

Paranormal craze part of new religion, theologian insists

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Fascination with zombies and vampires reflects a global New Spirituality shaped by America through pop culture, said theologian Ross Clifford, author of [*The Cross is not Enough: Living as Witnesses to the Resurrection*](#).

☒ Eckhart Tolle with television talk show host Oprah Winfrey. In 2008, approximately 35 million people participated in a series of 10 live webinars with Tolle and Winfrey. Clifford, principal of Morling College in New South Wales, Australia, believes the current paranormal craze fits into a broader movement of religious thoughts, including what was known a few years ago as the New Age movement.

America is the epicenter and exporter of this New Spirituality, Clifford maintains.

“It’s Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*; it’s Oprah, it’s Deepak Chopra, Eckhart Tolle. This new spirituality is an adult search for meaning and direction outside of institutionalized Christianity as they see it,” he said.

Clifford believes one characteristic of the New Spirituality is to pick and choose elements it wishes to incorporate from various religious systems.

“It’s eclectic, drawing bits and pieces of truth from different religions and spiritual sources,” he notes.

Drawing from the East and West

New Spirituality focuses on making the individual the best person he or she can possibly become. In seeking this end, it draws heavily from Eastern as

well as Western religious systems.

According to Clifford, Pew research shows many Americans who indicate no religious commitment actually embrace New Spirituality. He observes a connection between pop culture's fascination with the undead and the broader category of New Spirituality.

"Our generation has known Christianity if only nominally and is now exploring an alternative spirituality beyond Christianity and more embracing," he said.

Theologians like Clifford point out New Spirituality's piecemeal approach leaves it without a central belief system. Critics of New Spirituality predict a philosophy that seeks to draw one thing from one religion and something else from another, and makes the self its central focus cannot be ultimately satisfying.

Exciting challenge for Christians

Clifford calls the church's response to new spirituality an "exciting challenge, because they are asking us spiritual questions."

"The young people are searching through *Twilight*. They want to know how they can be the best person they can possibly be. So, we have a wonderful opportunity to connect with a thirsty generation," he said.

"It is wonderful to see what churches are doing and can do. I just think of this as an exciting time to be able in our way, not to Bible-bash people, but to let them see that in the search for meaning today, we said no to the materialism, we said no to the chase for the dollar—the economic crisis has guaranteed that. We have a wonderful opportunity to redirect the conversation and see people finding fulfillment in Jesus."