

# CHRISTIAN BOOKS ON THE NEW AGE

## A REVIEW ARTICLE

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*The many Christian books on the New Age may be divided into the categories of general surveys, those treating special areas of thought, novels against the movement, evangelistic works, writings by former New Age advocates, treatments of the New Age appeal to women, and those directed to children. Within each category these writings differ in value and purpose. It behooves the evangelical Christian to be selective in his choice of which of these books to use.*

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At least fifty Christian books have responded to the New Age Movement since 1985. Readers wonder which are of most value as they choose which ones to purchase. This essay looks at thirty-two of these works, comments briefly upon each, and compares their strengths and weaknesses with others. Volumes making the greater contributions receive a more detailed evaluation.

### INTRODUCTION

Evangelical books criticizing the New Age Movement (referred to henceforth as NA) number only a fraction of those works written in favor of the movement. These latter fill several shelves at Dalton, Waldenbooks, Crown, and other outlets, some of them viewing the NA in general and others claiming to contain the words of Jesus. They may deal with yoga, eastern meditation techniques, crystal power, tarot cards, out-of-body experiences, mind power to walk across burning coals or bend spoons or levitate or engage in super sex, or how to open one's life to direction from "spirit guides" (another name for demons).

The present discussion deals with *Christian* books. NA materials are too numerous to undertake an exhaustive study of them.

Even a consideration of Christian writings must be limited to *books*, excluding seminars, journal articles, materials published by The Spiritual Counterfeits Project and radio programs, tapes, and the like. Yet books cover practically all the aspects of NA.

It is helpful for the reader in gleaning information on the NA to divide the works under discussion into several categories. Some are general surveys, either of a scholarly or popular nature. Others analyze special areas of NA thought. Further, there are novels, evangelistic works, testimonies by former New Agers, books to women, and those for children. Sometimes a book may fit into more than one group.

## GENERAL SURVEYS

General surveys are of two types, the scholarly and the popular.

### *Scholarly Surveys*

Works found to be most helpful in regard to careful research, helpful critique, and informative coverage come earlier in the order of discussion: Elliot Miller, Douglas Groothuis, Karen Hoyt (ed.), Randall Baer, and Gary North.

**Elliot Miller**, *A Crash Course on the New Age Movement*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989. 260 pp.

This former editor of *Christian Research Journal*, with an MA in apologetics from Simon Greenleaf School of Law, endorsed early forms of what eventually became "the New Age Movement." He recounts his experience and his coming to Jesus Christ (appen. D).

His easily readable survey is a masterful treatment of NA belief. The movement is a loosely structured network of organizations and people within the network who are bound together by common values` values such as mysticism, monism ("all is one"), and a vision of the new Aquarian Age of peace and enlightenment. New Agers think "they can hasten the new order . . . by cooperating to influence developments in . . . political, economic, social, and spiritual life."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Miller, *Crash Course* 15.

Miller tells what the NA is and is not, and describes factors that have made it prominent in the USA.<sup>2</sup> He attributes its rapid growth to a revolt against the emptiness of secularism and a disillusionment resulting from the sex scandals of Jimmy Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart. However, all New Agers are not the same.<sup>3</sup> Their beliefs and practices may differ just as those of Christian groups and individuals do.

Miller contrasts hippies and NA people,<sup>4</sup> and describes the longings of the 1970's that nourished the movement, the unchristian nature of it, and the occultism that is its heart.<sup>5</sup> Substantial discussions deal with NA scientific claims (chap. 2), NA ideology (chaps. 3-4), and the Aquarian (Age) conspiracy (chaps. 5-6). The seventh chapter investigates the meaning of the NA for Christianity, giving reasons for and against labeling the NA as a precursor to the Antichrist and suggesting a Christian response to it. The next two chapters evaluate channeling (i.e. being a medium for other entities) with a mention of self-hypnosis, conscious fraud, and demon possession.<sup>6</sup>

Miller's appraisals are balanced and reflect a good knowledge of the relevant literature and an awareness of different sides of the issue. The late Walter Martin wrote in the Foreword, "I know of no one more qualified to write such a work and no work that approaches (its) scope and depth."

