

A COMMUNITY OF MYSTICS:

**New Zealand New Agers' Identity, Relationship with the
Community and Connection with the Divine**

by

Linda Edith Hampton, B.A.(Hons)

**School of Philosophy and Religious Studies Programme,
University of Canterbury**

**Submitted For a Master of Arts in Religious Studies
2008**

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Acknowledgements

*Shirley Walden for her proof reading expertise,
the 100 survey participants who trusted me with their beliefs and spiritual insights
and Donn Hampton for his unwavering support.*

Abstract

The 'New Age' encompasses many 'spiritualities', philosophies and alternative religions, such as Spiritualism, Wicca, Paganism and Theosophy, to name a few. Its cultural and ancestral threads, prior to the emergence of the contemporary New Age Movement in the early 1970s, is acknowledged by examining some prominent groups and individuals throughout history.

Many comments on the New Age Movement, in the 1970s, 80s and 90s were dismissive. Through a survey done in 2007 amongst New Agers, for this thesis, those early judgments are examined to determine their relationship to the New Zealand experience. There was found to be divergence from international analysis where New Agers' age was concerned, their presumed connection to the 1960s counterculture, the assumptions that the New Age Movement is exclusively white, that science is a necessary part of belief and that New Age beliefs exist in opposition to community needs.

The focus is on the New Agers' within community, not their separation from it, for separation is a claim some overseas academics promoted as proof that the New Age is anti-community because of its individualism in belief seeking. Through this thesis the New Zealand New Ager is placed in relationship to the global New Age Movement by an academic who is 'of' the movement, not an academic 'outside looking in'.

The experience of belief is looked at through the survey participants' eyes with the aim of claiming those experiences as 'mysticism'. This is approached by examining their 'contact' with the Divine/Godhead, through descriptions of altered/abstract realities. Any exclusivity the major religions have on mysticism is essentially 'removed' and given to the community as a concept attainable by those outside 'religion'; for example, the New Age Movement. The New Ager is seen both in the everyday reality helping to create community, and although it is impossible to prove/examine coherently, possibly in an altered/abstract reality/realities.

Introduction

Locating the New Age Movement in the Past and the Present

Locating the majority of the New Zealand New Age Movement appears relatively straightforward if the ‘general’ academic consensus that the international New Age Movement emerged out of the 1960’s counter-culture is accepted. Theoretically, one has only to search amongst the ‘baby boomers’ born post World War II in the 1950s and ‘60s and isolate those who created and reacted ‘visibly’ to the emergence of a counter-culture born out of ‘radical seeds’ that ‘sprouted’ periodically throughout history. However, although having connection to the counter-culture, from the outset the ‘Movement’ has been difficult to locate, because not only is it without a leadership hierarchy, it has highly individualized beliefs that frequently give an outsider either a disjointed view or one of only vague connection between each New Ager – the antithesis of a community connected to a single belief pattern.

Part of the radicalism was the separation of spirituality from religion and it’s developing into ‘alternative spirituality’ which Robert S. Ellwood, Professor of Religion¹, contended could be traced, like an underground river which surfaced periodically, as far back as “...ancient Chaldea and to Hellenistic times.”²

Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman see the separation of and preference for the concept of ‘spirituality/spiritual’, over the institution of religion, as a method of reaching a holistic view; a concept more able to negotiate the natural and supernatural realms “...because its [spirituality’s] fuzzy boundaries and malleable praxis allow it to occupy ambiguous, multivalent ground between realms elsewhere more clearly categorisable (and

¹ Ellwood, Robert S., *Islands of the Dawn: The Story of Alternative Spirituality in New Zealand*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1993. Biography on jacket cover.

² Ibid. Pg 1.

hence open to stigma) as ‘religious’ and ‘secular’.”³ That ‘fuzzy boundary’ tendency exists because the participants express extreme individualism, seen by some as a lack of commitment, a sign of a deteriorating society devoid of community.⁴

One means used to ‘negotiate’ the ‘new’ spirituality was derision. Amanda Porterfield described Robert Bellah’s attack on ‘Sheilaism’, the label an American woman gave her beliefs using her own name, which became “...one of the most influential critiques...” on a post-modern ‘pick ‘n’ mix’, eclectic, individualized spirituality.⁵ Sheila Larson reported herself content with a faith she had pulled together over a period of time, which stood separate from the institution of religion.⁶ It and she were condemned by Robert Bellah and several co-authors, all academics, as ‘superficial and narcissistic’ in *‘Habits of the Heart’* (1985), a critique which was to wield great influence in discussions on personalized spirituality.⁷ The fact that Sheila was a nurse further condemned her in Bellah’s and his co-authors opinion, because it aligned her with another nurse, Anne Hutchinson, who was banished by the Massachusetts Bay Colony governors and magistrates in the 17th Century for threatening ‘social order’, by having differing spiritual views from her community and regarding herself as the authority of those views independent of the religious authority of the time.⁸

The attack on ‘Sheilaism’ was linked to what was, in the 1980s, seen as a deterioration of American society through a growing spiritual individualism, ‘weakening’ religion’s role as the main unifier of American culture.⁹ Just as there was amongst the 17th Century Puritans disagreement as to how independent an individual’s spiritual experience should

³ Sutcliffe, Sutcliffe, and Marion Bowman, “Introduction”, Pg 9, in Sutcliffe, Steven and Marion Bowman (Eds), *‘Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality’*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2000.

⁴ Porterfield, Amanda, *‘The Transformation of American Religion: The Story of a Late-Twentieth Century Awakening’*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001. Pg 12

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Porterfield, Amanda, 2001. Pg 13

⁹ Ibid. Pg 12

extend and still be ‘authentically Christian,’¹⁰ Bellah and his fellow critics, of whom there were many, echoed those views approximately four hundred years later; in effect they contended that spiritual experience should be aligned with social responsibility – a responsibility to established institutionalized traditions.¹¹

One cannot look back from the ‘safety’ of New Zealand at American ‘witch-hunting’ and feel complacent, because derision and fear of the new was here too. In the following example there is sectarianism, something not present in Bellah and Co’s critique which took issue with individualism, however, the New Age provided a focus/vehicle for both to voice their particular concerns. Both critiques, although different, show the breadth of concern the New Age Movement (hereinafter referred to as ‘NAM’) stirred in different quarters.

In 1992 Selwyn Stevens wrote a booklet about the dangers of the NAM and its many parts, with a foreword by a Dr Richard Turnbull M.A. B.M. B.Ch, F.R.C.S. to give it a note of authority,¹² perhaps because Stevens was aware of being a non-academic. Stevens describes himself as a ‘third-generation preacher, Radio Rhema’s Regional Manager and Dominion Counsellor’ and includes a full description of his community and charity work.¹³

His biography is aimed at giving the reader the picture of a wholesome community leader who has authority’s approval, thereby legitimacy and authenticity. Stevens regards himself as an authority because he “...has read many books on the New Age...” and ‘knows’ its failings compared with Christianity, just as he claims to know the major religions of the world, of which he gives brief misleading descriptions - misleading because of what they omit¹⁴. Take Stevens’ description of Buddhism as one example:

¹⁰ Porterfield, Amanda, 2001. Pg 15

¹¹ Ibid. Pg 13

¹² Stevens, Selwyn, *“The New Age: The Old Lie in a New Package”*, Petone, Jireh Print Services, 1992. Pg 3

¹³ Ibid. Back Cover.

¹⁴ Ibid. Pg 36 and 37.

“Buddhists also believe in reincarnation and Karma. Universal suffering is caused by craving, which can be eliminated by Buddha’s “Eightfold Path” of self righteousness. Though Buddha only claimed to be a man, in time his followers made him a god.”

He states bald facts, isolating them, making no attempt to provide context. It is rather like describing Christianity as: ‘Christians believe there is only one life lived and that all transgressions are sins. The main focus is on Jesus, who was a man and a god and who was murdered on a cross. The cross is revered by being in all Christian places of worship and is also worn as a talisman.’

It is easy to dismiss Selwyn Stevens as a bigot, but similar views have been so widespread that action had been taken by relatives of some considered brainwashed by cult leaders.¹⁵ One reason for the view that New Age or new religious movements were dangerous to the individual and society, was partly due to the mass suicide of Jim Jones and his followers in a totalitarian community (Jonestown) in Guyana in 1978.¹⁶ Deprogramming was considered an option by some parents whose loved ones had strayed from the family faith and needed to be saved from themselves.¹⁷ It was a view so prevalent in the late 1970s and early 1980s that when Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah’s book, *‘The New Religious Consciousness’* (1976) was reviewed in the journal *‘NUMEN’* in 1979, the reviewer was surprised that the authors did not mention “...deprogramming in spite of the practice being not uncommon.”¹⁸

Michael York, commenting on the availability of literature on the New Age and Neopaganism in particular in 1995, agreed that what was available was ‘sketchy, incomplete,

¹⁵ Wuthnow, Robert, “The New Spiritual Freedom”, Pg 105, in Dawson, Lorne L., (Ed), *‘Cults and New Religious Movements: A Reader’* Malden, Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Barker, Eileen, “Book Review of ‘The New Religious Consciousness’”, Pg 277, in Glock, Charles Y. and Robert N. Bellah, (Eds), *‘NUMEN: International Review for the History of Religions’*, Volume XXVI, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1979.

and sometimes biased.’¹⁹ He quoted a Unitarian Minister who considered the New Age a fast ‘remedy’ for those unwilling to put the time into traditional religious disciplines; they were too undisciplined and out for fun - “It was a faddy kind of thing.”²⁰

There appeared to be a growing division between institutionalized religion and individual expressions of spirituality through the 1970s, ‘80s and ‘90s overseas, something that was perhaps diluted in New Zealand by a historical action in the 19th century excluding the establishment of a state religion in the new British colony, thereby cementing secularism; the Education Act of 1877 decreed that state schools would be free of compulsory religious instruction.²¹ The Act was not a sudden pronouncement; it arose out of a society where sectarianism was rife and various churches were displaying an inability to work together, although ‘signs’ were shown further back when the New Zealand House of Representatives sat for the first time in 1854²². In the first debate of the first Colonial Legislature the focus was on an opening prayer which representative James Macandrew lead by proposing that it was “fit and proper” that “...a public acknowledgement of the Divine Being...” be made²³. Various members countered with various concerns, including problems that might arise if some members were ‘Jews and Unitarians’.²⁴ Macandrew withdrew his motion and it was amended to acknowledge ‘the importance of religious observances’ but stated that the ‘perfect religious equality recognized by the constitution would not be subverted.’²⁵ After further debate the motion was

“...proposed and passed, that ‘the House distinctly asserts the privilege of a perfect political equality in all religious denominations, and that, whoever may be called

¹⁹ York Michael, *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 1995. Pg 25

²⁰ Ibid. Pg 44

²¹ Davidson, Allan K., “Chaplain to the Nation or Prophet at the Gate? The Role of the Church in New Zealand Society”, Pg 319, in Stenhouse, John and G.A. Wood, (Eds) *‘Christianity, Modernity and Culture’*, Adelaide, ATF Press, 2005.

²² Ibid. Pg 312

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

upon to perform this duty for the House [the opening of proceedings by a prayer], it is not thereby intended to confer or admit any pre-eminence to that Church or religious body to which he may belong.”²⁶

Effectively it did not matter whether the person saying the prayer was from a religious institution or not, it was a ‘public prayer’, a public service that did not support a particular religious expression. The decision came out of a colony which, from the 1850s, had mostly male immigrants, often working-class,²⁷ uninterested in religion and having no interest in re-establishing an institution they had not supported ‘back home’ in Britain.²⁸

Secularization could be said to have created the environment for the separation of spirituality from religion in New Zealand, if it were not for the emergence and influence of a new international pattern of ‘individualised belief’ - the ‘New Age’. That individualism creates difficulties for those trying to identify the New Age’s many parts. David Spangler, a writer from *within* the New Age, sees it as having two ‘regions’.²⁹ The first that is in the front line of “...scientific, technological, spiritual and social development.”, which includes the new thoughts on physics and concern for Earth on the political, business and medical scene.³⁰ The second region he sees as including the interest in the occult, the psychic, death, U.F.Os, crystals and ‘new religious experiences’.³¹

Spangler effectively separates the ‘new’ from the ‘old’. The first region is the injection of new technology and new ideas into the social structure creating a new era, whilst the second contains elements re-surfacing throughout history that have always intrigued man. The latter is aligned with Ellwood’s ‘underground river’ surfacing periodically in man’s civilizations – the NAM being one of those resurfacing periods. Certainly there is nothing

²⁶ Davidson, Alan K., 2005 . Pg 312

²⁷ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 274

²⁸ Ibid. Pg 4

²⁹ Spangler, David and William Irwin Thompson, *‘Reimagination of the World: A Critique of the New Age, Science, and Popular Culture’*, Santa Fe, Bear & Company, Inc., 1991. Pg 30

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

new in ‘the psychic’, death, or U.F.Os’, even ‘new religious experiences’ fall within that category; for example Christianity was once placed under that genre when it arose out of a Jewish/Roman context.

The view from *outside* the New Age is typified by an American academic, James R. Lewis, writing in ‘*Perspectives on the New Age*’, 1992, where he outlines the problems outsiders have with defining the New Age. He starts by quoting Eileen Barker, in ‘*New Religious Movements*’, 1989, who says that it is not a specific movement but a number of groups with ‘family resemblance; although two groups may have no such resemblance, both may resemble a third’.³² Lewis then quotes Ellwood, because of his work on new religious movements and his listing of New Age ‘general characteristics’:

“Emphasis on healing

A desire to be “modern” and use scientific language

Eclecticism and syncretism

A monistic and impersonal ontology

Optimism, success orientation, and a tendency to evolutionary views

Emphasis on psychic powers”³³

The care with which Lewis approaches a definition shows the difficulty outsiders have grasping an outline of what they define as a ‘movement’, rather than a religion with specific parameters.

For this thesis the title ‘New Age Movement’ is used simply because the name has a ‘history’ and is recognizable by all as an ‘identifier’, in spite of it being unpopular with some it labels.³⁴ Those ‘falling’ or ‘pushed’ under the title NAM, are spread widely, as Barker elucidated, across a loosely aligned set of beliefs ranging from (to name a few)

³² Lewis, James R., “Approaches to the Study of the New Age Movement”, Pg 6, in Lewis, James R., and J. Gordon Melton (Eds), ‘*Perspectives on The New Age*’, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Kyle, Richard, ‘*The New Age Movement in American Culture*’, Lanham, University Press of America, Inc., 1995. Pgs 4 - 6

Wicca, Spiritualism, Paganism, the Feminist Goddess movement and organisations such as Theosophy, as well as “...Neo-Paganism, astrology, nature religion, holistic thinking, healing, New Age, or New Spirituality.”³⁵ What they do have in common is a self-designated ‘sense’ of linkage with one or more major religious traditions, but individualized, creating opportunities for ‘open interpretation’ – in the case of Wicca that linkage may simply be its modern re-emergence *through* a culture dominated by Christianity. This last illustrates how by actively suppressing or destroying beliefs like Paganism and Witchcraft, the action can make a martyr of that belief system, if not now, perhaps in the future. Effectively, the witch-hunt of the Middle-ages came back to haunt Christianity as women gained their right to speak through the vote and their persecution was rehashed to justify other claims, real or imagined. Paganism, although perhaps modernized, romanticized or maybe outright reinvented, is alive and well in an age which invented freedom of expression – for past persecutions made sure people remembered what may have otherwise died naturally never to be exhumed. Legitimacy was assured because the Christian Church said Paganism existed and sought extreme measures to ‘prove’ its existence in order to justify its eradication.

The use of a label depends on who is doing the looking, and at which aspect they are looking. Take, for example, Catherine Albanese’s view of ‘Nature Religion’ in 1981, in which she discerned a clear line of evolution for American Nature Religion from the Puritan settlers to the present day.³⁶ First she examined Christian beliefs at the time the Puritans sailed to America and why they needed to make nature and the wilderness ‘subservient’, in line with the Bible’s teaching.³⁷ She then followed the line through the intervening centuries to the present, where she used two American periodicals promoting

³⁵ Roof, Wade Clarke, *Spiritual Marketplace – Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999. Pg 38

³⁶ Albanese, Catherine L, *America: Religions and Religion*, Belmont, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1981. Pg 339

³⁷ Ibid. Pg 339

‘natural’ activities for nature lovers - “...within their pages, the American involvement with nature became an identifiable religious system...” teaching a correspondence “... between self and the world, between earth and the rest of the universe.”³⁸ *‘Earth Mother News’* (1970), *‘Whole Earth Catalog’* (1968-1971) and *‘Whole Earth Epilog’* (1974) promoted subjects like dowsing, planting, natural medicine, homeopathics, Transcendental Meditation (this and the following from *Whole Earth*), I Ching, Yoga, tarot cards, palmistry, composting and Carlos Castaneda’s books which described his shamanistic experiences when doing peyote rituals.³⁹ Although the connection between 16th Century Puritans’ beliefs and Nature Religion of the 1980s seem fragile, Albanese was exploring the evolution of American society, incorporating the ‘new’ beliefs into the American community, not pulling them to one side, as many like Bellah and Co tended to do in that era – not so much a reconstruction but a re-imaging of the American society.

The former is a problem William Irwin Thompson, a cultural historian, approached in *‘Reimagination of the World’*, co-written in 1991 with David Spangler, by saying that the NAM is both new and ancient all at the same time.⁴⁰ He examples a journalist who presented the New Age as a ‘mindless fad’ that people became ‘caught up in’, as though it was a temporary aberration, then points out that by pulling aside and dismissing the New Age one would be pulling apart ‘Western history’s architecture’.⁴¹ Effectively he agrees with Albanese and her examination of Nature Religion, which incorporates aspects of New Ageism.

One of the aims in this thesis is to find at what point individualism is released and community is found within New Zealand’s NAM and its members’ relationship with the wider community. The origins and traditions in the wider international community, their

³⁸ Albanese, Catherine L, 1981.. Pg 337

³⁹ Ibid. Pg 338

⁴⁰ Spangler, David and William Irwin Thompson, 1991. Pg 19

⁴¹ Ibid.

trends and ‘connecting points’ are taken into account as both a comparison and an indication of the New Zealand experience. Another aim is to examine the means by which the New Ager creates a pathway or ‘journey’ through their eclectic beliefs and the altered/abstract realities used, to the point where they locate the divine and ‘engage’ with it. The community theme is continued into those realities to find whether a sense of community is being developed through the terms and definitions the NAM uses to describe the experience of spirituality. The means of achieving the latter was via a written survey carried out in 2007 amongst the New Zealand NAM, the details of which are laid out at the end of this Introduction.

The Modernists Absorb Exoticism and The Counter-culture Re-discovers It

Olav Hammer credits Alice Bailey, a prominent 20th Century Theosophist, as originator of the actual phrase ‘New Age’.⁴² She certainly used it throughout her writings and in the title of one of her books, *‘Discipleship in the New Age’*⁴³ first published in 1944, although Steven J. Sutcliffe in *‘Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices’*, 2003, contends there was ‘scattered’ use of it earlier, from mid-Victorian times.⁴⁴

Bailey was expelled from the Theosophical Society⁴⁵ in 1920⁴⁶, due to personality differences directly related to her being a telepathic channel of a large body of written work (nineteen books in all), which she claimed to be ageless wisdom from esoteric Masters; effectively, the amount of material she produced gave her more authority than

⁴² Hammer, Olav, *‘Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age’*, Koninklijke Brill, Leiden, 2004. Pg 66

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Sutcliffe, Steven J., *‘Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices’*, London and New York, Routledge, 2003. Pg 25

⁴⁵ A Society created by Helena Blavatsky and Henry S. Olcott, which arose out of Spiritualism in 1875. The Society’s creators saw it as a vehicle for rediscovering a unifying ancient wisdom which they felt was not present in the religions and science of their time. (Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 23)

⁴⁶ Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 65

some Theosophists felt was appropriate.⁴⁷ Bailey went on to create the Arcane School in 1923, which was based on Theosophy, a hierarchy of spiritual masters and "...a classification of the entire cosmos according to a seven-fold scheme."⁴⁸ The School is an organization Hammer contends 'split into several parts' after her death in 1949,⁴⁹ giving the view of an end to its existence as it fragmented. Ellwood, however, states that Foster Bailey, Alice's husband, was director of the Arcane School until his death in 1977,⁵⁰ giving the impression that although still functioning the School did not have the stature it had when Alice was alive.

Hammer, focusing on Bailey's use of the term 'New Age', observed that although it and 'Aquarian Age',⁵¹ were 'crucial concepts' throughout her writings she did not give an exact date for the start of that 'Age', merely hinted that it was to be 'soon', a word he noted she used on a 'Cosmic scale'; pointing to a period perhaps within the next two hundred years.⁵² However, she did once give an exact time for the appearance of the new teachings that were to prepare people for the Aquarian Age – '1975'; a date Hammer noted could be claimed by the NAM as prophetic as the Movement did emerge as a distinct entity around that date.⁵³

Theosophy, Bailey, and others similar, challenged and expanded the parameters of Western religious belief in the modern era, as did intellectuals like William James (1842–

⁴⁷ Sutcliffe, Steven J., 2003. Pg 65

⁴⁸ Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 65

⁴⁹ Sutcliffe, Steven J., 2003. Pg 65

⁵⁰ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 146

⁵¹ Hammer, Olav, 2004. 'Notes', Pg 73. The term 'Aquarian Age' is found in astrological lore and relates to the futuristic site of "...the astrological zodiac (i.e. the points on the terrestrial horizon)...in relation to the astronomical zodiac (the fixed stars)...": after each revolution of 29,920 years there is a shift to another zodiac sign. Abu Ma'shar (805-885) of Bagdad is credited with the first awareness of this move from the Piscean to the Aquarian Age. The concept re-surfaced frequently thereafter but it was in 1898 that a theosophical pamphlet produced the first written revival of the astrological claim of "...a coming Age of Aquarius...." The concept is/was linked to a future Utopia by some in the New Age, including Alice Bailey (Pg 230), although an actual date is vague. The actual change from one age to another was linked by Edgar Cayce with doomsday-type predictions of floods and earthquakes as the Piscean Age fades and the Aquarian Age takes over (Pg 244).

⁵² Sutcliffe, Steven J., 2003. Pg 249

⁵³ Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 249

1910), a modern philosopher, who approached the experience of religion, mysticism, by examining the different states of mind and the inner nature of religion in his book '*Varieties of Religious Experience*' (1902).^{54 55}

It was the intelligentsia, the educated, the middle-class and above who promoted and debated the ideas of the modern era both overseas and in New Zealand.⁵⁶ In New Zealand it was those Ellwood called the 'self-made middleclass' and 'self-made intelligentsia', exemplified by the members of the Theosophical Society whom he described as British immigrants who had created respectable but modest businesses, or work as teachers, clerks, shopkeepers, or similar 'niches'.⁵⁷ Ellwood dismissed any idea that New Zealand was settled by the British middle-class as 'a myth'; most were working-class, with the middleclass who did immigrate more likely being rebellious or overly adventurous young males wanting to escape a restrictive, pious Victorian society.⁵⁸

The organizations those 19th Century 'seekers' started overseas developed in New Zealand, at times, in greater numbers per-capita than the original ever did. For example, New Zealand Theosophy was a contender for that distinction⁵⁹ as was the 'Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn' which combined aspects of 19th Century Spiritualism, Swedenborgism, Romanticism and occult rites.⁶⁰ The New Zealand temple was founded in Havelock North in 1912 and continued until 1978, during which it had more members and lasted longer than its British parent.⁶¹

The fact that the New Zealand Order continued well into the 1970s means it bridged the shift from modernism to post-modernism, into the decade when the NAM emerged, seeming to survive the 1960s when the counterculture was in 'full swing' in America.

⁵⁴ Albanese, Catherine L., 1981. Pg 182

⁵⁵ William James will be discussed later under the subtitle 'Mysticism: Contact with the Divine'.

⁵⁶ Albanese, Catherine L., 1981. Pg 206

⁵⁷ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 109

⁵⁸ Ibid. Pg 274

⁵⁹ Ibid. Pg 114

⁶⁰ Ibid. Pg 156

⁶¹ Ibid.

Although exactly when the counterculture emerged in New Zealand as an identifiable entity is unclear - Ellwood confirmed its presence in New Zealand by citing a magazine called 'Mushroom', which focused on alternative lifestyles, meditation and included a directory of spiritual resources in New Zealand, but it appears to have been published around 1970 (the first issue having no date).⁶²

Ellwood in his book *'The Sixties Spiritual Awakening: Religion Moving from Modern to Postmodern'*, 1994, stops short of describing the 1960's as an axial point in history but does allow that the decade "...undoubtedly had deep measureless sources and will have consequences as far reaching."⁶³ Ronald B. Flowers in *'Religion in Strange Times: The 1960s and 1970s'*, 1984', confirms the '60s decade's importance; "...they were years of cataclysmic importance to American history. Many historians believe that decade was a time of national trauma, a turning point, a watershed for the course of American social and political life."⁶⁴ This last refers to the Vietnam War whose effects were felt through the Western world and through popular music produced by singer/songwriters such as Bob Dylan, who reflected the social and political injustices of the time to the youth culture of the day; all helped make those themes international concerns beyond their immediate political arena.⁶⁵

However, if the 'Bob Dylans' could be seen to be protesting in the 'classical' folk music tradition, 'pop groups' like the English band 'The Beatles' nudged cultural change beyond

⁶² Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 214

⁶³ Ellwood, Robert S., *'The Sixties Spiritual Awakening: American Religion Moving from Modern to Postmodern'*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1994. Pg 326

⁶⁴ Flowers, Ronald B., *'Religion in Strange Times: The 1960s and 1970s'*, Mercer, Mercer University Press, 1984, Pg 1

⁶⁵ Mayhew, Emma, "The Boogie of Sinead O'Connor Bob Dylan 30th Anniversary Concert, Madison Square Garden, New York, October 16, 1992", Pg 177, in Inglis, Ian, (Ed), *'Performance and Popular Music: History, Place and Time'*, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006.

the traditional by building on the 1950's rock and roll culture,⁶⁶ which was in turn built on the 'Beats' of the 1940s.

Jack Kerouac, the writer and rebel whose image inspired many musicians and actors of the '40s, like the leather clad Marlon Brando in the film *'The Wild One'*, in 1945 developed the 'Beat' concept which was "...to be yourself, at whatever cost."⁶⁷ He further described it as "...a certain new gesture, or attitude, which I can only describe as a new *more* ... a revolution in manners in America."⁶⁸ Kerouac developed the concept to encompass sexuality, drugs, alcohol, music and spirituality, describing Beat in many interviews with the media, as "...the necessary beatness or darkness that precedes opening up to light, egolessness, giving room for religious illumination."⁶⁹ One reporter wrote: "The beatniks ... don't like middle-class obsession with objects and conformity; they expand their minds with drugs or religion (many check out Zen Buddhism)."⁷⁰

If viewed in isolation the Beatles may seem a small footnote in history, just as Jack Kerouac might be viewed, but there is a clear line of Beat connection encompassing the 1940s and '60s that produced aspects of radicalism, through promoting 'difference' both in music and cultural behaviour – for example, one, almost a byproduct, was 'Beatlemania'.

Beatlemania, a title produced by the British Press⁷¹ was predominantly a 'female affliction' likened to mass hysteria, which brought post-Freudian comments from various psychologists who saw the behaviour as a cultural protest against the role of women⁷².

Beatlemania may have been a passing phase, but it was one example of an influence the

⁶⁶ Inglis, Ian, " 'Introduction': History, place and time, the possibility of the unexpected", Pg xv, in Inglis, Ian, (Ed), 2006.

⁶⁷ Amburn, Ellis, *'Subterranean Kerouac: The Hidden Life of Jack Kerouac'*, New York, St.Martin's Press, 1998. Pg 96

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Pg 280

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Sercombe, Laurel, "'Ladies and gentlemen...' The Beatles: The Ed Sullivan Show, CBS TV, February 9, 1964", Pg 1, in Inglis, Ian, (Ed), 2006.

⁷² Ibid, Pg 12

pop group was to have on fashion, speech, music and Western culture generally⁷³, just as its forerunner Beat did.

Every move of that working class foursome was reported in the daily Press and weekly glossy magazines internationally. They were famous, feted by those who wished to share in their limelight, effectively making their every move ripple out to touch all who read, or tuned into a radio or television. So when they went to India to be with the Maharishi,⁷⁴ the 'world' in the form of the Press, followed.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi presented the West with Transcendental Meditation in 1959,⁷⁵ which is the meditative practice of stilling the mind by chanting a mantra.⁷⁶ It was the Beatle George Harrison who was on 'the spiritual quest' but the other three followed, with all staying at the Maharishi's ashram in Rishikesh.⁷⁷ After a few weeks, when the guru was suspected of making advances to one of the women the Beatles left, reportedly disillusioned but still in contact with an avid press which devoured the fact that the Beatles still considered meditation beneficial.⁷⁸ The influence the Beatles wielded amongst the youth of the day would have certainly brought many to Transcendental Meditation's fold, if not other aspects of Indian religious culture.

However, the Maharishi was only one many claimed as avatars of various new faiths which emerged in the 1960s in a period Ellwood describes as going a "...a long way toward natural religiosity, in the sense of religion that finds and celebrates the divine already implanted in the human heart and the natural world."⁷⁹ The 'natural religiosity' led the Hippies, for instance, to Hinduism and its many aspects, possibly because it was seen as exotic and far removed from the Western culture they were born into.

⁷³ Sercombe, Laurel, 2006. Pg 2

⁷⁴ Palmer, Tony, (Illustrated by Ralph Steadman,) *'Born Under a Bad Sign'*, London, William Kimber, 1970. Pg 60

⁷⁵ Albanese, Catherine L., 1981. Pg 208

⁷⁶ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 235.

⁷⁷ Kozinn, Allan, *'The Beatles'*, London, Phaidon Press Limited, 1995. Pg 172

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ellwood, Robert S., 1994. Pg 332

‘Hippies’ were primarily middle-class youth who had left their homes to live with others of similar values, which encompassed a disregard of national boundaries and law and order, heavy drug use and a sexual freedom that shocked the society of the day.⁸⁰ Ellwood describes his visit, upon invitation, to a Hippie “inner city sanctuary” in 1967 that was filled with ‘incense, Indian cloth hangings, Tibetan Tankas, meditating Buddhas and the Hindu pantheon’, as well as a young man gazing into space after a ‘bad drug trip’.⁸¹ The Hippies ‘pick-and-mix’ beliefs were not new, even their lifestyle was not unique; the similarity to the Beatniks of the 1940’s Beat culture is clear, illustrating the ‘underground river effect’ Ellwood described earlier.

Although the counter-culture was an important footnote in history, contributing to a shift in society’s view of what belief can encompass, there was a more tenacious thread running under it – Spiritualism. Spiritualism came with the New Zealand settlers one hundred years before the Hippies, because some of its aspects, such as séances, where the dead were contacted and expressions of mediumship generally, were fashionable in Europe and Britain in the 19th century.⁸² In 1860 Spiritualism, which claimed to be the most scientific of religions and thereby modern and ‘enlightened’, was grasped by the ‘intellectual centre of the colony’, Otago, with great interest and debate over the mixing of the occult with science.⁸³ Ellwood explains why Spiritualism caught the public imagination, citing the newspaper debates which would run on for weeks between those who believed in ‘ghosts and messages from beyond the tomb’ and the skeptics.⁸⁴

“Not only did it offer personal immortality to those caught in the cogwheels of a materialistic, industrializing society; it also led them on trails of wonder outside

⁸⁰ Judah, J. Stillson, *Hare Krishna and the Counterculture*, New York, J. Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1974. Pg 99 and 100

⁸¹ Ellwood, Robert S., 1994. Pg 1 and 2.

⁸² Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 28

⁸³ Ibid. Pg 28 and 30

⁸⁴ Ibid. Pg 28

the one-dimensionality of the present to forge living links with the past and a paradisaical future. Spiritualism also encapsulated, and in some respects paradigmed, the century's increasingly bitter liberal-versus-conservative battles in religion.”⁸⁵

Spiritualism claimed to be the oldest religion, encompassing the ‘paleolithic shaman’ and at times Jesus as a prophet, as it supported some of the most important issues of the 19th Century, issues such as “...the abolition of slavery, women’s rights, universal suffrage, and opposition to privilege – whether in church or state.”⁸⁶ Effectively it promoted itself as having a modern, progressive, liberal outlook

Ellwood sees Spiritualism as having changed during its one hundred and forty years in New Zealand, with its emphasis being now on clairvoyance and voice mediumship, but still having a following disproportionately larger than that seen in Britain or the United States.⁸⁷ That ability to shift its focus, whilst still keeping the occult alive, is possibly why Spiritualism has remained a firm force in the NAM.

It could be said that Spiritualism and the Hippies are poles apart in spiritual thought, but they typify the nature of the NAM in that where two ideologies do not correlate, a third seems to have aspects of both in its makeup - that third being, in this case, the Theosophical Society.

The Theosophical Society emerged in America, promoting the mingling of Eastern beliefs with Western ideals, religious concepts and the occult for Western consumption. Madam Helena Blavatsky, a Russian émigré travelled to America in 1873 seeking Spiritualism and together with Colonel Henry Olcott, described as a lawyer, journalist and ‘man-about-town’, created the Society in 1875 out of an American Spiritualist background.

⁸⁵ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 29 and 30

⁸⁶ Ibid. Pg 30

⁸⁷ Ibid. Pg 28

⁸⁸ The Society was first established in New Zealand in 1888⁸⁹ and according to Ellwood had a per capita membership in 1993 twenty five times more than the United States, its founding country.⁹⁰ He found it difficult to say why this should be but cites research which argued “... that generally British settler societies, particularly New Zealand, lead among comparable first-world societies in receptivity to new religious movements.”⁹¹ Secular New Zealand may have pushed Christianity to the edge of its focus but proved to be fertile soil for new ideas on belief, especially ‘alternative spirituality’.

