

Chapter 1

The New Age Enticement of Christians

"Get down on your knees!"

"Get down on your knees. I am Jesus Christ, and I am going to heal you."

I listened to Muriel's narrative with fascination. She was standing at the front of the class in our New Age center and was describing an incredible experience that had recently occurred to her in the middle of the night.

"I am telling you the truth," Muriel continued with excitement. "He stood there right in the middle of my locked bedroom and told me to get down on my knees. If people think that Jesus is a weedy weakling, they are in for a big surprise. He is over six feet tall and looks very dignified and handsome.

"He is a power-r-r-ful being," she stressed with force.

I started to feel somewhat uneasy as I sat listening to Muriel's account. Blonde and of good height, she was about sixty years old and looked fairly slender in her attractive blue dress. Her face beaming with joy, the founder and director of our center described what happened next.

"I got out of bed and knelt in front of Jesus. He laid his hands upon my head and gave me a blessing. Then he turned around and walked straight through the solid, locked door of my hotel room."

Muriel commented matter-of-factly, "He was gone. He just disappeared into the corridor."

This was the second occasion in which I had listened to Muriel's account of the visit by Jesus to her hotel room. After her experience, many changes started taking place in the Lighted Way, our small metaphysical organization. I was becoming quite confused. The new Christian emphasis made me feel uncomfortable.

It wasn't that I disbelieved Muriel's experience. On the contrary, I fully accepted her narrative as being factual. After all, I was a board member of the center and had known Muriel for several years. She was

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very spiritual, and I had never observed her to lie or exaggerate. What made me feel uneasy was the new focus upon the Bible.

Muriel was a New Age channeler, or spirit medium,* when she founded the Lighted Way in the early sixties. Shortly after her visit from Jesus in 1985, she communicated a message from the Holy Spirit saying that I should throw away all my occult books and start to study the Bible instead. I was reluctant to accept her advice and give up my beloved esoteric volumes.

*Channelers are New Age mediums who claim to be able to receive messages from intelligent spirit entities existing in the spirit realms. The act of channeling is the verbalization by the medium of any messages received.

I had been a member of the Lighted Way for five years and loved the metaphysical teachings. Over the years I had had many spiritual experiences, some of them as important to me personally as Muriel's visit from Jesus was to her. For example, about a year after my first visit to the Lighted Way, I became a devotee of a noted Hindu/Buddhist guru called Djwhal Khul. After the four-year relationship with Djwhal Khul, I could not understand why I should suddenly become a follower of Jesus Christ instead and be required to trash all my occult books!

Muriel had stated that the metaphysical books were only half-truths and that the Bible was a much greater source of divine wisdom. But I remained reluctant to become involved in this Christianity.

I gradually began to acknowledge the fact that Jesus had taken over our center and that I must accept him as my master. I purchased a Bible and started to attend the weekly Bible-study classes and prayer groups that were being offered in lieu of classes on metaphysics.

The teachings expounded at the Lighted Way evolved into a curious mixture of New Age mysticism and biblical Christianity. We regarded ourselves as New Age Christians. I even began to tell people that I was a born-again Christian. After all, I had given up my Hindu guru and accepted "Jesus Christ" as my master and savior.

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During my meditation periods, I could sense that "Jesus Christ" and the "Holy Spirit" were inspiring me through my voice of conscience, exactly in the manner that Djwhal Khul seemed to have done previously. After a while, I became devoted to this Jesus. He took over my life.

I was also told to attend regular Christian church congregations so that I could meet new friends and interest them in meditation and other less offensive New Age ideas disguised in biblical-sounding terms.

Avoiding anything too controversial, I presented subtle suggestions here and there. I found quite a few people who were willing to listen to my interesting proposals. For example, a pastor from an evangelical congregation told me it would be a good idea for me to start a meditation group in his church if I could get some people interested.

Two years after the mysterious visit by "Jesus Christ" to the director of our New Age center, I experienced a dramatic conversion to authentic Christianity and discovered that the Jesus Christ I was following was not the real Jesus, Son of God Almighty. I was devastated to learn that as a New Age Christian, I had been following false prophets and false teachings purporting to be revelations of wisdom from God.

You may be wondering, Who or what appeared to Muriel in her hotel room? Was it her imagination? Or was it perhaps a demon in a disguise, pretending to be Jesus?