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<sup>2</sup>An example is Shirley MacLaine's alleged experiences in channeling (Shirley MacLaine, *Out on a Limb* [New York: Bantam, 1983]; *idem*, *Dancing in the Light* [New York: Bantam, 1985]).

<sup>3</sup>Miller, *Crash Course* 20.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 24-25.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 31-32.

<sup>6</sup>Appendix A answers eight common questions about the NA. One gives criteria for identifying a New Ager. Appendix B thoroughly critiques Cumbey's theory of a NA conspiracy (Constance Cumbey, *Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow* [Shreveport, LA: Huntington House, 1983]). He does not agree with her, but compliments her for alerting Christians. Appendix C has suggestions for witnessing to New Agers with an illustrative conversation that shows steps in leading a New Ager to the true gospel.

**Douglas Groothuis**, *Unmasking the New Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986. 192 pp.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Confronting the New Age*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988. 230 pp.

Elliot Miller, author of the previous work, ranks *Unmasking the New Age* preeminent in value.<sup>7</sup> Groothuis with a background as a reviewer for *Christian Research Journal*, as an instructor at the McKenzie Study Center, and as a graduate student in philosophy, reflects an impressive grasp of the NA. His work is clear, well organized, careful in its citation of NA statements, and accurate in its biblical evaluations. The former of his two books is as informative as anything so far.

He notes six NA distinctives:<sup>8</sup> (1) Monism and a person's consciousness expanding until his thinking dissolves into universal, undifferentiated oneness of realizing his godhood; (2) pantheism, all is God, an "it," a force, an energy, a consciousness; (3) every human is God (ignorance being the reason people do not realize this) and man is to worship his own being;<sup>9</sup> (4) men need to be enlightened about their godhood and can be by consciousness-altering techniques (i.e. meditation, yoga, LSD, est [i.e. Erhard Seminar Training or Forum training], chanting, dancing, hypnotism, internal visualization, sexual acts, biofeedback, etc.); (5) all religions are one, Christianity not being unique because this would disrupt unity;<sup>10</sup> (6) NA help can bestow cosmic evolutionary optimism by radical transforming power through methods of expanding the consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Elliot Miller, "The Best Books on the New Age Movement," *Christian Research Journal* 12/1 (Summer 1989) 30.

<sup>8</sup>Groothuis, *Unmasking* 19-31.

<sup>9</sup>Or Groothuis expresses it, "The self is the cosmic treasury of wisdom, power and delight" (Groothuis, *Unmasking* 25).

<sup>10</sup>New Agers come to this conclusion in different ways, one of which is to see Jesus' mission as one of letting men know their godhood.

<sup>11</sup>Humans can be "a new suprahuman species . . . as superior to present day humanity as we are to the apes" (Barbara Marx Hubbard, "The Future of Futurism," *The Futurist* [Apr 1983] 55, cited by Groothuis, *Unmasking* 30). The Messiah within

Groothuis also has chapters that are helpful on special aspects of the NA movement: moving from the counterculture to NA holistic health,<sup>12</sup> yoga methods for sexual intimacy and oneness, seeing a denial of death as the final stage of growth (i.e. a transition into reincarnation), and other NA expressions. He also handles human potential in psychology, science, politics, and spirituality.

He exposes veiled NA ideas by isolating the NA concepts that lie hidden beneath apparently harmless activities and philosophies (chap. 8). His pinpointing of the subjective dissolving of ethical distinctions between good and evil reflects NA's inability to claim that the movement is either good or true.<sup>13</sup> He contrasts the Christian view and explains several areas where it is more sensible: a personal God, a God who is transcendent, the possibility of ethics, a rational revelation for the submissive to learn from, a truly holistic picture in God's plan and power, objectivity, and historical evidences.<sup>14</sup>

While recognizing the rapid growth of NA enterprises, Groothuis is not pessimistic. He does not see NA world conquest as a foregone conclusion. A helpful addition to a work by one with such a thorough grasp of the NA and such colorful expressions would have been a fuller development of biblical responses to NA teachings.

In *Confronting*, this same author provides a few more of these responses. Three chapters (chaps. 4-6) telling how to witness to the New Ager are an informative comparison of the NA and Christian beliefs. They show Christian tenets to be more reasonable. It is too bad that the writer does not give a practical methodology for this kind of witnessing. This is the kind of help offered by Miller's work discussed above and by the books of Baer, Martin, and McGuire yet to be described.

