reference as "Christ Jesus the Lord" in chapter 2:6. (272)

There is no doubt that Jesus claimed to be deity. There were many times when his enemies (Jews) were angered by his claims. Moreover, Jesus' disciples claimed he was deity. Due to their claims, the disciples were persecuted severely throughout their lives. Moreover, many of them gave up their lives claiming Jesus' deity.

ESOTERISM; CONFUSING WORLD VIEWS; PICKING AND CHOOSING

Despite all the claims of deity made by Jesus seen in the Gospels and Acts, the New Agers still refuse to admit that Jesus either claimed or is deity. The New Ager typically argues that orthodox Christianity is misinterpreting the New Testament.

272. Bruce and Martin, "Archaeological Confirmation," 13.

Esoterism

In this critique of esoterism, the thesis will primarily deal with the way of obtaining and interpreting esoteric messages. The New Agers argue that esoteric messages are given only to those few that are enlightened with occult truth. Each message is exclusive to the one that received it. This, however, has a problem with verification. If the messages are given only to the select few, then it is impossible for others to verify the truthfulness of the messages.

Also, as discussed above, the New Agers argue that the way to understand God's message or the revelation is by interpreting it in an esoteric manner--Jesus' claims in the New Testament must be reinterpreted. They assert that there are hidden meanings in the Scriptures and that the way to acquire that knowledge is by interpreting the messages (as "what it means to me"). On this, there seem to be obvious difficulties of which two will be mentioned here.

First, it seems that if person A can interpret God's message or revelation as what it means to him, then person B can interpret the same as what it means to him. This would end in chaos. If A interprets "love your neighbor" as being kind to his neighbor, while B (A's neighbor) interprets it as envying his neighbor (which is A), it is obvious that one of them (perhaps both) is misinterpreting the message. It seems that the New Agers have to argue that this is not so, for

their view seems to imply that both A and B may be interpreting the message correctly. But if A contradicts B, then it is illogical to argue that both A and B are correct.

Against the charge that the New Age view is illogical, the New Agers would respond by asserting that illogic is O.K.. This leads to a much broader aspect of the New Agers' (and pantheists' in general) esoterism which we cannot discuss thoroughly, but will briefly note a few points (273). The New Agers argue that true knowledge is acquired, not by empirical knowledge, but by a higher form of knowledge which is obtained by a special or esoteric experience. Therefore, true knowledge is beyond logic. True knowledge is not subject to logic. Therefore, illogic is O.K.

There are several grave problems to this view. If illogic is O.K., then the New Agers should not have any objection in accommodating my theory that contradicts the New Agers' view. If I claim that I acquired a theory that "the New Age view is ultimately false" through a special or esoteric experience, there is no reason why my theory should be rejected. Based on the New Age view, since the law of contradiction is allowed, my theory that "the New Age view is ultimately false," should not be rejected. However, if it is not rejected, but is accepted as true, then the New Age view

273. Again, the scope of this thesis prevents a lengthy discussion. Thus, only three brief points will be made. For indepth treatment on this and related discussion, see David Clark and Norman Geisler's Apologetics in the New Age (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 121-124, 159-184.

is false. It is false because my view that "the New Age view is false," is correct.

Another difficulty with the New Agers' denial of logic is that it is self-defeating. In an attempt to defend the truthfulness of the view, that logic does not apply to their view, they cannot escape utilizing the "logical checking procedure" (274). In order to defend their view, the New Agers must demonstrate the coherence or unity of their view. As Geisler argues, "Despite their denigration of logic, even [the New Agers] come hard up against the unavoidable conclusion that truth must be unified--truth cannot contradict itself and still be true" (275). Otherwise, the New Agers must accept contradictory theories, such as "the New Age view is ultimately false," as seen above.

Finally, since even the New Agers, in defending their view to be true, must follow a logical train of thought, they are bound by logic. In defending their view, the New Agers' defense may follow something similar to this:

- (1) The New Age view is illogical.
- (2) But, illogic is O.K..
- (3) Therefore, since illogic is O.K., the New Age view is not false. (276)

274. Ibid., 174.

275. Ibid., 165.

276. Ibid., 174-175. This is along the line of Geisler's critique of the New Age view of logic.

Regardless of whether each premise is true or not, and whether the conclusion is true when comparing with reality, the New Ager has drawn a conclusion (3) from premises (1 and 2) through a logical train of thought. Therefore, the New Agers cannot escape logic.

Secondly, how can one verify whether A or B is correct? It seems this task is not possible. If both A and B are claiming to interpret the message as what it means to each individual, and if that is the only way that the messages are interpreted, then there can be no other method of verification.