Charles Webster Leadbeater, a second generation Theosophist, is credited with expanding the Western view of some aspects of Hinduism. He was a controversial person whose origins are complicated by his invention of a British aristocratic birth, when in fact he was a curate and the son of a railway clerk,⁹² and his sexual proclivities which involved young boys⁹³. In spite of his ‘difficult’ personality his interest in the occult lead him to Theosophy and thereby Blavatsky, who took him on as an Initiate.⁹⁴

The Society had a three leveled hierarchical structure of which the highest was composed of the “...Initiates in Esoteric Science or Philosophy...”, the second consisted of those who had been “...drawn into contact with the Masters ...” and the third level contained the ordinary members.⁹⁵ Leadbeater aspired to be initiated into the first and second levels and served his apprenticeship for the first by travelling with Blavatsky, but it was later, in the late 1890s when he made friends with Annie Besant, a notable radical feminist and intellectual of the time⁹⁶ who became his sponsor, that he became the

⁸⁸ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 96

⁸⁹ Ibid. Pg 97

⁹⁰ Ibid. Pg 186

⁹¹ Ibid. Pg 185

⁹² Washington, Peter, *‘Madame Blavatsky’s Baboon: Theosophy and the Emergence of the Western Guru’*, London, Secker & Warburg, 1993. Pg 115

⁹³ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 118

⁹⁴ Washington, Peter, 1993. Pg 116

⁹⁵ Shearman, Hugh, *‘Modern Theosophy’* Adyar, Theosophical Society, 1952. Pg 19 and 20

⁹⁶ Washington, Peter, 1993. Pg 93 and 94

Society's 'star lecturer and writer'.⁹⁷ Concepts like the 'aura' and the 'chakra system' Leadbeater remodelled, by bringing them out of the subjective, meditative inner worlds of Tantra where they traditionally resided, making them tangible/objective for the wider body of Theosophists in a work published in 1910 - so they could 'engage' with the chakras through psychic perception.⁹⁸ He described the 'aura' as the 'bodies' (there are more than one) of a human being of which only one is visible/material, the others being invisible to ordinary sight.⁹⁹ The 'chakras', Leadbeater explained, were "... 'wheel-like vortices' which the clairvoyant could detect in the luminous energy field that surrounded the physical body ... conduits for energy from the higher planes."¹⁰⁰

Leadbeater was not the only one publishing Tantric concepts, amongst others was Sir John Woodroffe a High Court Judge in Calcutta, but from the perspective of a nationalist, one passionately interested in India and Hinduism; "He eulogised the Hindu spiritual heritage and believed that it gave India a special role in the modern world..."¹⁰¹

Woodroffe independently studied and wrote a large body of scholarly work from 1913 to 1940 on Tantra, including Kundalini Yoga.¹⁰² But it was Leadbeater and his interpretation of Tantric concepts that found favour with new age writers,¹⁰³ possibly because Woodroffe's writings were from the perspective of a Tantric practitioner in the Hindu tradition and too academic – they were not aimed at a Western audience mixing various religious traditions with psychic perception. Olav Hammer's view is that they may have been 'too pre-modern', for example Woodroffe explained that Kundalini, a Hindu Goddess, was the consort of Shiva, whereas Leadbeater and subsequent New Age

⁹⁷ Washington, Peter, 1993. Pg 119

⁹⁸ Ibid. Pg 184

⁹⁹ Dixon, Joy, '*Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England*', London and Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press', 2001. Pg 127

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Taylor, Kathleen, '*Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra and Bengal: An Indian Soul in a European Body*' , Richmond, Curzon Press, 2001. Pg 38

¹⁰² Ibid. Pg 310

¹⁰³ Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 188

writers explain ‘the’ Kundalini as the life force or energy.¹⁰⁴ The latter is an important connection as the chakra system, the aura and the concept of Kundalini are to be found in NAM dialogue.

Although the Theosophical Society was a main player in moulding alternative belief in New Zealand from the late 19th Century on, it came after Buddhism had made its debut to European and American society.¹⁰⁵ In 1844, Eugene Burnouf published ‘*L’Introduction à l’histoire du buddhisme indien*’, the first scientific study of the text, doctrines and history of Indian Buddhism.¹⁰⁶ The impact of Burnouf’s book is described by Stephen Batchelor as

“...almost overnight, he [Buddha] was revealed as a historical figure, comparable in an alarming number of respects to Jesus. ... the Church now had to contend with the emergence of a fully fledged rival from Asia.”¹⁰⁷

The Theosophical Society was not the only ‘vehicle’ that promoted Eastern beliefs, as the Beatles’ example demonstrates, popular books containing Eastern elements were published in the middle of the 20th century, like the republishing in 1947 of J. Hilton’s 1933 novel, ‘*Lost Horizon*’, telling a fictional tale of ‘Shangri-La’, a hidden community high in the Himalaya’s, whose beliefs were Buddhist-like and whose inhabitants lived forever in a land of plenty following the dharma.¹⁰⁸ The book, and subsequent film (1937), caught the public’s imagination, as it still does today, because it contained all the ingredients of romantic exoticism.¹⁰⁹ The outline of the story had been extracted from the Kalachakra Tantra tradition from which the myth of a community of mystics in the

¹⁰⁴ Hammer, Olav, 2004.. Pg 185

¹⁰⁵ Batchelor, Stephen, ‘*The Awakening of the West: The Encounter of Buddhism and Western Culture*’, Berkeley, Parallax Press, 1994. Pg 242

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.* Pg 240

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.* Pg 244

¹⁰⁸ Schell, Orville, ‘*Virtual Tibet: Searching for Shangri-La from the Himalayas to Hollywood*’, New York, Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2000. Pg 245

¹⁰⁹ Schell, Orville, 2000. Pg 246

Himalayas, or mountains thereabouts, lived in an earthly paradise called Shambhala.¹¹⁰

The word ‘Shangri-La’ became incorporated into popular language as a concept, meaning an “earthly paradise, a place of retreat from the worries of modern civilization.”¹¹¹

Another controversial author was Lobsang Rampa, who claimed to be a Tibetan Buddhist Lama in exile in his first book, in 1956, told an exotic tale of his life in Tibet,¹¹² a country annexed by China just prior to the book being published.¹¹³ He wrote many books¹¹⁴ on his life as a Tibetan Lama, incorporating the exotic, hidden Tibet prior to the flight of the current Dalai Lama and his own life in the West as a bringer of knowledge from the ‘more knowledgeable’ East.¹¹⁵ Controversial, with an identity not helped by his employment in a London surgical goods company, Rampa covered conflicting facts by describing how he took over the Englishman’s (Cyril Henry Hoskin¹¹⁶) body because his own Tibetan body was failing due to the rigors of his adventures when escaping the Chinese.¹¹⁷ According to Rampa the willing Englishman wanted a way out because his life was difficult.¹¹⁸ In spite of identity difficulties Rampa was a best selling author worldwide with his books being translated into many languages – he also has the distinction of selling more copies than any other book on Tibet.¹¹⁹

Both Lobsang Rampa’s first book ‘*The Third Eye*’ and the film of ‘*Lost Horizon*’ emerged three and twelve years respectively before the Dalai Lama fled, in 1959, from the

¹¹⁰ Schell, Orville, 2000. Pg 245

¹¹¹ Murray, James A.H., Henry Bradley, W.A. Craigie & C.T. Onions, (Eds), ‘*The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Volume III*’, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989. Pg 169

¹¹² Lopez, Jr., Donald S., ‘*Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*’, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1998. Pg 87-88

¹¹³ Ibid. Pg 7

¹¹⁴ Ibid. Pg 112 Although Lopez states nineteen books were published, one extra manuscript by Rampa, ‘*My Visit to Venus*’, was published after his death. Publisher: Inner Light Publications, New Brunswick, 1988.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. Pg 95

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Pg 99

¹¹⁷ Ibid. Pgs 93 & 94

¹¹⁸ Ibid. Pg 92

¹¹⁹ Lopez, Jr., Donald S., 1998. Pg 86

Chinese occupation of Tibet,¹²⁰ helping to keep the interest in Tibet in the West alive over that period. However, even before those two books were written interest was great, mostly due to the country's remoteness, the closure of its borders to many and the interest in exoticism generally – all served to project on to Tibet a perception of mystery.

Several books were written on Tibet by Alexandra David-Neel, a French oriental scholar, who managed to travel the country disguised as a pilgrim in the 1910s and '30s.¹²¹ Although her books were actual accounts of her travels they increased the perception of mystery rather than dispelling it and most likely helped to lay a 'truth base' for what came after in the form of factual and fictional writings on Tibet.

The aura of mystery extended to the God-King, the Dalai Lama, with his flight from the country having all the elements of romance and adventure. Buddhism, the religion of Tibet, which bound the country's inhabitants together, received a great deal of Western interest as a result. It is an interest that remains as the Dalai Lama, who settled in India with those fleeing with him and those who have subsequently fled Tibet, actively highlights as his country's political difficulties with the Chinese continue.

That continuation of international recognition politically and spiritually is increased through the Dalai Lama's travels whose presence reminds the rest of the world of his country's plight as much as it shows him as an exotic anachronism in the materially inclined world today. He has become a spiritual leader for many with alternative beliefs as much as he is for the diaspora of Tibetans who moved beyond their sanctuary in India and settled in Western countries, including New Zealand. Philip Rawson, in '*Sacred Tibet*' (1991) which deals with Buddhist art and iconography, commented,

“Its real interest for us is that Tibetan culture offers powerful, untarnished and coherent alternatives to Western egotistical lifestyles, our short attention span, our

¹²⁰ Howarth, David, (Ed). '*The Memoirs of his Holiness The Dalai Lama of Tibet: My Land and My People*', London, Panther Books Ltd, 1962. Pg 177

¹²¹ Schell, Orville, 2000. Pgs 234-237

gradually more pointless pursuit of material satisfactions, and our despair when these, finally, inevitably, disappoint us.”¹²²

However, Schell contends that what the West has been ‘fed’ and subsequently consumed is a supernatural view of Tibet, something he labeled the ‘Virtual Tibet’ – the sanitized Tibet of fantasy sitting alongside the ‘real’ complex political reality.¹²³ In spite of Tibet’s ‘duality’, it and the Dalai Lama have become spiritual focal points for many Westerners, especially the NAM.

The Search for Community and a Pre-Modern History for the NAM.

‘Spirituality’ is seen by the NAM as being both an individual and a communal concept. Responsibility is removed from a hierarchy, like that encompassed in the ‘structure of religion’, and sited within each New Age individual to find or develop their own spirituality. The effect of many individuals making a solo journey towards spirituality creates the impression of NAM ‘members’ being separate from the community they live in, especially when religion has been seen as the traditional ‘binding agent’ for community generally. The NAM without a hierarchy or specific location is unable to be seen as a ‘functioning whole’ by the onlooker as he is only able to locate its smaller parts, thereby the NAM appears to be ‘outside’ or without community belief. The latter is illusionary because any ‘community’ is made up of various ‘agreed upon’ strengths and emphasis, meaning that any feeling of separation is constructed in the human mind aimed at expunging the ‘different’ from their vision - in this case the NAM.

¹²² Lopez, Jr., Donald S., 1998. Pg 9

¹²³ Schell, Orville, 2000. Pg 308

‘A community’ or ‘a society’ is defined as a composition of functional relationships between individual social structures with categories of thought and ideas operative within such structures.¹²⁴ Sociologists Lewis Coser and Bernard Rosenberg add –

“A whole is not identical with the sum of its parts. By reason of this principle, society is not a mere sum of individuals. Rather the system formed by their association represents a specific reality which has its own characteristics. Of course, nothing collective can be produced if individual consciousnesses are not assumed The group thinks, feels and acts quite differently from the way in which its members would were they isolated.”¹²⁵

The New Age individual acts therefore as though he were isolated where belief is concerned, which presents ‘difference’, yet the NAM can be a community in its own right, within a community, because it presents a ‘specific reality’ with its own characteristics within another reality. However, as will be shown, the NAM has roots in all parts of community life, which to the outsider gives a fragmented view with no nucleus, but that lack of nucleus effectively serves to make it more holistic, more able to be spread across the whole spectrum of ‘community’ – it is ‘in’ the community not in an institution. For Christianity in New Zealand the church buildings serve as its material focal point, when the NAM is similarly sought the whole community must be pointed to – its very fragmentation is its strength.

The same fragmentation is seen when looking for a history for the counter-culture, within it are fragments not big enough to hold up the larger result, the aftermath of that explosion of ‘difference’ in the 1960s and ‘70s. The elements of Modernism and Post-modernism that have been mapped out earlier in this Introduction are only ‘possibilities’ in

¹²⁴ Spencer, Herbert, “Social Structure and Social Function”, Pg 667, in Coser, Lewis A., and Bernard Rosenberg, (Eds), *Sociological Theory: A Book of Readings, second edition*, New York, Macmillan Company, 1964.

¹²⁵ Coser, Lewis A., Bernard Rosenberg, “Definition of the Field”, Pg 8, in Coser, Lewis A., and Bernard Rosenberg (Eds), 1964.

the NAM's history, because each member of the alternative community does not necessarily have, say, Theosophy in his family's history, or an interest in Lobsang Rampa's writings. The Theosophical Society is *there* along with Rampa 'in' the culture, but diluted depending on where the individual stands in proximity to the 'action' and its spreading 'waves'.

There are elements though which create generational change for all, like the societal changes resulting from New Zealand choosing secularism, partly through having no State religion and partly through the Education Act in the 19th Century, meaning that the Christian Church, although maybe not seen in the 19th Century as a peripheral player, by the late 20th Century it effectively was, in the minds of many New Zealand citizens living within secularism. Christianity was neither the major leader nor the site of focus for belief in the community, merely one 'pool' of action amongst a mass of interactive pools, each with their own nuclei.

However, New Zealand is a product of 19th Century Britain which did have and still has Christianity as its established state religion, meaning Christianity has had a great part to play historically in New Zealand because of its presence in Britain's political scene. The decree that there would be no state religion did not make New Zealand devoid of religion nor did it create an 'open book' where belief is concerned, as Christianity came with the settlers and the Christian Church in all its diversities of expression and was established as the pioneers established themselves. Although the church was not 'fed' by the New Zealand Government it was fed by British Christianity and the strong cultural bonds the first few generations had with Britain, with 'home'. Christianity was therefore part and parcel of most New Zealanders' lives through its rituals and ceremonies being

wholly, or in part of, Christian origin; although today those same ceremonies are diluted by or replaced with Maori spirituality, especially for public national occasions.¹²⁶

Belief permeates all parts of the human experience and the ‘spiritual experience’ was more often than not, aligned with religious experience, until the emergence of the ‘baby-boomers’, who, having been brought up alongside (if not in) the counter-culture, upon maturity challenged that Christian binding and created a visible divergence of belief in the 1960s and ‘70s. The means through which this divergence occurred was not sudden, merely the moment when social commentators of mainstream society (meaning those not of alternative belief) awoke the community to the challenge that a portion of society was showing significant, or measurable, ‘difference’ as a result of those two decades.

This ‘birth’ of NAM had its roots in the diverse ‘traditions’ and focuses of the previous decades and earlier ‘new ages’, like the Enlightenment of the 16th and 17th centuries which produced extraordinary people like Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688 to 1772), mystic, scientist and spiritual adventurer.¹²⁷ Those ‘roots’ may be traceable further back to, for example, Meister Johannes Eckhart a German theologian in the 13th and 14th century, who unwittingly challenged the Christian Church with beliefs that gained acceptance hundreds of years later, to the extent that he was decreed a mystic.¹²⁸ Eckhart’s beliefs have elements that might fit under the NAM umbrella, for example, he advised the finding of God within oneself, not in the symbols and tools of religion - “It is the inner sanctuary where we and God meet and become one.”¹²⁹

Meister Eckhart’s example shows that one who is a mystic today could have been a dangerous heretic to the Christian Church centuries ago, worthy of being tried and

¹²⁶ Matheson, Peter, ‘The Myth of a Secular New Zealand’, Pg 191, in ‘*Pacifica 19, June 2006*’, Brunswick East, Pacifica Theological Studies Assn, 2006.

¹²⁷ Lodge, Oliver, “Introduction”, Pg vii and viii, in Swedenborg, Emmanuel, ‘*The Divine Love and Wisdom*’, London, J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, [1933] 1912.

¹²⁸ Smith, Cyprian, ‘*The Way of Paradox: Spiritual Life as Taught by Meister Eckhart*’, London, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1987. Pg 7 and 8

¹²⁹ Ibid. Pg 51

denounced. Declaring him a mystic demonstrates changes to Christian belief and highlights the difficulties in locating, let alone labeling, prominent persons in the past as radicals; it adds to the divergence of opinion amongst commentators trying to locate a tradition for the NAM. The labels change depending on which century one is doing the looking from and who is doing it. Definitely there has been a progression of change, in hindsight, when looking back over historical records. But it must be noted that much of what is written is written by those who were free to write or had the authority of their society to write or be seen in history. Peter Matheson, church historian, noted in 2006, that

“When all historians were men, women were written out of the past. When all historians were ... of European origin, colonised peoples were robbed of agency. When all historians were intellectuals, focusing on high culture, ordinary people became invisible.”¹³⁰

Those who diverted from the path set by the society and Christianity of the day were often not recorded unless it was within Courts of Law records, or that of a prominent family connected to a Royal Court as Swedenborg was.¹³¹

Our view of History therefore is dependent on what and who was ‘accepted’ in whatever period is being examined, which puts Meister Eckhart’s views in a unique position, because if he had not been tried for heresy and had not the transcripts of his examination been recorded diligently by the German Court, his view of spirituality may not have survived to be studied hundreds of years after his lifetime. The transcripts of the past are important only in part to the NAM, because although it has a large body of writings attributed to it, produced by those who wish to share their experiences and those

¹³⁰ Matheson, Peter, June 2006, Pg 183

¹³¹ Albanese, Catherine L., 1981. Pg 173

who claim to be ‘leaders of the new consciousness’, the text only supports, or aids, the subjective beliefs of each New Age individual.

Cyprian Smith noted a ‘universality of belief’ within Eckhart’s beliefs,¹³² a circumstance echoed in the international nature of the NAM, both spiritually and materially. Materially because most of the ‘texts’ New Zealand New Agers use to support or confirm their beliefs are written offshore, producing a boon for publishers and book sellers internationally as they market popular spirituality under labels like ‘Inspirational’, ‘Self-Development’, ‘Occult, or ‘New Age’ - not ‘Religion’.

Shirley MacLaine, an American Hollywood actress, wrote of her own exploration of the New Age in *‘Out on a Limb’* (1983) and *‘Dancing In The Light’* (1985), books which proved so popular that she became an unofficial spokeswoman for many in the NAM who shared her beliefs and thereby helped highlight the existence of the NAM.¹³³ She typifies the nature of a ‘spokesperson’ in the NAM, in that she gained stature because her books sell widely and her lectures are enthusiastically received. However, because she is a well known Hollywood actress she has greater visibility making her views are more ‘saleable’, so much so that she is often singled out by academic commentators.

Another example of an ‘unofficial’ New Age spokesperson, voted so because of the popularity of her books and lectures, is Shakti Gawain, a Personal Development tutor and author who wrote *‘Creative Visualisation’* in 1979¹³⁴. Neither MacLaine nor Gawain are ‘leaders’ in that they represent a hierarchy within the NAM, they have been chosen by New Age individuals, through the purchase of their books, as representing some New Agers’ thoughts on various subjects and a knowledge base which the New Ager affirms by purchasing the ‘text’. The fact that most are not New Zealanders has little relevance, except perhaps for the New Zealand view that everything overseas is ‘better’ than that

¹³² Smith, Cyprian, 1987. Pg 12

¹³³ York, Michael, 1995. Pg 75

¹³⁴ Gawain, Shakti, *‘Creative Visualisation’*, New York, Bantam Books, Inc., 1979.

produced locally - a 'hangover' perhaps from pioneering days when Britain was where culture resided, and the early to mid 20th century when most published material came from off shore.

This international nature, or global focus, is frequently expressed through concern for the planet with world-wide meditations being not uncommon. These can be either formal through conventional advertising, or informal by being 'advertised' throughout the NAM's word-of-mouth system. One ongoing meditation is the Australian based, twice yearly 'Marine Meditation', which started in 1991 and is promoted via the Internet.¹³⁵ The Summer Solstice and Winter Solstice are occasions when the oceans and their contents are sent healing energy and the connection with the land, its contents (including humans) is reaffirmed with the help of several spirit guides including Archangel Michael.¹³⁶ Through activities such as the Marine Meditation, or by politically aligning themselves with eco-organisations like 'Greenpeace' a New Ager can be as passive or active as he wishes, as Spangler pointed out in his 'first region' of the NAM – it is an acknowledgement by the New Ager that he belongs to a 'community' that serves not just a perceived New Age community but the international community as a whole.

The most common expression of globalization in the NAM is its 'claim' on Eastern belief concepts, a claim which opened up opportunities for Eastern religions to send their teachers into the West, comparable with the way the Christian Missions have sent their missionaries into the East for centuries.¹³⁷ One example being Swami Vivekananda, an Indian political and religious leader, (a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Indian mystic and saint of the Hindu Tantra tradition) who helped reverse the missionary concept by travelling to America and London from India in the 1890's teaching/preaching 'spiritual brotherhood' and founding the Vedanta Movement, which taught a form of modern

¹³⁵ <http://www.angelfire.com/ok/MarineMeditation/mm.html>

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Sardar, Ziauddin, '*Orientalism*', Buckingham, Open University Press, 1999. Pg 33

Hinduism.¹³⁸ Ellwood describes Vedanta as a nondualist, philosophical tradition which the modern writers Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood helped make an intellectual and spiritual presence in the West.¹³⁹

That missionary tradition grew with the result that New Agers do not have to join the Theosophical Society or any other Western organization representing a ‘hybridized’ belief, they can attend ‘the course’ presented by a visiting Swami, Reverend or Tibetan Lama and learn first hand the tradition being presented often without leaving their own locale, adding to the globalization of belief. Then there are the ‘belief travellers’ who are free to pluck what they wish from the beliefs of whatever country they choose, staying in the ashrams, hostels or enclaves that are not necessarily in India, they could be in California, U.S.A., or Scotland, where, for example, is the new age centre ‘The Findhorn Foundation’.¹⁴⁰

All the above must be taken as indications of change, difference, or radicalism, not a clear line of evolution directly creating the New Age community; it is an indirect line through a changing society that created the 1970’s environment from which contemporary NAM sprang. Add to the latter the shadows of past traditions perhaps pre-Christian, remaining in common traditions and myths, imprinted in the individual’s habits, even though their origins may have been long forgotten and a melee of threads result, enough perhaps to create a ‘belief road’ for some to move along or ‘repave’. Theosophy provided what Hammer calls a ‘great metanarrative’ in its attempt to join into one historic myth, concepts such as Atlantis with India and Egypt,¹⁴¹ a type of ‘history’ that appears in many New Age esoteric narratives. Annie Besant, a second generation Theosophist gave a view of ‘the myth’ “...based on Plato’s story of the cave:

¹³⁸ Gambhirananda, Swami, *‘History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission’*, Calcutta, Advaita Ashama, 1957.

Pg 79

¹³⁹ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 235

¹⁴⁰ Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 342

¹⁴¹ Ibid. Pg 139

“Myth” is no means what most people imagine it to be – a mere fanciful story erected on a basis of fact, or even altogether apart from fact. A myth is far truer than a history, for a history only gives a story of the shadows, whereas a myth gives a story of the substances that cast the shadows.”¹⁴²

Mythical characters and events, for example, the Arthurian legends ‘play’ around parts of England, like Glastonbury where some New Agers and ‘Alternative’ Christians say King Arthur was taken for healing after his last battle;¹⁴³ exemplify the individual New Ager’s ability to draw ‘histories’ from ‘substances’. Certainly Glastonbury is a place of pilgrimage for “...Christian, Pagan, New Age, Buddhist to name but a few...” and is said to be ‘awash’ with myths.¹⁴⁴ But when a myth’s substance is examined, as in the case of ‘*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*’, a 14th Century Arthurian poem, there is found a framework of growth and development involving a smaller community (of knights) within a larger community (the royal court), involving a task which symbolically represents a seeking of self-knowledge.¹⁴⁵ The latter effectively sums up the ‘larger community’, which could be anywhere in the world, within which is ‘the smaller community’, the New Age and its ‘quest’ for self-knowledge.

Patricia Rose in ‘*Popular Spiritualities: The Politics of Contemporary Enchantment*’, 2006, proposed that the reason why medieval myths and motifs are sought are “... because the Middle Ages provide a source of magic, mystery and enchantment that satisfies the contemporary desire for new – or renewed – models of spirituality.”¹⁴⁶ Perhaps also there exists a deeper perception amongst New Agers, that of the early Middle Ages as a time

¹⁴² Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 177

¹⁴³ Ibid. Pg 93

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Pg 92

¹⁴⁵ Patricia Rose, “The Quest for Identity: Spiritual Feminist Ritual as an Enactment of Medieval Romance”, Pg 17, in Hume, Lynne and Kathleen McPhillips, (Eds), ‘*Popular Spiritualities: The Politics of Contemporary Enchantment*’, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Pg 16 and 19.

when the community accepted ‘magic, mystery and enchantment’, before Christianity’s purge of ‘witchcraft’, a time when ‘difference’ was acceptable.

How and Why the Survey Was Organised and the Response

What has been written could be seen to widen rather than consolidate the idea of a tradition or source of the NAM community, but each small portion represents a ‘gesture’ toward societal change which allowed the counterculture to give birth to the NAM and by gathering those ‘gestures’ together, as has been done here, ‘a picture of alternativeness’ is gleaned.

Perspective is paramount, because, if the view is from within another belief structure, then even the title of this thesis, “*A Community of Mystics*” would seem an anachronism - one creating the impression that somehow such a community can be located and even visited. But ‘community’ or culture might also to be found in the altered realities or altered states as much as it can in the myths of the material world the individuals of the New Age inhabit. To access those material and non-material states the view must be ‘of’ the community under scrutiny, otherwise the questions asked would be tainted by being sieved through other belief structure, which is exactly what has occurred with comments from some academics. Concentration on the Self exclusively, at the expense of the greater community has been touted by most on the periphery as a major New Age attribute. To uncover the subtleties of the New Age community/culture within the greater community the author took the role of a ‘mid-way person’ who is ‘of’ both cultures (the academic and the New Age), providing a focal point for the New Agers to focus their answers on, separate from an institution – whether academic or Christian.

Those making up the NAM move, via their view of spirituality, towards the divine, no matter what tradition or group of traditions they bind together to create a vehicle for that

journey – the means is important, but the ‘site’ where they gather to find consensus is just as important for some as it is often where they find ‘legitimacy’ for their beliefs. To find the connecting point of all these individuals the ‘experience’ of belief is examined as are the altered realities, or ‘other’ realities they enter into - the site where another form of community is being developed.

The means of uncovering the ‘journey’ and ‘the site’ where New Zealand New Agers engage with the divine, for this thesis, was done by a written survey. One hundred and thirty people were approached and out of those one hundred responded from various parts of New Zealand, with most being in the Canterbury Province. A map of New Zealand (Appendix iv) is marked with the areas from which participants were drawn.

The means of locating the bulk of the participants was from a base of thirty people known to the writer. Through that base group the names and addresses, or telephone numbers, were given to the writer of a ‘likely participant’ in response to the postscript at the bottom of the Introductory letter (Appendix i) which asked for names of likely participants. Several approached the writer directly after hearing of the survey expressing a wish to be included, an indication that the New Zealand NAM community grapevine is active and able to produce a ‘snowball effect’ to the process of participant gathering. Then, towards the end of the survey’s run a further ten practitioners connected to a ‘Body, Mind, Spirit Festival’ held in Christchurch on the 22nd and 23rd September, 2007, were approached by the writer to ‘round off’ the participants, making one hundred and thirty in all who were approached. The first one hundred surveys returned are included in this thesis.

Upon receipt of a favourable response from a prospective participant, the Introductory letter and a Consent Form (Appendix ii) were posted, along with a stamped, addressed return envelope. It was anticipated that a University of Canterbury letterhead might dissuade those who are alternative enough to dislike any form of authority, so the

Introductory Letter was not given a formal letterhead – only the name and address of the author showed, directing the focus to the individual writing the thesis not the institution overseeing it.

Upon receipt of the signed Consent Form, a Questionnaire (Appendix iii), with a number on the bottom left-hand side of each page as the only means of identification, was posted back with another stamped addressed return envelope. From that point the participants became anonymous, identifiable only by matching their number with a master list of names and addresses. When the thesis was finished that list was destroyed to preserve the participants' anonymity.

The questions were open-ended in order to broaden the net wide enough to cater for all the varieties of belief generally pushed under the NAM 'umbrella'. Pagans, Wiccans, Spiritualists, various Buddhist traditions and Christians have representation, not because those 'belief labels' do not stand alone, but because the participant/s have added elements of other beliefs to make a unique belief structure. It is through those individualistic belief structures that a connection with mysticism and a belief structure held in common is proposed.

The concept of 'mysticism' is used to describe the *action* of the New Agers' experience - the altered/abstract realities through which they access/experience the divine. Mysticism being a 'construct' standing slightly apart from religion whilst being *'of'* them, with a tradition in most because they either claim it, or recognize the concept, as it stands 'apart' from mainstream worship, for example, Sufism in Islam.

Philosophy has played a great part in mysticism's discussion, for example, William James, who sought modern explanations of mysticism through religion, the occult and science.¹⁴⁷ James's "Four Marks of Mysticism", from *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1985) are used as one 'measure' of mysticism because he is a modernist, his

¹⁴⁷ Albanese, Catherine, 1981. Pg 183

views are respected¹⁴⁸ and made contemporary by being debated and quoted by his fellow philosophers and others, for example in *'Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis'*, 1978, edited by Steven T. Katz; James's work is referred to on fourteen separate occasions by the contributing writers.¹⁴⁹ Katz describes mysticism as a subject of special fascination, a concept sought now especially by those in intellectual and academic circles to "...replace traditional piety as the authenticating dimension of human life", as the power of organized religion declines.¹⁵⁰

Christianity will not be examined in depth any more than any other religion beyond what the survey participants' answers demand. Although, to be seen to push Christianity away and present the New Agers as fresh and unaffected by the customs of their culture, of which most stem from Christianity, would give a false impression. But to take the orthodox Christian perspective would not serve the outcome either, as any mention of Christianity by a participant must be taken in context from their view, because often Christianity is a 'direction' for the survey participant, for example, when 'Jesus' is cited it is not an indication that the person in question is a member of the Christian Church. A New Ager uses various portions of various belief systems, often taking an identity, titles and portions of vocabulary and using them in their own belief construct. An initial evaluation of participants showed that few retain contact with the Church on anything more than a casual basis, after their childhood instruction in Sunday School, although that instruction does affect their view of belief.

The questionnaire was designed/constructed to show where the participants are located within New Zealand society and how the participants negotiate their identity within that society. What was evident, as the surveys started to be returned, was that the bulk of the

¹⁴⁸ Katz, Steven T. "Editors Introduction", Pg 2, in Katz, Steven T. (Ed), *'Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis'*, London, Sheldon Press, 1978.

¹⁴⁹ Katz, Steven T. (Ed), "Index", 1978. Pg 261.

¹⁵⁰ Katz, Steven T. "Editor's Introduction", Pg 1, in Katz, Steven T., (Ed), 1978.

NAM sits as a semi-hidden society with its own views on life and death. It was also obvious that this survey is only a start for further investigation into the NAM, because as the twelve questions and their parts were answered, many more unwritten questions surfaced.

As the survey progressed it quickly became clear that some of the questions brought to the surface subjective thoughts many found difficult to convey in black and white answers. The writer had several unsolicited telephone calls relating to the survey, as various participants conveyed their difficulty in putting their inner experiences on paper. Exasperated comments like “I am sorry but it is as near as I can get to what I experience and know...” were common as were several thoughtful ones, “...it really made me think....” One participant labelled the survey “...*the* spiritual exercise of the year...”, another, “...about time someone tabled our views...”, whilst two participants, known to the writer, found the exercise too ‘exposing’. These last persons although returning their surveys, refused to answer those questions that revealed an individuality they had kept hidden for decades from husband and family, but they were in the minority as most regarded it as a challenge worthy of rising to and answered all they felt pertained to them and their beliefs.

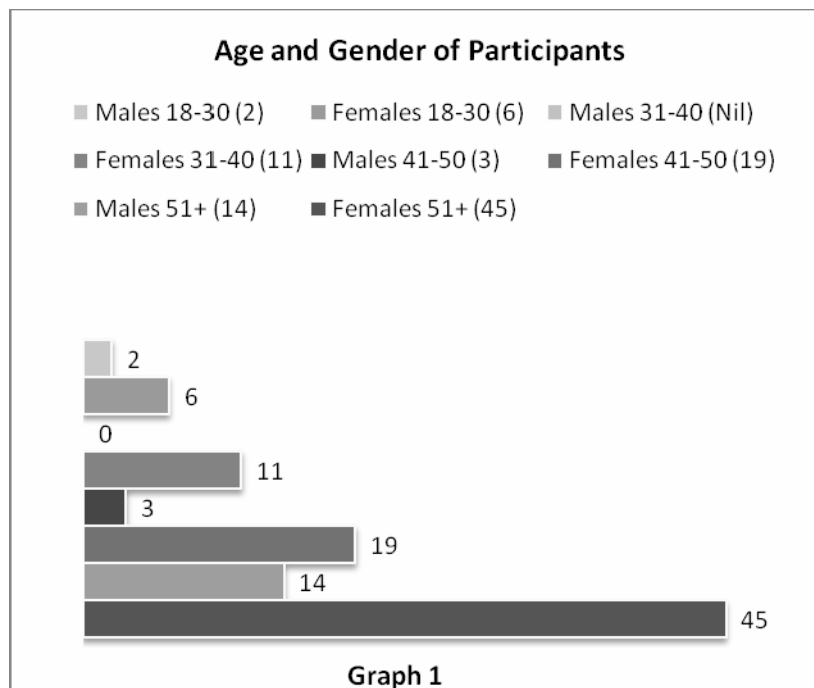
This survey is the first that has been openly conducted in New Zealand amongst the NAM by a university student who is also a participant of the New Age. The fact that the survey was an academic one, carried out under the auspices of a university served to spur some on, rather than providing a damper to enthusiasm as was first feared.

The Community

Identifying the New Zealand NAM (measured against the international experience).

The comments of the international academic community provide the basis for identifying the NAM because they provide a location for the Movement and the attributes they comment on indicate ‘difference’ in belief from any other religious organization in the community. In the absence of a New Age spokesperson or hierarchy who speaks for all New Agers, academia is regarded as an authority or an ‘impartial’ observer by those outside the NAM.

There are several major general observations made by academic commentators, one being that the NAM is dominated by middle-class, middle-aged white women. The graph below gives a quick overview of the gender and age of those who participated in the survey.



With the majority of the participants being women there is an initial alignment with the international view. Richard Kyle in *'The New Age Movement in American Culture'*, 1995, said that about 70% of NAM members are women linked to the 1960's counterculture, from "...the aging segment of this generation..."¹ He quotes Shoshana Feher, a sociologist, who contended that it is a 'religion' allowing women to speak and go beyond their 'traditional roles', that it appeals because of its emphasis on 'nurturing, holistic and global concepts'.² Kyle then quotes Professor Ruth Tucker, who says it is the middle-aged who are able to afford not only a comfortable lifestyle, but the 'New Age activities' as well³, giving the view that the NAM is strongly commercialized.