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men will lead them into the bright future of a world community, all by means of realizing the potential of collective humanity.

<sup>12</sup>This includes acupuncture, biofeedback, iridology (i.e. gauging bodily irregularities by the iris of the eye) (Groothuis, *Unmasking* 61).

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 167.

**Karen Hoyt** (ed.), *The New Age Rage*. Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1987. 263 pp.

Several resource persons, including Brooks Alexander, Robert Burrows, and Groothuis, contribute chapters to this volume edited by Hoyt, executive director of Spiritual Counterfeits Project, Berkeley, CA. Chapter subjects include holistic health, science, politics, transpersonal psychology, personal growth (i.e. finding or losing oneself), conspiracy theories, and others. One must read this book slowly and patiently. It does not flow as well as those by Miller, Groothuis, and some others.<sup>15</sup>

A beneficial appendix contains thirteen contrasts of the NA with authentic Christianity. The work's bibliography would have been more useful if it categorized the books somehow, as in the works by Miller, Groothuis, Amano/Geisler, and some others.

**Randall Baer**, *Inside the New Age Nightmare*. Lafayette, LA: Huntington House, 1989. 197 pp.

During his fifteen years as a New Ager Baer became a sought-after seminar leader and wrote two books on crystals, both of which attained a top-three sales rating with Random House. In an out-of-the-body experience about three or four years ago, he was pushing to reach the ultimate break-through in the realm of rapturous colors, when suddenly a hand seemed to reach down before him, peel back a layer of the scene beckoning him onward, and expose a hideous face ready to devour him. He was terrified and began having doubts.

His later analysis after becoming a Christian was that the earlier part of the experience was Satan's enticing display of the beautiful and the latter was his actual hideous face revealing his desire to destroy. As a Christian he began witnessing to New Agers even at their own

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<sup>15</sup>An example of its ponderous writing-style is in a chapter on Cosmic Conspiracy and End-Time Speculation: "When the Bible speaks of conspiracy theories specifically, it ignores the issue of accuracy altogether. It simply directs our attention to God which is where it truly belongs" (Hoyt, *Rage* 201). Whatever this means could have been expressed more clearly.

seminars`but not for long. After a lectureship in New Mexico, he went to Colorado where his vehicle swerved off a mountain pass on May 5, 1989. The circumstances of his death were mysterious, giving rise to separate investigations by the FBI, an insurance company, and a sheriff's department.<sup>16</sup>

Baer's book is most informative about life inside NA experience. The Space Brothers (i.e. spirit guides) instructed him specifically how to write a book that reached number one in world sales.<sup>17</sup> He candidly recounts frequent ruination of families during workshops and retreats through spouse swapping to find new "soul mates."

After beginning his Christian witness he was persecuted with attempts on his life by demons, as he analyzed it. Several strange incidents almost took his life before his final wreck.<sup>18</sup> Yet he also tells of God's blessing that cheered him and the lessons he learned in witnessing.

His descriptions of the basic philosophy of the NA and the kinds of people attracted to it are revealing. People rationalize promiscuous sex to the point that "the stability of marriage in the New Age is in a terrible state" producing an unusually high divorce rate.<sup>19</sup> Justifications for abortion take different forms, one of which is to note that through reincarnation a person will get another chance, so no harm is done.<sup>20</sup> Concern for the welfare of others was rarely observed, because in the movement, "the self loves to focus on the self."<sup>21</sup>

Baer exposes the NA's inroads into art, magazines, music, TV, movies, psychology/self-help books and the like.<sup>22</sup> Recognizing that

<sup>16</sup>*The Omega Letter*, 5/11 (Dec 1989) 7.

<sup>17</sup>Baer, *Inside* 36.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 129-30.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 151-57.

New Agers view Christians as distorted old-age relics with limited thinking,<sup>23</sup> he includes practical suggestions for helping them out of the NA entrapment and an open letter to New Agers.<sup>24</sup> His appendices deal with buzzwords, organizations advertised or listed in NA literature, names of NA journals, titles of workshops, and the like.

His weakness in the use of questionable sources has been noted,<sup>25</sup> but the reader interest generated by his detail and personal experiences within the NA is very high.