Regarding the second possibility, perhaps you do not believe in the existence of satanic angels. When I was a Christian youth, I held the same view. Believing that evil angels were simply mythical, I never thought it was possible to be influenced by them. However, some definite power certainly took control of our center and my personal life. I was destined to have a profound and incredible learning experience before I was pulled from the clutches of darkness and brought into the true light of a relationship with Christ.

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The New Age Seduction of Christians

Several months after my rescue from the New Age and its counterfeit Christianity arm, I gave a personal testimony about my experiences to a large group of Christians at a camp meeting. I told them about my experience of being held firmly in the grip of deception perpetrated by the New Age cult movement and about its endeavor to fuse Eastern philosophy with Christianity.

After the talk, a middle-aged Christian couple approached me. With a worried expression on his face, the father reported: "Our daughter was always rather timid and nervous. She recently started to attend Yoga classes. Now she is also doing meditation in order to find peace and relaxation. She tells us that it works. She is becoming more and more interested in other New Age ideas and will not listen to anything we tell her. She still sings in our church choir. What can we do?"

Maybe you have an acquaintance involved in the New Age. I have discovered that it is subtly luring many Christians into its influence. As a teenager, I, too, was one of the victims. Even though I had been brought up in a Christian family that attended church each week, I was still deceived by the New Age movement's promises of health, happiness, and fulfillment. I was completely led astray, eventually becoming totally immersed in the world of the occult. It really can happen to anyone - you, your family, or your friends.

For example, my own active involvement with the New Age movement began when I joined a London-based international networking organization called Health for the New Age. Not even knowing what the term "New Age" meant, I wasn't looking for spirit guides or occult practices. I was simply interested in finding information about alternative healing techniques for a condition that I had. My innocent interest eventually led me onto the path of obedience to the powers of deception. Apparently, my Christian upbringing failed to give me the knowledge that would have alerted me to the dangers of the course I was taking.

Knowledge, success, and oneness with "God" are the promises the New Age movement presents to the potential victims it is about to

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ensnare. And thousands of unsuspecting individuals - Christians and atheists alike - are swallowing this lure. Many orthodox Christians, including some pastors, have tasted the New Age bait and found that it "was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom" (Genesis 3:6).

During the time I was a New Age Christian, it was very pleasing to find that a few Christian preachers were already teaching some of the New Age beliefs. Joyfully hearing them express statements that were in line with what I had learned in my metaphysical training, I reasoned that these preachers must have received revelation knowledge directly from the spirit realm, or possibly were inspired by the New Age writings in widespread circulation. Your own pastor may have expressed odd interpretations of biblical passages, and you are not quite sure where he is coming from.

The New Age teachings and practices have now become so widespread that most Christians are quite likely to come into contact with them in one form or another. Often people are not aware of that exposure. For example, maybe you have been to healing professionals who practice new and interesting techniques, and you were unaware those techniques are New Age oriented.

Like Nancy Reagan, perhaps someone in your family has taken an interest in astrology, thinking that it may be beneficial, or, at worst, just harmless fun. I am sure the wife of our popular former President did not realize that astrology is an ancient divination practice originating from pagan Babylon and is expressly forbidden by the Bible.

It is possible you may have sought advice from a psychological counselor, and, unknown to you, he was a New Ager, and you were being exposed to a subtle web of evil deceit.

If you have desired to seek closeness with God, perhaps meditation has attracted your attention, that so-called science of seeking communion with God. You may have wondered whether it is really a good idea for a Christian to meditate.

I first began to practice New Age introspective meditation in a class at the Lighted Way metaphysical center. Some people begin New

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Age meditation techniques right in their own churches. Like my acquaintance Jean, for example. She is a secretary with a large Christian publishing house. As she sat at her desk reading through one of my manuscripts, several questions started to surface concerning her own recent activity.

Jean reported: "I am going to a Bible study in which the teacher asks the members of the class to sit quietly and try to listen for God's voice. I wonder if this is the beginning of what you talk about in the book."

"You bet it is," was my reply. "It sounds to me like a classic case of the invasion of New Age techniques right into your own church. This type of introspective meditation is not found in the Bible, and it has never been part of orthodox Christian activity. It is a Hindu practice that is undesirable and potentially dangerous!"