Steven J. Sutcliffe, an Research Fellow at University of Stirling, England, in *'Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices'*, 2003, mostly agrees and locates the origin of the 'white, middle-class' women in the 'arts, managerial, professional, entrepreneurial' areas of society, claiming they are drawn to the "...emotional empathy, bodily awareness and interpersonal skills."⁴ However, he adds that the New Age *reclaims* traditional skills normally attributed to domestic 'feminine' areas⁵, which contradicts Feher's claim that the drift of the women is in the opposite direction, away from traditionalism. Sutcliffe allows that according to some 'emic accounts' New Agers also have 'superiority in spiritual gifts', but stops short of confirming the latter with the statement - "...the relative social power and status of 'New Age' women remains an unresolved issue."⁶

Both Sutcliffe and Kyle are correct in their agreement that the NAM has an emphasis on 'nurturing, holistic, global concepts' and 'emotional empathy, bodily awareness and

¹ Kyle, Richard, 1995. Pg 11

² Ibid. Pg 10

³ Ibid. Pg 11.

⁴ Sutcliffe, Steven J., 2003. Pg 223.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

interpersonal skills', because they sum up the healer's interest in both the personal and global levels. Many of those skills have been 'traditionally' the preserve of women located in the home environment, but they are also aspects which can be put squarely on many social services, like the medical profession, the charities of institutionalized religions and governmental social programs, all of which have 'traditionally' been patriarchal. Sutcliffe's statement that women involved in 'arts, managerial, professional and entrepreneurial areas are 'drawn to' the domestic to 'reclaim traditional skills' lost, revives an old male dominated view that femininity is contained in domesticity, which is 'natural' to women. Domesticity, by its very nature, contains 'managerial', 'artistic' and 'entrepreneurial' aspects, only falling down on the 'professional' because patriarchy considered it unpaid work.

To see whether the New Zealand NAM matched the overseas findings the survey participants were asked in Appendix Question i what their ethnicity was and 'what socio-economic part of society they were born into'. Two examples were given as a guide, blue collar [working class] and middleclass. The results were as follows –

	<u>No Socio/Econ. Level</u>	<u>W/class</u>	<u>M/class</u>	<u>Upper M/class</u>
NZ European/white	4	2	16	1
NZ'er	2	9	11	
NZ Maori		1½	½ *	
NZ Maori/Pakeha	1	1½	½ *	
NZ Pakeha		1	3	
Pakeha			1	
NZ Kiwi		1	2	
Kiwi		1	1	
NZ Farmer	1			
NZ Euro 'Professional'	1			
European	2	4	17	
Caucasian			3	
Australian Euro			1	
Canadian			2	
British		2		

Continued overleaf

* Two participants described themselves as half working class and half middle-class

	<u>No Socio/Econ. Level</u>	<u>W/class</u>	<u>M/class</u>	<u>Upper M/class</u>
English white		1	1	
Dutch NZ'er	1			
Aryan			1	
Human			1	
No ethnicity given	1		1	
	13	24	62	1

The labels given are what the participants volunteered, ethnicities were not provided, for example, three described themselves as ‘Pakeha’ whilst two others as ‘New Zealand Pakeha’ – likewise with ‘Kiwi’. The ‘New Zealand European Professional’ and the ‘New Zealand Farmer’ could possibly be placed under middle-class, but that would assume both were successful in their business life or that those labels *are* middleclass. If the former applies then the class system is wealth driven and if the latter applies there could be both poor and wealthy farmers, all sharing the middleclass status. The participants, ‘professional’ and ‘farmer’ either believed the labels implied a status or they were avoiding making a decision on what class they were. If they were placed under middle-class because it was assumed that both ‘professional’ and ‘farmer’ indicate a middle-class status, then the natural progression of ‘assumptions generally’ would be that New Zealand has a social system based on occupation.

Chris Laidlaw, a past Member of Parliament and Race Relations’ Co-ordinator, in 1999 cited three clear social levels: at the top are the 5-10% moderate to very wealthy, second are those he calls ‘the middle-class rump’, encompassing mostly everyone else, but mainly Pakeha who manage without extravagance and who regard New Zealand as egalitarian.⁷ The third group he calls “...the have-nots, a rapidly growing proletariat, overwhelmingly Polynesian It is here that race and class begin to converge....”⁸

⁷ Laidlaw, Chris., *‘Rights of Passage’*, Auckland, Hodder Moa Beckett Publishers Limited, 1999. Pg 176

⁸ Ibid.

Tucker's view is that only the middle-class can afford the 'New Age activities'. To gain an insight into how prevalent workshop attendance was the participants were asked if they had attended a workshop [Q11b]. 99% answered -

“Yes” 63 “No” 36

Of the 63 who said “Yes”, 21 indicated they had attended workshops overseas, but amongst those a number indicated they had other reasons travelling, separate from the workshop. The countries mentioned were America, Australia, Egypt, London, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, India, Netherlands, Ireland and Tibet. The conclusion might be that the majority of New Zealand New Agers are middle-class because they can afford to attend workshops, but that it is not a requirement as 36 said they had not. However, the cost of workshops generally must be taken as a factor in determining whether, for instance, a working-class person could afford to attend one. If a one day workshop cost \$10 to \$50⁹ and was well within the scope of a New Zealand working-class person then the assumption that the ability to attend a workshop is only available to the middle-class fails. Whether affordability was a factor for the 36 who said they had not attended a workshop could not be determined as that was beyond the scope of the survey questions, as was the cost of the workshops attended by the 63 participants.

Kyle adds to Bruce's evaluation of New Agers when quoting Tucker, by further commenting that the New Age attracts women [primarily] with a comfortable lifestyle, with a “...better than average education, who are urban, middle class, upwardly mobile and not particularly alienated from society.”¹⁰ This is not borne out by the survey as 24% claim working class/blue collar descent with 13% ‘unknowns’ not putting a social status.

⁹ The cost of workshops are determined by the practitioner or facilitator running them and can be as little as \$10, for example a Spiritualist Church may run an afternoon workshop charging \$10, whereas a well known 'identity' may charge several hundred or several thousand dollars depending on the length of time involved, i.e. whether it is a weekend workshop or a year's instruction.

¹⁰ Kyle, Richard. 1995. Pg 11

The following participants are amongst those who claim to be of a class lower than middle-class. Their answers¹¹ to the questions on ethnicity and class are typical of the other participants:

-Female, over 51 years, does voluntary employment as a Spiritualist Minister and describes her ethnicity as “*Blue-eyes Blond Pakeha*” and “*Lower Class*”, urban.

[P5]

-Female, between 41–50 years, in paid employment and whose ethnicity is “*Kiwi*” and “*lower middle-class*”, urban. [P11]

-Female, between 41-50 years, self employed as a therapist and is “*European, working class*”, urban. [P25]

-Male, over 51 years, paid employment, is a “*New Zealander*” and “*Blue Collar*”, country living. [P80]

15% of survey participants live in country districts, 4% are unemployed, 4% are not formally employed because they are caregivers to either a parent or children and 3% are students, making 26% who do not, in some part, fit into the International New Ager model. [None of these participants is placed under more than one category.] Add to the survey finding that 41% of the participants are fifty or under and the international findings’ relevance ‘fades’ somewhat, making the New Zealand experience look unique.

The view of the majority, who claim to be ‘middle-class’, has to be addressed in a New Zealand context and concept of ‘class’, especially when looking at, as an example, Participant 25 who is a self employed, full time therapist having been born working class. If the British and/or American NAMs were to be regarded as ‘the’ NAM model the question arises as to what class does a New Zealand alternative therapist fall under, is it middle class because it is a little more ‘genteel’, than a car mechanic, or working class because the remuneration may not be that of a middle class occupation? Participant 25

¹¹ All participants’ quotes are given with original spelling, punctuation and grammar.

also describes herself as working class destroying any particular class level for ‘alternative therapist’, a sign that occupation is not necessarily an indication of class in the New Zealand NAM, meaning Laidlaw’s analysis that class in New Zealand is based on wealth holds.

To add ‘weight’ globally to the assumption that the ‘mostly middle-class theory’ fails is Catherine Albanese’s assertion that there is a strong, quiet, therefore unnoticed, working class component in the NAM.¹² As this assertion is in the 3rd Edition (1999), of her book *‘America: Religions and Religion’* [of which the first was in 1981], that working class component could be seen to be a sign of the NAM spreading beyond its middle-class origins.

However, whether the growth is amongst the middle-class or across the board is unable to be proved, as Hans Baer, an Anthropologist, pointed out in 2004; whereas the seminars and workshops may be affordable mostly by the middle-class, New Age books, magazines and audio/video tapes are affordable by most, certainly the working class, making it impossible to evaluate such a market or to determine the number of participants - he strongly suggested that the NAM is a ‘mass phenomenon’.¹³ Baer’s comments could not have been said with such certainty in the 1980s, a possible indication of the growth of the NAM, a point backed up by the increased/continued academic interest since the early 1970s when the current incarnation of the NAM surfaced. [The middle-class issue is discussed further later]

Steve Bruce in *‘God is Dead: Secularization in the West’* (2002) under the Chapter title “The Failure of the New Age” states that the New Age is ‘lily-white’ and notable for the absence of/or under-representation of racial and ethnic minorities.¹⁴ His contention is

¹² Baer, Hans, *‘Toward an Integrative Medicine: Merging Alternative Therapies with Biomedicine’*, Walnut Creek, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004. Pg 19

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Bruce, Steve, *‘God is Dead: Secularization in the West’*, Malden, Blackwell Publishing, 2002. Pg 89

firstly that there is a culture block in many British, black, working-class circles to “group hugging, talking to angels, spiritual dancing and Tibetan overtone chanting...” it is “...just too feminine.”¹⁵ Secondly, the New Agers disdain for material concepts and “...economic striving (which is not the same as renunciation) is fine for those born into comfortable circumstances but unattractive either for those who have yet to find security or those who have just achieved it through hard work and deferred gratification.”¹⁶ Whilst the ‘group hugging etc’ may be considered less manly in many circles it is not a ‘requirement’ within New Age ethics because of the extreme individualism of the New Age - you take and make of what is available to suit the Self.

Bruce’s observation that the New Age is ‘lily white’ has some validity when looking at the ethnicity schedule for the thesis, because although there is Maori representation it is only 3.5%, well below the 2006 Maori population figures of 16 – 17.4% put out by ‘Statistics New Zealand’.¹⁷ When only South Island figures are looked at, Maori total 7.1%, over twice that in the survey,¹⁸ but the inclusion of some Maori in the survey does quash any totally ‘lily white’ label. Also, it must be noted that no question on ethnic ‘origin’ was put in the questionnaire; the 3.5% of Maori was a volunteered percentage, meaning there may be those of Asian, Maori or other origins/ethnicities ‘unseen’ amongst the survey participants.

Alongside the ‘middle-class and white issue’ is the ‘women in the majority’ issue to clarify, because it is clear that women make up the majority of both the international and the New Zealand experience. Reasons may be found in the status given historically to women, which for centuries has been one of the ‘second class’ person, a ‘role’ still evolving/changing. Meaning, that although opportunities for women abound in most

¹⁵ Bruce Steve, 2002. Pg 89.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ <http://www.stats.govt.nz/developments/imputation-of-maori-descent> Page 1. Downloaded 30/11/2007

¹⁸ <http://www.stats.govt.nz/census/2006-census-data/quickstats-about-maori/2006-census-quickstats-about-maori-revised.htm?page=para003Master> Downloaded 9/1/2008

spheres of the community now, in the 21st century, as Prime Minister Helen Clark demonstrates, within the living memory of the majority of the survey participants are experiences of being made to feel inferior, for example, through the lower wage structure for women and the view that child rearing is a 'lesser' role. They are concepts that are not immediately expunged from individual thought processes when laws are changed, they remain for a generation or more. Sutcliffe points out that it is a thought process which pervades even the New Age by using as an example Alice Bailey, who can justifiably lay claim to being the one who 'gave birth' to the current emergence of the NAM, but could also be seen as a mere secretary to 'her Tibetan Master' whose words she wrote down, a role effectively placing her in a familiar "hierarchically-gendered relationship"¹⁹.

A few decades later in the 1950s and '60s Sheena McGovern and the other women founders of the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland, had their authority effectively ignored when Peter Caddy wrote his autobiography in 1996; he became the 'name' behind the colony, as did other males who joined later, in spite of the leadership and co-leadership of women well into the 1980s.²⁰ Sutcliffe gives other incidences of women leaders in the New Age who are ignored when a male comes into their working sphere and is courted by outsiders as 'the leader/spokesman'.²¹ The idea surfaces that equality is relatively easy to put humans into, but taking inequality out of the mind of the human is more difficult, we 'naturally, fall into old ways of thinking of the male as the leader in some instances. The latter could be one reason why most New Agers are solitary beings and women – it is perhaps the only way they can have independence from controlling hierarchical patterns that are 'involuntarily' activated having not quite been eradicated from social and belief concepts.

¹⁹ Sutcliffe, Steven J., 2003. Pg 220.

²⁰ Ibid. Pg 221

²¹ Ibid.

Confirming the latter is Catherine Benland in *'Religion of New Zealanders'* (1995).²² Benland says traditional religions still view Neo-paganism as witchcraft.²³ She used as an example two women in ecclesiastical roles, who were given the label of 'witch' and whose bishops tried actively to disown them after they attended The Third National Ecumenical Feminist Women's Conference in Christchurch in 1988, which Christian and Pagan expressions of spirituality.²⁴

For the majority of New Age men there may not be an equal reason driving them to being solitary in their belief patterns, because they have always had a 'voice' traditionally, possibly making their presence in the NAM a lower ratio. Their presence though tempers any gender exclusive claims or accusations that might attach themselves to the NAM.

The depth of the social controlling patterns may be due to a 'because men have always lead' syndrome, or because of the persecution of women as witches; it may also have roots in the way women have been portrayed in religion, "...as even more fallen than men, more fleshly, more trapped in matter ... more susceptible to sin; they are objects of temptation as well, for they pull men down into matter...."²⁵ Women have always been 'background to the ceremony up front' in the Christian Church; certainly in the pews, but also cleaning the silver/brass, the ceremonial robes/linen, doing the flowers and making food. The male/female roles within society and the Christian Church have been well documented and are diversionary for this thesis, but clarity is shown when a survey participant is given a voice, saying more about the 'hidden' New Zealand woman, who is a New Ager, than any academic voice or argument citing male versus female status.

²² Catherine Benland, "Women's Spirituality Movement", Pg 243, in Donovan, Peter, (Ed), *'Religions of New Zealanders, 2nd Edition'*, Palmerston North, The Dunmore Press Ltd, 1996.

²³ Ibid. Pg 246

²⁴ Ibid. Pgs 251-253 .

²⁵ Bednarowski, Mary Farrell, "The New Age Movement and Feminist Spirituality: Overlapping Conversations at the End of the Century", Pg 169, in Lewis, James R., and J. Gordon Melton, (Eds), 1992.

Uncovering/locating the New Ager ‘in’ the Community.

Participant 32, here given the name ‘June’ as a humanizing non-de-plume, [all the participants’ names are fictitious] is an “*Astrologer*” aged over fifty-one years, is self-employed and exposes a possible dichotomy when asked whether she regarded herself connected in any way to a religious organization [Q2c]:

“I help clean the Co-operating Church, as a ‘hang-over- from the days I used to go and take my children to Sunday School. I’m still on the church newsletter list and haven’t quite severed the ties.”

When asked what religious traditions she has read or explored [Q3c]

“Christianity, Siddha Yoga, Spiritualism.”

What quarter did she hear of those religious traditions [Q3d]

*“Early days – Sunday School and osmosis – living in a Christian Culture.
Siddha Yoga – introduced by friend. Spiritualism – reading Doris Stokes books initially, then after attending a night with a medium, started attending a newly formed circle at[gave name of small country town] for 2-3 years.”*

How she would describe her religious/spiritual identity [Q3e]

“I’m interested in exploring anything of a metaphysical nature. Anything that is a Mystery or unexplained by conventional wisdom.”

Does she meditate [Q5a], if so what school of thought or religion her meditation is aligned with [Q5c] and was she taught [Q5e]

“Yes – Used to meditate daily (for years) now infrequently, usually when visiting spiritual groups. I learnt through Siddha Yoga and discovered the ability myself – if day-dreaming is classed as meditation, I have been ‘there’ my entire life.”

June’s experiences show that although spiritually she does not find herself bound by the Christian Church, socially she does, through ties encompassing her family – also the local

Church can rightly claim her as a member because she has not “...quite severed the ties”. Effectively she left ‘everything in place’ when she actively searched for her own beliefs, probably when her children no longer drew largely on her time and had always been ‘alternative’ spiritually, even when attending to ‘Church matters’, something she obviously regards as a normal part of community duties, of which she is part. June circled in Question 12c ‘*selective with your identity*’ and ‘*partner approves*’.

June’s inner experiences have ‘developed’ from formal meditation to ‘day-dreaming’ which can also be described as ‘open-eyed’ meditation, although she leaves it up to the reader to interpret it as such, but felt it important to mention. She is within ‘the community’ which some social scientists (see Bellah’s response to ‘Sheilaism’ on page 4 in the Introduction) view as having a traditional nucleus and authority in the Christian Church and she is within a ‘slightly’ hidden community, so called because she is ‘*selective with her identity*’, which gave her Siddah Yoga and Spiritualism. She is giving what is required of her outwardly without disturbing the surface tensions of her community, whilst being the individual subjectively. Also she is an astrologer, a role which uses the movement of the planets, and other celestial bodies, to determine the character and nature of human affairs and contains a prophetic aspect. It is an occupation which cements her in an alternative belief structure.

If June’s experience has clarity in the way she gives ‘lip-service’ to a religious authority, Christianity, ‘Brenda’s’ experience is an example of one whose ‘movement’ away from Christianity is less clearcut -

Brenda is over fifty years, self-employed part-time, working as an alternative therapist, who describes herself [Ap.Q i] as “*European/NZ*” and “*professional*” with beliefs that are [Q3a]

“*Alternative and Unique to her*”.

When asked whether she had a religious upbringing of any sort [Q2a]

“Yes – Methodist.”

Does she belonged to a religious organization [Q2b]

“No.”

Does she regarded herself connected in any way to a religious organization [Q2c]

“Yes – By heritage – family, by history – my experience.”

Does she belonged to a spiritual group or organization independent of traditional religious institutions [Q2d]

“Yes – No Name – simply a group which develops consciousness of what, who and how we are.”

How often do you meet [Q2f]

“Fortnightly.”

Does she believe traditional religion had played any part in her spirituality’ [Q2g]

“Yes – Parents lived what they believed – that unconditioned love is central to everything. Their spiritual commitment and practice was lived. Thro’ church going I learned group skills, energetic understanding of music, prayer, preaching and personal connecting for support, empathy and the need for continuing growth and development to become all the potential that I contain. This continues for the whole of life.”

Does she feel she has retained any element of that religion in her own beliefs [Q2h]

“Yes – The endless possibilities of love, grace, trust, growth, conscious development into altered states and healing.”

Does she meditate [Q5a], if so how often [Q5b] and what school of thought or religion she aligned her meditation to [Q5c]

“Yes – daily – Tibetan Kum Nye Yoga”

When asked if she was taught to meditate or discovered the ability herself [Q5e] she answered “Yes” to both. Although Brenda appears to be ‘mostly’ Christian her meditation is firmly Buddhist, something cemented a little more in Q3c

“... Christianity more deeply than the others. Then Buddhism.”

When asked whether she considered her ‘non-mainstream’ beliefs belong to a tradition [Q3f]

“Yes /No – From a mixed bag of traditions. Something that makes living-sense to me.”

Brenda does attend workshops and courses, both locally, nationally and overseas [Q11b]

“USA – Australia”, but they are related to her work

“Primarily Energetic Healing and work, Bioenergetics.”

When asked to circle various phrases applying to her beliefs and family situation [Q12c]

Brenda crossed out ‘totally’ in ‘totally open’ and added “*as open as possible*”, further circling ‘*mixed family reaction*’ and ‘*partner disapproves*’ showing her difficulties in being open and free to live/speak about her beliefs. But her answer to Question 2c indicates firmly that she is ‘bound’ by family traditional ties as much as she is voluntarily through belief. However, those bindings do not stop her from incorporating Buddhism into that belief, nor from exploring further, if she wished, other traditions. Brenda makes it clear that she does not see separation between her and the community – everything the community offers is worthy of consideration.

The demands of the family are obviously a factor for those women born in the 1940s and 1950s, a period when women were expected to stay home and put the family’s needs first. Both Brenda and June have put family needs first and still do in some respects because they clearly show they not only take active part in ‘making’ community but have a measure of obligation to do so. The ‘delayed spiritual seeking’ for both women, could simply be a ‘temporary’ factor that in several generations will not show up in such surveys

as society becomes more egalitarian – nor possibly a cultural byproduct linked to the expectation of women as prime caregivers. The affordability factor could be linked to family, with the dispersal of grown children leaving more ‘fat in the purse’ and more personal time for women who are by then either in their middle-age or approaching it.

To determine how many participants over 51 years became interested in alternative spirituality around the counter-culture period participants were asked [Q3b] - ‘around what date did you start to actively seek knowledge of spirituality?’ 96% answered of whom 58 were over 51 years. Answers given were not always a date, some put an age.

The women over 51 who gave a date

1960s	7	1970s	4	1980’s	11	1990’s	3	2000’s	4
-------	---	-------	---	--------	----	--------	---	--------	---

The women over 51 who gave an age or indication of a time period

Always	6	Teens	4	In 20s	2	In 30s	1	In 40s	1
--------	---	-------	---	--------	---	--------	---	--------	---

For the men over 51 the results were similar, although the start was earlier for one

1940s	1	1960s	2	1970s	2	1980s	1	1990s	1
2000	2								

The men who gave an age or time period

‘Always’	2	Teens	3	In 20s	0	In 30s	0	In 40s	1
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The results show clearly that not all participants are ‘products’ of the counterculture [*see age adjustment below] as the start of their interest varies considerably, with 24 showing an interest emerging approximately around the 1960s and 70s (taking in those in their teens and twenties). Add the 9 who were either brought up in the alternative environment (the 1940’s participant is included) or showing a childhood interest [under ‘Always’] and the figures show only 33 out of a possible 58 in the same age group, [which in turn is from the total of 96% who answered the question,] had alternative belief interests encompassing the counterculture period, not the majority of participants. The remaining 25 discovered their interest in spirituality in the decades following the 1970 ‘beginnings’

(the 1970s being the era when the New Age is recognized as having its beginnings). Although the findings are only a sampling coupled with some assumptions of age it does show a divergence from the ‘findings’ of Ellwood in 1993, who claimed New Agers were now reliving their youth in the counterculture.²⁶

The term ‘middle-aged’, meaning between ‘youth and old age’,²⁷ was found to be used mainly by academics up to the 1990s to describe the major age concentration of NAM members. The term ‘baby boomers’,²⁸ used to describe those born in the two decades after the Second World War, appears to be replacing the looser title, ‘middle-aged’, giving a little more precision to the age of those who experienced the counter-culture. * The approximate age of survey participants who experienced the counter-culture of the 1960s in their ‘youth’ is taken in this thesis as being over fifty years, because they would have been middle-aged (forty and over in the 1980s and ‘90s) when the term was most used – forty being an age of maturity, between youth and old age.

Turning the focus back to Brenda and June, both give the impression that although not actively searching, they would add to their beliefs, if a concept presented itself and was found to have favourable resonance. Another aspect in common is their implied disassociation with institutions. June does not name a specific Spiritualist Church, but casually labels that arena of belief as ‘spiritualism’ or ‘spiritual’, saying that she ‘did’ belong, not naming anything taking its place thereby giving the impression that she, at the present, ‘floats’ between groups. Brenda definitely belongs to a group “*with no name*” that meets very regularly, through which, she and the other members explore the aspects of the ‘Self’, although she does not expand beyond that. She firmly honours her Methodist upbringing, crediting it with moulding many aspects of her and her beliefs, which she then

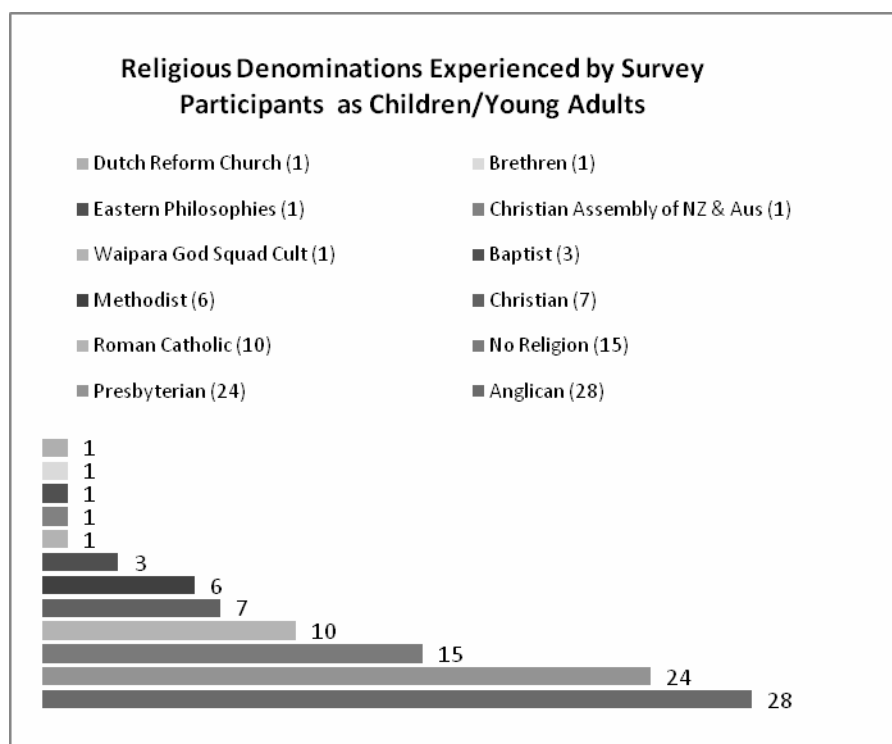
²⁶ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 245 [Ellwood’s full quote is on Thesis Pg 41]

²⁷ Fowler H.W. and F.G. Fowler, (Eds), ‘*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English: based on the Oxford Dictionary, 5th Edition*’, London, Oxford University Press, 1964. Pg 766

²⁸ Roof, Wade Clark, 1999. Pg 3

aligns with Buddhist meditation/beliefs, immediately expanding our view of her, from a secular person with strong Christian beliefs derived from her upbringing, to a New Ager exploring and expressing her individualism. Her reading material [ApQii] shows the breadth of interest in religion/belief generally; alongside Christianity, Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism and Zen Buddhism, is Sufism, North American Native, Jewish Kabbala, aspects of Hinduism, Shamanism, Maori Spirituality and Wicca.

As the religious upbringing of participants has been broached the following graph gives a view of just how many had religious instruction in their formative years and what area of belief they were in.



The lack of institution, or specific location, coupled with extreme eclecticism, makes the task of identifying New Agers difficult, making any volunteered objective and/or subjective information vital in the absence of the reliable removed observation/anthropological study. Although, to say there is 'no institution' is not strictly correct when taking into account the Theosophical Society or the Spiritualist Church,

however the nature of the New Ager is one who adds and subtracts beliefs even if they are members of an institution. Participant 69, 'Mary', is an example -

Mary is over fifty-one years [Q1a] and belongs to “*“The Sunday Gathering’ and The Theosophical Society”* [Q2d] She described The Sunday Gathering’s aims [Q2e] as: “*To grow in awareness, to share experiences, books related to spirituality, science, mind/body/spirit, DVDs and videos to discuss together etc.”*

Her upbringing incorporated the Anglican Church [Q2a], which she said played a part in her spirituality,

“By teaching love and compassion – the ‘Spiritual’ feeling in a Church with its music, hymns, candles etc – (unrelated to dogma and rules).”

Mary by mentioning the music, candles and ‘feelings’ aligns herself with ‘Romanticism’. Whereas a non-New Ager might highlight the superficial, the candles, music and emotion, a New Ager would assume Mary is speaking of the etheric energy those objects help create; that which augments a ‘Spiritual feeling’ - freedom beyond the material, beyond ‘dogma and rules’, beyond a human authority. When asked if she had retained any element of that religion in her beliefs [Q2h] she answered

“Yes – The element of life lived simply with care and compassion for others including as well animals and the planet. To be socially responsible. To be aware of the spiritual part of life and living.”

Mary has made it quite clear that she is responsible for her beliefs, they are not uniform to the articles of any organization she belongs to and she does not feel constrained by them. Mary’s example shows why the Theosophical Society, Spiritualist Churches or any other organization, whether a recognized religion or not, can be a part of the NAM if it is part of a New Ager’s beliefs. Christianity is not exempt, because Mary has incorporated aspects of it, albeit peripheral, into her beliefs – effectively she has created ‘Maryism’. The latter she affirms [Q3e]

“I have dropped connection to a Church and like to feel free and explore without rules and dogma. I believe that I am a spiritual being having a human experience on earth and I have phases of being stimulated and spiritually aware and phases of blankness or rather times of not pursuing spirituality.”

When asked specifically if her ‘non mainstream’ beliefs belong to a tradition [Q3f]:

“Bits and pieces from several traditions obviously influence at times but no specific tradition.”

Mary’s sources of information [Q3c and d] come from the Anglican school she attended, family, yoga, meditation groups, reading, lectures and workshops on subjects including Christianity, Buddhism and “briefly” others. When asked at the end of the questionnaire [ApQ vii] what traditions she has read or explored, in any way, Mary added to the former,

‘Sufism, North American Native, aspects of Hinduism, Celtic, European Nature Religions, Zen Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism and Maori Spirituality’,

meaning she has been exposed to a large array of thought from diverse cultures which have broadened her thoughts on belief in some part, no matter how small.

When asked whether there was any title/label she would give herself in addition [Q1f] Mary declined to answer. 48% of participants declined to answer, whilst another 16% simply put “No”. That question admittedly followed three relating to being an alternative therapist, selling a product and helping others achieve ‘something’ in the spiritual field, so it is perhaps not a surprise that as an identifying label another 16% gave their healing modalities. Others had no difficulty separating their thoughts from the previous two questions: 2, connected to a Spiritualist Church, described themselves as ‘Mediums’, 2 as ‘Lightworkers’, 2 declared they either did not need a label or they did not like labels and the following labels were amongst the remaining individuals:

“Minister” [Spiritualist Church].

“Circle Leader” [Spiritualist].

“Just curious”.

“A sensitive”.

“A Messenger”.

“ Witch”.

“I am a person – I don’t have to have a label or title and don’t have to prove myself to anyone”.

“Seeker of Truth – I seek the ‘numinous’ factor within”.

“A facilitator, a breaker of rules and boundaries – the ‘what if’ school of discovery”.

“Motivator, spiritual empowerer of Self”.

It is impossible to make a decisive comment on the 64% who either left a blank or put ‘No’ to Question 1f, but taking the comments and labels of the remainder as indication of the formers’ views, then it appears only the 5 connected to Spiritualism and the ‘Witch’ had no difficulty aligning themselves with a particular belief mechanism. However, even the title/label ‘Witch’ is non-confirming, because although Participant 84, ‘Maddy’ volunteered she belongs to a “*Witches’ Coven*” later in Question 2d, she gives two other labels alongside ‘Witch’ in Question 1f - “*Psychic Development Tutor, Lightworker*”. In Question 4a, which dealt with labels, she answered

–“Spiritual, Pagan, Witch, Bitch (lol), channeller, crystal/spiritual healer.”

Maddy claims again the title ‘witch’ but appears to divert attention away from it with ‘Bitch’ and then indicates humour with ‘lol’.²⁹ Also with her explanation of what service she provides [Q 1e] there is less alignment to a rigid Wicca³⁰ creed than to general New Ageism:

“Weekly development/tuition courses, Chakra Balances, Crystal - Spiritual Healing, workshops. Helping others to understand and develop their own psychic abilities.”

²⁹ A internet email and cellular telephone ‘texting’ acronym for ‘lots of laughter’ and ‘laugh out loud’.

³⁰ Wicca – witchcraft.

Again the eclectic nature of the New Ager applies and nowhere does Maddy state that she exclusively helps others become a witch or Wiccan. In fact Maddy gives little information beyond the title ‘witch’, of her Wicca community except that they meet

“To celebrate the seasons, giving thanks for all we have received thru out the year, to develop spiritually and to send healing and love to the Earth and all living things.” [Q2e]

The connection to nature could be relative to all in the NAM, but by labeling herself ‘witch’ the connection to nature is specific. Albanese pointed out in 1981 that a coven operates to elevate the natural world and to use its powers through the use of ritual.³¹ However, twenty six years later the description Maddy gave could equally be placed on all those in the NAM who do ‘Earth Healing’. For example, Participant No.21, a retired registered nurse [Q8b] described her activities as *“crystal healing and earth healing”* [Q1e], giving no indication of a connection specific to Wicca. Wicca does not enclose or own earth rituals, they are common to many parts of the NAM.

The general terms in which Maddy describes her activities, combined with her ‘diversion tactic’ away from the label ‘witch’ could be due to a reaction to the title in a culture that, according to Benland, has “...been indoctrinated to see witchcraft as evil. After all, it said in the Hebrew Bible: ‘Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live’ (Exodus 22.18)”.³² Maddy’s presentation of the label could be seen as a defiant gesture, as much as it is a description of her activities. She does not give any actions or language of witchcraft that might separate her from any other New Ager, as her description in Question 3e shows

“I don’t call myself religious, spiritual yes. I would describe myself as Pagan or a Witch, one who is in-tune with Mother Earth, a Spiritualist.”

³¹ Albanese, Catherine, 1981. Pg 185

³² Benland, Catherine, Pg 253, in Peter Donovan (Ed), 1996.

Maddy is one of approximately five in the survey [an approximation is all that can be achieved as some who labeled themselves ‘pagan’ could practise witchcraft as individuals yet not be part of a coven] who align their beliefs with Wicca, but she also aligns herself with Spiritualism, making that title too a generality rather than a label specific to an organization like the Spiritualist Church. The general view of Maddy is one who does not ‘restrict’ her activities to Wicca and Wiccans but one who interacts with her wider community.

Maddy also uses the label ‘Lightworker’, one that appears again as a descriptive title given by Participant 85, ‘Shona’ in a question scenario which proceeded as follows –
Has traditional religion played any part in her beliefs? [Q2g]

“No”

Do you feel you have retained any element of that religion in your beliefs? [Q2h]

“I have always believed in a god force etc, energy and spirit, and being able to feel their presence. In which I use in everyday life to help and guide me and others, as lightworkers .”