**Gary North**, *Occultism and New Age Humanism: Unholy Spirits*. Fort Worth: Dominion, 1988. 426 pp.

The 1986 cloth edition of this paperback was a revision of *None Dare Call It Witchcraft* (Arlington House, 1976). The work is a wordy, philosophical/historical analysis of the subject,<sup>26</sup> but good discussions reflect the underlying presuppositions of NA ideology. The occult revival, the ignoring of a sovereign God and resulting rampant immorality,<sup>27</sup> growth in paranormal science since 1960, detailed accounts of leading sorcerers and psychics, occult powers behind them (chaps. 4-7), magic, and UFO's<sup>28</sup> are reviewed. The self-designated heart of the book is his treatment of "Escape from Creaturehood" (chap. 10).<sup>29</sup> He explains many NA phenomena as accomplished by

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 162-63.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 175-78, 184-87.

<sup>25</sup>An illustration is his documentation of a claim that Hitler relied heavily on the occult (Elliot Miller, "Book Reviews," *Christian Research Journal* 12/1 [Summer 1989] 30).

<sup>26</sup>The author anticipates his readers' difficulty: "It requires a degree of self-discipline to read it" (North, *Occultism* 18).

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 326.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 329.

"supernatural and highly personal powers."<sup>30</sup>

He predicts that Christians will triumph in an emerging Christian republic, not in a rapture to heaven.<sup>31</sup> The rise of occultism and other NA infiltrations "can be reversed only by men who recognize their responsibilities under God to subdue the earth for the glory of God (Genesis 1:28)."<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately North's postmillennial bias brings him to misconstrue what the proper application of Scripture is.<sup>33</sup>

This writer's sections on the roots and trends of the NA are longer than comparable ones by Miller, Groothuis, Martin, and Amano/Geisler, whose handling of the subjects is adequate without a postmillennial solution. Three of North's chapters merit special commendation: the ones on Psychics (chap. 5), Edgar Cayce (chap. 6), and Demonic Healing (chap. 7).

### *Popular Surveys*

Among popular surveys, the more profitable works are by Brooke, Amano/Geisler, Martin, McRoberts, and Smith.

**Tal Brooke**, *Riders of the Cosmic Circuit*. Batavia, IL: Lion, 1986. 220 pp.

\_\_\_\_\_, *When the World Will Be As One*. Eugene, OR: Harvest

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 330.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 394. He labels the expectation of a rapture according to dispensational eschatology as retreatism and defeatism (ibid., 395). His primary agenda is postmillennialism and reconstructionism. Christians will subdue the earth only by integrating biblical law into society, so they need to get to work and do so.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 401.

<sup>33</sup>Many non-reconstructionist Christians apply biblical truth properly in response to the NA while believing in an imminent rapture. This hope is not inconsistent with hard work for God until it occurs. Admittedly, through an unfortunate imbalance between present responsibility and future hope, some have failed, but so have those with other views of Christ's return. A healthy balance between meeting present needs and a premillennial hope is the great need of the hour.

House, 1989. 294 pp.

Brooke's *Riders* profiles three "godmen" of India: Sai Baba (chaps. 1-3), Muktananda (chaps. 4-10), and Rajneesh (chaps. 11-21). Brooke, before conversion to Jesus Christ, spent 1969-71 studying them. The book shows the deceit of these leaders who pushed themselves in self-denial and mind-expansion to the "explosion" crisis and received enlightenment about their own deity. The attainment also brought cosmic power and a searing of conscience and moral sensitivity. Their control over their followers was absolute.

Sai Baba could hiss at his devotees over any annoyance they caused him and plunge them into despair for days.<sup>34</sup> Muktananda dispensed with morality, frequently having several women in his bedroom in one night.<sup>35</sup> He died in 1982 of a heart attack. In 1985 Rajneesh said that "Jesus Christ was a crackpot" and "only the retarded and utterly mediocre people can believe in God."<sup>36</sup> Subsequently, he pled guilty to two charges in United States federal courts for which he received a ten-year suspended sentence and was asked to leave the country.<sup>37</sup> He had trouble in other countries<sup>38</sup> and died recently on a South Pacific island while practicing the occult.

