



STATEMENT DN080

The Best Books on the New Age Movement

Over the past few years, and particularly the past several months, the Christian market has been virtually glutted with books on the New Age movement (NAM). Certainly, the topic is broad enough and important enough to warrant several treatments of it. But it is becoming increasingly difficult for booksellers to *stock* all these titles, let alone for Christians to read them. Some of these books are sensational, others superficial. Still others are thoughtful and basically accurate, but lack originality. How then does the reader sort through this mass of volumes to find those rare works which *are* of great worth? It is the purpose of this review to help such readers by pointing to the following titles — the best books on the New Age.

Unmasking the New Age

Douglas R. Groothuis
(InterVarsity Press, 1986)

The first good Christian book on the New Age movement is still at the top of my list. *Unmasking the New Age* is an amazing work in that in 194 pages it covers virtually every relevant submovement and trend within this far-flung movement, and addresses every major question it raises for Christians. After providing a basic introduction and historical background, Douglas Groothuis proceeds to offer an overview of New Age influences in medicine, psychology, science, politics, and religion. He concludes by outlining a preliminary Christian response to the NAM.

The author deserves high marks on several points. As one who has also researched the subject, I can attest that Groothuis is extremely well-read in the vast literature pertaining to his subject. He is also a clear, effective writer, packing his words lull with meaning. Furthermore, as a critic of the NAM Groothuis displays an all-too-rare quality: *balance*. For example, he recognizes that the NAM is *the* rising social force without concluding that the battle for our culture is already lost.

If the book has a weakness it might be a lack of apologetic muscle. Groothuis's criticisms of the movement, though valid and relevant, are usually very brief. But if this is a flaw, it is a minor one. One book can only accomplish so much. As a concise Christian overview of the NAM, *Unmasking* can hardly be topped.

Confronting the New Age

Douglas Groothuis
(InterVarsity Press, 1988)

Looking for a book with a strong *practical* emphasis to help you respond to the NAM? Groothuis's *Confronting the New Age* offers much useful information and advice on both witnessing to New Agers and resisting their social incursions. In the process it offers a Christian apologetic to many New Age claims and suggests principles of discernment for Christians encountering possible New Age influences.

Not only does Groothuis equip Christians to respond to the NAM, he also strives to insure that their response is *balanced*. Chapter 3, "Converting a Culture," lists three scriptural themes for a Christian's interaction with culture ("separation," "transformation," and "conservation") and six "pitfalls" (from the "quarantine mentality" to the "ostrich mentality") which result when these themes are not held in proper balance. As the author demonstrates, a major problem with the church's response to the NAM so far has been falling into one or the other of these pitfalls.

Whereas many sequels merely rehash the thesis of the first book, *Confronting* is a much-needed complement to *Unmasking*. Together the two books firmly establish Groothuis as one of our leading authorities on the NAM.

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The New Age Rage

Karen Hoyt and the Spiritual Counterfeits Project
(Fleming H. Revell Company, 1987)

As their first and only book on the NAM, *The New Age Rage* distills the collective research and insights of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project (SCP). SCP is a forefront “discernment” ministry in Berkeley, California, that has been observing and critiquing virtually every aspect of the NAM since 1974.

The whole gamut of New Age thought and activity is covered, including health care, science, politics, and psychology. Additional chapters are devoted to providing historical background, examining Eastern influences, discussing the end-times and conspiratorial intrigue that many attach to the NAM, contrasting New Age and Christian views of personal growth and transformation, and suggesting strategies for sharing the gospel with New Agers.

Every chapter in the book is worth reading, but some are more so than others. Specifically, the chapters on “A Vision for a New Humanity,” “Cosmic Conspiracy and End Times Speculation,” and “Breaking Barriers by Building Bridges” are invaluable. But the two chapters contrasting Christian and New Age views of growth and transformation, though insightful, reflect inadequate research. They critique the world-denying doctrines of Eastern monism without addressing serious (even if ultimately futile) New Age efforts to redefine these doctrines in more positive terms.

Because of the book’s multiple authorship, it lacks the coherence and evenness of books like Groothuis’s *Unmasking*. Nonetheless, those who are looking for a *serious* evaluation of the NAM as a major cultural trend should not miss this book.

Inside the New Age Nightmare

Randall N. Baer
(Huntington House, 1989)

Sadly, the author of this important book — a former New Age leader — is no longer with us. He was killed on May 5 in an automobile accident, just days before the book was ready to be released to the public. (According to Huntington House, an official investigation is in progress concerning several suspicious details surrounding the incident.)

The most powerful part of *Inside the New Age Nightmare* is its first three chapters. These tell Randall Baer’s moving story; how he was first lured into the NAM, then avidly pursued many New Age spiritual paths, went on to become an internationally respected speaker and author (writing two best-selling books on crystals for Harper & Row), and finally came face to face with the powerful evil that lurks behind the seemingly benign face of the NAM: a consuming darkness from which he could only find deliverance through Jesus Christ.

The remaining nine chapters take a broad look at the NAM in terms of its practices, participants, social inroads, and hostility toward orthodox Christianity. The author, with 15 years in the NAM, knows his subject thoroughly. He offers fresh insights on the nature and operation of the NAM.

Baer devotes special attention to “forewarning” and “forearming” the spiritually vulnerable so they will recognize how Satan uses the seductive allurements of New Age mystical “highs” to produce ever-increasing dependency on and bondage to the occult. He also applies the “You shall know them by their fruits” test to the NAM with compelling thoroughness.

The book is not without some noteworthy flaws. For example, he fails to document debatable claims (see, e.g., p. 145). He also believes and cites questionable authorities pertaining to the supposed heavy dependency of Hitler on the occult and alleged plans of New Agers to “cleanse” the earth by exterminating Christians. Such failings, however, can be largely excused because of Baer’s newness (two years?) to the Christian faith.

For those who find the other books described here too scholarly, this one will be a refreshing alternative. It presents comparably valuable information and analysis in a simpler, more personal style. It also affords several moments of “comic relief” as Baer recalls some of his wild and whacky encounters with New Agers.

In closing, we at the JOURNAL would naturally like to think that the new books by our publisher and editor (Walter Martin’s *The New Age Cult*, Bethany House Publishers, and my own *A Crash Course on the New Age Movement*, Baker Book House) also belong on this list. But we will leave that judgment for others to make.

— Elliot Miller

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