Do you consider your ‘non mainstream’ beliefs belong to a tradition? If you have circled ‘yes’ what is that tradition? [Q3f]

“A long line of lightworkers and mediums or wickers as described in days gone by.”

Shona uses the word ‘wickers’,³³ but alongside is ‘lightworker’, a label volunteered by three participants, meaning it is a legitimate title that can be used alongside ‘medium’.

A Lightworker is ‘one who works in the Light’, a belief statement aligned firmly with an action. The ‘Light’ is, as Marilyn Ferguson in *‘The Aquarian Conspiracy’*, 1980, explains it,

“...the vision of evolution towards the Light. Light is the oldest and most

³³ ‘Wickers’ – the familiar of Wiccan – a person who either practises or aligns their beliefs with witchcraft.

pervasive metaphor in spiritual experience. We speak of enlightenment, the city of light, the Light of the World, children of light, the ‘white-light experience.’”³⁴

Ferguson goes on, presenting the experience of being ‘in the light’ from Sufism, poem fragments, ideas/myths regarding “...a ‘fall’ into matter from light, and the lightward ascent has begun again...”: a Hasidic passage on ‘the light penetrating the darkness’: the Buddhist concept of allowing light to enter one and the equating of light with liberation in the ‘*Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ*’, by Levi H. Dowling, 1920.³⁵

Ferguson holds an interesting position in the NAM dialogue. She is an investigative journalist and publisher on “...humanistic medicine, memory, learning, creativity, brain research, biofeedback, pain and the physics of consciousness...”, not an academic.³⁶ Her book ‘*The Aquarian Conspiracy*’ an investigation into the personal and social aspects of the ‘new consciousness in the 1980s made her a ‘voice’ in the NAM, or one unofficial spokesperson in the absence of NAM leaders for some academics, like Kyle, Sutcliffe and Albanese. Another, in a similar position as Ferguson and often quoted is David Spangler, a writer on the New Age and former co-director of the Findhorn Foundation, an organization regarded as a prominent ‘light group’.³⁷

For the New Zealand New Ager the ‘Light’ most likely contains concepts similar to Ferguson’s description found in books read, coupled with a dualism encompassing good/bad, light/dark, gleaned from Christian instruction of which most participants had some exposure to in their formative years. Light is the opposite of Darkness, representing evil, whereas the Light is good, a constructive positive concept. Place ‘worker’ after ‘Light’ and it labels one who believes they work for good; they are a

³⁴ Ferguson, Marilyn, ‘*The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980’s*’, St.Albans, Granada Publishing Limited, 1982. Pg 421

³⁵ Ibid. Pg 422

³⁶ Lerner, Max, “Foreword”, Pg 11, in Ferguson, Marilyn, 1982.

³⁷ J. Gordon Melton, “New Thought and the New Age”, Pg 20, in Melton, Gordon J. and James R. Lewis, (Eds), ‘*Perspectives on the New Age*’, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992.

‘Lightworker’, a label which ‘rests lightly’ and does not cement the user in any fixed set of alternative beliefs, meaning they can adjust their beliefs whilst still using the label, for those who need a reference point. Because more than one participant used the label it is obviously a familiar descriptive title in the NAM, one indication of a communal language that includes concepts like ‘spiritualism’, tempering the extreme individualism of New Agers.

The Spiritualists appear to have beliefs in common when asked what the aims of their organization was ³⁸[Q2e] -

-The ‘Minister’ - *“Proof of survival after death.”* [P2]

-The ‘Circle Leader’ - *“To promote the Spiritualist Church Principles and to provide a safe place for the worship and communication of Spirit and Spiritual Healing - Principles: Ministry of angels and spirit communication - universal fatherhood of god and brotherhood of man, personal responsibility and spiritual karma, progress open to every soul, survival of bodily death.”* [P6]

- The ‘Deep trance medium’ *“To work with Spirit to develop our knowledge and abilities.”* [P96]

Other Spiritualists, who did not label themselves as such, but put down in Question 2d and 2e their affiliation with Spiritualism and their view of its aims, numbered 21. One of those was another ‘Lightworker’ [P30] who gave the Church’s aims as - *“To enhance the journey of others and share the gifts of healing, clairvoyance.”* This participant’s view appears to correspond with Ellwood’s statement that Spiritualists now are more concerned with developing clairvoyance and voice mediumship³⁹; aims which diverge from Spiritualism’s origins, yet the three quoted participants align their aims with their Church’s original precepts. Showing less containment to a single organization is the label

³⁸ More than one Spiritualist Church is involved in this survey and some work under the titles ‘Spiritualist Circle’ or ‘Spiritualist Group’

³⁹ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 28

‘Lightworker’, a non-conforming construct that both Witch and Spiritualist feel they can use.

One Spiritualist labeled herself a “Probationary Healer” and gave her Church’s aims as – *“To teach the seven principals of Spiritualism;⁴⁰ To prove life after death with clairvoyance; To provide a welcoming non-judgmental place for people who are searching for their spiritual truths.”* [P94]

That statement seems to sum up what all the Spiritualists surveyed felt their organization’s aims were, to provide a ‘safe’ haven within a Spiritualist community.

Those who gave their healing modality as their identifying label in this section will be approached more fully later, but it is interesting to note that of the 26 who work part-time at healing, only 16 gave their healing modality title whereas of the 12 full time Practitioners 10 gave their healing modality as an identifying label. It could be that those who are reliant on the income from their healing have to be more pragmatic about labels, or are marginally more open about their beliefs than some of the part-time therapists, who do not rely totally on their healing for their income. This aspect highlights the degree of involvement a full time practitioner has to have with the larger community’s business world and its demand for clear descriptions, on its terms, of concepts that are taken to be less rigid by those less ‘exposed’. Many of the part time practitioners may only practice on friends, family and associates, therefore are able to live with less (or totally without) confrontation from the greater community who might not share their beliefs and lifestyle.

The final question [Appendix x] asked participants for their view on the label ‘New Age Movement’ to describe alternative spirituality, it gave more ‘light’ to the label issue than Question 1f did:

–“It’s what we do - label things. The label doesn’t have any purpose other than

⁴⁰ ‘The Principles’ are included in Participant 6’s quote earlier.

being a label. But people use it in a derogatory/dismissive sense. You could change the label – wouldn't change the way it's used" [P18]

-"I believe labels separate humankind." [P119]

-" 'Nonsense'. We are all born as spiritual beings without religion or beliefs etc and labelling. " [P130]

-"Very broad range covered by a relatively 'nondescript' label. Why 'label' belief/spirituality?" [P134]

The reaction is a repudiation of one means of locating/identifying an individual, via their religious affiliations. In today's multicultural, multi-belief climate, when a label is used as a generalization, it does not identify and can often distort. For example, in the national census if you label yourself 'Christian', because you believe in Jesus Christ, you are gathered together with all other 'Christians', no matter whether you are a New Ager who mixes Christian beliefs with Buddhism, aspects of the occult and do not attend or belong to a Church. Individuality is 'officially' lost as the Christian Church claims statistically a member, but not that 'member's' soul, nor authority over his belief structure.

The difficulty the participants have with labeling gives a 'twist' to the middle-class issue discussed earlier on pages 41 through to 44. 62% chose middle-class but it seems unlikely that they would suddenly choose to put aside their objections to being labeled specifically for that question - it could be that some chose a 'midway' point as a mild protest. The question on whether the New Zealand NAM is primarily middle-class is considered unresolved in this survey.

The NAM does use labels, but mostly to connect the material world with their inner world – to create a context for themselves in their society and history, on their terms. The New Ager chooses a self designated context from what is 'on offer' from his community, which often does not translate to concepts taken by the some in that community as absolute/rigid truths, such as 'social' history and 'religious' history.

One participant ‘Georgina’ [P29] echoes the latter when asked whether traditional religion had played a part in her spirituality [Q2g]

“Yes - A sense of history, also a fear of God's wrath. Created separateness between different religions. Now in later years with greater understanding it gives me a sense of belonging and knowledge that the Bible contains great wisdom. I do not feel I need to attend a 'church' to be a Christian.”

When asked to describe her spiritual/religious identity [Q3e]

“A very strong sense of who I am, how I can influence my world. A deep inner knowing of peace and strength. Not easily swayed by so called ‘experts’ or fearful thinking.”

Any idea that Georgina has distanced herself from the community by being a Christian who refuses to attend church is scotched when asked whether she helped others achieve ‘something’ in the spiritual field [Q1e].

“I help run a programme in Prison called “The Sycamore Programme” based on the Bible story of ‘Zaccheus’. It is restorative justice. I also give handouts of quotes from different sources e.g. Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandala [Mandela], Allen Cohen, Emmet Fox etc.”

It obviously matters to the NAM members what they are called, as long it is not imposed on them and can choose not to have a label at all. The latter also shows clearly the view that the NAM members do not see themselves as separate from the greater part of society. Georgina being a case in point, she shows more commitment to members of the community than most, as working with prisoners might be seen ‘the heavy duty end’ of the communal spectrum.

The gathering of society’s parts under one religious label was regarded as necessary by Upasaka Priyananda, of the Auckland Buddhist Centre writing in 1982 an article for the Seventh Auckland Religious Studies’ Colloquium, titled *‘The Buddhist Spiritual*

Community Today'.⁴¹ He contended that a secular society is mostly made up of people in an 'identity crisis' because they are without religion, that which provides identity.⁴²

The comments of those such as Priyananda, even though made in the early 1980s are important because they set the 'tone' for other judgments that are not easily put aside in the decades following, as they attach with so much veracity that every following commentator must first engage with them. Priyananda's thoughts align with others of the time; that those who create their own beliefs are not only separating themselves from, but are acting to make their community unstable by taking authority for their own beliefs and not bending to a central authority in the community, as shown by Bellah and his fellow writers in the 1980s. Further, that if enough people follow suit then it could eventually lead to the destruction of the community, a view based on the assumption that insitutionalised religion 'is' the core of community, in disregard of the intricate network of beliefs which actually make up a modern, post-modern community.

W.J. Stuart, a Wesley-Lecturer at St. Johns College in 1982, in his article "*Secularization and Sectarianism: The Struggle for a Religious Future for New Zealand*" stated, he could not say that New Zealanders were not totally disinterested in religion, but they were increasingly resistant to organized religion and that religion was regarded as a "...private affair for many New Zealanders."⁴³

They are comments specific to New Zealanders and not particular to the New Age, but they do show a national 'sensitivity' to the subject of personal religion/belief, explaining in some part the dislike of labels, because it exposes one's beliefs. However, Ellwood, in 1993, in *'Islands of the Dawn: The Story of Alternative Spirituality in New Zealand'*,

⁴¹ Priyananda, Upasaka, "The Buddhist Spiritual Community Today", Pg 82, in Sharpe, Kevin, (Ed), *'Religion and New Zealand's Future: The Seventh Auckland Religious Studies Colloquium'*, Palmerston North, Dunmore, 1982.

⁴² Ibid. Pg 83

⁴³ Stuart, W.J., "Secularization and Sectarianism: The Struggle for a Religious Future for New Zealand", Pg 84, in Sharpe, Kevin, (Ed), 1982.

displays another reason for New Agers to be non forthcoming about their belief identity. He separates the New Age from Theosophy, Spiritualism and every other group which has specific organization,⁴⁴ greeting the NAM in the same dismissive manner as his academic contemporaries, Bellah and Co, not as a viable 'new religious movement' stemming from the counterculture (in this reincarnation) but as an artifice of the affluent who are -

“...now well into middle age and looking for reaccess to the wonders of their youth. But now under new terms: being putatively well established in families and careers, not to mention susceptible to the lassitude of noontime and the skepticism born of little experience ... and self-assured enough to want to put together their own redemption kits ... apart from any living priest or temple, with a confidence both wonderful and appalling....”⁴⁵

The reasons why Ellwood and others attack the NAM could be founded in a belief that the spiritual has become commercialized, that it is less etheric, more material and short term. Ellwood confirms that view at the end of his book by musing on 'the new groups' contribution to a 'taste and sample' culture, one which relies on short term 'good experiences'.⁴⁶ “The will, or any sense of the need, to create chartered, enduring alternative spiritual institutions, or to stick with only one over the long pilgrimage of a lifetime, has faltered.”⁴⁷ The academics quoted are not 'of' the NAM, therefore their view is incomplete – presenting their opinions is similar to asking a man to explain the concept of womanhood, or vice versa, the result would be a 'viewpoint' from outside the culture.

The attacks on the NAM's individualism prior to the mid 1990s, would be a sound reason for New Agers' 'selectiveness' with identity alone. If the intolerance was in

⁴⁴ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 245

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Pg 246

⁴⁷ Ibid.

academic circles and amongst writers generally then the NAM would certainly have been regarded in society generally as a ‘rogue element’, as it is in some part today, as the following shows.

A small article appeared in the ‘*New Zealand Listener*’, in May 2007, written by Alison Coleman, a journalist, on a conference of pagans and neo-pagans in Scotland.⁴⁸ The article was a superficial look at the ‘strange people’ attending the conference, to which some wore purple cloaks, white druid garments, “...Pentagrams, beards and waistcoats abound, displayed on wide expanses of tie-dyed stomach.”⁴⁹ The feeling Coleman created was of jolly ‘Halloween/Harry Potter-ish’ characters who had left their magic wands at home and who “... tend to know more about ancient mythology than they know about fixing their car or setting their video recorder.”⁵⁰ Coleman described Pagan beliefs as a “... messy, a grab-bag of belief, a DIY religion,” in an article aimed at showing a quirky part of Scottish life, which the ‘*Listener*’ published under ‘Travel’.⁵¹ The points in the article to note are, that the New Age as a vehicle for humour/ridicule is international, that New Agers although relatively harmless are impractical, as their incomprehensible beliefs demonstrate. The article’s presence in the *Listener*, a broadly read magazine, shows the NAM has been noted as having a large presence in New Zealand – a belief system the readers would relate to, in some way.

The ‘difficulty’ New Zealand in particular has with religion or spirituality generally, is based in 19th century pioneering and the type of Briton who settled this country. Michael Blain, an Anglican minister writing, in 1993, in ‘*Journeyings*’, a theological and biblical resource journal, approached the reasons for the decline of the Church in New Zealand by

⁴⁸ Coleman, Alison, “It’s a Kind of Magic”, Pg 58, in ‘*New Zealand Listener*’, May, 12, 2007.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

starting with those who settled here.⁵² Like Ellwood he too noted that it was not the ‘superior classes’ who took the opportunity to emigrate, but mostly the rural poor and working class, who had already distanced themselves from the Church in Britain and had no reason to “...spend their energies in establishing the Anglican (or Presbyterian) church when they had so many other things to do.”⁵³ When approaching the situation in post-modern New Zealand he agrees that surveys depict a secular society, but there is “...a high proportion who do believe in something.... Most New Zealanders hold a belief in God, but for most of these this is a belief in a spiritual force or life force, not the personal God of Christian revelation.”⁵⁴

In 1998, ‘*Long, White and Cloudy: In search of a Kiwi Spirituality*’, in a chapter entitled “No religion please, we’re spiritual – the boundaries between sacred and secular”, the then Dean of Christchurch Cathedral, John Bluck, contended that Kiwi spirituality is a theme explored by New Zealand’s media, both in advertising and programmes, for example soap operas, freely, “So long as religion isn’t mentioned explicitly, churches don’t appear and clergy are portrayed as clowns,[he mentions two British television series, ‘Father Ted’ and ‘Vicar of Dibley’] spiritual issues can be freely discussed. ... Spirituality is acceptable. Religion is not.”⁵⁵ ‘Kiwi’s’, he contends, treat “piety with savagery” and like Blain locates the reasons firmly in New Zealand’s 19th century settlement and the sectarian rivalry which helped to bring about secularism.⁵⁶ Further, he relates the latter to the development of ‘hostility to institutionalized religion’.⁵⁷

⁵² Blain, Michael, “Decade of Evangelism: The Secularism of New Zealand society”, Pg 7, in ‘*Journeyings*’, Auckland, Board of Christian Education of the Diocese of Auckland, June. 1993.

⁵³ Ibid. Pg 8.

⁵⁴ Ibid. Pg 16

⁵⁵ Bluck, John, ‘*Long, White and Cloudy: In Search of a Kiwi Spirituality*’, Christchurch, Hazard Press, 1998. Pg 19

⁵⁶ Ibid. Pg 23

⁵⁷ Ibid.

The reasons for the dislike or suspicion New Zealanders have of religion are clearly part of our national makeup, something some participants displayed when asked whether traditional religion played a part in their spirituality. [Q2g]

-“Yes - I have explored many religions and found them to be restrictive and patriarchally dominated. It led me to Paganism and Wicca which is Goddess centered.” [P12 female]

-“Yes - Made me question what they [Christianity] taught.” [P2 female]

-“Yes – I was a church youth group leader for thirty years and watched my young people experience the so-called Gifts of the Spirit and grew to realize that these experiences did not belong to any denomination or religion but were simply spiritual.” [P4 male]

The following comments contain elements that sum up most participants feelings -

-“Yes – As a young child it provided a framework that endorsed a life that incorporated other than purely secular concepts. This framework effectively allowed for the ‘non-physical’, ‘unseen’, ‘magical’, ‘mysterious’ as well as supporting the development of an alternative values system. As a young teenager I felt very strongly the Church my family belonged to failed to ‘walk the talk’ at a time in my life when I very much needed spiritual comfort. This ‘cutting off’ from Church eventually (much later in life) led me to recognize what I perceive as distinction and frequently a separation between religion and spirituality. ‘Spiritual is something I know through experience, and is what both illuminates and powers my journey through life. I personally have no interest in religion – as perceive it is too often corrupted (to a large extent by politics, dogma + hypocrisy). I guess it has meaning and is useful for some people – but not for me at this stage in my life.” [P5 female]

With New Zealanders' dislike of religion and acceptance of spirituality in mind, Question 12c was put to the participants to find out how open they were with their beliefs and what effect it had on their relationships. Phrases to be circled were given, indicating their choice of privacy, their selectiveness with their identity or whether totally open, the following figures resulted from a 100% response:

Totally open	50	Selective with identity	51	Totally private	4
Uncaring who knows	17	Evangelical ⁵⁸	0	Unaware of opposition	3
Or					
Family unaware	5	family disapproves	2	family share beliefs	17
unimportant to family	9	mixed family reaction	41	belief separates family	1
partner disapproves	3	partner does not know	1	partner shares beliefs	25
partner approves	17	beliefs resulted in divorce/separation	4 (1 in part)		

Added by participants voluntarily:

<i>Family Aware</i>	2	<i>As Open as Possible</i>	1	<i>Partner doesn't believe</i>	1
<i>Partner's Beliefs differ</i>	1	<i>Some family share beliefs</i>	4		

Typical responses: -“ *Selective with identity, mixed family reaction, partner shares beliefs*”.

Additional Comments given:

-“*Totally open – selective with identity as don't go preaching my beliefs, talk if asked or similar interest – unimportant to family*”. [P59]

⁵⁸ 'Evangelical' although a Christian term it is in 'common language' as meaning 'to speak specifically of one's beliefs with a view to informing/changing another's view' – those beliefs could be religious or related to a commercial product one 'believes' in. The participants are in a culture, which although secular, does have a firm Christian history and most participants have had some form of elementary Christian instruction. It is used here as a culturally common word related to belief.

-“*Selective with identity, evangelical formerly, mixed family reaction*”. [P121]

-“*As open as possible, mixed family reaction, partner disapproves*”. [P40]

-“*Selective with identity, partner approves, mixed family reaction among in-laws.*”

[P3]

Information gleaned from the above table is indecisive because some participants circled several phrases which cancelled out, in part, previous circled phrases. However, the phrase ‘*unaware of opposition*’ with only 2 circling it suggests that the bulk of participants felt unable to confidently include it – meaning there is an awareness of opposition of some sort, whether in the immediate family environment, as Participant 3 states, or within the New Zealand culture.

The ‘*uncaring who knows*’ phrase only had 17 participants circle it, yet 50 claim to be ‘*totally open*’ about their beliefs. This can be broken down further to give an indication of how their environment supports them:

- 8 were ‘*totally open*’ with no further qualification circled

- 5 were ‘*totally open*’ and ‘*uncaring who knows*’

- 22 were ‘*totally open*’ and included phrases showing family and/or partner support.

- 13 were ‘*totally open*’ but included ‘*mixed family reaction*’ [7 of this group also circled ‘*uncaring who knows*’]

- 1 was ‘*totally open*’ but the ‘*family were unaware*’. This answer is contradictory, but perhaps indicates an estrangement between the participant and family.

- 1 was ‘*totally open*’ but circled ‘*beliefs resulted in divorce/separation*’

The 41% who circled ‘*mixed family reaction*’, are obviously aware of some active or passive opposition from within the family, but do not indicate escalation beyond that. Even when the partner is evaluated the reaction leans towards the positive rather than the negative as only 8 overall indicate ‘actual’ opposition. The overall impression though is

that half feel they are able to live their beliefs openly, whilst the remainder either have difficulty doing so, or are aware of opposition from within the family circle, or culturally.

3 participants circled both '*totally open*' and '*selective with your identity*', whilst 1 circled '*selective with your identity*' and 'totally private', seemingly presenting four oxymora, but perhaps it shows more a 'necessary negotiation' between their beliefs and those of their family, business, or socially/culturally. The latter may be why 13 participants coupled the '*mixed family reaction*' phrase with '*totally open*' - as an awareness of differing belief stances in their immediate and/or wider environment. It could also show that the participant who commented - "*Selective with identity, evangelical formerly*", indicating a difficulty in openly living and wanting to tell/educate others on her beliefs. Generally the overall information shows that many want to be '*totally open*', but are unable. An awareness of being in the minority may also be a reason why so many circled 'selective with your identity'. It has to be conceded that the question was poorly organized as more decisive information could have been gleaned. However, it did provide valuable insight into the difficulties the participants have in living their beliefs in both their immediate and greater environment.

Where community is concerned amongst the NAM, words used by participants such as '*motivator*' and '*facilitator*' [Q1f] cement again not so much the individual without community, but more a person with a community who feels they have a role in promoting 'a' belief or set of beliefs which would 'serve' that community. This evangelism aspect appeared in Question 1e, which followed on from questions about the participant's work as alternative therapists.

Participants were asked if they 'were involved in helping others achieve 'something' in the spiritual field' [Q1e]. 95% answered.

63 'Yes'

30 'No'

2 'Yes & No'

The next part of the same question asked them to describe what that ‘something’ was.

The quotes selected were chosen because they represented a good cross section of responses.

“Yes - Telling people of my beliefs, experiences with spirituality.” [P31]

“Yes – By Interaction with people, helping to raise the vibrations of the Planet.”

[P79]

“Yes - in the broadest sense I feel that I do. I have often come across people who are wanting some direction and they are drifting towards to alternative beliefs.”

[P117]

“Yes - helping others to reconnect with their true selves.” [P64 Therapist]

“Yes - seem to be a 'connector' discover books, information, practitioners and pass the information onto others. ” [P18]

Of those who answered with similar words to those above, 6 were amongst the 50 who were ‘totally open’ with their beliefs, whilst 5 were amongst those ‘selective with their identity’, showing that it is not just those who claimed to be ‘totally open’ who did the evangelizing. To put those 65, who said they helped others, in perspective, only 39 participants claimed to be therapists [Q1c], meaning 24 felt it was part of their belief structure to actively evangelize when the opportunity presented itself, independent of a client/therapist based situation. That evangelizing 24 came from no particular institutional background – the motivation to do so is general over the survey and most probably is less New Age derived than a natural urge to share one’s thoughts and abilities. The views of the participants quoted are less individualistic and more ‘community in action’, because they are sharing their beliefs as they use words like, ‘helping, sharing, connecting, bringing’; words indicating communication with others.

The Healer

‘Healing’ is a reoccurring theme in the NAM. Professor Gehardus C. Oosthuizen of Durban contends that for New Agers healing via non-medical means is an avenue for experiencing the metaphysical forces supporting their beliefs.⁵⁹ His view presents the thought that members of the NAM may not be seeking a spirituality specifically separate from Christianity or a different ‘type’ of spirituality, they may reject Christianity because of its perceived lack of spirituality, as Participants 12, 2, 4 and 5 indicated earlier on Page 68. It is a view confirmed by Bryan R. Wilson when examining secularization in *‘Religion in Secular Society: A Sociological Comment’* (1996) when he said the world has become ‘demystified’; men no longer respond with a sense of awe and mystery to it; that the religious view has been lost along with the religious institutions’ influence in interpreting the ‘purpose of life’.⁶⁰

The development of ‘latent abilities’, is cited as a reason why New Agers place such importance on healing, states sociologist Adam Possamai; it is in order to understand and to achieve realization of the ‘higher’ Self and the body/mind/spirit through the use of meditation, healing and other practices.⁶¹ The views of all three academics, Oosthuizen, Wilson and Possamai, link in spite of approaching the subject from different directions, by separating the act of healing from an everyday context and placing it in the mystical arena.

York cited Meredith McGuire’s four year study of “...alternative healing practices amongst middle-income New Jersey people...” which found Americans, both in the city and suburbs use “...health, illness and healing as expressions of their concerns for

⁵⁹ Oosthuizen, Gehardus C., “The Newness of the New Age in South Africa”, Pg 266, in Lewis, James R., and J. Gordon Melton, (Eds), 1992.

⁶⁰ Wilson, Bryan R., *‘Religion in Secular Society’*, London, C.A. Watts & Co. Ltd., 1996. Pg 57

⁶¹ Possamai, Adam, “Superheroes and the Development of the Latent Abilities: A Hyper-real Re-enchantment?”, Pg 55, in Hume, Lynne and Kathleen McPhillips (Eds), *‘Popular Spiritualities :The Politics of Contemporary Enchantment’*, Aldershot and Burlington, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006.

meaning, moral order and individual effectiveness and power in their daily world....”⁶²

His conclusion was that healing was more related to social and, in part, medical and spiritual concerns.⁶³ The latter combined with Oosthuizen, Wilson and Possamai’s views presents a more holistic⁶⁴ ‘life-style’ approach to healing which can be summed up in the concerns the NAM has for ‘Body, Mind and Spirit’. But those comments do not go far enough to explain the NAM’s focus on healing.

The act of healing has wider ramifications extending to the global/universal ‘arena’ in the New Age metaphysical view, which contends that what exists in the microcosm (the individual’s body) mirrors that of the macrocosm (the Universe) – if a healing is done on an individual, even on one’s self, it has a ripple effect to the greater portion of existence.

Marilyn Ferguson gives that wider aspect of healing a brief acknowledgement by saying that we are oscillating fields within greater fields.⁶⁵ Catherine Albanese goes somewhat to understanding the former;

“...healing is a work of reconciliation. In keeping with its fusion of matter and spirit (the holistic paradigm), this healing emphasizes a forgiveness that dissolves physical disease, emotional hurt, and the collective distress of society and nature.”⁶⁶

Albanese uses the word ‘dissolve’, giving the impression of instant healing, but ‘allows’ it could be used to indicate a release/healing over a period of time, or a response at spirit level which understands the reason for the dis-ease. The dis-ease may not ‘go’ immediately from the body, but remain for a period of time, as though an exact period is

⁶² York, Michael, 1995. Pg 38 and 41

⁶³ Ibid. Pg 41

⁶⁴ ‘Holistic’, within the NAM, indicates an engagement with the ‘mind, body and spirit’ – the whole person. It can also be used to indicate ‘limitlessness’.

⁶⁵ Ferguson, Marilyn, 1982. Pg 257

⁶⁶ Albanese, Catherine, “The Magical Staff: Quantum Healing in the New Age”, Pg 78, in Lewis, James R. and J. Gordon Melton, 1992.

required/agreed to, to imprint ‘knowledge’ of the reasons for the condition, on the psyche of the person concerned.

The word ‘collective’ is confirmed by Spangler as important when he said the NAM is all about a ‘collective transformation’ brought about through love, compassion and communication,⁶⁷ expressed in actions which include healing (of self and others) and meditation. Spangler uses the ‘chaos dynamic’ to illustrate the reason for New Age individualism by likening the New Ager to a pebble. He describes the action of a stream flowing over pebbles affecting its flow and the joining of many such streams, over time creating a river, actions culminating in the river’s ability to transform the land and thereby affect man’s placing his cities and towns – the smallest of actions can affect culture.⁶⁸

One survey participant helps illustrate the point -

“I am in this world to help others, to give service. Healing flows through into everything.”(Q4a) “...we are all 'One'. To hurt others is to hurt yourself.” (Q2h)
[P64]

Uncovering the healers amongst the survey participants was somewhat convoluted, due to the difficulties the participants have with labels. Question 1c asking whether the participants worked as ‘alternative therapists’ received a 100% response:

“No” 61 “Yes” 39 (of whom 12 work Full-time and 27 Part-time)

4 who answered “No” later in Question 1e, which asked ‘were they involved in helping others achieve ‘something’ in the spiritual field’, were revealed as healers -

“Yes - spiritual field is Body, Mind and Spirit, that means - energy healing e.g. EFT, All Holistic field, Chemicals in our food and cosmetics. EFT - Emotional Freedom Technique, Body Talk, Reiki, Holistic Pulsing.” [P130]

“Yes – Crystal Healing, Earth Healing.” [P21]

⁶⁷ Spangler, David, and William Irwin Thompson, 1991. Pg 64

⁶⁸ Ibid. Pg 74

- “Yes, - I work as a medium, clairvoyant, do clearings⁶⁹ and explain to many people what it is to be a Spiritualist. *Healing without charging.*” [P47]

- “Yes - have recently been training in 'Healing Touch'. I have completed level 2⁷⁰. 'Healing Touch' is an energy-based healing technique. 'Something' would be better energy balance and facilitating client's own healing process.” [63]

They may regard healing as a major part of their spiritual identity, possibly because they do not charge. Whereas if they did use the title ‘alternative therapist’ and charge, it may place them in an arena they feel does not blend with ‘spirituality’, that of the material commercial world. Participant 47’s additional comment “*Healing without charging*” highlights the division between those who earn their living from their skills and those who consider them a ‘gift from God’ as many connected to the Spiritualist Church do.⁷¹ The following shows this is not an uncommon view:

“Yes - in learning and experiencing spiritual development I am also helping others to do the same (groups or circle work) and I also work at a local Spiritualist Church doing addresses [clairvoyance from the ‘platform’ during a service]. This is all voluntary, unpaid work .” [P93]

When asked whether they were ‘active healers’ [Q8a] the number of healers rose from 39 to 72 [2 of this number were ‘not active’, but were healers] the non-healers lowering to 20, with one of that number being in doubt due to her unwillingness to use the word ‘healer’:

-“No - although I use affirmations⁷² on behalf of others (+ myself) with seemingly good Effect.” [P70]

⁶⁹ A ‘clearing’ is a removal of or healing of etheric aspects deemed negative by a person living in a particular environment. For example, a person may request a ‘clearing’ of their house when they have a ‘ghost’.

⁷⁰ Healing modalities often have ‘levels’, which the healer/trainee can choose to be trained in thereby gaining further qualifications/expertise. ‘Reiki’ is healing technique which also operates on levels of achievement.

⁷¹ Monteith, W. Graham, “Iona and Healing: A discourse Analysis”, Pg 113, in Sutcliffe, Steven and Marion Bowman (Eds), ‘*Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*’, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2000.

⁷² An ‘affirmation’ is a statement from the soul/spirit to the body it inhabits ‘directing’ it to perform a function, either one of healing or change of some sort to facilitate healing. Ritualistic repetition of the statement is common.

A further 2 of the “No’s” could be given the ‘healer’ status, although they did not align their activities with that of a ‘therapist’ or ‘healer’. One of those, Participant 36, stated

“Chemical-free herbal moisturiser and ointment to family friends and word-of-mouth.”

The other, “Oliver”, Participant 4, circled “Yes” and “Part-time” to the question on whether he sold/provided a product to the alternative community [Q1d]

“Genesa Crystals and other sacred geometry shapes such as pyramids hand cut from Oamaru Stone.”

When asked whether he helped others achieve ‘something’ and what was it [Qe]

“My venture is called Spiritually Significant Sculpture and there are three answers to this Question: 1. Sacred geometry shapes have a particular energy of their own (Pyramid energy is well known) so owning one of these allows an enquirer to explore and perhaps experience this phenomenon. For the Genesa it is plant health and growth. 2. Providing someone with their significant icon, e.g. a Celtic Cross provides a constant reminder of sacred space often setting the scene for meditative experience. 3. A Genesa crystal or indeed any other item can be programmed by radionics⁷³ and intention to aid, for example a healing therapist.”

When asked if there was any other title/label he would give himself [Q1f]

“I am not a therapist, but I don’t think I need a label.”

The ‘living in two worlds syndrome’, (that of an everyday reality and that of the multi-various NAM viewpoints of ‘reality’ each having vastly different views on some concepts, as ‘healing’ demonstrates,) is displayed when Oliver’s activities and comments are

⁷³ ‘Radionics’ works on the ‘Holistic Universe’ principle, meaning everything is connected and an object, no matter where it is located, can be ‘tuned into’ and ‘read’. Oliver ‘tunes in’ to his client’s energy and uses it to ‘program’ the object they order from him. The term stems from an actual machine (Radionics Machine) within which an electrical current passed through an object belonging to the person being focused on, e.g. a hair or nail clippings to effect a healing. Oliver bypasses the machine and uses his mind to connect – the label ‘Radionics’ remains as a description of his action.

evaluated. He anticipates the ‘healer/therapist’ definition in part by disclaiming not only the label ‘therapist’, but labels generally. However, if a group of New Agers viewed him most would regard him as a healer, not a therapist, because he is using those abilities on the stone/substance to uncover its uniqueness; shaping it to a particular ‘significant’ shape knowledgeably to in turn aid healing, or a healer. His actions are that of a healer and an artist, i.e. allowing the substance to express itself, knowing it is not inert, that its shape emits ‘a’ specific energy – he changes the shape and the energy is changed. The same analogy can be applied to the healer/client relationship – a healer ‘manipulates’ the client’s energy, changing its ‘shape/form/substance’ (transmutation) to facilitate a transformative process. ‘Healer’ is a looser title encompassing more than a non New Ager using the word might allow – their focus would be on aligning NAM views with the modern medical profession. Oliver is contributing to the transformation of planetary actions, so therefore he is a healer, not merely part of a service industry on the periphery of the NAM. An interesting addition to Oliver is his terminology where he says an item can be “programmed” with “intention to aid” as does his acknowledgement of ‘an’ energy particular to a shape, showing his working knowledge of the occult, if not use of it, beyond the ‘artistry’ involved in such work. He is approaching ‘the item’ as a healer would a client, using his senses to project a particular outcome; a physical action he terms ‘programming’, which, in its turn, would be beneficial to all concerned. It is healing, but removed from the actual action taking place at a later time through another healer, whose healing he augments. Oliver highlights a connection between New Agers, a dialogue directly challenging/contradicting the ‘extreme individualism’ label given to New Agers – he demonstrates community action.