A chief benefit of the book is to help those who are being deluded into accepting NA thought to see its deceit before it is too late. Brooke analyzes some of these leaders' paranormal acts as merely human, but attributes some to powers from another world.<sup>39</sup> His own conversion resulted from an uneasiness that he was into something the Bible condemned (see chap. 22).

*When the World Will Be As One* relates NA plans for a global

<sup>34</sup>Brooke, *Riders* 35.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 71-72.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 65.

community to solve human problems. The greatest hindrance they face is genuine Christianity, which prevents NA seepage into every area of American life.<sup>40</sup> True Christians, in insisting on the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and not allowing the equality of Mohammed, Krishna, Lord Maitreya, and others with Him, make the authentic Christ an impediment to the NA. They therefore reformulate the NT picture of Christ into a broadminded, non-judging, cosmic being who approves all paths except the one biblical way. This reformulated Christ also teaches the deity of man, the truth of eastern mystery religions, and a syncretistic world. Channelers and psychics communicate with this Christ. New Agers are strongly antichurch.<sup>41</sup>

In Brooke's opinion, a world network of secret financiers is quietly conspiring to take control of the world economy through which it will bring governments under its control (chap. 20). This reviewer wonders whether a hidden aristocracy could have as much control as Brooke thinks, but can see how this plan, if fully implemented, could lead to such a world order.

As a young Christian, Brooke claims to have had a private superscreen vision of the NA future world system, which was quite different from the bright future promised by New Agers. His vision featured a grotesque creature who brainwashed people so as to destroy them.<sup>42</sup> It is unwise to combat the NA by pitting vision against vision as Brooke does, however. An accurate biblical picture of the future would be better. Brooke does this in his closing reminder that Christ will come and bring the collapse of the false Babylon, a global network of economic and occult forces. He then will replace man's world order with His own.

Miller has pointed out inaccuracies in Brooke's *Riders*. Brooke incorrectly attributes a NA newspaper ad for the NA "Christ" to the Lucis Trust founded by NA author Alice Bailey. Instead, the ad was

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<sup>40</sup>An example of seepage cited tells how a ouija board lured a person deeper and deeper into the occult (Brooke, *When the World* 18-22).

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 115-17.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 282.

placed by the Tara Center.<sup>43</sup> Aside from minor weaknesses, Brooke's books have outstanding content and are written in an engaging style.

**Walter Martin**, *The New Age Cult*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1989. 140 pp.

Martin's clear and orderly study sees the 1970's as when "the New Age Movement" terminology began. He has a good summary of NA doctrines (chap. 2) with their corresponding biblical correction (chap. 3). He pinpoints dangers of NA in the classroom, politics, and the church (chaps. 4-6). Dangers to the church include an erroneous doctrine of sin (i.e. sin is man's ignorance of his godhood), eastern meditation, no moral absolutes, and the teaching of a NA cosmic Christ to be found in all religious traditions. A discussion of reincarnation (chap. 7) and practical steps for evangelizing New Agers (chap. 8) conclude the book.

Martin's book is more informative than Chandler's, which is yet to be discussed, because of its briefer and more specific descriptions. Its strength is in giving Christian answers instead of majoring in information about the NA.

**J. Y. Amano and Norman L. Geisler**, *The Infiltration of the New Age*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 1989. 150 pp.

Amano's and Geisler's book is equally as helpful as Martin's in brevity, readability, and organization. Amano, a free-lance writer, and Geisler, Dean of the Liberty Center for Christian Scholarship, have combined efforts to produce well-selected material on eastern ideas that are seeping into the west. In particular, they treat pantheism, the occult and spirit guides, reincarnation, self-godhood, the global-village dream, and a world conspiracy. Their theory of a conspiracy sees Satan as the mastermind, not humanism, communism, NA belief, or the like.<sup>44</sup> The book's emphasis on the unproductivity of developing conspiracy theories of the latter kind may be overstated. Perhaps

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<sup>43</sup>Elliot Miller, "Book Review," *Christian Research Journal* 11/2 (Fall 1988) 30.