As seen above, the esoterically obtaining and interpreting of messages result in logical inconsistency. Also, their attempt to solve this difficulty by denying the concept of logic results in self-defeat. Furthermore, the subjectivity of esoterism also makes the verification of truthfulness impossible. Therefore, the New Age view of esoterism is an illogical, self-defeating and unverifiable doctrine.

Furthermore, the esoteric doctrine results in being non-historical. The New Agers frequently takes an historical event in the Bible, and interprets it as to what it means to them. By doing this, the New Agers are abandoning the historical side of the message. And yet, the New Agers charge that the New Testament is not historically reliable.

Confusing the World Views

One way in which the New Agers argue for their pantheistic view of Jesus Christ is by what James Sire in Scripture Twisting calls, "world-view confusion." This is done "whenever a reader of Scripture fails to interpret the Bible within the intellectual and broadly cultural framework of the Bible itself but uses instead a foreign frame of reference" (277).

The teachings contained in the Bible clearly support the monotheistic world view (278). Throughout the Old Testament, it has been constantly emphasized that Jehovah is the only true God. And in the New Testament, Jesus came as the unique, only-begotten son of God who alone deserves worship.

Thus, when the New Agers utilize the Scriptures (such as the words of Jesus), they are utilizing the writings which the authors wrote from the monotheistic perspective. But when the New Agers interpret monotheistic writing according to the pantheistic world view, "The result is that the original, intended meaning is lost or distorted, and a new and quite different meaning is substituted" (279). The New Agers have

277. James W. Sire, Scripture Twisting (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1980), 128.

278. The monotheistic view can be seen throughout the Old and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, God is portrayed as one God who is the only God. This can be inferred from the Judaism of both the Old and the New Testament.

279. Sire, Scripture Twisting, 128.

disregarded the message the author tried to convey. In this case, Sire continues:

. . . an important principle of responsible reading has been violated: We should always read in the spirit of the writer, pay attention to what the writer has actually said in the cultural and intellectual framework natural to the text. That is, a good reader always sees the text in terms of its original historical and literary context.

Not to do this when reading the Bible is not only to violate the literary character of Scripture but to confuse the very systems of thought that underlie human disclosure. (280)

In order to support their pantheistic view with scripture, the New Agers must choose between the two alternatives. If they want to interpret the Scripture in their pantheistic view, they must violate the integrity of the original writer. Thus, in order for the New Agers to not violate the integrity of the original writer, and since the Bible is written from a monotheistic standpoint, they ought to interpret the Scripture in the monotheistic context (281).

Pick and Choose

Throughout the presentation of the New Age views, it has been shown that New Agers are often inconsistent in their views of god and of the Scriptures. They seem to pick and choose certain points to their advantage.

280. Ibid., 128-129.

281. Monotheism and pantheism are opposing views. Therefore, if one is true, then the other must be false.

This is seen in their view of god. They seem to go back and forth between god who is personal and god that is impersonal. When they argue for god as being energy, as Spangler does (282), they seem to be arguing for god who is impersonal. However, when they argue for the pantheistic god (283), they seem to be arguing for a personal god. It seems that the New Agers desire to have the best of both worlds by wanting both a personal and an impersonal god, while their pantheistic philosophy can only grant the impersonal god.

The New Agers' picking and choosing is also seen in their utilization of the Scriptures. It seems that the New Agers, for the most part, downplay the Scriptures. However, when the New Agers want to utilize certain portions of the Scriptures (such as Jesus' baptism and others) to argue for their view, they seem to have no problem with the validity of the Scriptures.

As seen above, the New Agers are being inconsistent in two additional areas. They cannot decide whether their god is personal or impersonal. Also, they utilize the Scriptures when it is to their advantage, and downplay them when they are not.

282. Spangler, Reflections, 13.

283. Bailey, Bethlehem to Calvary, 21.

SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, we have seen that there are several problems with the New Age view of Jesus' life: Jesus' relationship with Essenes, his travel throughout India, and his survival of the crucifixion. Furthermore, their New Age source of their argument, mainly Akashic Record and Notovitch's account of Jesus' travel to the East, is shown to be unreliable. In addition, on the contrary to New Agers' accusations, the New Testament (especially the Four Gospels) are shown to be historically trustworthy, while Paul's teaching of redemption and the deity of Jesus is not exclusive to Paul but is taught by the eyewitness followers of Jesus and Jesus himself. Furthermore, New Agers' attempts to explain away the teachings of Jesus regarding his deity and the doctrine of redemption by interpreting the Bible esoterically result in logical inconsistencies and is historically unverifiable. And by interpreting the monotheistic Bible from the pantheistic world view, the New Agers violate the literary character of the Scripture. But if New Agers do interpret it from the monotheistic world view (as the New Testament was originally written), they must admit to Jesus' claim of deity. Finally, New Agers are not being consistent with their view of god, and their view of the Scriptures--they go back and forth between a personal and impersonal god, and they utilize the Scriptures which they downplay when it is to their advantage.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The New Age movement is a broad pantheistic (the theory that is generally defined as "the theory that God is the world and the world is God" (284)) religious movement, attempting to bring in the New Aquarian Age in the present world. The New Age authority is firmly based on Akashic Records and other Gnostic and "lost" documents--they, however, do base their authority on the Bible to some extent, but only in an esoteric way. The New Agers also believe that in each dispensation, God has provided a leader of that age who would guide mankind to divinity.