‘Energy’ as a concept in the NAM

The word ‘energy’ is used liberally by the New Ager to describe that which ‘cannot be described’ yet is known in some way, because its effect and/or presence is ‘felt’.

Participants speak of its effect and the means by which ‘energy’ is not only felt, but used.

-“Yes - I am very (overly) sensitive to energy - often toxic energy crowd me and I am having to learn to tune in to my own centre, my intuition, to work out what belongs to others and what is mine.” [P45 described herself as a “sensitive – intuitive”]

Participant 40, here named ‘Joline’, replied to Question 4b

“Yes - I read the impact of people energetically. I mentor and balance daily my own energy fields.” When asked in Question 3e ‘what her religious/spiritual identity was’ - *“Being human/spirit - or mind, emotional, body/energy = spiritual.”*

‘Energy’ is used here as an opposite to ‘matter’; it is ethereal yet able to be discerned through the senses, it needs ‘balancing’, ‘monitoring’ as to what is ‘mine and what is theirs’ – the senses are being used to discern function and ‘beingness’ beyond the material, using the word to link both. ‘Energy’ is used as a generality but also shows uniqueness because each individual uses the word to explain a ‘pathway to’ as well as a site for their own belief system, which is, as Joline demonstrated, intrinsically linked to ‘spirituality’.

Giving a 2006 academic view binding the word ‘spirituality’ to ‘energy’, Paul Heelas writing under the title ‘*Challenging Secularization Theory: The Growth of “New Age” Spiritualities of Life*’ says, “Spirituality is taken to be *life itself* – the “life force” or “energy” that sustains life in this world, and what lies at the heart of *subjective life* – the core of what it is to be truly alive.”⁷⁴

⁷⁴Heelas, Paul, “Challenging Secularization Theory: The Growth of “New Age” Spiritualities of Life” in ‘*The Hedgehog Review*’ Vol 8, Issue 12, 2006, (Electronic Source), Charlottesville, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia. 2006. http://www.virginia.edu/iasc/publications_hedgehog_review.php

‘Energy’ in the NAM can be used as a noun or adjective, energy is everything and anything; God is not excluded as Godhead is ‘The Source’ of that energy – it permeates everything. Shakti Gawain, a New Age author and speaker on personal development and consciousness, gives a NAM view of energy in *‘Creative Visualization’*, 1978, as

“Our physical universe is not really composed of any ‘matter’ at all; its basic component is a kind of force or essence which we can call *energy*. ... Physically we are all energy, and everything within and around us is made up of energy.”⁷⁵

The participants have also used the word as a communication ‘link’ between them and the survey’s readers, as the following shows in Question 8c, when describing nonmaterial concepts whilst healing:

-“*Like being removed from the physical and observing the energys interacting with the patient.*” [P2]

-“*Not being 'In control' going with the Universal flow (energy).*” [P130]

- “*.... The feeling changes from my Self feeling to their energy.*” [P52]

The descriptions do not indicate unfamiliarity with the energy they are dealing with, but a willingness to communicate an action simply. For example, Participant No.2, is a Spiritualist Minister, a status indicating an expertise/ability in describing those energies ‘interacting’ with her patient. She would watch, allow and engage when needed, otherwise the ‘healing’ would not be controlled. The word ‘energy’ is used by her to ‘connect’ with the reader, not alienate by using words she knows would be unfamiliar.

In some respects the participants use ‘energy’ as a ‘coverall’ to shield what they ‘specifically’ know and do have language for, as well as using it to communicate/indicate a ‘substance’ they detect in some manner through their senses. It is a word that connects the individual with the rest of the NAM as much as it offers a ‘loose’ explanation without

⁷⁵ Gawain, Shakti, 1979. Pg 5 and 6

having to present what may be a subjective set of complex eclectic beliefs/gnosis to possible challenge.

The Divergence from Individuality

Many of the participants belong or belonged to a spiritual group or organizations where they meet like-minded people [Q2c]. 100% answered:

49% belong to a group or organization (of whom 5 belong to more than one group) 5 used to 46 do not

Of those who 'used to', the names of those organizations were: Women's Full Moon Meditation, Radha Soami Sant Mat, 'No Name' (2 groups) and Self Realisation Meditation Healing Centre, 'Unity (American)'.

Of the remainder:

Spiritualist Church 21 Theosophical Society 5
 "No name" 7 (one was described as "pagan")
 The Sunday Gathering 3 Yoga 2 On going workshops 3

The remainder, with one participant each:

The Kindred Soul Trust, Witches Coven, Braided River Group,
 Kirtan, SUBUD, "I AM Centre"⁷⁶, Unitarian
 Universalists of Christchurch, Divine Connections, Zen Buddhism,
 Womens Sacred Mystries, "a world wide organization",
 College of Acupuncture

44% of the participants sought out others to -

- "... support each other on our spiritual journey." [P21- The Sunday Gathering]

⁷⁶ In 1993, Ellwood, apart from finding a possible 'lead' in the Auckland telephone directory, which when rung only gave an address to write to for information, found no "...visible I AM Centre or group in New Zealand." The naming of such a Centre in Christchurch, fourteen years later, by one survey participant [P70], proves the endurance of many organizations which emerged in the modern era. The 'I AM Activity' started in America in the 1930's and is now what Ellwood calls "...an enduring part of the American religious scene. Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 148 - 149

-“... *encourage and foster greater awareness of the many and wanted methods associated with living a spiritually empowering life style.*” [P43 – The Kindred Soul Trust]

-“...*learn and help each other on our spiritual pathway and to share ideas and thoughts and have a light hearted uplifting time.*” [P80 – no name]

-“... *celebrate the seasons, giving thanks for all we have received thruout the year, to develop spiritually and to send healing and love to the Earth and all living things.*” [P84 – Witches Coven]

-“ *i) to form a universal without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour. Ii) To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science. Iii) To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man and woman.*” [P58 – Theosophical Society]

-“*The Sunday Gathering: To grow in awareness, to share experiences, books related to spirituality, science mind/body/spirit, DVDs and videos to discuss together etc.*” [P69]

‘Sharing’, ‘support’, ‘celebration’, ‘uniting’, ‘gather’, ‘send healing’ are words used by the participants. They are not words used by people who seek exclusivity in their beliefs. Clearly the New Zealand NAM seeks contact with those with similar beliefs and willingly creates enduring ‘organisations’.

Any idea that these groups are of short duration is halted by the following comment –

-“*Used to meet Thursday evenings for 15 years - group disbanded and we moved.*” [P65]

The regularity of the groups meeting varies from

-“Regularly - about 8 times a year.” [P10]

To -“Up to 3x weekly.” [P53]

Any average for the meeting of the groups was difficult to measure, but groups outside the Spiritualist Church appeared to meet on average once a month. For some Spiritualist Church members it was more frequent if they attended Church and also a healing or development group during the week.

Individuality is expressed in the seeking of belief, not the living the beliefs, which is 'of community' for 49% of participants. The existence of these groups firmly shows there is a dialogue on belief, which in turn indicates a similarity in belief, or an emerging culture. In addition, there are the many workshops and seminars, both formal and informal, which provide sporadic gathering points for New Agers and those interested in the NAM – they could be viewed as more of a 'window' on the movement than the therapists, because although particular beliefs are being promoted through the facilitator, those gathering to take part can represent a whole gambit of beliefs from across the New Age belief spectrum.

The seeking of those with similar beliefs is part of the gregarious nature of humans, otherwise we would not be living in communities, but those communities also put pressure on each of their members through 'social custom'. Marilyn Ferguson talks about social custom being the 'deepest of cultural trances', about it being a subtle power wielding tremendous influence over the lives of a community, one which often goes unchallenged.⁷⁷ New Zealand social customs do involve the Christian Church because British social customs were overlaid on this country; expectations of behaviour do and have developed, for example, until the last quarter of the 20th century, marriage and death was expected to be 'celebrated' with the guidance of the Christian Church. Now, in the 21st century, it is accepted that some 'funerals' are where friends meet to share memories of the dead person with no religious input. The same with marriage; vows are often exchanged (or not) with no priest, no religious overtones and often outside in a garden - 'in nature'.

⁷⁷ Ferguson, Marilyn, 1982. Pg 427

Kevin Ward in 2004, in an Inaugural lecture at the School of Ministry, Knox College, commented on the increased popularity of New Zealand's widely diverse religiosity and spirituality separate from organized religion.⁷⁸ The separation, he said, was not a rejection of God but a rejection of the institution and the 'religious label'.⁷⁹ He quoted Richard Wright who wrote in 1953, "Religion was once an affair of the church, now it is in the streets in each man's heart. Once there were priests; now every man's a priest."⁸⁰

The divergences from religion discussed and commented on above are not separate from the NAM; they are incorporated with and are alongside those New Zealanders who act to defy some of the 'requirements' of community according to Bellah and Co's assessment, without releasing their sense of 'being' a community. Secularism is shown, in the New Zealand example, as a state not devoid of belief/spirituality but merely one where a significant number has separated from the institution. 'Permeating' that secularism is the NAM with individualism providing a site for belief, whilst correlating both with its own culture and the greater community's social customs.

The participants were asked if they felt isolated because of their beliefs [Q12d].

93% answered – "No" 80 "Yes" 7 "Yes & No" 6

Some of the comments were –

-*"Yes & No - mainly mix with like-minded otherwise life is just too hard."* [P20]

-*"No – but different."* [P38]

-*"Yes & No, Yes mainly."* [P77]

-*"No – I know by intuition those I can talk to about this to."* [P92]

The participants do not feel separate until belief becomes an 'issue', then they feel disconnected, not from a perceived separate New Age community, but the greater

⁷⁸ Ward, Kevin, "Is New Zealand's Future Churchless??", Pg 5 and 13, in 'Inaugural Lecture', School of Ministry, Knox College, February 23, 2004.

⁷⁹ Ibid. Pg 5

⁸⁰ Ibid. Quote from Richard Wright, 'The Outsider', New York, Harper & Row, 1953. Pg 359

community encompassing all New Zealanders. That greater community does not specifically have a problem with the NAM; it has a difficulty with all expressions of belief, the reasons for which are found within the initial formation of New Zealand society.

The Experience of Belief

The Divine in the NAM

The questionnaire bypassed, in the most part, the participants' individualized belief structures, their source/history/cosmology, by going directly to their experience of the divine in Question 10. In retrospect the questions asked in this section appear clumsy and over simplistic, as they went from an 'arena' of divinity to a divine 'being', which could be interpreted as 'a being' or 'a state of being' that was divine. However, that simplicity proved successful in drawing out participants' thoughts as 100% answered the first part of this section.

Question 10a asked 'Do you believe in the concept of 'the divine', or the possibility of such a concept?' Participants were invited to circle either 'Yes' or 'No'.

"Yes" 94% "No" 4% "Not sure" 1%

Crossed out both 1%

Of the 4 who answered "No", 1 did not add anything further and the 3 remaining responded with the following comment

- " I don't believe in a divine being – or anything separate from us all. I do believe in the concept of divinity, in that we are all divine and part of 'The whole', that we are all connected, that every thought and deed affects everything else, seen or unseen. We are all part of the same great mystery of life. I believe that the messages from 'higher intelligence/sources, are a part of us – not separate. Its just from our perspective it might appear to be separate/higher/greater." [P32]

Participant 32 spoke for the majority of the participants as their answers, teased out over this section, correlated with her view that the divine is not separate; all is divine.

Of the participants who appeared to diverge from the majority view: the participant who answered “No” without further comment answered “Yes” when asked if she ‘believed in a supreme being of any kind’. And the participant who crossed out both options commented

- “I accept all concepts as pointers to deeper truths.” [P120]

Although enigmatic the comment does allude to ‘The whole’ Participant 32 mentioned.

Question 10b asked ‘Do you believe in a supreme being of any kind?’ 97% answered.

“Yes” 76 “No” 18 “Yes & No” 2 “Don’t Know” 1

The question although appearing to narrow the focus to ‘an actual being’, was interpreted by many participants as ‘a state of beingness’. The question brought additional comments, echoing Participant 32’s previous comment, of which the following typify:

- “This being is a state rather than having a particular form.” [P40]

- “The word 'being' is difficult. I like the possibility of an energy field e.g. the ground of all being, Great Universal Source, Universal Consciousness of which we are all part of - the divine is within Us.” [P69]

The second part of the same question asking ‘what title they would give the being’ created difficulty for some in finding descriptive words, as the following demonstrates:

- “ The Universe - but this is not an apt title - but can't find a more appropriate one.” [P18]

- “ Prime Creator/God - depends what culture I'm with.” [P20]

There was a firm rejection by most, of the divine being singular, ‘a’ being. Of those who did speak of the divine as singular, wholly or in part, the following titles were given:

“Universal Love”, “Divine Mother God”, “Energy”, “Light being”, “God for lack of any other name”, “Higher Self”, “All That Is”, “Love”, “Great Spirit”.

Samples of longer answers -

- “Universal or Divine Intelligence + Pantheism?” [P58]

- “A Higher Self and ‘God’,” [P86]

-*“The Source, The Universe (usual one), The Force, Great Spirit, (in prayer) Mother/Father God.”* [P3]

Those who objected outright to the word ‘being’ –

-*“Many names, Divine, Infinite Love, All that is, God (not a being as such - it just is).”* [P64]

-*“All beings are divine.”* [P70]

If the latter sums up most of the participants’ objection to a singularity in their concept of the divine, they also allude to more, to ‘something’ beyond the comprehension of the human mind, to which they give a name because ‘that is what we do – put labels on things’, to paraphrase Participant 18. Also there is a repetition of some titles, like ‘Universe’ ‘Force’, ‘Source’ and ‘All that Is’, meaning there is a language agreement amongst the participants on names for the divine – an ‘in community’ language.

A small section of participants separated the divine into individuals -

-*“God, The One, The Source, Guides, Masters, Angels.”* [P106]

-*“Guides or helpers from the Spirit World.”* [P98]

These give credence to the view that some NAM beliefs have a ‘pantheon’ of divine beings/individuals, except that Participant 106 adds ‘*The Source*’ immediately aligning her answer with the majority, describing the divine as a more expansive element and indicating a hierarchy. Participant 98, a Spiritualist, demonstrated this when answering “*Yes*” to both Questions 10a & b and “*No*” to the two questions dealing with whether the being was divine or god-like, meaning he places ‘Guides or helpers’ into a ‘Supreme being’ category separate from the divine. The effect is both monotheism and pantheism because the participants have names for the one ultimate expression of divinity, but draw in others, like ‘the Masters’ and themselves, to create a hierarchical or pyramid-like system with the ‘ultimate expression’ at the apex being part of all. There are definite signs of agreement

amongst the participants as to what the divine is, including language agreement showing in places which ‘joins’ the New Agers rather than confirming individualism.

Another small group used the name ‘Jesus’ and other Christian titles –

-“*The Lord Christ, The Lord Jesus, Our Father God, The Lord God, The Father of us all.*” [P65]

-“*God/Lord/Jesus.*” [P133]

-“*God, Jesus, The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit (The Trinity).*” [P47]

The first, Participant 65, here named ‘Fran’, describes her ethnicity and socio-economic status

“I am a NZ Maori of mixed blood, ¾ Maori and ¼ English and Scotch – middle-class and blue collar”

Fran is a vegetarian of forty years for ‘*Ecological*’, ‘*Partly taste related*’ reasons and because she ‘*Can’t bear to eat Animals*’. Also

*“I learnt when I had grown up that the blood of animals was impure and can desensitize humans.”*¹

A retired librarian, Fran started her working life in 1950, meaning she would be in her mid seventies or early eighties, if she started working between sixteen and twenty six. She is a self-taught healer who works “*sometimes*” and was brought up with the Anglican Church -

“...until about 30 then I explored the other religions, especially the Spiritualist Church and I made a study of Contemplatives², a further stage of the meditative state to the transcending of the personality into the Christ consciousness.”

¹ Vegetarianism is a ‘thread’ running through some beliefs in the NAM; one purporting that the eating of meat weakens the spirituality of the person. Possibly a legacy directly attributable to the introduction of Eastern philosophies, for example The Theosophical Society promoted vegetarianism as necessary for the development of a pure expression of spirituality, although the ‘thought’ could be earlier as Emanuel Swedenborg practised an aestheticism where food was concerned.

² ‘Contemplatives’, meaning meditations or those who meditate, is a Christian term, not a word used by the Spiritualist Church, it could possibly be used in the Alice Bailey tradition. Alice Bailey was prior to The Theosophical Society in the Anglican Church (Ellwood, Robert S., 1993, Pg 145).

When asked whether she belonged to a religious organization [Q2b] or connected to one [Q2c] “*No – not now.*”

When asked if she belonged to a spiritual group or organization independent of traditional religious institutions [Q2d] Fran answered “*Yes*”. When asked its name, aims [Q2e] and how often they met [Q2f]

“No name. I had a group of people who came to my home and we studied meditation and The Science of Meditation in a scientific way.³ And esoteric teachings about the ‘Oneness of All that Is’! We also studied teachings given to Alice Bailey⁴ by a Master of the Wisdom called The Master Dwahl Khul [Djwal Khul] known as The Tibetan Master and his master the Master Jesus Christ and CHRIST and other Masters of the Wisdom and Compassion. Our aim was our own learning and experiencing the expansion of our consciousness and the learning, experiencing and transcending of our daily states of consciousness into an experience of the “Oneness of all Souls and the Oneness of all Life to the experience of our own God Consciousness and of the ONENESS of all life and All Souls and All Nature! We used to meet every Thursday evening for a period of 15 years and then some of us shifted and the group was disbanded”

When asked if any element of her religious upbringing had been retained by her in her beliefs [Q2h]

“Yes. The elements of Love, Peace and Joy and the Oneness of All that is! These for me have proved and enhanced the ‘LIVINGNESS’ of all ‘that is’ within nature and within us!”

When Fran was asked to describe her religious/spiritual identity [Q3e]

³ Science or scientism is discussed under the subheading ‘The Role of Science’.

⁴ The Arcane School, whose teachings are based on those of ‘the Tibetan’ produced through Alice Bailey, is what Ellwood describes as a ‘highly active group’ in New Zealand. The organization is usually known by one of its activities ‘The Full Moon Meditation’. Ellwood ‘found’ an information centre in Wellington and in Paekakariki (Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 132 and 145).

“I have thru deep intense meditation experienced the livingness of my inner self, I experience feelings of deep Love and Joyful Peace, deep inside me’ said’ and I ‘heard’ myself saying and almost singing in exultation that I am the daughter of the living God – I AM⁵ a ‘Son’ of God”

When asked if she considered her ‘non-mainstream’ beliefs belonged to a tradition [Q3f]

“The Ancient Wisdom”⁶, which in some form or other underlies all of Life, underlies traditions, philosophies, the new Psychology, the Teachings of Goodwill⁷, of Love, of Peace and of Joy!”

Fran accepts the labels in Question 4a of ‘Psychic’, ‘Clairvoyant’, ‘Sensitive’ and ‘Clairaudient’ as parts of herself, qualifying them with “sometimes” and adding “mystical”, aligning them with her ability to

“...help others to help themselves, and I always end by saying ‘if it be My Father’s Will to do what is best for the situation or the person/persons involved....”

Any idea that Fran is ‘of’ the Christian Church is further dispelled by her answer to the question ‘what school of thought or religion do you align your meditation with’ [Q5c]

“The Arcane School in London – who follow The Teachings given to Alice A. Bailey from The Master of the Wisdom Master Dwahl Khul known as ‘The Tibetan Teacher’, the words of Jesus Christ and other Masters of the Wisdom such as Kathumi [Kuthumi] and Morya and All Masters of The Wisdom, and Hilarion who had been St.Paul at the time Jesus was on earth.”

Fran believes in reincarnation, [ApQii] is ‘totally open’ about her beliefs , but ‘selective with her identity’, “occasionally”; “some” of her family share her beliefs and her ‘partner

⁵ Although Fran uses ‘I AM’ frequently there is no indication she belonged to any organization beyond the Alice Bailey tradition, which does mix Judeo-Christian terms with the esoteric.

⁶ Fran’s use of the phrase and her highlighting it is not unusual as Alice Bailey reaffirmed in her teachings a great deal of The Theosophical Society’s teachings. Hammer points out that Madam Blavatsky, and thereby Theosophy believed there did exist a ‘universal ancient wisdom-religion’ (Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 61).

⁷ Could be a direct reference to one of the many names the Arcane School now operates under – ‘The Auckland Goodwill Unit of Service’ to be found in ‘Beliefs and Practices in New Zealand: A Directory’, (Ellwood, Robert J. 1993. Pg 144).

approves' [Q12c]. She has read and/or explored traditions which include Buddhism, Sufism, North American Native, Jewish Kabbala, Aspects of Hinduism, Gnosticism, Arthurian Legends, Zen Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Maori Spirituality and Christianity [ApQvii]. Fran does not feel isolated because of her beliefs [Q12d] – she believes they are partly mainstream and partly alternative,

“They are Universal and Ageless and for all people and all races.”

Fran sees everything as ‘One’, all souls, all life and all of nature. Her use of the word ‘Nature’ is frequent, effectively aligning her beliefs with the thread of ‘Nature Religion’ Catherine Albanese found running through American history, alongside Alice Bailey. Fran refers to the *“The Arcane School in London”* which most probably is the ‘Lucis Trust’, an organization which embraced Bailey’s teachings and has a major centre in London⁸. In New Zealand the Alice Bailey tradition has been known commonly as ‘The Full Moon Meditation Groups’, centered around monthly group meditations at full moon, an occasion when ‘The Great Invocation’ is recited⁹.

The recital of ‘The Great Invocation’ is a ritual during which the energy of the Masters and authors of man’s spiritual plan is ‘invoked’¹⁰. The Invocation is mentioned by Fran in Question 5e.

“All used the Great Invocation daily, visualising our triangle, sending out energies to humanity of Peace, Goodwill and Love, Light and Power....”

By specifically mentioning ‘our triangle’ Fran aligns herself with ‘The Triangles’ founded in 1937 by The Arcane School with the intention of small groups of three persons linking through meditation to release positive energy to the world, creating a “network of light”.¹¹

⁸ Ellwood, Robert S. 1993. Pg 146

⁹ Ibid. Pg 147

¹⁰ Ibid. Pg 145

¹¹ Ibid. Pg 146

Ellwood, as mentioned earlier, ‘found’ The Triangles Centre in Paekakariki with an information service in Wellington.¹²

The first two of the Invocation’s four verses are:

From the point of Light within the Mind of God

Let light stream forth into the minds of men.

Let LIGHT descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God

Let Love stream forth into the hearts of men.

May CHRIST return to Earth.¹³

The use of the word ‘Light’, used frequently by the NAM, is located in this context within ‘the Mind of God’, as is the usage of the title ‘Christ’ beyond Christianity, although it is admitted that a source does not preclude Fran or others moving the concepts away from that source. Fran uses Christian terms, but would be regarded as having beliefs more aligned with Gnosticism than Christianity, something Kyle confirms, “...more scholars have compared the New Age with Gnosticism than with any other religion of antiquity.”¹⁴ He cites Professor Harold Bloom who contends that many Americans have put such emphasis “...on knowing God in a personal way, that it has lead them to ...the idea that something inside of them is in contact with God.”¹⁵

Some tenets of Gnosticism are seen in the beliefs of Participant 133, the second of the three who uses Christian terminology. ‘Brent’ is between eighteen and thirty-one years, unemployed and regards his beliefs as ‘*unique*’ to him [Q3a]. He includes in his identity the attributes of the ‘Psychic’, ‘Clairvoyant’ and the ‘Clairaudient’ [Q4a] and adds “*Healer*” when asked if any further description could be applied. He meditates daily

¹² Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 145

¹³ Ibid. Pg 146

¹⁴ Kyle, Richard, 1995. Pg 19

¹⁵ Ibid.

having discovered the ability himself [Q5a,b,e] and uses the title ‘Spiritualism’ as a descriptive term in one question, but does not belong to the organisation, instead he gives the name “*Divine Connections*” as the group to which he belongs. [Q2d] He describes the group’s aims [Q2e] as “*From basics to Expert*” and they meet “*twice a week*”.

Brent has had no religious upbringing [Q2a], does not belong to a religious organization [Q2b], yet circled “Yes” when asked if he regarded himself connected in any way to a religious organization [Q2c], adding

“I give my thanks at the Cathedral Square Church about once a week.”

When asked if he is involved in helping others achieve ‘something’ in the spiritual field [Q1e]

“Yes. Proving to friends and family that clairvoyants are real and that Healing does work without seeing doctors or taking medication.”

When asked when he started to actively seek knowledge of spirituality [Q3b]

“About eight months ago.”

What religious traditions has he read or explored [Q3c]

“Nothing really, I’ve read a little bit of the bible.”

Brent describes his religious/spiritual identity [Q3e] as “*Clairvoyant, Medium*” and uses Christian terms mixed with New Age/Spiritualist/occult concepts, something his answer to Question 10e demonstrates

“I had a really bad attack from the nasty side 4 days prior to the 7.7.07, this was terrible and fearful, I honestly thought I was going to die. This went on for 4 days. It was hard to fight, but the bible helped me build my faith up and after things had gotten beaten the lord himself came down, showed himself, told me well done and I had been blessed. Amazing experience.”

Brent ‘borrows’ aspects of Christianity, the Anglican Cathedral and the Bible as well as its titles; concepts in the community he regards as ‘useable’, because he does not see himself

as separate, although he is selective as he makes it clear he wishes to be independent of the medical profession. Alongside his ‘spiritual borrowing’ is another reality, the ‘nasty side’ which Brent encountered and engaged with to the extent that it affected him emotionally and physically. The effect could be seen as negative, but not to Brent, because when asked if his life had changed after experiencing an altered reality [Q6b] he volunteered, alongside other positives, the insight - *“I don’t do drugs or alcohol any more.”*

To assume New Agers are ‘born again’ Gnostics is misleading as the New Ager, although assuming a personal relationship with the divine/God, appropriates many other traditions, some of which are found in Eastern philosophies, for example vegetarianism.

The third participant [P47], ‘Edith’, uses Christian terms, is a Spiritualist belonging to a ‘*Spiritualist Group*’ [Q2d], is over fifty-one years, is a middle-class New Zealander [ApQi] and does voluntary employment [Q1a & b] by being a volunteer at a Residential Home for the Aged, and a Prison Visitor. She is mostly a vegetarian [ApQiii] (eating meat *“very occasionally”*) and has been for twenty-five years. Three other members of her family are also vegetarian. Her reasons [ApQiv] are

“Animals – their treatment, slaughter etc.”

Edith describes the part traditional religion has played in her spirituality [Q2g]

“From an early age I attended Church on my own without my parents. I lived next to the Manse and Church in a small country town, then as a 10-11 + 12 year old due to the War we shifted, so I walked about 1½ miles to S.School, later I attended B.Class. I have always adored Churches and I enjoyed sermons etc., but I always felt there was more to why we were on earth and later as a young woman of 26, 27, discovered Spiritualism and there were the answers for me. Spiritualism is my way of life and I try to live it to its full meaning.”

Edith describes herself as a healer *“trained in Spiritualist Church”*, active *“when required”* [Q8a & b].

“I work as a medium, clairvoyant, do clearings and explain to many people what it is to be a Spiritualist. Healing, without charging.”

When asked whether she had retained any element of religion in her own beliefs [Q2h]

“Yes. Jesus, The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are always with me as I work for folk. When I Bless a Home or building or do clearings¹⁶ also Healing I work with Jesus, he is always there for me as the Healer. He actually appeared to me as I sat outside my Granddaughters Hospital bed [room] when she had meningitis. She survived 10 days in intensive care with only deafness in one ear and is now 25.”

Edith circled ‘Psychic’, ‘Clairvoyant’ and ‘Sensitive’ in Question 4a and when asked if she used any or all of these attributes in her everyday life

“Yes. As a carer to the Aged, to help people with their lives, support to those that have been abused or are addicts. Clearing homes and buildings. Understanding those who have committed crimes. My deep love of animals, SPCA and all creatures – I rescue birds, ducks, hedgehogs etc.”

She meditates [Q5a & b] *“When I require to, or with a group”* having been taught [Q5c & e]

“I was taught Raja Meditation which I enjoyed, but I actually call on my higher Jesus power and call in all who work with me.”

And still has a connection to the Christian Church, regarding herself as ‘connected’ to [Q2c]

“St. Stephens Anglican Church by knitting blankets and garments for the Ukraine each year. ... [name of town] sends 3 -4 woolpacks to Mandova.”

¹⁶ A ‘blessing’ or a ‘clearing’ is a ritualized action aimed at balancing and/or evicting any negative or inappropriate energy.

Edith lives in a large South Island town and combines aspects of Christianity, Spiritualism and 'Nature Religion' together with the Eastern concept of meditation. She freely admits that her beliefs are eclectic. When asked whether her beliefs belong to a tradition

"Yes. A tradition of many countries all over the world from the American Indians, Egyptians, Tibetans and Atlantians, early Maori and Chinese. Not all the people of these races, but many tried to bring Peace to our Old World."

Edith, as a Spiritualist, accepts the continuation of life after death, therefore she acknowledges 'Spirit' in all its forms, binding them with Jesus and other aspects of Christianity. She does not mention any other divine being beyond the Christian concept of the divine, but accepts Raja Meditation, moulding it to suit her particular beliefs. The range of her 'belief seeking' means she comes in contact with many different views and personalized beliefs, yet appears to move freely amongst them without jarring either her beliefs or others.

The third aspect of Question 10b asked 'is this being 'divine'. The number answering this question dropped to 53%, inviting the conclusion that the remainder felt their previous answers were adequate.

"Yes" 48

"No" 5

Of the 'Yes's' the following are a sampling

- "Yes (God is not a 'Being' to me but everything which exists - omnipresence)"

[P27]

- "The Divine Source." [P2]

- "Yes in the sense of related to the supernatural." [P4]

Again the singular aspect of the question is negated by all in the sample except the last, Participant 4, but his response to 'what title do you give this being' (Q10b) -

- "The All that is (and that includes me)" aligns him with the others he is grouped with.

The final part of Question 10 b asking 'is this being god-like?' attracted answers from 45% of participants:

"Yes" 36 "No" 9 "Don't know" 1

Again the question indicated a singular 'god' but some answers went beyond a simple 'yes'.

- "Yes, but taking all forms of everything always." [P53]

- "I give the title of God' but not Christian God, more God Force or God Spirit, more like an energy than a person." [P87]

Of the 45 who answered 21 were Spiritualists. Sieving out their answers resulted in

"Yes" 9 "No" 2 No Answer 2

Longer Answers 8

Of the Spiritualists 6 aligned themselves with the majority of the survey's participants agreeing that the Divine was not singular whilst 15 answered in a manner indicating a singular 'god'. Amongst the 'Longer Answers' were the following comments

- "Don't know, what is God-like." [P6]

- "Yes (I find these questions a bit amusing from my understanding as God is in us and part of us is in God." [P51]

- "No, there is God." [P86]

- "Kind of." [P95]

- "Yes - there is and always 1 true God and the basic belief of a God based religion." [P96]

- "God, but I don't think of this entity as the God of the Bible, male with a beard in human form." [P94]

The answers give an impression of overall puzzlement to the term 'god-like', an impression not given when asked previously 'is this being divine', which may indicate a reaction to the question's divergence from a generality to a specific nature without

indicating a tradition. Another Spiritualist participant used a Christian title, but appeared to distance herself from it –

-“*The Almighty - I asked what I should call this being and this is the answer I was given.*” [P6]

The use of Christian titles in the NAM creates the question ‘Does the NAM have a God that can be aligned with the Christian concept of God?’ To which the answer must be ‘No’, the only similarity is through the appropriated titles. Amongst the survey participants were those who saw ‘a singular God amongst others’, such as ‘the Masters and Guides’ who are within the concept of the Divine, which has many names, for example, God, the God Force, the Universe. But the idea of separation from man is dismissed by the majority; man is included in the Divine giving the impression of a hierarchy ‘through’ which man evolves and/or is an intrinsic part of.

The Occult (or Esotericism)

Peter W. Williams in *‘America’s Religions: From their Origins to the Twenty-first Century’*, 2002, said the term ‘occult’ is ‘slightly dated’ and in its most basic meaning is ‘that which is hidden from view’; the New Age being a good site for “...much that once passed as occultism¹⁷.” He adds that a large variety of activities are ‘lumped’ under the title, like dowsing, astrology, theosophy, healing crystals, amongst others and although much “...removed from Buddhism and Neoplatonism, their role in American religious life nevertheless shares some interesting features with those stately traditions of antiquity.¹⁸”

Aspects of the occult permeate the NAM as Maddy and Participant No. 21 showed earlier and is the means through which the NAM accesses the divine. To find how many of the participants work under or use labels traditionally related to the occult, Question 4a was included. The participants were asked to circle any of the following that applied to

¹⁷ Williams, Peter W., *“America’s Religions: From their Origins to the Twenty-first Century”*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2002. Pg 330

¹⁸ Ibid.

them - ‘Psychic’, ‘Fey’, ‘Clairvoyant’, ‘Sensitive’, ‘Clairaudient’ . 98% responded to the question in some manner, even if they did not circle any of the proffered labels in the first part. For definitions of the labels the Oxford Dictionary was consulted:

‘Psychic’ : “Characterized by being susceptible to psychic or spiritual influence ... which gives them a tendency to second sight or clairvoyance, also clairaudience and telepathy.”¹⁹

‘Fey’ : “...displaying magical, fairy like, or unearthly qualities....”²⁰

‘Clairvoyant’ : “Keenness of mental perception, clearness of insight; insight into things beyond the range of ordinary perception.”²¹

‘Sensitive’ : “Of life, knowledge, perception (also formerly of desires, feelings: connected with the senses, sensuous. Of objects: Perceptible by the senses.”²²

‘Clairaudient’ : “The faculty of mentally perceiving sounds beyond the range of hearing,”²³

No explanation or expansion of the words was added to the question which might have influenced the participants in some way. The results were

Psychic	45	Fey	12	Clairvoyant	41	Sensitive	79
Clairaudient	46						

The difference in numbers between ‘Sensitive’ and the remainder indicate it is a more palatable word, perhaps because ‘Psychic’ has been used to indicate unusualness or abnormality, for instance, the casual comment “You must be psychic” to indicate knowledge beyond what is considered normal. Also, ‘Clairvoyant’ and ‘Clairaudient’ may be too precise, descriptions too narrow to indicate where the reception point of knowledge is located. ‘Sensitive’ is a more gentle label indicating an awareness of difference in the senses or use of them, but nonspecific about what sense is being used,

¹⁹ Murray, James A.H., Henry Bradley, W.A. Craigie & C.T. Onions, (Eds), 1989. Pg 758

²⁰ Ibid. Pg 865

²¹ Ibid. Pg 262

²² Ibid. Pg 985

²³ Ibid. Pg 262

which obviously suits the participants. The low number of participants circling the label ‘Fey’ could relate to it not being a term used in modern language, being found in older language traditions of Great Britain.