<sup>44</sup>Amano and Geisler, *The Infiltration* 99.

some can maintain a proper balance while pursuing such endeavors. However, their point about inadequate evidence to show New Agers secretly in control of the world is well taken.<sup>45</sup>

Appendices at the end include a summary of key NA concepts (appen. 1) and a section similar to Baer's book alerting Christians to signs of the NA (appen. 5). The latter lists New Age leaders, buzz words (i.e. centering, cosmic energy, etc.), and symbols (i.e. rainbow, pyramid, and rays of light). For its length, the book is very lucid and comprehensive.

**John Ankerberg and John Weldon**, *The Facts on the New Age Movement*. Chattanooga, TN: John Ankerberg Evangelistic Association, 1988. 40 pp.

This booklet condenses fundamental statements into answers to thirty lead questions. Well documented and perceptive, it shows how reasonable biblical answers are and exposes fallacies and dangers in NA thinking. It defines the NA, identifies its leaders, and describes its beliefs, attractiveness, techniques for channeling, and use of crystals to gain power. Scriptural answers to the NA, reasons why New Agers are against true Christianity, and arguments why New Agers are not behind a conspiracy to seize control of the world are also included. In addition, the brief work has space enough to discuss witchcraft, demons, and Satanism. Finally, the benefits of Christ for the New Ager are clarified.<sup>46</sup>

**Alice and Stephen Lawhead**, *Pilgrim's Guide to the New Age*. Batavia, IL: Lion, 1986. 112 pp.

The Lawhead work is a simulated driving tour of NA beliefs on cosmos, self, family, body, mind, and kingdom with the co-authors at the wheel.<sup>47</sup> An initial clarification of what the NA is would have

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 100.

<sup>46</sup>The booklet is available from The John Ankerberg Show, P. O. Box 8977, Chattanooga, TN 37411.

<sup>47</sup>Lawhead, *Pilgrim's Guide* 4.

helped this book. The "drivers" speed away so fast that the reader is puzzled by disjointed details about an enormous universe before being shown the relevance to the NA. Each part of the tour ends with a Christian perspective so general that it is unconvincing. Perhaps the book will appeal to readers who prefer picture books, but this preference will deprive them of much. Straightforward books by Miller, Groothuis, Baer, Martin, and Amano/Geisler are more helpful.

**Kerry D. McRoberts**, *New Age or Old Lie?* Peabody, Mass.: Hendrikson, 1989. 137 pp.

Growing out of an MA thesis at Simon Greenleaf School of Law, this readable book by an Assembly of God pastor is a worthy addition to the field, but not as informative as Miller, Groothuis, Baer, Martin, and Amano/Geisler. It has short summaries of principal NA beliefs and criticizes the NA preference for myths rather than factual data. The weakness of NA holism, cosmic evolution, ethics, astrology, and the like are shown. He pictures New Agers as idolaters who worship the image God created (i.e. deified men) instead of glorifying God. Demonic entities masquerade as wise teachers, mimicking the threefold lie of Satan in Gen 3:1-5.<sup>48</sup> Questions about the NA are answered and tips given on how to witness to New Agers (chap. 8). Baer and Martin are also good on this, as is McGuire's work yet to be described. Roberts concludes against a conscious human NA conspiracy.<sup>49</sup>

**Dave Hunt**, *America the Sorcerer's New Apprentice. The Rise of New Age Shamanism.* Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1988. 318 pp.

Hunt, author of several NA books, describes how more Americans are using consciousness-expanding methods and consulting spirit guides. Ouija boards, contact with the dead, and psychotherapy and the occult are among his topics. He understands demons to be the source of paranormal phenomena more often than

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<sup>48</sup>McRoberts, *Old Lie* 78-79.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 82-84.

humans.<sup>50</sup> His extensive and informative quotes from NA sources do not always validate his conclusions. For example, his theory that the present NA expression of worldly concepts will directly result in the Antichrist and world government of the prophesied tribulation period cannot be pressed with certainty.