Occultist Lectures in Methodist Church

Some churches in my own area openly accommodate New Agers and their evil philosophies. Take, for example, a large Methodist church in the Los Angeles area. It has boldly rented its sanctuary to the renowned New Age celebrity Benjamin Creme so that he could present his West Coast lectures on the subject of the second coming of "the Christ" to planet Earth. Creme is an occultist who placed full-page advertisements in eighteen of the world's major newspapers in 1982, announcing that "the Christ" had returned and was living in London.

Jesus warned that Creme's type of activity will happen toward the end of the age:

At that time if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or, "There he is!" do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time (Matthew 24:23-25).

Note that even the elect are in danger of being deceived. I hope your pastor would not rent your church to an agent of the Antichrist conspiracy.

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Are New Age Philosophies Really That Bad?

Initially, I felt grateful that I had been led into the New Age movement. The teachings answered many questions and gave hope for the future. The New Age appeared to offer everything that I had been looking for. I felt part of a movement, part of a group of people who were genuinely seeking to improve the quality of life on this planet and who were seeking to harmonize their lives with God.

I came to believe that if I applied the New Age teachings and techniques in my life, my skills and talents would develop to their full potential, and I would attain fulfillment and happiness.

For example, I began to practice meditation in the hope of receiving enlightenment. In meditation, I became aware that it was possible to tune in to an inner voice of conscience that seemed to give wise advice. Known by New Agers as the voice of the "higher self," it was not some strange voice speaking to me, but was more like my own voice of conscience - with a special clarity and composure - speaking to me in a new and distinct manner. The newly found conscience seemed to operate from a higher level of wisdom than my regular, logical thoughts. The New Agers regard this inner voice as an expression of the voice of God, a manifestation of the Holy Spirit as it speaks through the mind. I was delighted to discover this source of "divine" wisdom within my own mind as it prompted me to make many beneficial changes in my life.

Unfortunately, after the first few years of apparent blessings, life gradually became a nightmare of slavery to the dictates coming from my perverted inner voice of conscience. For example, my endeavors to secure the financial prosperity promised by the New Age prophets resulted in monetary debt as I was forced by my conscience to make large donations to help finance the operations of the Lighted Way and its advertising thrusts to promote New Age "Christianity." Any disobedience began to result in severe depression, which I perceived to be the feeling of separation from "God" because I was disobedient to his will. As soon as I donated the amount of money I had been commanded to give, the intense depression lifted immediately. This

scenario occurred repeatedly; like a puppet on a string, I was being controlled by a strange and awesome force.

The cult of the New Age is similar to all other cults. It doesn't matter whether you are a slave to false voices of conscience, to spirit guides, or to cult organization leaders; the process of intimidation, guilt, and bondage is very similar. However, the progressive deception was so subtle that I never suspected I was being manipulated by some kind of evil power.

A Promise of Immortality

It became my hope that New Age Christianity would bring me into immortality, the eternal life promised by Christ. I was unaware that Satan was using New Age teaching to perpetuate the lie he told Eve in the garden: "You will not surely die" (Genesis 3:4). Believing this lie, I had to accept distorted interpretations of the clear scriptural statements that "death came to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12) and that the wages of sin is death (see Romans 6:23).

I had believed that all the different avenues of religious expression would ultimately lead to God, whether those expressions were colored by Hinduism, Buddhism, or something else. The idea that all spiritual paths lead to God is one of the fundamental New Age doctrines.

But the Bible says something different:

Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it (Matthew 7:13, 14).

Upon my rescue from the New Age, I was stunned to realize that even though I was praying and preaching in the name of Jesus, in reality I was traveling the wide road to destruction. Perhaps you think it is impossible for someone to be preaching and praying in the name of Jesus while being under the control of the powers of darkness.

Christ warned that there would arise false teachers who would preach in his name:

Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many

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miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (Matthew 7:22, 23).

You need to know about my former activities because right now others are doing exactly what I was doing. You need to be able to recognize them before they lead you or your church astray into false doctrines and questionable practices.

Before I describe how I was seduced by the Mastermind, I would like to tell you a little about my background.

The Disappearance of God

I was born thirty-nine years ago into a Christian family who methodically attended church each week. My father was a lay preacher in the small congregation. Even though I believed that Jesus was the Son of God, I gradually developed an attitude of apathy and coldness toward Christianity.