Additional labels volunteered by participants in the same question were -

Medium 8	Spiritual Healer or Healer 13	Intuitive 11
Clairsentient 2	Channeller 5	Lightworker 2

As were the following -

‘Spiritual Seeker’, ‘Wise Woman’, ‘Educator’, ‘Lifepath Teacher/coach’, ‘Shamanistic’, ‘Spiritual Warrior’, ‘Claircognizant’, ‘Empath’²⁴, ‘Mindreader’.

Most of the proffered labels are related to specific actions, for example, a ‘Medium’ is a person who allows themselves to be the midway point or mediator between those ‘alive’ in the material reality and those ‘dead’ in the ‘after-life’ by speaking, either in a full trance, semi-trance, or via telepathy, the words of someone in the afterlife or another reality.

Others were related to a ‘state of being’, like ‘Mindreader’ and ‘Claircognizant’, or abilities aligned with a tradition, for example, Participant 29 used ‘Wise Woman’, the title of a woman following the female teacher tradition of one who sets the example in pagan and neo-pagan traditions, in aspects like health, wisdom, magic, ‘herstories’ and histories, mysticism, witchcraft, creativity and visions, to name a few.²⁵

A ‘Channeller’ is another, more modern, term for ‘Medium’, a label historically linked to Spiritualism²⁶ – ‘Channeller’ separates the action from the institution for some, but it is used by some members of the Spiritualist Church. ‘Clairsentient’ is a generalisation - one who is “Responsive to sensory stimuli. Characterized by the exercise of the senses.”²⁷

Some of the comments offered were -

²⁴ ‘Empath’ is a label becoming popular in the New Age dialogue indicating empathy with, or knowledge of, the feelings and emotions of others, possibly because like ‘sensitive’ it is not an occult label.

²⁵ Benland, Catherine, Pg 248, in Donovan, Peter, (Ed), 1996.

²⁶ Kyle, Richard, 1995. Pg 30

²⁷ Murray, James A.H., Henry Bradley, W.A. Craigie & C.T. Onions, (Eds), 1989. Pg 993

-*"I never considered I was any of these things until others pointed it out to me.*

To a large degree I dismissed it as pointless to my continuance in a society that doesn't encourage the divine or the creative!" [P15 circled - Psychic, Fey, Sensitive, Clairaudient]

-*"These are all labels that have been applied to me, but I think sensitive is the most appropriate - the others apply occasionally only - for the little experiences that come unbidden and not yet controlled. Smell and physical sensations figure occasionally too."* [P18 circled - Psychic, Clairvoyant, Sensitive, Clairaudient]

Neither Participant 15 nor 18 are alternative therapists (Q1c), but both are healers, one in training and one self-taught working on friends and relatives (Q8a & b) – both are *"selective with their identity"*. (Q10c)

-*"Intuitive 'student of the Infinite Way', Truth-seeker."* [P36 circled - Fey, Sensitive]

Participant 36 is not an alternative therapist, but a healer because she provides herbal ointments to friends and relatives – she too is *"selective with her identity"*.

-*"It is like a vibration something like a electric wave length."* [P60 circled – Psychic, Clairvoyant, Sensitive, Clairaudient]

-*"Energy sensitive which is also multi level and visual energy sensitive."* [P75 circled - Sensitive]

Both Participants 60 and 75 are alternative therapists and are *"totally open"*, as would be expected when working with the public, unlike those who although healers are not working in the public arena. But being 'open' with one's identity because one is working in the public eye is not overall as the following shows.

-*"Clair-nose-ent - smelling the dark side, channel - hyper over the top sensitive, someone doing healing work."* [P76 – circled Psychic, Sensitive, Clairaudient]

Participant 76 is an alternative therapist, but is *"selective with her identity"*.

-“I can pick up vibrations/wave lengths of individual substances more readily than most.” [P83 – circled Sensitive]

Participant 83 is neither alternative therapist nor healer and is “selective with his identity”.

-“Humble through spiritual learnings.” [P87 – circled Psychic, Clairvoyant, Sensitive, Clairaudient - Spiritualist]

-“In training for clairvoyance - and there is a long way to go.” [P88 – circled nothing – Spiritualist]

-“I am working on the clairvoyant and hesitate to add it because although I have had some extraordinary insights its not something I can claim. I am a sensitive if that means able to feel different energies.” [P94 – circled nothing but added ‘Healer’ – Spiritualist]

Participants 87, 88 and 94 are not alternative therapists, but are healers in the Spiritualist Church and are “*selective with their identity*”.

Five of the above indicate the difficulty in pinpointing which of the sense organs their psychically gleaned knowledge is coming from, hence the popularity of ‘Sensitive’ Some have a reluctance to claim the labels, whilst others accept them as part of their identity. Only 1 of the 10 quoted, Participant 83, is not a healer and claims only the title ‘sensitive’ but allows that he has more abilities ‘than most’. Of the 3 Spiritualists 2 are reluctant to claim any occult labels, whilst 1 has no difficulty. Of the alternative therapists 3 have no difficulty with the labels whilst 1 did, although she allowed that she was ‘energy sensitive’. The unwillingness to be labeled, inherent in the NAM, has arisen with this question, although all 10 participants give opportunities in Question 10b for the reader to ‘read more’ into their answer, giving the impression that the question was important, one not to be passed over.

The means by which the participants use those ‘extra’ senses cements them more into the occult. 84 participants experienced ‘difference’ from their normal state of being when

meditating, or had an experience of an Altered Reality (hereafter referred to as an A.R.) when doing so - that number includes 3 who were unsure whether they were experiencing an A.R.

Spangler points out that identifying the NAM with the occult or psychism is not difficult and is something the 'outer' world is more than ready to do; the occult having always been viewed with suspicion by those who dislike or distrust what the NAM believes or represents.²⁸ Turning that suspicion around to the idea that promotion of the occult is not the major focus of the NAM and that other ideas, like the healing of the planet's pollution through global co-operation and the development of new ideas on the sacred are just as important,²⁹ is almost impossible when value is seen in promoting the occult as anti-Christian. These pervading views would have an effect on the New Agers using 'extra-senses', meaning their acceptance of labels usually falling under the occult label would be 'naturally' avoided if there was another more acceptable label, like 'Sensitive'.

In Question 5g participants were asked if they 'could describe the state of meditation'

- "Dream-like state - am I meditating or dreaming? I have had prophetic dreams/meditations - precognition of being told of my mother's passing. Precognition of the passing of my mother-in-law. Many meeting with and messages from my elder son who passed over 14 Nov 2004. I have also phsyically [physically or psychically] felt him in a waking state." [P3]

Her dreams/meditations do not contain aspects of everyday reality, yet affect it, through her senses being 'projected' to another 'time' where she 'heard' when her mother-in-law would die. She uses the words 'prophetic' and 'precognition', both words from occult sources.

²⁸ Spangler, David and William Irwin Thompson, 1991. Pg 61

²⁹ Ibid.

- *“Taken/go back into past lives. Taken/go into different dimensions, beings etc.*

*Akashic Records.”*³⁰ [P136]

Time is nonexistent or is able to be shifted to suit the moment with reincarnation becoming a means to experience and gather knowledge. From the participant’s other comments it is assumed that she ‘accessed information’ in the Akashic Records as Edgar Cayce, the early 20th Century American psychic, named ‘The Sleeping Prophet’, believed he did during his trance readings.³¹

- *“I’m sorry but the best description would be ‘wow’. Enhanced colours, sounds, sensations, scents. Interaction with other spiritual beings.”* [P134]

The experience is extra-ordinary – she notes ‘difference’ in everyday concepts with the words ‘enhanced’ and ‘spiritual’.

- *“I left my body and went somewhere where I felt like the Holy Spirit entered me. I was so loved and at peace, words cannot describe the feelings!”* [P131]

Her body was ‘left’ in the ordinary reality whilst its essence, the ‘I’ ‘went somewhere’ beyond description and was joined by an essence she is sure is not ‘ordinary’ - she uses Christian terminology to describe it.

- *“Past lives - monastery many times, experiences, monks and nun - Hard work, clearing, devotion to humanity - ego: rejection. One of the lessons in this life – rejection.”* [P130]

An experience of transformation, of dedication to problem solving – of self-healing.

- *“Journeyed through my body and seen diseased or unhealthy areas organs eg intestines. Have seen activities happening in a different location - verified and*

³⁰ ‘Akashic Records’, according to Hammer, appears to be ‘an innovation’ of Helene Blavatsky, which he traces to the Monier-Williams Sanskrit dictionary and the word ‘Akasha’, which defined is “the subtle and ethereal fluid supposed to fill and pervade the universe and to be the peculiar vehicle of life and sound”. Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 124.

³¹ Ibid.

conversations - verified. I have conversations with a Tibetan Master , friend, (Buddhist) through the mind when we are in separate locations.” [P129]

The ability to treat the body as a ‘vehicle’ – her essence examined its vehicle inside through an A.R.. She also indicates a telepathic aspect with an ability to defy time and distance.

-“1) I was sitting meditating - just focusing on my breath then all of a sudden I was standing across the other side of my room looking at myself. I even walked out of the door and through the house and back before I felt a zap and jumped awake. 2) Meditating with crystals around me. Usual sort of meditation but as I was coming out of it I could hear a lot of shuffling noises like lots of people moving around the room (I was alone). I thought twice about opening my eyes, but I’m so glad I did, it made me burst into tears, there were 3 glowing beings standing around me. I have never felt so loved and so at peace before - so much I didn’t care what happened to me.” [P127]

Again time and distance is compacted to the moment. She ‘comes out’ of the meditation expecting to have ‘left’ the experience of lots of people around her in the A.R. and finds the A.R. has mingled with her everyday experience, or her ability to shift one A.R. from a ‘closed eyed’ meditation to ‘open eyed meditation’ is discovered.

-“ Feeling of complete peace and immeasurable love. It is not so much anything bizarre, but just my quiet communication with God. (I’m not sure that this is what you are referring to).” [P64]

Within meditation she experiences something which she was not experiencing before she went into meditation, otherwise it would not be mentioned. It feels normal to her to sit communicating with God. The words ‘altered reality’ used in the questionnaire indicate the extra-ordinary, beyond the normal, which she has difficulty engaging with, hence the word ‘bizarre’.

The overall consensus is that the A.Rs. stem from normal everyday sources, but are not a part of everyday reality – they encompass “peace”, “love” and a timelessness which some associate with ‘God’ – a feeling that being ‘in’ a body is being contained, but a state that is changeable within life, via an A.R. The A.R. was a time for self-healing and a gathering of knowledge as much as it is a period where one was ‘separate’ from the human body.

The following comments contain words and feelings that encompass the experiences of the majority of the participants -

-“There is extreme calmness, no judgement, the ability to see a very broad view of the world, - beings or a situation - feels multisensory - information coming in as 'knowing' – hearing and seeing simultaneously. Very big picture information - total calm is the overriding perception.” [P16]

-“Hard to know - I have felt deep relaxation and contentment but no altered experience that I can remember.” [P69]

-“I'll share one - all of a sudden I was part of an endless plane of existence, very white, nothing and nobody. All was peace and I was aware it was a group mind/space. A place/experience to hook into. I stayed there till I had had enough - very Wow!” [P25]

-“Sometimes when I meditate I have the feeling of just going. While I don't have an out of body experience, i.e. looking at the world from outside myself, I don't feel either that I am in my body. In fact unless I consciously think of my body i.e. my hands or legs I just cant feel them. When I do come back and focus on my body it is very heavy. I can lose quite a lot of time. On one occasion when I was woken, which felt like I had only been meditating about five minutes, an hour and a half had passed.” [P38]

The difficulty expressing language for symbols seen in an A.R. is apparent, for example, some felt their body had enlarged/changed, that they ‘been taken’, they ‘had

left/journeyed through’ to an ‘Out of Body Experience’, yet Participant 38 was sure it was not the latter, in spite of her experience correlating with others who do use the phrase. Also there is no mention of ‘Out of Body Experience’ in the survey so it is something she has processed in her mind at some time.

There is a correlation with these experiences as though they have been ‘to the same place’, even though one, Participant 69 was sure she had not experienced an A.R. There is an ability amongst the participants to experience similar things indicating ‘a community/culture’ aspect to the A.Rs. If it is possible to create a community/culture out of ‘similars’, whether they are actions or agreements in the material world, it is certainly possible in the non-material because human experience is the connector in both.

The above view and the participants’ views cited, correspond to the metaphysical view that all is connected; to repeat what was said in the section on Healing, what is in the smaller view, the microcosm, the human life, so it is in the macrocosm the life of the cosmos, the greater part, each affect the other.³² The participants’ A.Rs. are symbolic of, or an immersion into the greater part, the Cosmos, which is non-material, as the nature of the word ‘metaphysical’ indicates – beyond the physical. The A.Rs. are affecting the participants when they ‘enter’ into them and as with the healing action, the smaller part is also affecting the larger. This view is not new to the NAM, it can be found in the ‘threads’ of occultism that has ‘coloured’ everyday life through the ages, like planting crops with attention to signs of the Zodiac, avoiding black cats, not spilling salt or breaking mirrors to avoid bad luck.³³

Those aspects of the occult and others were part of life alongside and woven into religion, until the Enlightenment, when science entered, grew in importance and challenged

³² Albanese, Catherine, 1981. Pg 165

³³ Ibid. Pg 164

both traditional Christianity and occultism to the extent that the latter was reclassified as ‘superstition’.³⁴

During the Enlightenment Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was writing of his visions, receiving what he called ‘revelations’ about the Bible; Kyle considers him a major contributor to modern occult thought because he linked the secretive activities of the medieval alchemist to the Spiritualist séance and Theosophical lecture by demonstrating communication with those on the other side.³⁵ He also linked the Gnostic and Kabbalist belief in a spiritual pre-and post existence and the idea of events occurring beyond the material world – in an invisible world.³⁶

Albanese adds to Kyle’s explanation by explaining the threads of religious expression, both formal and informal occultism running throughout American history, which could be placed directly on to a large portion of the NAM, its acceptance of the occult and its use of it. She used the phrase ‘homesteads of the mind’ to describe how the metaphysical religions deliberately used the occult, stressing spiritual or mental theories about life rather than explanations through the historical.³⁷ Albanese also noted the use of simpler, more general/ordinary language which made it easy for groups to relate to one another.³⁸ Through these systems ‘magic’ became a valid activity devoid of mystery and more an expression of harmony because its followers used a mental world without boundaries – a mental universe where the microcosm and macrocosm shared the same reality.³⁹

Most New Agers in this survey use general language, unless speaking of commonly accepted concepts like the aura, chakras and their titles, as ‘Lightworker’ showed earlier. The fact that these words are commonly accepted show the development of a ‘New Age’

³⁴ Kyle, Richard, 1995, Pg 23

³⁵ Ibid. Pg 25

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Albanese, Catherine, 1981. Pg 165

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

community within the greater ‘orthodox’ community, as does the ‘homesteads of the mind’ where the A.Rs are experienced, where connection to the divine is made and subjective information is gleaned and processed – it is truly ‘a mental world without boundaries’, unless a New Age individual creates a barrier. A large portion of the New Age does not use the word ‘mystery’⁴⁰, they look to ‘metaphysics’⁴¹ to explain esoteric laws/explanations, to which they ‘will’ become party to through putting into action concepts they have read of or gleaned knowledge of through their A.Rs.

The occult is important to the New Ager, whether Wiccan, Theosophist, Spiritualist, or an ‘independent’ incorporating ideas from all. Some may read copiously various religious traditions and explain their A.Rs, using at times words from those traditions, because New Agers are ‘in’ a ‘textual’ society, but they also use the psychic to link with the macrocosm – an action found deep within occultism.

The step from believing it is unlucky to walk beneath a ladder, or using astronomical charts to plot one’s future actions, or consulting a Tarot or Divination/Oracle Card reader is small and ‘allowable’ within New Zealand’s secular culture. 84% of participants consult or have consulted at least once, a Card reader or read the cards themselves, whether for guidance, pleasure, or simply because ‘it was available’.

71 have consulted Tarot Cards, 53 have consulted Divination/Oracle Cards

(13 who have not consulted the Tarot have consulted Divination/Oracle Cards)

Only two survey participants passed over the question dealing with occult labels for the use of the senses. The reason for such a large number acknowledging the occult’s importance must be because it is ‘the’ means through which the NAM accesses the divine.

⁴⁰ The word ‘mystery’ can be considered a temporary concept in much of the New Age; once a question/mystery arises, the answer/knowledge is expected to be made available to the enquirer through the ‘action and reaction’ scenario. The ‘action’ being the enquiry when ‘mystery’ appears and the ‘reaction’ being the knowledge/understanding received, which negates mystery.

⁴¹ Metaphysics means ‘that which is beyond the physical or material’ (Albanese, Catherine L., 1981. Pg 165), a word encompassing the laws/knowledge of universal energy – everything – its presence indicates a lack of mystery.

Altered States and Abstract Realities: The Action

The action or means of accessing the divine was approached in three ways, through meditation, through the role of healer and through the role of client. First the question ‘Do you meditate’ was put [Q5a]

91% meditated 8% did not 1% answered “not now”

When asked if they had ‘ever experienced an altered or abstract reality whilst meditating’ –

82 had experienced an A.R.

7 meditated but had not experienced an A.R.

3 meditated but gave no other information

Of those who did not meditate some still had experiences of A.R., for example to Question 9b which asked ‘do you partake in ritual of any kind (other than meditation and healing) which induces, or has induced an altered or abstract reality experience for you?’

-Participant 12. *“Yes. Infrequent. I go into an alpha state I think, where I Journey to meet my animal guides and we go travelling together.”* And to Question 9c *“Well, you could say it is all in my mind, I can still hear what is going on around me. But I learn things and see things in my mind that I couldn't possibly know or guess. So I am accessing another ... dimension?”*

She ‘journeys’, she ‘goes into’ a state she recognizes as something other than everyday reality but has difficulty explaining it, or is shy of claiming an ability beyond what is considered normal.

-Participant 29. *“Used to belong to 'Women's Full Moon Meditation Group' .”*

(Q2d)

And when asked if she had experienced an A.R. at any time other than when meditating [Q6a]

“Yes - in times of great grief have felt totally disconnected to the reality around me and put myself into a space where I know I may appear out of balance, but I know it is a safe space for me to be. Totally focussed on an outcome and seem to ignore any negative comments or other peoples agendas.”

The fact that she belonged to a meditation group and is aware of ‘totally disconnecting to the reality around her’, at a particular time, points to her ease with the concept of A.Rs.

-Participant 44 , ‘Penelope’ *“Just listening to clues around me - not really an altered state for me.”*

But earlier in Question 6a

“ Yes - occasionally see, hear or know things. Has happened since I can first remember.”

To Question 6b, which asked if her life changed, after she first experience an altered or abstract reality, Penelope answered,

“It has always been like that.”

In Question 4a she circled *“Psychic, Fey, Clairvoyant”* and Question 3d revealed that her maternal set of Grandparents were Spiritualists and the paternal Grandparents Catholic. Entering an A.R. is not an unusual action for Penelope, it is an accepted use of the senses for one who has been brought up in a partially spiritualist background.

Penelope demonstrates an aspect of the NAM which has some strong indications in the survey feedback from a small proportion of participants, that of family involvement and the passing down through not one but sometimes two generations of one family, beliefs that fall under the NAM umbrella. The concept of a ‘normal/ordinary’ reality separated from what is ‘extra ordinary’, through the use of human senses, has fuzzy edges for Penelope, as her ‘normal’ encompasses all, meaning when asked whether she experiences A.Rs. she is naturally in doubt – separation has less definition.

Of the 9 who don't meditate, 7 experience A.R.s. in other ways. To Question 6a, which asked if the participant had experienced an A.R. at any time other than when meditating, 97% answered.

"Yes" 79 "No" 16 "Not sure" 1 "Yes & No" 1

When the 'Yes's' were asked how A.R.s manifested 75 gave descriptions or gave specific incidences. A sample

-“Yes - when I've been in a situation where it was necessary to help someone or myself. When needed to bring clarity or understanding to an event, situation or a question I've wanted answered. To see the soul of another and their spiritual journey.” [P2]

-“Yes - at times of personal danger, I get heightened hearing etc. Usually I am unaware until that point that there is danger.” [P134]

-“Yes - I have seen spirit follow people. I have also seen the darker side of spirit realms.” [P133]

-“Yes - sometimes I see shapes or things attached to people often I've zoned out. Sort of when you're either relaxed or tired or lying in nature looking at the sky I've seen some strange things (balls of lights etc).” [P131]

-“Yes -I have journeyed numerous times to visit my totems/animal guides, entering the lower world through drumming/trance or visualisation. I have done this both on my own and as part of a group.” [P14]

-“Yes - If you mean seeing spirits, it happens often, not quite daily. I often see spirit people with my physical eyes, wandering around my house and shopping centres.” [P127]

-“Yes - when listening to music (particularly Baroque) - when writing - on mountains - at seaside.” [P24]

8 participants mention being 'in Nature' as conducive to entering an A.R. (exemplified above by Participants 24 and 131), whilst others indicate an ability to 'see' other realities in everyday situations (Participants 127 and 133), which includes Participant 133's warning of 'the darker side'. The latter is echoed by Participant 134 who speaks as though she often encounters danger within an A.R. Participant 2 appears in control of her ability to enter an A.R. 'to help others', giving the impression of 'controlled normality' to her entering an A.R., as does Participant 14 when visiting her 'totems/animal guides'.

There is a difference in the way members of the NAM view A.Rs.; there is apprehension alongside savoir faire, danger and practical usage within/of those realities. The question which brought the comments into view did not mention the divine or spirituality, instead it led the participants to speak of entering other realities separate from a conscious decision to 'engage' with the divine or aspects of the divine, meaning there is difference and a measure of control in a meditation. Overall the extra senses are seen as either natural to the participants or attributes they expect to acquire/develop.

Mysticism: Contact with the Divine

Spangler commented that

"Psychic powers do not offer a swift path to wisdom. Wisdom comes from consistent, hard inner work. ...there is no shortcut, no instant formula for gaining enlightenment and inner balance, No amount of aura balancing, channeled messages, or psychic phenomena by themselves will turn us into inter-directed, compassionate, empowering people."⁴²

The survey participants claim psychic powers in oblique or overt ways, using them as a means to enter A.Rs. in order to experience 'a connection' to a wisdom/knowledge or 'feeling' that indicates, by its nature, a substance that is greater than they are. The age of

⁴² Spangler, David and William Irwin Thompson, 1991. Pg 59

the majority of the participants indicates a lack of ‘shortcut’, more a number of years working on fine-tuning what is essentially a ‘mystical ability’, meaning they enter into ‘a mystery’ coupled to belief which is translated as ‘the’ divine.

Adam Possamai in *‘Popular Spiritualities’* describes the New Age ‘inner adventure’ as being similar to the Buddhist search for enlightenment, through a realization of a ‘higher self’.⁴³ The means is through understanding one’s body/mind/spirit, to become more effective and efficient in life, an aim coupled with the search for a personal experience of the divine, for example, through meditation ‘to reach a higher stage of being’.⁴⁴

Possamai’s description corresponds to Neoplatonism, the philosophy/religious system based on Plato’s view that the ‘real world’ was one of ‘Forms and Ideas’ upon which ‘the physical, material universe was modelled’ – the original form was reflected in every other form, creating a hierarchical system at the top of which was the most True, Good and Beautiful Idea.⁴⁵ Neoplatonism retained and built on the latter by naming the original or ‘ultimate Idea’ as ‘the One’, which was at the top of a hierarchy made up of individual souls of varying levels of evolvment, through which the soul ascends. The mystical experience of any soul was a move to create a union with the ‘One’,⁴⁶ an aim which could explain why meditation is so important to the NAM, if an alignment with Neoplatonism is found.

There is a definite move by the participants to create that union with the ‘One’, using their eclectic belief systems as vehicles. Alex Owen, professor of history and gender studies, in *‘The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern’*, 2004, acknowledges that eclectic nature by recalling the ‘mystical revival and the spiritual movement’ of the 1880s and 90’s when groups ‘clustered’ under mysticism’s ‘umbrella’

⁴³ Possamai, Adam, Pg 55, in Hume, Lynne and Kathleen McPhillips (Eds), 2006.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Albanese, Catherine, 1981. Pg 166

⁴⁶ Ibid. Pg 167

and competed with one another, at times with hostility.⁴⁷ One of those groups was the Theosophical Society.

The Society contains what Ellwood describes as ‘a Neoplatonic bent’,⁴⁸ especially drawing on its concept of emanationism – the separation from and return to the ‘Absolute’⁴⁹ and was one of a number of organizations that created the idea of a ‘secret spiritual tradition’ to which one could be party to by joining the said society or organization in question and becoming one of the ‘enlightened few’.⁵⁰ In direct contrast to that elitism sat Spiritualism, with a broad appeal due to its democratic makeup and an outlook devoid of secrecy.⁵¹

Alignments with Neoplatonism overlapping the same era, but individualised, are found in Edgar Cayce, 1877-1945, the American prophet who diagnosed illnesses and prophesized the future through a self imposed sleep-like state, using the term ‘the oneness of all force’, which he identified with “... ‘Life’, ‘Love’, ‘Light’, ‘Law’ or ‘God’ ”.⁵² Cayce though regarded the occult as ‘visualisation or positive thinking’ done without consideration for ‘spiritual law’, which he differentiated from psychic activities of ‘the soul’, through the individual’s manifestation of the One Spirit.⁵³ Today, Cayce’s activities would be viewed as ‘the occult’, because they employed a ‘non-ordinary’, trance-like state producing information not of the reality and time he lived in. Cayce though wishing to be viewed as separate because he regarded himself as Christian and did not present any opinions of his own, beyond what a stenographer recorded of his readings for whoever asked him to do the reading.⁵⁴ However, the notes taken do point to his acceptance of a

⁴⁷ Owen, Alex, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2004. Pg 20 and 21

⁴⁸ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993, Pg 113

⁴⁹ Owen, Alex, 2004. Pg 34

⁵⁰ Ibid. Pg 22

⁵¹ Ibid. Pg 18

⁵² York, Michael, 1995. Pg 60

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 66 and 383

hierarchy of spiritual beings, which included angels, archangels and Jesus as Master of Masters - the latter forming the Great White Brotherhood⁵⁵ of Theosophical origin whose existence Cayce also accepted.⁵⁶

Cayce's activities, although regarded as unique in his time, were not necessarily so as Peter Nelson found. In *'Exploring the Paranormal: Perspectives on Belief and Experience'*, 1989, Nelson, a social scientist, produced a paper on 'conversion, consciousness and the ecstatic experience', looking at surveys done from 1899 to 1961 on those subjects⁵⁷. He found that in spite of the amount of information available, myths on the rarity of such 'encounters' continued until the 1970's through to 1980's when various surveys were done [Nelson tables five]⁵⁸. "These surveys have revealed that a consistent 20-40% of the population claim to have had at least one encounter of this type in a lifetime."⁵⁹ Wade Clark Roof concurred in 1999 when looking at specifically the American experience; he claimed that large numbers of Americans not contained by 'official religion' and who practise 'popular religion' [the New Age] claim mystical experiences.⁶⁰

Nelson's findings upset James's 'organisation' of mysticism into four distinct characteristics which can be evaluated by an independent 'authority'. It expands the concept of mysticism into two camps, 'sanctioned' and 'unsanctioned' mysticism – the latter being unofficial thereby able to be ignored as a rogue element.

⁵⁵ 'The Great White Brotherhood' could be seen as a legitimizing factor for the Theosophical Society – a semi divine authority with a voice from, but slightly removed from 'Godhead'. Hammer contends their presence is a 'crucial discursive strategy'; first their presence lends validity to teachings and secondly they are able to be mythologized and their identities/teachings extended. Others, such as Alice Bailey and Cayce, certainly used them to claim legitimacy for their teachings. (Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 384).

⁵⁶ Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 383

⁵⁷ Nelson, P.L., "A Survey of Mystical, Visionary and Remote Perception Experiences", Pg 184, in Zollschan, G.K., J.F. Schumaker and G.F. Walsh, (Eds), *'Exploring the Paranormal: Perspectives on Belief and Experience'*, Bridport, Prism, 1989.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Roof, Wade Clark, 1999. Pg 37

The actual label ‘mysticism’ does carry some assumptions; one, that it is an experience of a religious or spiritual nature and two, that it cannot be proved to have happened, as it is in the main, an experience of the individual. The proof aspect leads to science, which G.K. Zollschan, J.F. Schumaker and G.F. Walsh, the editors of *‘Exploring the Paranormal’*, see as ‘the study of regularities’; events that are strictly repeatable to which the paranormal in contrast appears ‘sporadic, elusive and unpredictable’.⁶¹

The word ‘mysticism’ was not mentioned in the survey questions on purpose to allow the participants full rein to their ideas, descriptions and insights without having to conform to any perceived mystical archetype that might have been garnered during any religious instruction received in their former years and which might have been triggered by use of the word. The direction or target the participants were given was the divine, through the mention of a ‘spiritual identity, an object, mantra or a particular concept’ in Question 5i and through meditation in Questions 6a, 7c and 8c, effectively opening up the discussion of A.Rs. beyond meditation. The latter brought correlations as well as the ‘sporadic, elusive and unpredictable’, simply because the process was through individual descriptions of consciousnesses and individualised vocabulary, not a prescribed language of symbols.

The difficulties in explaining to another something especially personal is summed up by the following answer to Question 5f, which asked for a description of an A.R. when meditating -

-“When I close my eyes there is immediate blackness. One dot will appear, its immediately blown up and its as if in that flash am perched on the edge of a window frame thats suspended in mid air. Sometimes wobbly other times very steady. When that frame moves slices of light are seen. Its in those I try to look into these flickerings and leap into them - once you’ve done one more appear and they turn into jets (worm hole) type. (bloody hard to explain).” [P77]

⁶¹ Zollschan, G.K., J.F. Schumaker and G.F. Walsh, (Eds), “Editors’ Preface”, 1989. Pg ix

She laboriously explains a process leading to an A.R., which she indicates is repeated frequently and personal to her, but it is not mysticism, nor is it the ‘actual’ experience of the participant’s A.R., it is an ‘interpretation’ of the experience. She appeals to the reader’s imagination aware that it may be of a vastly different nature from hers. Also, it is a lengthy detailed description of something that could have taken seconds, or less, meaning any indications of mysticism could be submerged under dialogue.

To find similarities the participants’ experiences were organized under loose labels, for example ‘out of body experiences’, ‘mention of knowledge’ and ‘reality expansion’, to make the examination of large explanations easier. Of the first, ‘out of body experiences’, 17 participants mentioned them directly, although others in excess of that number indicated its probability, a sample is given here.

-“Sometimes when meditate I have the feeling of just going. While I don’t have an out of body experience, i.e. looking at the world from outside myself, I don’t feel either that I am in my body. In fact unless I consciously think of my body i.e. my hands or legs I just can’t feel them. When I do come back and focus on my body it is very heavy. I can lose quite a lot of time. On one occasion when I was woken, which felt like I had only been meditating about five minutes an hour and a half has passed.” [P38]

Timelessness is experienced and she goes somewhere, but is adamant she is not ‘out of her body’, in spite of experiencing a ‘lack of body’. The body becomes almost irrelevant as the following shows

-“Feels like I’ve gone off somewhere outside my body but I’m not sure where.”

[P45]

-“I have left my body and have seen myself below.” [P46]

-“...The concept of not feeling my body and being everywhere at once.” [P62]

Yet at the same time the body is a point of reference within which 'difference' is detected, pointing perhaps to a shift in consciousness/reality where normal concepts 'of being' are changed.

-“Filling my body with golden light, using specific breathing pattern, raising my consciousness allows me to enter into an altered state. I still have awareness of my physical body but I can easily leave my body, going into other dimensions of reality or the core of the earth or to other planetary energies. My physical awareness connection is still there but way off to the side of my attention but still attached. When I am in an altered state all my senses are heightened I feel the colour vibration, things look somehow different, I talk and hear telepathically. Time has no meaning, what I think is 1 hour can be 3 hrs.”[P52]

Participant 52 confirms eloquently the change of consciousness theory – she is there in body, but not in her body, she is in an 'altered state' of being. Again time is 'of' another consciousness not that the 'everyday' consciousness.

-“ 1) voice guided meditation - sank beneath the floor of the house - could see and smell the earth - wasn't pleasant under there. 2) several times – concentrating on a flourite pyramid - drawn into it and saw its inner structure moving and changing. Also feelings of being drawn out of my body 3) sound/word meditation - closed - eyes - physic sensation very, very strong or being sucked into a kaleidoscope type environment - felt that I was being separated from my body - became very frightened and called out 'stop' – No! haven't meditated since.” [P18]

In Janis's (Participant 18) first meditation recall she was able to feel sensations which are physically impossible, therefore it seems reasonable to assume she was 'out of body'. In the second incidence she allows she was 'out of her body' because the impossible happened – she was 'in' a crystal, but the third, which by its description seems to be

another 'lead' meditation with sounds and words which are not her own, she did not feel in control. The experience was very real and frightening - in direct contrast to the following.

-“I left my body and went somewhere where I felt like the Holy Spirit entered me.

I was so loved and at peace, words cannot describe the feelings!” [P131]

Although using Christian titles and terms, like 'prayer', Janis uses at other times "God/Goddess/myself" which point to New Ageism, as does her reading material which includes Christianity alongside Buddhism and Paganism. Janis's answer to Question 2h asking 'if she had retained any element of traditional religion in her beliefs' -

-“Yes - praying to God every night and connecting with him/her/myself daily.”