The growth of shamanism results from "deliberate planning and strong effort,"<sup>51</sup> he says, and will transform America into a Hindu/Buddhist/Shamanic faith eventually if not halted. The only countries to survive its surge so far are Islamic ones. He shows the desirability of Christianity instead of this pantheistic and naturalistic way.<sup>52</sup> Americans must choose their destiny.<sup>53</sup>

**Texe Marrs**, *Dark Secrets of the New Age*. Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1987. 288 pp.

This is one of a number of books on the NA by Marrs, a retired Air Force officer who now leads Living Truth Ministries of Austin, TX.<sup>54</sup> It amasses over six hundred quotations and many details to clarify NA teachings. Marrs relates these to biblical information about the government of Antichrist, but the reader must evaluate carefully all the good data to see whether it confirms his conclusions. His emphasis on alertness and defending the truth is proper, but Christians cannot be as certain as he is that the present state of the NA movement is the one that will fulfill prophecy about the end-time tribulation.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Hunt, *New Apprentice* 197.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 275-76.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>54</sup>Douglas Groothuis, "'A Summary Critique' of Texe Marrs," *Dark Secrets, idem*, "Mystery Mark of the New Age," *Christian Research Journal* 11/3 (Winter-Spring 1989) 27-28.

<sup>55</sup>Marrs, *Dark Secrets* 61, 262-63. Many in church history have claimed to be the Messiah or forerunners just before the Messiah's appearance. They were wrong. On

The viewpoint of this author is apparently post-tribulational.<sup>56</sup> He derives support for his theory of a soon-to-come world religion from Hal Lindsey, Paul Crouch, Pat Robertson, Constance Cumbey, Dave Hunt, Jimmy Swaggart, and Dave Wilkerson.<sup>57</sup> The weakness of his case is typified in the seven identifying marks of Antichrist (chap. 6) where his use of Scripture is often misleading.<sup>58</sup>

Yet the book has much that is profitable if used with discretion.<sup>59</sup>

**Russell Chandler**, *Understanding the New Age*. Dallas: Word, 1988. 360 pp.

Chandler, a *Los Angeles Times* writer, in this lucid popular survey treats many aspects of NA and includes many quotations. Representative of his thirty-three chapters are ones on gurus; crystal and pyramid power; commercial appeal; ideas in education, music and art; theories of conspiracy; reincarnation or resurrection; and cautions and dangers. His concluding chapter presents Jesus Christ as the man of all ages.

The well-documented book arranges key concepts in an entertaining style, but does not satisfy those looking for detailed Christian answers. The works of Miller, Groothuis, Martin, Amano/Geisler, Smith, and others are better at this.

April 5, 1982 Benjamin Creme mistakenly said his Lord Maitreya (the Messiah) would come (ibid., 36). The present trend has elements that *could* turn out to be the fulfillment of prophecy. Christians should not be dogmatic that it is, but should be well informed and try to reach New Agers in the meantime.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>58</sup>For example, he cites Isa 9:6 to show that Antichrist will be a man of peace (ibid., 68-69). This is a verse that refers to Christ. His use of Dan 11:32 to portray the false Christ as corrupt and deceitful is also an interpretive error. Evangelical interpreters usually limit Dan 11:21-35 to Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), with the portion about Antichrist beginning at either v. 36 or v. 40.

<sup>59</sup>Groothuis's review of Marr's work documented above in n. 54 is helpful.

**F. LaGard Smith**, *Out on a Broken Limb*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1986. 207 pp.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Crystal Lies. Choices and the New Age*. Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1989. 162 pp.

The former work of Smith, a professor of Law at Pepperdine University, evaluates Shirley MacLaine's *Out on a Limb*. It is a detailed and excellent response to MacLaine. Its explanations are clear, often deriving specific help from Scripture. This extremely worthwhile book patiently develops the problems of reincarnation and karma, NA consciousness, and me-generation selfism. Unfortunately the editors have not documented many of MacLaine's quotations and other information as other works of this type have. Smith's qualifications should not be impaired by these omissions.

In very readable form, his *Crystal Lies* plainly describes many facets of NA belief and practice such as reincarnation and famous channelers. He personally detected mistakes in a session with one of MacLaine's channels (chap. 7). Other facets featured are yoga, holistic health, and "easy outs" like divorce for freedom-craving people (chap. 11). He notes a profession of Christianity by many New Agers who support their profession with a "pick and choose" method of interpreting the Bible. These same ones reject clear biblical teaching about sin, salvation, sacrificial atonement, grace, resurrection, judgment, heaven, and hell.<sup>60</sup> Edward Cayce was one, having served as a Baptist Sunday School teacher at one time.

