



STATEMENT DN011

A Summary Critique: Dark Secrets Of The New Age / Mystery Mark Of The New Age

In both *Dark Secrets of the New Age* and *Mystery Mark of the New Age*, Texe Marrs depicts the New Age movement as the inexorable engine of apostasy and apocalypse which is intent on unveiling a counterfeit Christ (the Antichrist) and creating a one-world government and religion requiring its satanic mark. Both books have leapt onto the Christian bestseller list and Mr. Marrs is frequently interviewed on Christian radio and television as an expert on the New Age movement.

Marrs has assembled a vast array of data to demonstrate New Age cultural influence. He shows the New Age world view to be opposed to Christianity because it depersonalizes God as a cosmic force, deifies man, demotes Jesus, promotes spirit contact, relativizes morality, reduces religion to pantheism, revives ancient paganism, and sparks hostility toward those (such as “underevolved” Christians) who refuse to “resonate” with the enlightened.

Both books give evidence that Marrs has done his homework. He reports New Age influence at a variety of levels and exposes an occult underbelly of the movement often neglected by superficial media reports and New Age propaganda itself.

The chapter, “Call Not Evil Good,” in *Mystery Mark* is most helpful in revealing the alarming pervasiveness of the New Age’s teaching that the devil and evil don’t exist; therefore, we are not sinners, we don’t need a Savior, and we are free to do anything! Such ethical relativism is both radical and rampant in New Age circles, and such a corrosion of conscience can only bode ill for the nation.

Similarly the chapter, “Apostasy: The New Age Plan to Take Over the Christian Church,” in *Dark Secrets* is instructive on how New Agers redefine and misinterpret biblical doctrine, all the while claiming spiritual legitimacy. This area will become increasingly important as New Agers attempt to fortify their belief system by passing it off as “the true Christianity.”

Although Marrs has done his homework, the quality of that homework is regrettably deficient in several areas. First, he is committed to the idea that the New Age movement *will* usher in the Antichrist; it’s only a matter of time. In so doing, he places all his eschatological eggs in the New Age basket.

Although this scenario is possible, it discounts the possibility of revival in the West and elsewhere before the Second Coming. Much of America is being taken captive by the New Age, but the active presence of the Holy Spirit remains with us, and renewal and reformation are possible. The New Age threat should drive us not only to our knees but also into the streets to proclaim, defend, and apply the truth of the gospel. Yet even if the battle for the hearts and minds of the West is lost, the God of the universe is bigger than Western civilization! If we completely forfeit our Christian heritage, God may stir — and is stirring — revival elsewhere. The judgment of America and/or the West may not mean the end of the world, as much as that might prick our provincialism. (The fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. wasn’t the end of the Kingdom of God!)

Marrs’s eschatological certainty sometimes leads him carelessly to correlate New Age prophecies with biblical prophecies. It is unwise to appeal to an occult document to interpret the meaning of a biblical passage. We should remember that various occult prophecies have failed in the past and will fail again. Let’s be careful not to give the devil the pen with which to write our eschatology.

Second, Marrs sometimes uncritically accepts New Age reports at face value, as does Constance Cumbey (see Elliot Miller’s critique of her books in the Summer 1987 Christian Research Journal). For instance, he writes as if all

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channeled or spiritistic material is directly dictated by demons. This may or may not be, depending on the case. The channeled doctrines are always demonic (1 Tim. 4:4), but the direct source may be merely human. Human fraud is an element of the New Age that Marris doesn't seem to recognize. Neither does he consider the possibility that some channeling might issue from mental disorders. (See Elliot Miller's two-part series on channeling in the Fall 1987 and Winter/Spring 1988 Journals.)

In *Mystery Mark*, Marris quotes Jose Arguilles, the mastermind of the New Age "Harmonic Convergence" (August 16 and 17, 1987): "We're almost at the completion stage of bringing all the thousands of New Age groups, organizations and churches together." Arguilles may well believe this. But based on my own research and observation I take his statement with some grains of sociological salt. Marris, however, takes it as unmistakable evidence of a "monstrous and hideous" global conspiracy.

Because New Agers are often utopian, thinking they can establish heaven on earth by "creating their own reality," they tend to overstate their influence. When the New Age "World Peace Event" was held in Seattle in December of 1986, local organizers predicted as many as thirty-five thousand pilgrims would attend the all-night vigil for "visualizing world peace." About seven thousand attended. The expected results of the "Harmonic Convergence" turned out to be a bit less cosmic than anticipated by many breathless New Age oracles. Many New Agers may *claim* we are on the brink of planetary transformation, but let's demand hard evidence before certifying their optimism. After all, cults are famous for claiming more members than they actually have. Marris has piled up mounds of data, but a more careful *interpreting* of the data is in order.

Marris's conspiratorial thinking often ignores the diversity within the New Age movement. The movement has no one human leader, although Satan is the spiritual source of its doctrinal deviance; it has no one overarching and unifying organization, although formal and informal "networking" is common; nor does it have an official bible. Some New Agers look for a counterfeit Christ to unite the planet and bring world peace. Others recognize no guiding power outside themselves and have a more decentralized view of social change.

Yet Marris casts a conspiratorial net of uniformity around this diversity and disregards important distinctions and qualifications. We should remember Isaiah's words: "Do not call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. The LORD Almighty is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread" (Isa. 8:12-13).

The New Age movement is better viewed as a deep and significant cultural trend based on a world view shift than as a tightly knit conspiracy. Because it advances an insurgent non-Christian world view, the movement needs to be rationally critiqued — not just denounced or pushed into an eschatological showcase.

Third, Marris's books flex little apologetic muscle. He proclaims, but seldom defends, the gospel. He rightly equates New Age errors with the devil's work, but seldom exposes their illogic and lack of evidence.

The New Age movement does raise important apologetic issues. Did the Bible ever teach reincarnation, as Shirley MacLaine and others claim? Is the idea of Karma just? Does it make sense to believe in an impersonal and amoral God? Did Jesus travel to India? Is ethical relativism logical and livable? Though Marris exposes many unsavory elements of the New Age, he seldom develops a Christian response to these important issues.

The New Age is filling a cultural void. It advances where Christians retreat. It isn't enough to curse the darkness. Christians need to shine forth the light of Christ in every area of life — whether education, business, medicine, politics, or psychology to displace the darkness of deception. We need strategies for cultural influence as well as descriptions of deception. We need a theology of culture as well as a demonology. This apologetic of responsible cultural action is absent from Marris's presentation.

Fourth, both books are over-documented in that the reader must wade eye-deep through masses of New Age quotations, often from obscure writers that Marris mistakenly takes as representative of all New Agers. The aim of Christian critiques of the cults, the occult, and the New Age movement should not be to create experts in error. A better strategy is inoculation. Only enough error should be presented to produce spiritual antibodies that insure immunity from the deception. *Dark Secrets* and *Mystery Mark* are both cases of occult overkill.

Fifth, both books are sometimes also under-documented in that some key claims — such as *Mystery Mark's* assertion that Gorbachev is a New Ager! — are not substantiated. Simply because Gorbachev uses a few words approved of by New Agers does not put him in their category.

The extent to which Texe Marrs's books motivate Christians to proclaim, defend, and apply their faith to the New Age challenge is debatable. If they awaken Christians to the acids of spiritual error and stimulate them to live for Jesus, they will be a needed tonic for a crippling apathy. If they are taken as a report that “there are giants in the land” that cannot be defeated, they may only serve to fortify that apathy.

— *Douglas Groothuis*