[P131]

A Christian upbringing gave Janis the words and phrases indicative of mysticism in an environment not exclusively Christian. Others incorporate Christian titles as the following sample shows:

-“I have once participated in a group meditation and my partner was beside me doing the meditation too. I was experiencing my own alternative reality, but I also picked up on hers, as at one point I felt a great heat and light like the sun beside me and she has said Jesus had walked with her at that point during the meditation.” [P14]

-“It is a state of feeling deep emotion and deep connection with the unseen - God, angels, healers, my (disincarnate) grandmother and father. Always signalled by a tingling sensation in my upper lip and then tears coursing down my cheeks. No messages received but a beautiful knowing that we are together.” [P39]

A hierarchy is indicated, with her deceased grandparents being part of the 'whole'.

-“Strong connection with guides/divine essence through colour/seeing and also feeling their presence in and around me.” [P50]

-“Creative visions - inspirational truths represented in blazing coloured images.

Arms encased in flame and enormously painful, as if they were actually on fire and burning! Regression back to baby in the cot being sexually molested by the insertion of 2 fingers from the father. Floating on water. Bliss of immeasurable grandness, all cells separating out to blend with the stuff of the cosmos. Meeting with God who had taken a height of many storeys high of a building dressed in a shining suit of armour and the armour filled with blinding light with the request to look into it with total and unconditional love etc etc.” [P53]

Participant 53’s description encompasses a regression experience, knowledge, visions, a feeling of floating, bliss and a physical God – the whole gambit of experiences through meditation.

-“Often 'go out' when meditating and connect with what I have been told is the Gallactic Council who 'sent' my soul here to Earth, when I went down the tunnel of light '87. When in Egypt in the Kings Chamber I vibrated and shook so much they had to lie me down. Sometimes at night its as if my soul leaves my body as I seem to be paralyzed and cannot move a muscle and I just have to wait until it passes. When working I 'go' out and see into the body!!!” [P20]

The ‘tunnel of light ‘87’ refers to a near-death-experience this participant had in 1987. The ‘Galactic Council’⁶² mentioned indicates a hierarchical system of belief, which was confirmed in Participant 20’s answer to Question 3e dealing with ‘religious/spiritual identity’. She also sees significance in her body’s reaction to being in a pyramid in Egypt during a trip overseas. It is her ‘soul’ leaving her body which leads to a problem of who ‘she’ is, soul or body, yet her experience does correlate with the others. To continue -

-“Connecting to the ‘Higher Source’ (God). Working with Spiritual beings,

⁶² Various ‘Councils’, ‘Brotherhoods’, or higher spiritual beings in groups, are spoken of in New Age dialogue, for example ‘The Great White Brotherhood’ stemming from the Theosophical tradition as mentioned earlier. ‘The Galactic Council’ is often spoken of by those who incorporate extra-terrestrials in their beliefs. There is no reference to who ‘told’ her it was the Galactic Council – her dialogue is brief and sketchy.

Masters, Archangels.” [P20]

-“ Feeling of complete peace and immeasurable love. It is not so much anything bizarre, but just my quiet communication with God. (I’m not sure that this is what you are referring to)”. [P64]

These two participants do not expand on their regular communication with the divine.

There is a ‘separation’ from everyday reality and coupled with a ‘normalizing’ due to the familiarity of a repeated action which creates an absence of drama, so much so that

Participant 64 doubts her experience ‘fits’ with the question.

-“A state of 'being' of 'I Am' (bliss) of going to distant places, of meeting and seeing people of all kinds. Symbolic experiences pertaining to my life at this time, feeling and seeing my guides. Revisiting past lives, i.e. seeing what I need to know to help me deal with an issue or layer that has come up. Seeing parades of people passing though/by my altered state. 'Seeing' other people's meditation without intending for that to happen.” [P75]

The description is of experiences both specific and random as her ‘extra’ senses pick up information as though she is in a vehicle with windows – there is a sense of a ‘journey’.

Also she is able to ‘see’ others meditations as did Participant 14 who ‘picked up’ aspects of his partner’s meditation – it is as though there is a joining of consciousnesses creating a communal experience.

Many participants give clues to the feelings experienced, they feel emotional, they experience peace or bliss in the ‘expanded’ space which meditation offers.

-“Peaceful, knowing, connectedness. Sometimes a profound sensed happiness or bliss. Sometimes (often) ideas pop into my head - ideas that I perceive to be instructional and are usually useful to me.” [P5]

-“A sense of hugeness. So large I can't fit my surrounds. I smell unusual odours, roses, tobacco, food being cooked. Hear music, many radios playing at

the same time, or people talking, hundreds of them. The disassembling of atoms so the world becomes a mosaic. I have experienced a floating sensation. Of my body being weighed down by other bodies. I hear someone speaking, sometimes feel their breath on my face, or them touching my feet, (especially my feet). Sometimes hear the birds talking, can understand what they're feeling and communicating between one another." [P15]

Again the 'communal consciousness' experienced through being aware of others' thoughts/conversations, human and otherwise - the birds 'talking' and being able to understand them.

-“Time stops and you 'see', feel, 'are in' a different world. I was shown parts of my life and why certain experiences were relevant to my growth. This is mostly what happens to me in this state. Sometimes I just 'AM'. Nothing is there and yet everything is there and breathing with me. One enormous expanded being! “
[P133]

Again a joint consciousness, but not always, at times the experience is of an individual evolving, growing. The space 'is not owned' by an individual though as Participant 40 uses the words “*Boundaryless – vast – at one*” If a description speaks for the majority, the following two do.

-“The experience is of feeling one self as an energy of total peace and infinite wisdom, love, compassion etc. Losing sense of body and feeling free to move anywhere.” [P119]

-“Intense sense of the moment. That all 'answers come from within this moment. Coupled with a blending of time and space until all places and times become illusionary and the deeper reality of the internal now emerged.” [P120]

These two participants make it clear there is no division between them and the divine, they are/of/within Godhead.

The mystical experience will always convey ‘mystery’ because the label, when engaged as a description, indicates an action beyond human comprehension. William James, modern philosopher and psychologist, attempted to make mysticism definable, in ‘The Gifford Lectures’ during 1901 to 1902, by proposing ‘four marks’ that must be achieved in order to earn the label.⁶³ His criteria are used because his critique is respected and regarded by his contemporaries as one of the most important in the modern exploration of mysticism.^{64 65} John E. Smith said James ‘subordinated’ the philosophical and theological dimensions of religion in favour of the personal experience;⁶⁶ “... yet he retained a critical attitude in that he regarded the authority of mysticism as limited.”⁶⁷ James reasons for setting the ‘four marks’ was in response to those who used the term mystical as a reproach toward any experience thought to be sentimental and vague.⁶⁸

The first of James’s ‘four marks’ is ‘**Ineffability**’ - It defies description/words meaning the ‘quality’ must be directly experienced; it cannot be imparted to others.⁶⁹ Certainly the participants showed their difficulty in describing their experiences and there was no indication that ‘a training’ had been undertaken beyond the global concept of ‘meditation’.

The second is ‘**Noetic quality**’ – Those who experience also experience ‘states of knowledge’ where insights, illuminations, revelations of significance/importance occur.

⁶³ James, William, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Cambridge, Mass. and London, Harvard University Press, (1901-1902) 1985. Pg 302

⁶⁴ Katz, Steven T., (Ed), ‘Editors Introduction’, 1978. Pg 2

⁶⁵ Smith, John E., “William James’s Account of Mysticism; A Critical Appraisal”, Pg 247, in Katz, Steven T., (Ed), *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Pg 250

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ James, William, (1901–1902) 1985. Pg 302

These states carry with them an ‘authority for after-time’.⁷⁰ 8 participants were specific about the knowledge received, whilst many more indicated ‘insights’ of significance. Certainly there was ‘an authority or authorities’ as none of the participants doubted their being ‘within’ or ‘one’ with Godhead, which was less ‘a being’ to most and more ‘beingness’.

The third, ‘**Transciency**’ – Except in rare instances, half an hour, at most an hour or two, mystical states cannot be sustained. Reproducing their quality is difficult but when done so it is recognizable as a continuous inner development accompanied by a feeling of importance.⁷¹

Several participants speak of long lengths of time passed unwittingly during meditation, longer than James allows is sustainable –

–“Time has no meaning, what I think is 1 hour can be 3 hrs.” [P52]

–“When coming out of this state the time elapsed can be 1 hour or several hours. You never know in advance.” [P133].

This could be because the participants are not in an institution where bells are rung, for instance in a monastery or nunnery, to denote a period of duty, or because no one has told them that it is rare to do so. The importance to the participants is borne out by their willingness to repeat the experience – several speak of the benefits, of their continuing development through meditation.

The fourth mark is ‘**Passivity**’ –

“Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations, as by fixing the attention, or going through certain bodily performances, when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he

⁷⁰ James, William, (1901-1902) 1985. Pg. 302

⁷¹ Ibid.

were grasped and held by a superior power....”⁷²

James goes on connecting the latter with other phenomena such as prophetic speech, automatic writing or trance mediumship where there may be no recollection of the action.

The ‘preliminary voluntary operations’ certainly cover meditation as does ‘fixing the attention’. As for being ‘grasped and held by a superior power’ many participants use Christian terminology to indicate a powerful ‘one’ such as “Jesus” [P14], “Holy Spirit” [P131] and “God/Goddess”, as well as titles such as “Galactic Council” [P53] and “guide”, to indicating one who has helpful knowledge or the authority ‘of’ Godhead to help/intervene. ‘Master’ also indicates authority and often a specific teacher covering an area of knowledge, for example a ‘healing Master’. James continues -

“Mystical states strictly so called, are never merely interruptive. Some memory of their content always remains, and a profound sense of their importance. They modify the inner life of the subject between the times of their recurrence. These four characteristics are sufficient to mark out a group of states of consciousness peculiar enough to deserve a special name.... Let it then be called the mystical group.”⁷³

The participants quoted have retained a memory of their ‘encounter’ with the divine, but there are also those who cannot recall what happened during their meditation, but are aware of gaining and being a part of something significant. That something is enough to encourage them to continue meditating which could mean that ‘something of importance’ was gained but retained in one or more layers of consciousness, rather than the everyday consciousness.

-“ ... *just a sense of weightlessness and expansiveness. Definitely beneficial from the point of view of calming, relaxation and stress relief.*” [P67]

⁷² James, William, (1901-1902) 1985. Pg 302 and 303

⁷³ Ibid. Pg 303

-“A stillness not of this world - the unexpected feelings of knowledge.” [P7]

-“Sometimes like daydreaming. More recently I've been sitting in a trance circle where we encourage channelling spirit. I can feel spirit move close to me and in waves the energy becomes part of me. My heart rate increases dramatically so I feel my whole body is shaking with its strength. My face often feels manipulated. The temperature often drops. When meditating alone I don't have such strong reactions but often feel energy close. My mind is still and I feel peaceful. The feeling of my body disappears and I feel like I'm floating. Sometimes when meditating to music its as if I've become the sound. Its hard to explain, but it seems there are many layers of something like an onion, and I'm slipping between and through them.” [P94]

As far as mysticism is ‘able to be judged’ the participants appear to qualify as mystics when measured against James’s four marks and when Nelson and Roof’s dismissal of the ‘mysticism is rare’ myth is taken into account.. Add to that the tension that has always existed between mysticism and religious traditions at the ‘exalted level’ of the religious/spiritual experience, where the mystical has transcended doctrine and found a ‘oneness’ “... common to all true mystics”, as Steven T. Katz noted,⁷⁴ and religion, the traditional site of mysticism, although often providing the language does not provide the only pathway to it.

The move away from religion into other concepts, beyond any psychological label that might be attached to the individual by others due to their use of the occult, into the universal philosophy of metaphysics, was found by D.T. Suzuki when comparing Zen Buddhism with Meister Eckhart’s Christian mysticism.⁷⁵ He pointed out that this was due

⁷⁴ Katz, Steven T., (Ed), “Editor’s Introduction”, Pg I, in ‘*Mysticism and Religious Traditions*’, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983.

⁷⁵ Suzuki, D.T., ‘*Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist: The Eastern and the Western Way*’, United States of America, The Macmillan Company, 1957. Pg 19 and 20

to the mystic's perception of 'pure nothingness' when perceiving Godhead.⁷⁶ Professor Frederick Streng, scholar in Indian and phenomenological concepts, explained why in *'Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis'*, 1978, by saying that "Godhead can only be known without thought, because all human thought is classified as the sort of thing that by definition cannot perceive pure Being."⁷⁷ Therefore there is no thought when a union with Godhead is achieved;⁷⁸ a perception of 'nothingness', the concept of 'being in a body' is removed, until thought is engaged again and the participants 'feel' their body – the 'being in a body' is 'a thought'. That 'being in a body experience' (everyday reality) is where the belief system is important, it is where the explanation/narrative is found, beyond it there is a union with Godhead, a concept found not in the psychology of the individual but in the philosophy of metaphysics.

There are correlations with Neoplatonism in the participants' concept of the divine, in their descriptions/experience of the nature of their realities (their everyday reality being only one of many). Neoplatonism is a philosophy, not a religion – it has no mediator, other than the one correlating 'Ideas' and 'Forms' between one concept of belief and another for their own purposes. Although the participants' descriptions 'indicate' Neoplatonism it is still an imposed philosophy for the purposes of this thesis. However, it does demonstrate a communal aspect, albeit an ancient one, beyond the material agreements that make up the 'everyday reality' of humanity, which binds the NAM into both the local and the global community. If mysticism transcends all religions, then it also transcends the eclectic beliefs of the New Ager and dismisses any argument that includes Neoplatonic, meaning there could possibly be a communal aspect to mysticism

⁷⁶ Suzuki, D.T., 1957. Pg 19 and 20

⁷⁷ Streng, Frederick, "Language and Mystical Awareness", Pg 159, in Katz, Steven T., (Ed), *'Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis'*, , London, Sheldon Press, 1978.

⁷⁸ 'Godhead' is used as a term to denote the ultimate divine reality or the apex of 'a divine hierarchy', because its usage is accepted academically and does not conflict with the participants descriptions of that reality.

extending beyond any coherent and/or accepted perception of it, simply because it places mankind in a space where sectarianism is impossible.

The ‘repeatability’ of the participants’ experience of a ‘mystical’ state, or a state which has a mystery attributed to it, needed to be examined. Although, how often the participants make a connection with the divine or Godhead does not determine their actions as those of mystics or not, but does indicate a familiarity with the concept and a conscious seeking of ‘something’ worth making the effort to repeat. Participants were asked [Q5b] if they meditated ‘daily, several times a week, once a week, or once a fortnight’ and were given space to indicate any diversion from those four. 77% answered. [In comparison 91% said they meditated in Q5a]

Daily	14	Several times a week	32	Once a week	9
Once a fortnight	6	Occasionally	9	‘Informal’ meditation	4
When needed	3				

Many indicated a variation in their meditation times, for example one meditated twice a day, whilst others said they meditated ‘when they needed to connect’. A small number said they used to meditate everyday but now either don’t or do so less frequently.

Question 5h asked how often they experienced an A.R., again a word or phrase was provided to circle. 80% answered

Every time	9	Regularly	48	Not frequent	18	Rarely	5
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Over half of all 100 participants could be said to be very conversant with attaining an A.R., not taking into consideration those who, judging by their descriptions, were experiencing an A.R. but were either unsure of what an A.R. constituted or did not consider their actions out of the ordinary. For example -

“I hear music in my head.” [P37]

If the music heard is not from a material source then it is most likely from a reality removed from the ordinary.

-“I have seen images especially if it’s a guided meditation, but otherwise no.”

[P59]

If those images are not of the material reality then they are in an A.R.

-“Hard to know - I have felt deep relaxation and contentment but no altered experience that I can remember.” [P69]

-“I am sure I have but am not sure I know what this means so I will leave this page.” [P92]

None of the last four have been included in the A.R. total. To do so would take the total of participants who have experienced an A.R. during meditation to 84%.

To enter into an A.R. with the aim of being ‘within’ Godhead is the ultimate experience of belief. Its achievement is unable to be regulated, proved or examined coherently in anyway, because any judgment is of the description of the action, not the actual experience, which is hidden from all but the experiencer. For example, both Christianity and Hinduism acknowledge mysticism yet their doctrines are non-comparable because one is monotheistic, the other polytheistic and neither can evaluate each others mystics. A non-New Ager cannot evaluate a New Ager as a mystic, just as a New Ager cannot evaluate a Christian or a Hindu as a mystic. Commentators put the NAM beliefs outside the community’s beliefs, regarding it as non-legitimate, yet claim an ability to judge the nature of its achievement of Godhead. In a sense the attacks on the NAM are confirmation that it is ‘of’ the community, the same community/culture that its detractors are in, otherwise the NAM would be out of reach, contained firmly within ‘another’ community, elsewhere. If it was a foreign belief system it would be seen as being ‘from another culture’, for example, Islam or the many parts of Hinduism are accepted by most New Zealanders as part of the global community. But the New Zealand NAM is not from another culture it is ‘of’ a culture/community which has firm Christian roots, as most participants confirmed by volunteering information on their Sunday school instruction in Christianity.

For those who ‘appear’ to have attained the Godhead the action ‘appears’ to align them with mystics throughout history who also ‘appear’ to have achieved oneness with Godhead. Certainly NAM mysticism is within that ‘20-40% of the population’ Nelson spoke of, who defy the common belief that such encounters are rare. It could be said that mysticism has no use to religion because it cannot be regulated and examined ‘coherently’. Yet many historical figures have been described as or declared a ‘mystic’ as a means of legitimizing their behaviour/belief or means of worship – Meister Eckhart being one.

There was no doubt Eckhart was a devout Christian who was prepared to explain his views to his inquisitors, but he was not a mystic to those who questioned him, those in context. It was well after death that his thoughts were revived to be examined and he was declared a mystic by those not ‘of’ the Christianity of his day – an action by those ‘out of context’.

Any ‘out of context’ view according to Katz ‘...severs all grounds of their intelligibility.”⁷⁹ A theory which works when viewing the Spanish mystics of the late medieval period, who inflicted pain on themselves in various inventive ways to ‘bring them closer to God’, for example, Catherine of Siena who, amongst other tortures, put a metal chain so tightly around her waist that it cut into her flesh.⁸⁰ In the current religious context Catherine’s behaviour would invite questions on whether she was psychologically suited to life within a religious community, but in her time, in context, when self immolation was common amongst the devout, she was declared a mystic. Meister Eckhart’s achievement as a mystic though, is, by Katz’s measurement, disallowed because he was not a mystic in his own time, in context. Coherence is found not when the cultural norms of the mystics under scrutiny are taken into account, but ‘through’ the cultural

⁷⁹ Katz, Steven T., “Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism”, Pg 47, in Katz, Steven T., (Ed), ‘Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis’, London, Sheldon Press, 1978.

⁸⁰ Flynn, Maureen, “The Spiritual Uses of Pain in Spanish Mysticism”, Pg 257, in ‘*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Summer 1996, Vol LXIV No.2’, Chamberburg, The Academy, 1996.

norms of those doing the labeling. Katz's criteria is met with this survey in that the NAM although having eclectic beliefs is in context with its examination, but his statement does add to the difficulties in measuring mysticism, pointing to the great number of varying opinions and their political content.

As an example of one opinion, Nelson, in his research into the 'Mystical, Visionary and Remote, Perception Experiences' uses the ontological debates, mentioning the 'differences between scholars',⁸¹ but views the 'praeternatural'⁸² experience' from the viewpoint of the psychologist/social scientist investigating 'psychological mechanisms'. Although acknowledging religion Nelson effectively removes the spiritual from mysticism and puts that experience in a scientific context, beyond doctrine, in order to demystify.

The two concepts, mysticism and science, seem poles apart, but Spangler, in his New Age commentator role, joins the two in the common aim of going beyond all knowledge and experience of what is known to gain 'the new'⁸³. He contends that both science and mysticism must allow the possibility of overturning what is known through their explorations and be prepared to be changed by it, "... even their own sense of self, if that is what the path into revelation demands."⁸⁴ Mysticism, New Age or otherwise by Nelson and Spangler's evaluation stands alone, away from religion – science becomes the new arbitrator in the absence of religion.

The Role of Science

Science is regarded as important to the NAM by many scholars, for example,

⁸¹ Nelson, P.L., Pg 211, in Zollschan, G.K., J.F. Schumaker and G.F. Walsh, (Eds), 1989.

⁸² Praeternatural – 'before natural' – an older spelling used by Nelson to indicate not only a specific definition but an intention; opposed to 'supernatural' which stands apart from 'everyday sensate experience'. (Nelson, P.L. Pg 211, in Zollschan, G.K., J.F. Schumaker and G.F. Walsh, (Eds), 1989.)

⁸³ Spangler, David and William Irwin Thompson, 1991. Pg 54 and 55

⁸⁴ Ibid.

J. Gordon Melton in 1992 said, the NAM "... has been most open to both science and technology."⁸⁵ In 1995 Kyle stated that "The New Age prefers to view itself as scientific"⁸⁶ And David J. Hess in 1993 wrote,

"...New Agers incorporate and rework the research of anthropologists, physicists, philosophers, and other scientists and scholars to legitimate a discourse that also sanctions crystal healing, channelers, astral bodies, goddess religion, and other beliefs and practices generally associated with popular culture."⁸⁷

In 2000 Steve Bruce, writing under the title '*The New Age and Secularisation*' said, that the New Ager interested in 'new medicine' or 'new science' believes himself an intellectual equal to the experts in 'old' medicine and science.⁸⁸

Hess, commenting on the New Age as a "...consumerist movement in its own right...", said in spite of commercial and religious similarities the NAM is "... constructed in opposition to official religion, science, business and medicine."⁸⁹ Continuing that theme under the subtitle "Anti-intellectualism and anti-scientific attitudes piggybacking on New Age mysticism", Barry L. Beyerstein, in 2005, strongly criticized Andrew Weil and Deepak Chopra, who he claimed are 'New Age medical gurus' denigrating science by convincing "...many that 'anything goes.'"⁹⁰

There seems to be conflict amongst the academics; at one point science is important to the New Ager and in the next 'anything goes'. Who exactly they are looking at and who they are labeling 'New Age' is only clear with Beyerstein who names individuals, Weil and Chopra. The others could be talking of any part of the New Age or its periphery,

⁸⁵ Melton, J. Gordon "New Thought and The New Age", Pg 24, in Lewis, James R. and J. Gordon Melton, (Eds), '*Perspectives on The New Age*', Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992.

⁸⁶ Kyle, Richard, 1995. Pg 75

⁸⁷ Hess, David J., '*Science in the New Age*', Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993. Pg 37.

⁸⁸ Bruce Steve, "The New Age and Secularisation", Pg 231, in Sutcliffe, Steven and Marion Bowman (Eds), '*Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*', Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2000.

⁸⁹ Hess, David J., 1993. Pg 89

⁹⁰ Beyerstein, Barry L. "Alternative Medicine and Common Errors of Reasoning", Pg 39, in Lee-Treweek, Geraldine, Tom Heller, Susan Spurr, Hilary MacQueen and Jeanne Katz, (Eds), '*Perspectives on Complementary and Alternative Medicine: A Reader*', London and New York, Routledge, 2005.

where the New Age merges with the greater community. The NAM is not separate from community, it is the ultimate expression of integration and without clear edges where it ‘engages’ with the rest of society/community, meaning there could be a whole industry servicing the NAM, claiming the labels of the New Age, but not have the beliefs of it. Evaluating an entrepreneur in the ‘normal’ commercial world from an entrepreneur with New Age beliefs is impossible as both are earning their living or gaining commercially from their ability to detect an opportunity. The same with the person claiming scientific proofs for their beliefs, are they on the edge of Christianity, Buddhism or firmly ‘in’ the New Age? Relying on labels is an imprecise method of ‘finding’ some members of the NAM due to the Movement’s dislike and often avoidance of the concept.

The place science has in the participants’ beliefs were surveyed by asking ‘Do you consider there to be a scientific basis to your beliefs?’ [Q12a] 89% answered –

“Yes” 42	“No” 38	“Don’t Know” 3	“Yes & No” 3
“No Significance” 1	Placed a question mark 2		

The second part of the question asked ‘If you circled “yes” how does that manifest?’

–“I believe the two can't work without one another. Science isn't a means of proof as we are seeing everyday. Scientific evidence alters from one research to the next so can't be deemed as substantial as we'd like to believe. Spirituality is founded on belief rather than fact and that too can change as mind sets change.” [P15 ... answered “No” to Question 12b.]

–“Only because Quantum Physics is now being able to provide evidence to support what we've known and experienced for ever. I don't say 'proof' cos I don't think that's appropriate . Evidence allows people to consider and decide. Proof means someone has decided for you.” [P18 ... answered to Question 12b, “Yes. Again – only say yes cos of the ability to defend my beliefs when attacked or interrogated. Bit of a woose ... I don't need the scientific backing - I've experienced it - but feel

defensive about my beliefs and experiences when in 'mainstream' company.”]

Participant 18 indicates ‘she’ does not need the scientific backing, but those who question her do, those without her beliefs. Effectively she turns the ‘need’ for science around to those who are commenting on the NAM, which in turn forces her, as the New Ager, to seek science.

However, there is one incident in ‘Fran’s’ dialogue [P65] which indicates science is not separate from, nor in ‘opposition’ to belief/spirituality to some in the NAM. When Question 2e asked about any spiritual group or organization she belonged to, Fran gave in her answer, “...we studied The Science of Meditation in a scientific way.” It gave the view that Fran is using scientism to explain her beliefs, but in her answer to Question 12b ‘Is it important that your beliefs have a scientific basis’ she answers “Yes” and then goes on to explain why –

“Because for my understanding it helps me to explain to others how that the philosophy, psychological and scientific are all parts of the ONE GREAT WHOLE and for me the teachings, belief, ideas, complement and parallel one another, and that helps to confirm them for me and others.”

Fran is not talking about a science which is ‘repeatable’, for her there is no doubt science is part of everything, as does the following Participant.

-“Yes - if by science you mean that there are certain fundamental laws that govern the main essence of humanity and existence then I would say yes.” [P38]

-“Yes - in recent times Quantum Physics, as I believe we are all interconnected, our thoughts create everything about us, our lives, we attract to us what we believe about ourselves (“What the Bleep do we Know” and ‘Secret’⁹¹) To me it proves

⁹¹ ‘What the Bleep Do We Know’ is a movie issued in March 2005 about consciousness and spirituality, a “...revelation of quantum fields hidden behind what we consider our normal, waking reality....” (<http://www.hoptustore.com/bleep.htm> downloaded 18/4/2008). ‘The Secret’ a book by Rhonda Byrne ‘revealing’ the power of the mind and its production of thought to attract good and bad. (United States,

hands on healings, intuitive ...as we are interacting with our energy field and the persons we are working on, as particles move in and out of existence.” [P59]

15 participants mentioned Quantum Physics, indicating an ‘awareness’ of aspects of ‘science’s’ achievements. Participant 59 sees Quantum Physics, ‘What the Bleep...’ and the ‘Secret’ as proof of what she is already doing – as though the science already existed, it just had to be recognized, caught up with.

–“Yes - Einsteins Theory of Relativity explains energy very well but so many physicists I have read have also made many discoveries about the earth's field and its connection to everything on this earth. Unfortunately for the Joe Bloggs the connection/ties are still separated between scientific discovery and complementary therapies.” [P75]

–“Yes & No - I don't know. I have had discussions with someone who has a scientific answer to disprove everything I believe in and I don't feel I have adequate knowledge or the eloquence to argue this point.” [P94]

There is a general agreement that those ‘needing’ the scientific answer are those not necessarily of the NAM, which in turn points to the presence of a dialogue on belief between the NAM and the greater community. What the comments above show is that a number of the 42 [Q12a] believe there is a scientific basis to their beliefs, but do not regard science as homogenous – science replicates religion in that it has many diversities and many values.

Hammer approached the role science and scientism has in esoteric tradition, by claiming that science, since the advent of the modern age, has been used as a ‘significant Other’, a legitimizing authority to base doctrinal elements on.⁹² He cites a variety of traditions, such as Alice Bailey, some Muslim scholars and ‘a number of modern religious

Beyond Words Publishing, 2006. <http://www.helium.com/items/270307-secret-really-secret-rhona> downloaded 18/4/2008).

⁹²Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 204

movements' who use science to define and delimit their views, mentioning the influence science has played in parts of Christianity, resulting in the rise of creationism⁹³.

The NAM is not separate from its greater community, it takes its proof mechanisms from the same community that demands 'proof' of NAM beliefs, a community that has incorporated science or scientism in its dialogue since the Enlightenment when Francis Bacon and René Descartes subjected nature to mathematical and analytical study.⁹⁴ Man is 'of' nature therefore he has a vested interest, meaning any scientific dialogue is not going to remain in the laboratory, its words and method (scientism) is going to be appropriated by the people science affects. Science is held up as the 'measure of proof' in some concepts, belief being one which can escape through being subjective, until it ceases to be contained by the individual/s and is expressed. As Participant 94 said and a few others in the survey indicated, some in the greater community expect science to be used as the measure for validity.

If Question 12a leant towards science having an importance to the New Age belief dialogue the question following moved opinion sharply away. Question 12b asked 'Is it important that your beliefs have a scientific basis?' 91% answered –

“No” 72 “Yes” 13 “Yes & No” 5 “Sometimes” 1

Those numbers indicate a complete reversal of the findings by a number of scholars commenting on New Age attributes. Participants commented further –

-“No, not to me personally. Yet it is great to have an answer for skeptics.” [P3]

-“No, but it helps others to understand what I'm on about.” [P75]

-“No, my beliefs are unique to me so I don't care what basis they have.” [P46]

⁹³ Hammer, Olav, 2004 Pg 205

⁹⁴ Capra, Fritjof, 'The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture', New York, Simon & Schuster, 1982. Pg 54

Conclusion

The Global NAM

The eclectic beliefs of New Age individuals incorporate aspects of various religions and the myths of popular culture equally. It is an attribute some academic commentators found frustrating when trying to grasp ‘likenesses’ within that eclecticism, so they could comment on the NAM, in whole or part, as a New Religious Movement or as a means of dismissing the Movement as a passing ‘fad’. One academic, Robert Bellah, found those who claim a personal authority for their beliefs separate from institutional authority, a destructive element in the community.⁹⁵ He said, the ‘binding agent’ for a community comes from a recognized central authority.⁹⁶

The NAM certainly makes difficulties for the commentator, not only because it does not have a particular set of beliefs common to all, it does not have a ‘site’ in the community, like Church buildings nor a hierarchy of recognized leaders. If it did have a centralized hierarchy, it would stand in direct opposition to both the existing community religious institutions and individualism, because it would be a religious authority. Instead, the NAM is fragmented throughout various communities globally, with many ‘unofficial’ spokespersons who have no authority beyond what individual New Agers are willing to give. Take away (or depose) a spokesperson and the wider NAM is not affected. What could be seen as a weakness is ultimately its strength as each individual takes responsibility for their own belief system, whilst acknowledging they are part of the ‘whole’, the whole being everything, the ultimate in ‘community belonging’. The NAM permeates the community physically and culturally by ‘using’ its history and myths.

⁹⁵ Porterfield, Amanda, 2001. Pg 12

⁹⁶ Ibid.

The international academic comments on the NAM were examined because they give a location for ‘the other’, they indicate difference. Throughout the 1970s, (the decade when Olav Hammer claims the NAM emerged as a distinct entity,⁹⁷) the ‘80s and ‘90s criticism was reasonably uniform with some exceptions. One of those exceptions was Catherine Albanese, who in 1981, placed Nature Religion (a genre gathered under the ‘New Age umbrella’) ‘in’ history by claiming its line of descent from the first American settlers to the current day,⁹⁸ effectively pulling Nature Religion into American history and not excluding or separating it as an aberration.

Richard Kyle⁹⁹ and Steven J. Sutcliffe¹⁰⁰ agreed that the NAM was a global spiritual phenomena, one which primarily attracted middle-class, middle-aged white women, because they considered them the section of society most able to afford the workshops and seminars where ‘New Age principles’ were learnt. However, those claims were challenged by Albanese, who in 1999, noted a strong, quiet and unnoticed working class component within the NAM.¹⁰¹ Hans Baer in 2004, supported Albanese by pointing out that while seminars and workshops may be affordable mostly by the middle-class, books, magazines and audio/video tapes were affordable by most; it was impossible to monitor who or how many purchased them.¹⁰² It was as though the ‘highlight the obvious and attack’ method, previously demonstrated by much of the academic community, was being tempered by interest in the NAM’s approach to spiritual belief as the 1990s matured.

The New Zealand Experience

To see whether some opinions of those overseas commentators fitted the New Zealand experience the participants were put into gender and age groups. The majority, 81%,

⁹⁷ Hammer, Olav, 2004. Pg 249

⁹⁸ Albanese, Catherine L. 1981. Pg 339

⁹⁹ Kyle, Richard, 1995. Pg 11

¹⁰⁰ Sutcliffe, Steven J., 2003. Pg 223

¹⁰¹ Baer, Hans, 2004. Pg 19

¹⁰² Ibid.

covering all age groups were found to be women, out of which only 45 were in the middle-aged category (fifty-one years and over), meaning although the majority were women, those in their middle-age accounted for less than half, not the majority. 45 is still a significant amount and may be due to older women having more time as parental duties become less demanding as children grow, or an indication of a period of years spent 'experiencing life' before entering into 'spiritual exploration' in the middle years. The remaining 34 of that 79% were under fifty-one, weakening somewhat the first theory that growing children inhibit the spiritual search for all women.

In 1995 Kyle estimated that 70% of NAM women were linked to the counter-culture of the 1960s,¹⁰³ a view confirmed by Ellwood who considered in 1993 that most New Agers were ageing remnants of the counter-culture, reliving their youth.¹⁰⁴ [For this thesis 'middle-aged' was taken as being over fifty one years, discounting those in their forties, accounting for the twelve to fourteen year gap between Kyle's and Ellwood's statements.] To find when the participants first actively sought knowledge of spirituality, they were asked to give a date – 98% answered. The answers created a small difficulty as some participants gave their age rather than a date, but by taking those who did give a date and those who could have possibly been in their twenties and even their teens in the 1960s and '70s, the approximate figures show only a possible 33 of the 58 over fifty-one year olds (both men and women) could have sought spirituality during the counter-culture. Looking at the figures from a different perspective, by taking the 43 women fifty-one years and over (out of 98%) and 'assuming' all found spirituality in the 1960s and '70s does not make the figures comparable to Kyle's 70%. [The assumption that the counter-culture did not really enter New Zealand until the 1970s was taken into account by including those who said they

¹⁰³ Kyle, Richard, 1995. Pg 11

¹⁰⁴ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 245

found spirituality in that decade.] The theory that *most* New Agers can be linked to the counter-culture was not reflected amongst the survey participants.