I think much of this attitude can be attributed to the neighborhood in which I grew up - a medium-sized town located in the industrial region of northern England. Factory chimneys endlessly belched out smoke into the drab, cloudy sky. People seemed oriented to a secular, coarse lifestyle. Among my friends, religion was hardly ever talked about except as a subject for rude jokes and as a means of expressing profanities. Schoolteachers never mentioned God, and everyone seemed to get along fine without religion.

I began to drift into the worldly values and activities of my friends. At first it was small things, such as minor vandalism, smoking, and stealing liquor from my uncle's pantry. More serious was the tendency never to think about God or Jesus or about the role they should have in my life.

As I became more involved with my predominantly ungodly friends, I gradually categorized religion as something that belonged to my parents, but not to me. Even though I believed that Jesus had existed as the Bible teaches, I felt no special relationship with him. And yet, surprisingly, I felt secure that if I died I would go to heaven.

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My alienation from Christian values intensified in high school, where my teachers exposed me to fascinating ideas such as the theories of evolution, reincarnation, and extrasensory perception.

I recall one teacher in particular. Mr. Harding looked to be in his early thirties. He was of medium height and build, with reddish-brown hair neatly styled in a manner typical of British high-school teachers. But he seemed to be different from most schoolmasters. A rather solitary character, he often could be seen in his beige raincoat sitting by himself in local cafes. Even though I was a sciences student, I found his twice-weekly philosophy class to be most interesting.

"Freud says" was one of Mr. Harding's most common phrases as he introduced us to the ideas of Sigmund Freud, the famous psychoanalyst.

"Freud says that man's unconscious mind is a very powerful force in his life," commented Mr. Harding. "He believed that all the idiosyncrasies in our motives and emotions result from the workings of the unconscious."

I had a deep personal interest in Mr. Harding's statements. Sitting in his class, or in any of my high-school classes, for that matter, I often felt discomfoting anxieties and fears. Sometimes my chest would tighten, and a dark wave of claustrophobia would descend upon me like a nightmare, giving me the powerful urge to leave the room, for no apparent reason. I knew the feeling was irrational, but could not understand my fearful response.

The problem had started one morning when I was sixteen years old. During a school assembly in the auditorium, I was suddenly overwhelmed by a panic attack. I had felt tension and stress building inside of me for months. On this particular morning, the tension seemed to explode in an attack of fear and anxiety, which I had difficulty keeping under control. My chest tightened as if a steel band had been wrapped around it, and I thought I was going to faint from lack of oxygen. It seemed as if I were under a cloud of impending doom as I wrestled to keep my thinking clear. Using every drop of

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willpower available, I fought the urge to run and forced myself to stay outwardly composed until the assembly was over.

After this first panic attack, I was never again the same person. My late teens seemed to be dogged with incessant anxiety. The family doctor prescribed tranquilizers and told me to take it easy. I was disappointed when he failed to give any meaningful reasons for my condition.

"Why do I feel this way?" I asked him.

"I think you may have been working too hard," he suggested nonchalantly. His vagueness precipitated a lack of confidence in his diagnosis. To be truthful, excessive study did make me feel worse, but I could not agree that it was the basic cause of my condition. I intuitively sensed that something had changed inside my nervous system as I became an adolescent, but I did not know what to do to correct the condition.

While listening to Mr. Harding's Freudian-oriented philosophy talks, I wondered whether the anxiety was connected with my unconscious mind, as proposed in Freud's psychology theories. Perhaps Freud's books could throw some light upon my strange feelings of tension and alienation.

Being motivated to read some of Freud's works, I began to evolve a general opinion that all human problems could be explained in terms of dysfunctions associated with the unconscious mind. I thought, Perhaps religion itself is a neurosis, a condition of psychological weakness, a mask for an underlying lack of maturity. This was a view that Freud expounded.

This led me to question whether Satan really existed. Were temptations really a process of some evil being playing psychic war games with his victim, as the church taught? Freud expressed the contrasting idea that the activity of the subconscious mind was responsible for conflicting thoughts and impulses. He believed that a person's irrational and antisocial actions were highly influenced by the unconscious memories associated with detrimental childhood experiences called trauma.