New Agers claim that the leader that was provided for the Piscal age was Jesus Christ, who was an ordinary man who devoted his life for the ministry to mankind. Throughout his life, Jesus encountered various Eastern religions, and was influenced by them.

Around the age of thirty, assert many New Agers, Jesus presented himself to be used by the Christ--the hierarchical being. Thus, for three years the Christ utilized Jesus' body to minister to mankind.

284. Clark and Geisler, Apologetics in the New Age, 241.

Throughout his life, Jesus showed mankind the way to discover their own divinity. Jesus manifested this through the process of initiation to his Christhood and/or divinity.

Due to the influence of the many eastern religions, Jesus' teaching, as seen in the New Age view, is very different from traditional Christianity. The New Agers argue that Jesus did not teach the doctrine of blood sacrifice, but of tolerance. Traditional Christianity, which affirms the doctrine of blood sacrifice and claims exclusivity is the fabrication of Jesus' disciples, especially Paul.

There are, however, several difficulties to the New Age view of Jesus Christ. Much of their view, such as Jesus' encounter with the Essenes and Eastern religions, is mere speculation that is without firm historical evidences. In fact, much of their argument commits the Fallacy of Ignoratio.

A more severe difficulty of the New Age view is that their much dependent source of evidences of Jesus' travel to the East--the account of Jesus' life by Notovitch--has been damagingly criticized by scholars such as F. Max Mueller and E. Goodspeed. The weakened account of Notovitch has been further refuted to the point of silence by Professor J. Archibald Douglas, when he disclosed the findings from his trace of Notovitch's expedition. After his meeting with the lama of the monastery in which Notovitch alleged to have seen the writings of the life of Issa (Jesus), Douglas concluded that Notovitch's account was--as the lama says--"'Sun, sun,

sun, manna mi dug!' which is Tibetan for, 'Lies, lies, lies, nothing but lies!'" (285)

This difficulty becomes more devastating for the New Agers since their source of the life of Jesus and their revelation in general--the Akashic Record--is shown not to be trustworthy. It has been shown that the information about Jesus which Levi and Cayce received from the Akashic Record was inconsistent. Furthermore, it has been shown that the historical information which Levi received from the Akashic Record was historically incorrect (regarding Herod Antipas, Meng-tse, etc.). Therefore, since both Notovitch and the Akashic Record's accounts of Jesus life and his travels throughout the East are refuted beyond a reasonable doubt, the New Agers' claim of Jesus' travels (and other claims that are given by the Akashic Record) cannot stand.

Not only the life of Jesus, but the New Agers' accusation against orthodox Christianity, is also refuted by the trustworthiness of the New Testament writers (including Paul) and their writings. Regarding the New Agers' accusation that Paul fabricated Jesus' teaching, it has been shown that the disciples of Jesus considered Paul as a true follower of Jesus. It has also been shown that Paul's teaching of redemption and the deity of Jesus were also taught by Jesus himself and the eyewitnesses.

285. J. A. Douglas, "The Chief Lama of Himis on the Alleged 'Unknown Life of Christ'," 672.

The New Agers' resistance to admit Jesus' teaching of his deity nevertheless persists. New Agers attempt to resolve this by "explaining away" or reinterpreting the New Testament in an esoteric manner. This, however, results in logical inconsistencies and is unverifiable. New Agers attempt to reinterpret the Bible by interpreting from the pantheistic world view. This, however, results in violating the literary character of the original writers and writings. Moreover, many New Agers commit another fallacy by picking and choosing. They want to have the best of both worlds by wanting both a personal and an impersonal God. Furthermore, they also pick and choose the portions of Scriptures when it is to their advantage, while downplaying them other times.

Despite New Agers' attempt to establish their case for their view of Jesus of Nazareth, the discussion above has shown that their case does not stand. The discussion throughout the thesis clearly shows the systematic inconsistencies of the New Age view--both internal inconsistencies and inadequacies regarding factual data (especially regarding Jesus' travel to the East, where he allegedly was influenced by mystical philosophy). Therefore, the New Age view of Jesus Christ--that, due to the influence of the religions of the East, Jesus was utilized by the Christ to manifest and teach mankind the eastern pantheistic divinity within them--must be rejected. With the rejection of this New

Age view, orthodox Christianity, which is opposite of the New Age view, is able to further set forth its case.

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