Amongst the participants was a small Maori component of 3.5% which was well below the National (16-17.4%) and South Island (7.1%) population figures. However, there was no specific question relating to ethnic 'origin' in the questionnaire – any offering in that respect was voluntary, meaning there could have been more than 3.5% of participants who are not of European origins, but do not consider themselves ethnically anything other than a 'New Zealander'. The 3.5% Maori component does disrupt the theory that the NAM is 'exclusively white' in the New Zealand experience.

The middle-class issue was surveyed resulting in 63% of the participants labeling themselves middle-class, 24% claiming working-class and 13% who did not give an indication. Those figures appear to confirm the international claim that the majority of the NAM is middle-class. Although, the two participants who offered the labels 'professional' and 'farmer' could indicate a confusion in nominating a class, as much as it could indicate a refusal to acknowledge a class system in New Zealand. The middle-class majority must be accepted, but it must also be noted that given the difficulty the participants displayed when identifying labels were asked for, they could have been taking the 'middle-ground', giving middle-class as a label representing a non-committal answer.

The international commentators' descriptions of the NAM when overlaid on the New Zealand experience do not fit exactly, there are some differences. The question arises as to who exactly, the overseas experience encompasses, especially when both Baer and Albanese allude to a number of unseen New Agers, or a layer of the NAM which is difficult to monitor. However, because of the global nature of the NAM, the overseas comments from the 1970s to the present day do affect the general view of the New Zealand NAM.

The Community

Finding the New Ager in the community was made doubly difficult by the participants' dislike of identifying labels. The label problem did cause difficulties with some questions, the middle-class issue being one. Many refused outright to give a label when asked, explaining in a variety of ways that they did not believe in labeling people. One participant [P119] was specific about her dislike when she said labels separate humankind.

The dislike of labels also appears to be related to an unwillingness to be contained within a particular belief genre, something which might inhibit movement 'through' various 'ideas and forms' to a periodic realignment of the eclectic beliefs a New Ager gathers, as much as it could be a reaction to a particular part of the New Zealand character, which is suspicious or resistant to those who broadcast their religion/beliefs. As Bluck stated, as long as religion is not mentioned, spirituality is acceptable to New Zealanders as a whole.¹⁰⁵ That suspicion was reflected in occasional comments given by participants directed at the Christian Church, for example, Participant 5 said, *"I personally have no interest in religion – as perceive it is too often corrupted (to a large extent by politics, dogma + hypocrisy)."*

New Zealand's secularism provides a unique environment for the NAM, one which contrasts with the American experience of religion, having had a firmer footing from the outset due to its pioneers, for example, the Puritans, being 'committed' Christians and that of Great Britain where Christianity is the official religion. Bellah's claim that New Age individualism is contrary, or works against the needs of a community, does not hold when New Zealand is viewed; to claim it is so would be a claim that this country is without coherent community because a religious authority is not at its centre.

¹⁰⁵ Bluck John, 1998. Pg 19

The official ‘letting go’ of religious institutions in the 19th century did not develop into a society without religion or spiritual beliefs. The Christian Church has had a significant presence from the outset, also, some New Zealanders joined organizations with alternative spiritual beliefs/philosophies like the Theosophical Society, The Golden Dawn, Alice Bailey’s Arcane Society and particularly, the Spiritualist Church, because they were fashionable, modern and appealed to the occult explorations of the day. Ellwood found New Zealand to be unique, as some of its alternative societies often attracted more members per capita than their founding, overseas organizations.¹⁰⁶

Why those organizations or their parts still exist, is explained by the numbers of survey participants seeking communal participation in belief. In the first instance New Agers form new or join existing groups, like those mentioned above; 49% belong to a spiritual group, or organization, 46% do not. To that 49% add the 5% who used to belong to a group (some reasons for relinquishing a group were given, for example, moving from the area) and over half have no difficulty discussing their beliefs with others of like-mind, meaning there is ‘a sense of’ and a seeking of community by the NAM. The New Ager may have individuality when gathering eclectic beliefs, but not in sharing them through discussion with others.

That ‘discussion’ aspect is seen in the common names given to the divine/Godhead, for example, ‘The Source’, The Universe, and ‘All That Is’. Also in titles/labels chosen, like ‘Lightworker’ to indicate a specific theme or ‘energy’ incorporated in a New Ager’s work or general ‘beingness’. The word ‘energy’ can be both specific and have a slightly looser meaning when used as a general communication to indicate an etheric substance; a word of the ‘middle-ground’, used when any individual belief labels/claims for that substance might be misunderstood or cause confusion. Albanese noted the same action, the use of a

¹⁰⁶ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pgs 185, 186 and 156.

more general/ordinary language of culture' making it easier for groups to relate to teach other.¹⁰⁷

There is another form of 'discussion' or sharing, experienced within the group meditation, where similar concepts or knowledge can be experienced or gleaned, as though some or all members of the group are 'in communication' within an A.R. It is a shared experience that does not involve the spoken word until after the meditation.

In the second instance the New Age community is 'evangelical' when an interest is expressed in their beliefs. When asked if they were involved in 'helping others achieve something in the spiritual field' 65% answered "Yes" (includes 2 who answered "Yes & No"). Amongst that 65% were 39 professional therapists, who have a commercial interest in developing their theories, leaving 24 non-professionals who felt it was part of their belief structure to actively 'instruct', if the opportunity presented itself. The overall view is of a willingness to connect to the greater community via belief, on both the professional and personal level. Because the New Ager lives (or wants to live) their beliefs, most of which is subjective, there are moments when the everyday world and its assumptions work in opposition to New Age views. That is the moment when the New Ager chooses to, or not to, reveal himself, which could explain the difficulties expressed in the section of the survey which asked how open the participant was with their beliefs. Subjectively and in the living (the action) there is openness, but when the everyday world opposes, silence or circumspection is seen as necessary, hence the circling for some of both 'Totally Open' and 'Selective with beliefs' [this is discussed more fully later].

The third instance of community connection is via Healing, a 'theme' permeating the NAM. Healing is not only personal, but global, with each individual's healing action having global implications through the 'chaos dynamic', which David Spangler explained

¹⁰⁷ Ellwood, Robert S., 1993. Pg 165

is where the smaller part can affect the larger part via collective action.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, when a healing is done on an individual, even on one's self, there is a ripple effect to the greater portion of existence. Healing is not only a means of connecting via the physical but also via the etheric, meaning the New Ager does not consider themselves separate, nor act as though they were separate, from their local or global community – it could be seen as another form of etheric discussion. One Participant [P64] expressed that concept by saying “*Healing flows through into everything ... we are all ‘One’. To hurt others is to hurt yourself.*” To help another, no matter how small, is a ‘healing action’, a concept effectively widening the common view of healing as a mending or curing of the physical body. The Self and the community are considered one, a concept coined by many participants in the term ‘All That Is’.

The healing aspect of the NAM could be called the ‘deeper New Age’, but that too is misleading; the everyday world may speak of ‘levels’ of involvement, but the New Ager self designates/designs their role – there is no central authority which rules a portion of ‘popular new-agism’ invalid or less than any other. For example, aspects seen on Oprah Winfrey’s television program or in women’s magazines are as valid as any other expression of the New Age – it is self-regulating through the action and reaction scenario.

To discover how free New Zealand New Agers are to express their beliefs, a selection of phrases were given for participants to circle with no restriction on how many could be circled. 50% circled ‘Totally open’, of whom a portion must have included ‘Selective with Identity’ as 51% circled it; only 2% circled the phrase ‘Unaware of opposition’. A typical selection of phrases chosen by the average participant was ‘*Selective with identity, mixed family reaction, partner shares beliefs*’. The ‘mixed family reaction’ phrase attracted 41%, to which the participants added phrases that ranged from ‘family unaware’

¹⁰⁸ Spangler, David, and William Irwin Thompson, 1991. Pg 74

through to 'beliefs resulted in divorce/separation'. The impression given was that although 50% 'felt' they could be open with their beliefs they were aware of potential difficulties. There was a few who contradicted themselves, especially with the 'Totally Open' phrase showing their willingness to be so, whilst betraying some difficulty when others (as mentioned previously), not of like-mind, are in contact with them.

New Zealand New Age individuals are selective to whom they 'expose' their belief identity for a variety of reasons including the national attitude to religion/belief. It is an attitude not necessarily confined to the NAM, but one that does contribute to the difficulties in finding the New Zealand NAM. The therapists/facilitators of seminars/workshops who court public interest in order to earn their living could appear to be the 'public face' of the NAM, but they are not a true representation of the greater part of the Movement as 61% did not claim the label 'therapist' in the survey, meaning the greater part of the NAM in New Zealand is 'out of view'. Being out of view could mean those individuals are mixing well within the community – they are not prominent because they are not seen to be 'different'. June is a good example; she is an 'invisible New Ager' because although she still cleans the local church, she is also an Astrologer who mixes her beliefs with Spiritualism and other non-Christian beliefs. She takes her turn cleaning the church because she is involved in her community. How this compares to the international NAM community is not known, no comparisons were found, just Albanese and Baer's allusion to a hidden aspect of the New Age. But it could be assumed to be global as there are correlations between the New Zealand experience and the overseas, including the existence of a textual 'dialogue' between all countries through literature and the internet.

The NAM believes itself capable of being a loosely bound community within and 'of' its local community whilst also being part of the global community, not the separate entity the academic view presented the NAM as. But there is another aspect of 'community'

being experienced, connected to the individual's inner spiritual experience, beyond the spoken language, religious doctrine and alternative eclecticism - mysticism.

Mysticism

Many individuals, such as Meister Eckhart, Emanuel Swedenborg and Sri Ramakrishna have been declared mystics because their 'experience' of belief was considered far greater than the capabilities of their contemporaries. Mystics are regarded as uncommon, so much so that some are not declared 'mystics' until after their death, as Eckhart's example shows. Swedenborg's example is a little different, because although he claimed to be a Christian, he did display 'New Age' tendencies with his mediumship and interest in the occult – he is regarded as a mystic in spite of that separation from Christianity. Sri Ramakrishna, declared a mystic during his lifetime, is of the Hindu Tantric tradition, meaning mysticism crosses religious boundaries – it is not owned by any one religion.

Invariably mystics are connected to a religious 'tradition' which acknowledges the individual as a mystic at some point because their experience or knowledge is unique and involves a 'spiritual mystery', something that cannot be explained in ordinary terms, but is real, unique and beyond everyday human spiritual/religious experience. New Agers entering into altered states and experiencing Godhead, are entering a 'spiritual mystery' through the rituals of Spiritualism, Wicca, Paganism, the many other popular/alternative belief genres or their individual eclectic beliefs. It is a 'spiritual mystery' because it is an individual action which uses the eclectic beliefs of that individual to enter a state beyond those beliefs, beyond human description.

One method the participants used to enter that state is through meditation, either as an individual or in a group. 91% of the survey participants meditated, with 82 of that percentage entering into an A.R and of those 57 on a regular basis. Through meditation alone, over half the New Agers surveyed were familiar with entering a reality specifically

for connecting with the divine/Godhead. Many said they gained ‘knowledge’ and/or had a feeling of being a part of something greater, a ‘oneness’ which encompassed everything, whilst a few, said they ‘only went out of their body’. To contend that all 82 entered a different reality from each other would be unreasonable, just as it would be to contend it was the same reality, because all are experiences beyond the observer’s view any judgment is invalid. The observer makes what he can of the description given, not of the actual experience, a situation where the words and symbols used are measured against a prescribed view of what ‘it might be like’ to enter Godhead. Even the phrase ‘enter Godhead’ is open to question, as no independent authority can mediate on its attainment or otherwise.

However, the participant’s answers do correlate in, ‘intention’ and for the greater part, in description. Meaning there is a uniform movement driven by individuals in the New Age toward ‘something’ called the divine. Their descriptions correlate, for example, in being part of a ‘hugeness’, ‘a oneness’, ‘All That Is’, of ‘not being in their body yet being everywhere’, of strong connection with the divine described as ‘bliss’, ‘peacefulness’, ‘immeasurable love’ and ‘knowledge/knowingness’, ‘timelessness’, they *appear* to be experiencing a similar or a communal state fueled by diverse eclectic beliefs, which go beyond those beliefs into a ‘commonality of beingness’. It could be called a ‘union’ of New Agers who experienced the divine, through mysticism or as Participant 133 called it *“One enormous expanded being! Nothing is there and yet everything is there and breathing with me.”* Albanese coined the phrase ‘homesteads in the human mind’ to describe ‘a mental world without boundaries’, the ‘inner worlds’.¹⁰⁹

94% of the survey participants said they believed in the concept of “the divine”, a concept beyond and superior to human experience. Of those, the majority dismissed the view that the divine was singular, “a” being. Even where there seemed to be a singularity,

¹⁰⁹ Albanese, Catherine, L., 1981. Pg 165

a 'being' attributed a title, often another non-singular title was offered as an alternative title, as in Fran's answers beyond her use of Christian titles like, "*The Lord Christ, The Lord Jesus, Our Father God, The Lord God, The Father of us all.*" Fran revealed she belonged to the Arcane School of thought and used, as well as Alice Bailey's titles for the Masters, descriptions like – "*Oneness of all Souls and the Oneness of all Life....*" Yet in spite of the assumption that the Christian titles and the Alice Bailey titles are specific to their particular traditions they were found throughout the participants descriptions, meaning the titles have transcended those organization to become common descriptions.

Together with the other participants' names for Godhead, there appeared to be a firm connection to Ellwood's Hellenic river, which appeared to be forming, as the survey was disseminated, into a 'belief system' very much like Neoplatonism – 'the connection of all, moving through evolution into an Idea, a Form, One'.¹¹⁰ If the greater community needs a title or tradition/location before the label 'mysticism' can be given to the experiences of the NAM then Neoplatonism could be useful, but it is diversionary because the participants eclectic beliefs which precede/lead to the exploration of the divine have little relationship to Neoplatonism apart from them being 'ideas'.

Many cultures have saints and mystics, or the equivalent, which are 'contained' within their particular traditions. The NAM is within the community, using aspects of all religious traditions and the cultural myths of many ethnicities – it is in effect breaking 'the rules' by crossing doctrinal and cultural boundaries. If mysticism was found within a contemporary Neoplatonism it could possibly find acceptance by some, because the title would 'contain' the belief system, however that philosophy is found to have no more ownership of the NAM than Christianity or Hinduism – it is another contributor to an eclectic nature.

¹¹⁰ Albanese, Catherine, L., 1981. Pg 166 and 167

To give some form of measurement to the participants' experiences William James's 'four marks' were used, 'Ineffability' 'Noetic quality', 'Transcendency', 'Passivity',¹¹¹ because they are respected by the academic community and made contemporary by being debated/used by many commentators on mysticism.¹¹² Even the use of those 'marks' could be said to be invalid as they come from a philosopher with no connection to the NAM, however they are useful in aligning the NAM's experience's with the greater community.

In all but one instance the participants' experiences fit James's four marks. That one instance was the duration of an experience where James gave a specific time limit, which some participants exceeded. To contend that James is the arbitrator of all mystical experiences would be ludicrous, but it does demonstrate 'points of connection' which are universal.

There is no way to 'prove' mysticism, it must be taken as a word usable/valid 'within' the genre being observed, otherwise comparisons would make the doctrine or beliefs of 'the other' the means of measure. Within the NAM a New Ager can justifiably claim mysticism, just as any other religion can claim it 'within' their religion/beliefs. It would be inappropriate for someone 'outside' the Movement to decry/judge the spiritual experience of those 'inside' or 'of' the New Age. To accept the validity of such a judgment would be similar to a Christian having an effect on who is considered a Hindu mystic or vice versa.

79 out of the 97% of participants who answered the question, experience A.Rs at times other than when meditating, these experiences include, entering into 'open eyed' meditation/day dreaming at unorganized times. For the participants, and within the New Age they are a 'natural' usage of the 'extra senses' which have developed, or been with the

¹¹¹ James, William, (1901-1902) 1985. Pg 302

¹¹² Katz, Steven T., 1983. Pg 247

participants since birth, through which they ‘see’ concepts other than what is accepted as real by their larger community. Also included, are those using rituals other than meditation, for example Wiccans and healers generally, who enter an A.R. for healing purposes. Some of these A.R.’s correlate with those experienced when in meditation, making the blending with Godhead less ‘formal’, making ‘mysticism’ a more common experience than most isolated in their specific belief would allow.

The act of mysticism/A.R. could be seen as a distancing oneself from community, even being ‘outside community’ for that period, just as the experience is ‘out of body’ or without ‘thought activation’. Frederick Streng contends that Godhead can only be known without thought because the moment thought is activated the participant feels their body – ‘being in a body is a thought’, an action taking the focus away from the body to the senses.¹¹³ If a commonality in thought, and thereby action, is what connects a person to their community then mysticism takes all mystics beyond community and beyond religion, no matter what doctrine is used to explain the experience. ‘Community’, as we know it, stops at the point where mysticism ‘takes over’, unless the persons experiencing mysticism have a commonality of thought/action. It is the common agreement on a ‘form’ which makes the ‘real’ and brings it within an arena of judgment; for example, if more than one person sees a ‘Loch Ness Monster’, then it makes it more ‘real’ for the community than if only one person saw it.

The use of the ‘extra senses’ can cover both those who ‘see’ other realities frequently and those who have perhaps experienced the phenomena once or twice in a lifetime. All are using an aspect of ‘the Occult’. The psychic or Occult is familiar to 98% of the survey participants who indicated their attributes in this field by circling ‘Psychic, Fey, Clairvoyant, Sensitive and/or Clairaudient’. Of that 98% the majority, 79, included ‘Sensitive’ along with other attributes, or circled only that label. The definition of

¹¹³ Streng, Frederick, Pg 159, in Steven T. Katz, (Ed), 1978.

‘Sensitive’ clearly indicates a ‘sensitivity’ of the senses and is obviously a more palatable term to New Agers. The use of those ‘extra senses’ are important to the New Agers because via them they enter into A.Rs., whether to be ‘in’ Godhead specifically or by association, through for example, healing, although it is noted that merely being ‘in life’ (experiencing the material/everyday reality) is considered as important a part of ‘All That Is’ for most participants.

There was a commonality to all mysticism/mystics, Steven T. Katz noted, at the ‘exalted level’ which transcends religious doctrine¹¹⁴. This transcendence is apparent when looking at some organizations under the New Age umbrella, like Theosophy, Alice Bailey’s teachings, Spiritualism; in retrospect it is seen that none ‘owns’ the New Age ‘mystical tradition’ more than any other religion/philosophy that emerged in the 19th century mystical/spiritual revival, in spite of there being a tendency for some to place a secrecy around any knowledge which gained the acolyte access to ‘inner wisdoms’. So it is with the beliefs held by the New Age individuals, no particular avenue of belief is a guaranteed pathway to Godhead; it is a solo journey ‘through’ belief, not the ‘natural’ result of learning the teachings of a particular belief tradition. Peter Nelson and Wade Clark Roof agree, the ecstatic/mystical experience is not a rare experience in spite of myths persisting in it being so right up to the late 20th Century.^{115 116}

Science

Nelson’s examination of the subject as a social scientist¹¹⁷, removed the mystical from traditional religion and introduced ‘science’. However, using science as a measure for proving a community effect for mysticism both joins and separates, because although the greater community has mysticism in its dialogue, through individuals being labeled

¹¹⁴ Katz, Steven T., Pg I, in Katz, Steven T., (Ed), 1983.

¹¹⁵ Nelson, P.L., Pg 184, in Zollschan, G.K., J.F. Schumaker and G.F. Walsh, (Eds), 1989.

¹¹⁶ Roof, Wade Clark, 1999. Pg 37

¹¹⁷ Nelson, P.L., Pg 184, in Zollschan, G.K., J.F. Schumaker and G.F. Walsh, (Eds), 1989.

mystics, it does not necessarily accept that mysticism is a 'normal' part of 'community', hence the myth that it is a rarity, therefore any claim by the NAM of mysticism is unlikely to be recognized by the greater community.

Science examines the accepted and unaccepted, then mediates, explaining and expanding the community's view of itself and its environment. Steve Bruce¹¹⁸ and David J. Hess¹¹⁹, amongst others, claim science is important to the NAM, and Ellwood singled it out as a 'general characteristic' of the NAM in its 'desire to be modern and use scientific language'.¹²⁰

In response to that view the participants were asked a direct question: 'Is it important that your beliefs have a scientific basis?' Out of the 91% who answered - 72 said "No". Although those 72 participants state science is not important where their beliefs are concerned, that does not necessarily mean they are unaware or disinterested in what science can offer, or the process of scientism, beyond the interest of anyone else in the same community who is not a New Ager. Science and scientism has dogged the footsteps of belief since the Enlightenment, effectively losing its exclusivity and becoming part of common man's life; part of his dialogue, his technology and his food.

There is an interest in science for some New Agers, but the survey showed it to be on a level less concerned with 'inner' aspect of belief and more the construct of belief. The question 'Do you consider there to be a scientific basis to your beliefs?' resulted in 89% answering. Of that number 39 said "No"; 42 said "yes"; with a further 8 being indecisive. The question could have been read as 'Do you consider there is a *current* scientific basis to your beliefs?' as many of the participant's additional comments indicated that science 'had not yet caught up', was only just catching up through Quantum Physics, or that it too was evolving along with man. Others considered it unreliable as a measure of proof where

¹¹⁸ Bruce, Steve, in Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman (Eds), 2000. Pg 231

¹¹⁹ Hess, J. David, 1993. Pg 37.

¹²⁰ Lewis, James R., Pg 6, in Lewis, James R. and J. Gordon Melton (Eds), 1992.

belief is concerned and any usefulness it had was as a response to skeptics, or as one participant [P75] said, “*to help others to understand what I’m on about*”. Amongst those 42 who answered ‘yes’ were a faction who considered science a part of ‘the One Great Whole’ not a separate authority, with only a few considering science important to spiritual belief. Science was not dismissed, but placed in context to ‘normal’ living, not as an exclusive category specific or vital to the New Age.

There is a strong sense of community amongst New Agers, otherwise over half would not seek out others of similar beliefs and create groups, nor would they enter into dialogue about their beliefs with others outside the NAM – there is a clear wish to share their New Age beliefs. ‘Alongside’ the NAM’s interaction with the physical community there is also a possible ‘esoteric community’ being created by the movement; a possible only, because acceptance of altered realities beyond the commonly accepted physical reality is not universal.

However, James, through his ‘four marks’, gave an outline of a person entering into a mystery reality (mysticism) separate from the physical. Through discussions, previous and subsequent to James on mysticism by academics, theologians and philosophers of that mystery, the word ‘mysticism’ has been placed in the community’s dialogue as a symbol representing an action involving an altered reality, or realities, into which a mystic enters – it has been made more ‘real’.

Many of the participants feel so strongly about their ‘connection’ with a mysterious altered reality, which they regard as divine and whose nature they agree on (through many of their descriptions correlating,) that they seek it both in groups and as individuals. Those that correlate in description could be said to be a ‘community of assent’ in levels of reality other than the physical; a community of the mind/thought which transcends the physical. There could be ‘said’ to be ‘A Community of Mystics’ existing in both the

altered realities, the 'homesteads of the mind', and in the physical community in New Zealand, a fragment of which took part in a survey for this thesis.

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Appendix i

P.O. Box 21,
LEESTON, 7656,
Canterbury.
Tel: 3243-720 (Ch'ch No)

1st June 2007

Dear

You are invited to participate as a subject in the research project entitled “***A Community of Mystics***” which will contribute to my Master’s thesis. The aim of the project is to gather knowledge of the altered/abstract realities through which individuals, gathered under academia’s umbrella label ‘The New Age Movement’, seek ‘the divine’ or a concept similar. The reason for doing so is to cement the argument that there *is* connection between those of alternative beliefs, that being through the ‘experience’ of religion, ‘mysticism’. In addition, a portion of the research is aimed at identifying some differences in lifestyle, and thought, from main-stream individuals in the wider community. This survey marks a milestone in New Zealand as it is the first to canvass the alternative community on their beliefs and spiritual lives; one which will quote directly, at times, from the answers you give, and pull similar answers together to find an overall pattern of belief and experience.

Your involvement will be entirely through a questionnaire drawn up by myself in such a way that the answers you give will reflect *your* beliefs and experiences and not preconceived conceptions, hence the ‘open-ended’ nature of some questions. All participants will be anonymous as names will not be put on the questionnaires, nor used in the thesis, nor published at any time. Instead a numbering system will be used to identify one questionnaire from another and although some of the results of this project may be published by me at a later date independent of the University, anonymity is assured due to the numbering system. Due to my interest in this survey beyond my University degree there are two parts to the consent form.

The project is being carried out as a requirement for my Master of Arts degree under the supervision of Dr M. Grimshaw, who can be contacted at 03 364-2390, ext: 6390, Philosophy and Religious Studies Department, University of Canterbury. He will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

This project has been received ***and approved*** by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Linda Hampton B.A.(Hons),
Healer, Metaphysical Counsellor, Paranormal Mediator.

P.S. If you know of anyone who would be willing to take part in this survey could you ask them to contact me or, after asking their permission, forward me their contact details.

Appendix ii

Linda Hampton,
P.O. Box 21,
LEESTON, 7656,
Canterbury.
Tel: 3243-720
(Ch'ch No.)

1st July, 2007

CONSENT FORM

"A Community of Mystics"

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.

In addition I agree to the anonymous results of the survey being used at a later date by Linda Hampton in publications beyond the Master of Arts degree she has activated this project for.

I understand also that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

NAME (Please print):

.....

Signature:

Date:

Please return this form in the attached stamped addressed envelope

Appendix iii

**This Questionnaire is compiled by Linda Hampton.
The answers are to be used in a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts,
supervised by Dr M. Grimshaw, School of Philosophy & Religious Studies,
College of Arts, University of Canterbury.**

Most questions are organised so that you can answer by circling a word or phrase, but where that is inappropriate I have asked for written explanations. If the space provided is inadequate, please either write on the back of this form or use a separate piece of paper, numbering what question you are answering, e.g. 1/c) or 7/b) etc. All information given will be anonymous. Any answer is valuable and will be treated with the utmost respect.

1.

a) Are you?... *(please circle one)* Male. Female

What age group do you fall within?	18-30 years	31-40 years
	41-50 years	51-85 years

b) What is your work status?... *(please circle one)*

Self-employed Paid employment Unemployed

Voluntary employment

If you feel none of the above apply to you please state your status/identity

.....
.....

c) Do you work as an alternative therapist? Yes/No

If you circled 'yes' are you? ... *(please circle one)* Full time Part-time

d) Do you provide/sell a product or products to the alternative community?

Yes/No.

If you circled 'yes' is it? ... *(please circle one)* Full time Part-time

What is your product?

.....
.....
.....

e) Are you involved in helping others achieve 'something' in the spiritual field? Yes/No

If you circled 'yes' could you describe what that 'something' is?

.....

.....

.....

f) Is there any other title/label you would give yourself in addition, or instead of the above?

.....

.....

2.

a) Did you have a religious upbringing of any sort? Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' can you please state the religions denomination or title

.....

.....

b) Do you belong to a religious organisation? Yes/No

c) Do you regard yourself connected in any way to a religious organisation?

Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' how so?

.....

.....

.....

d) Do you belong to a spiritual group or organisation independent of traditional religious institutions? Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes', what is its name?

.....

.....

e) What are the group's or organisation's aims?

.....

.....

.....

f) How often do you meet?

.....

g) Do you believe that traditional religion has played any part in your spirituality?

Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes', how has religion played a part?

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.....

h) Do you feel you have retained any element of that religion/s in your own beliefs?

Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' can you describe that element?

.....

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3.

a) Do you consider your beliefs to be... *(please circle what is appropriate)*.

Mainstream

Alternative

Unique to you

b) Around what date did you start to actively seek knowledge of spirituality?

.....

c) What religious traditions have you read about or explored?

.....

.....

.....

.....

d) How or from what quarter did you hear of those religious traditions?

.....

.....

.....

.....

e) How would you describe your religious/spiritual identity?

.....

.....

.....

.....

f) Do you consider that your 'non mainstream' beliefs belong to a tradition? Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' what is that tradition?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4.

a) Do any of the following labels apply to you?... *(please circle any that are appropriate)*

Psychic Fey Clairvoyant Sensitive Clairaudient

Are there any other words more appropriate or additional to the above that you can apply to yourself?

.....

.....

.....

.....

b) Do you use any (or all) of these attributes in your everyday life? Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' can you explain how you do so?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5.

a) Do you meditate? Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' can you answer the following questions in this section, if your answer was 'no' please pass onto Section 6.

b) Do you meditate? *(Please circle appropriate phrase)*

daily several times a week once a week once a fortnight

or?

.....

c) What school of thought or religion do you align your meditation with?

.....
.....

d) What position do you place your body in when meditating?

.....
.....

e) Were you taught to meditate? Yes/No

Or did you 'discover' the ability yourself?

Yes/No

f) Have you ever experienced an altered or abstract reality whilst meditating?

Yes/No

g) Can you describe that state at all? *(If there is not enough room please use either a separate piece of paper or the back of this form)*

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.....

h) Have you experienced when meditating an altered or abstract reality more than once?

Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' how often would you achieve an altered or abstract reality? *(please circle appropriate phrase/word)*

Every time I meditate

Regularly

Not frequent

Rarely

i) Do you focus on a spiritual identity, an object, mantra or a particular concept whilst meditating? Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' can you describe that identity/object/mantra or concept?

.....

.....

.....

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6.

a) Have you experienced, or do you experience, an altered or abstract reality at any time other than when meditating?

Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' can you say when and how it manifested? (Please use a separate piece of paper or the back of this form if space allowed is inadequate)

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b) Did your life change after you first experienced an altered or abstract reality?

Yes/No

If you circled 'yes' can you describe how it changed?

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[illegible]

7.

a) Do you, or have you participated in any of the following activities as a client/patient?

(Please circle appropriate titles.)

Reiki

Intuitive Healing

Psychic Healing

Message

Healing of any other title (*please provide title*)

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b) How often do you seek a healing treatment? *(Please circle appropriate period.)*

Weekly Fortnightly

Monthly

Six Monthly

Annually

c) Have you experienced an altered or abstract reality during a treatment?

Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' can you describe the experience?

[illegible]

8.

a) Are you an active healer? Yes/No

b) Are you...? Qualified In training Self-taught

If you have circled the first or second (or both), what is the modality's title/s? *(Please include all the modalities you are qualified in, if there is more than one.)*

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c) Have you ever found yourself entering an altered or abstract reality whilst healing?

Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' can you describe the experience?

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9.

a) Have you sought an experience with any of the following:-

Tarot Cards

Divination/Oracle Cards

Prophetical cards

Sacred/Spiritual Dance Sacred/Spiritual Music

Sacred/Spiritual Drumming

Sacred/Spiritual Toning (using the voice in any way)

If you have circled any of the above can you say why you sought these activities and what effect they had on you, i.e. whether it was pleasant, disturbing, invigorating, frightening, life changing etc. and why?

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b) Do you partake in ritual of any kind (other than meditation and healing) which induces, or has induced, an altered or abstract reality experience for you? Yes/No

If you circled 'yes' can you describe it?

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And do you participate: *(please circle one)*

Regularly

Infrequently

c) If the answer to any of the above in this section is in the affirmative, then how do you feel you are using your senses during the altered state, or during the period you are in the altered or abstract reality?

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d) Is there value in 'experiencing' as opposed to just 'knowing' there are other realities?

Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' can you say why?

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10.

a) Do you believe in the concept of 'the divine', or the possibility of such a concept?

Yes/No

b) Do you believe in a supreme being of any kind? Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' what title do you give this being?

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Is this being 'divine'?

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Is this being god-like?

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c) If you have circled 'no' to the last two questions, but have answered 'yes' to question 'b)' then how would you describe the nature of that being?

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d) Have you been in contact with this being? Yes/No

e) Is contact with this being via an altered or abstract reality experience/s? Yes/No

If you have circled 'no' can you say how you contact this being or are contacted by him/her.

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If you have circled 'yes' can you describe that altered or abstract reality?

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11.

a) Do you have a guru, teacher or mentor in the material (everyday) reality?

Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes', where is he/she/it located?

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 b) Have you ever travelled (what *you* might consider a significant distance), to a spiritual workshop/course to partake or meet a specific teacher? Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' would that be.....? (*please circle appropriate phrases or numbers sequences*)

Within the town or city you live in

In another town or city

And from your home would it be: 10 – 15 kms 16 – 25 kms 26 – 50 kms

51 – 100 kms

more than 100 kms

To Nth Island (if living in Sth Island)

To Sth Island (if living in Nth Island)

Overseas (please state country)

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 c) What was that teacher's name at the workshop course, or if more than one workshop/course has been attended - the names of your teachers?

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 d) What was the topic of the workshop/s/course/s?

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 e) Do you feel you benefited from the workshop/s/course/s overall? Yes/No

If you answered 'yes' then can you describe that benefit?

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d) Do you feel isolated because of your beliefs? Yes/No

e) With regard to life generally, have your beliefs made you emotionally more...?

(please circle one) Optimistic Pessimistic Unchanged

Appendix Questions:

i) What is your ethnicity?

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i) What socio-economic part of society were you born into? (eg blue collar, middleclass)

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ii) Do you believe in reincarnation? Yes/No

iii) Are you a...? (Please circle appropriate one)

Vegetarian Vegan Meat-eater

If you circled 'vegetarian' how long have you been one?.....years

If you circled 'vegan' how long have you been one?years

If you circled 'meat-eater' have you always been one? Yes/No

iv) If you are a vegetarian or vegan? Are the reasons:- (Please circle appropriate phrase/s)

Ecological Purely taste related Can't bear to eat Animals

Come from a Vegetarian family Other reasons (can you say what they are?)

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v) Are you a feminist? Yes/No

vi) Do you or have you belonged to any eco-environmental group/s? Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' can you please give the title/s.

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And its/their activities/aims?

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vii) Have you ever read about or explored in any way the following traditions? *(Please circle)*

Christianity	Buddhism	Sufism	North American Native
Tanta	Jewish Kabbala	Aspects of Hinduism	Shamanism (generally)
Celtic Legends	Gnosticism	Islam	Arthurian
European Nature Religions Buddhism		Zen Buddhism	Tibetan
Maori Spirituality paganism	Wicca	Pagan	Neo-

viii) Have you knowledge of your other lives? Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' can you say how this has affected your view of the 'real' (everyday reality) in this life?

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ix) Have you changed your name (other than through marriage). Yes/No

If you have circled 'yes' can you say why you felt to do so?

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x) What is your view of the academic label 'New Age Movement' to describe alternative spirituality?

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THANK YOU.

Linda Hampton, P.O. Box 21, Leeston, 7656, Canterbury. Tel: 3243-720

Distribution of Survey Participants in Districts and Cities