I began to agree with Freud's view and regarded Satan as a purely mythical symbolic representation of man's inner disordered state with its destructive impulses. To deal with this condition, one needed greater psychological understanding.

After digesting a couple of Freud's books, I focused my efforts once again upon academic studies. My fear and anxiety had abated somewhat, and my interest in psychology waned. However, Freud's ideas had deeply affected my attitude toward religion.

"Will, are you going to the fresher's stag night this evening?" Brian asked as he took off his black-framed spectacles in the elevator. A friendly guy of rather thin build, Brian was a fellow university freshman living on the same floor of our students' accommodation building. It was my first week of beginning a bachelor's course in physics.

"What is a stag night?" I asked with curiosity, having never lived in a big city before.

"Oh, it's a striptease show with plenty of booze. The students' union has organized a special show for all the freshmen. Why don't you come with us?"

I knew it wouldn't be the right thing to do. But even though I wasn't really too interested in the suggestion, I felt as if I could just do with some kind of excitement to pass the evening and get away from the worries and stress of starting university life.

"I guess I'll come with you. Sounds like it may be fun," I said with a lump in my throat. As a student at a university, I wanted to stretch my boundaries to see what kinds of things were happening in the bright lights of the metropolitan city of Manchester. In a spirit of rebelliousness, I didn't want anything to stop me from having a "good time," especially not my conscience.

Out of curiosity, a few weeks later I visited pornographic movie theaters on a couple of occasions. They were a terrible bore, but at least I felt I was exercising my initiative and maturity to search for some excitement to break the loneliness of student life.

The university's bars and weekend rock shows now attracted my attention. However, even they became boring unless I had a couple of

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beers to help me loosen up a little. As intoxication progressed, my lowered moral standards enabled me to amuse Brian and our companions by telling lewd jokes, much to their cheering applause.

What relationship I may have had with Christ was now over, even though my "body" still attended church once a week so that things would look good in our family. Like a kind of Jekyll and Hyde, I became a double personality, putting on an air of respectability in church, but living an unchristian life outside of it.

Upon leaving the university, I aspired to find fulfillment in a career and in the pursuit of leisure. Becoming an engineering designer-draughtsman for a large manufacturer of textile machinery, I was busy earning and spending money, trying to satisfy an insatiable thirst for excitement through motorcycles, cars, travel, partying, and bars.

When I was about twenty-four years old, I decided to quit the token visits to church, even though I was afraid my family would treat me as an outcast. It was not easy to leave the church. Quite frankly, I was afraid that the Christian gospel might be true after all, and my life would end in damnation. After weeks of excruciating deliberation, I finally decided to cease all church attendance. I rationalized that I would "take a vacation" from all religion for a while to see how I would feel. Then perhaps later I would reassess my beliefs.

Life without any religion seemed to be better than the former pretense - at least now my beliefs and behavior were consistent. For example, I noticed I could now use profanities and pornographic expressions without arousing any nudge from my conscience, leaving me completely free to do as I pleased.

"Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" became an apt symbolism for my life. But a new problem developed. I didn't die, and it was getting more and more difficult to be merry, no matter how active my social life became. And frantically active it had become: the once withdrawn high-school student was now involved in anything from motorcycle gangs to mountaineering, from shady bars to rock festivals. However, after playing out these activities, the old feeling of unfulfillment would creep upon me.

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A letter arrived from my older sister. "Why don't you come and live with us in Canada?" she wrote. "You can start a whole new life in this land of opportunity." My sister had emigrated to Toronto with her husband and family several years before. The invitation sounded appealing.

Deciding I needed some drastic change to get out of my rut, I took her advice and flew out to a prospective new life. Unfortunately, being in a new country did not seem to alter the way I felt. I also very much missed my friends back in England. After a few months, I returned to my hometown.

I now became more acutely aware of the underlying unfulfillment and creeping depression. Further, the phobias and tension I had felt in my teens had never completely left me, and I wanted so much to feel relaxed and completely at ease. Remembering my high-school teacher's high esteem for Freud, I decided to turn to psychology as a means of finding answers to the problems of my life.

Paying many visits to a local lending library, I borrowed several books on psychology. In my thinking, I wondered, Could a correct application of this psychology give me peace and contentment in life? The ideas expressed in the pages sounded very promising.

One small book on the library shelf caught my special attention.