Other highlights include Smith's emphasis on personal godhood<sup>61</sup> and a correlation between the NA's denial of sin and its dismal record of immorality.<sup>62</sup> He disagrees with the conspiracy theorists, though he respects their zeal.<sup>63</sup> This writer's works are

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<sup>60</sup>Smith, *Crystal Lies* 25-26.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 19, 36-37, 42, 50, 95, 103.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 55.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 58-59. The militancy of fundamental Islam is one of his reasons for denying a one-world government in the near future. Another is the variation in views among New Agers themselves (ibid., 59).

lighter reading, but very informative and worthwhile.

#### SPECIAL AREAS OF THOUGHT

**John Ankerberg and John Weldon**, *Astrology. Do the Heavens Rule Our Destiny?* Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1989. 334 pp.

The first of several books treating limited aspects of the NA is co-authored by Ankerberg (introduced previously) and Weldon, who has a doctorate in comparative religions and has written on psychic healing and sorcery. This definitive and authoritative analysis of astrology is presented for the sake of forty million Americans who believe in it, including ten percent of the evangelical population.<sup>64</sup> The book has wide documentation (over three hundred sources) and has a twenty-page bibliography that is divided into helpful categories.<sup>65</sup> Separate chapters discuss subjects such as the world view of astrology, its alleged proof, scientific evidence against it, the compatibility of astrology and Christian doctrine, and its relation to spiritism. The authors cite Robert Morey (*Horoscopes and the Christian* [Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1981] 48-59) to support the incompatibility of astrology with Christianity.<sup>66</sup> This book reflects their care and great investment of time in studying the subject.

**Paul C. Reisser, Teri K. Reisser, and John Weldon**, *New Age Medicine. A Christian Perspective on Holistic Health.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1987. 205 pp.

In this work Paul, a family physician, Teri, executive of a crisis pregnancy center, and Weldon (identified earlier) have revised an earlier work, *The Holistic Healers* (Chattanooga, TN: Global, 1983), by adding studies of biofeedback, homeopathy, and iridology. This highly regarded book evaluates "holistic" inroads into the field of

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<sup>64</sup>Ankerberg and Weldon, *Astrology* 7, citing a Gallup Poll.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 286.

human health from outside organized medicine. After centuries of the practice of medicine by mystics, faith healers, gurus, and shamans, scientific medicine has developed in the past few hundred years, but it has failed to restore health for people who are afraid to die. Those advocating healing through faith and the paranormal have capitalized on this failure.<sup>67</sup> The frequent impersonal and callous approach of many medical doctors is another reason for the new surge of interest by people who want to be treated as *whole* persons.

Features of medicine derived from eastern mysticism and occult metaphysics (chap. 4) include four ideas on how to gain energy: all is one, and in an unaltered state, a person feels a oneness with all in one reality; man is god; life's aim is to become aware of one's godhood through various techniques; and the enlightened person attains control of his consciousness. A survey of the mystical roots of ancient Chinese medicine in chapters 4-6 is accompanied by two objections to the system: (1) Invoking life energy through the suggested procedure ignores objectivity and bases "science" on conjecture, subjective impressions, and unreliable data. (2) The approach is usually pervaded with mystical ideas, i.e. conditioning the psychic centers of the body to receive universal love and magic.<sup>68</sup> Some people who sincerely believe they are trusting the Bible are actually practicing occultism when, because of their lack of discernment, they engage in "treatments" based on a world view that is contrary to the Bible.<sup>69</sup>

Other chapters in the work cover psychic healing and Edgar Cayce (chaps. 7-8), biofeedback, homeopathy, iridology (chap 9), alternatives to the new medicine (chap. 10), and biblical foundations for wholeness (chap. 11). Its annotated bibliography is valuable. Groothuis calls this an "excellent Christian critique."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Reisser *et al*, *Medicine* 9-10.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 93-94.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>70</sup>Groothuis, *Unmasking* 191. He lists three other good sources: Martin and Diedre Bobgan, *Hypnosis and the Christian* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1984); *Spiritual Counterfeits Journal* (Aug 1978); and John Weldon and Zola Levitt, *Psychic Healing* (Chicago: Moody, 1982) (*ibid.*). William Nolen's older book effectively exposes fraud

**John Ankerberg and John Weldon**, *The Facts on Channeling*. Chattanooga, TN: John Ankerberg Evangelistic Association, 1988. 41 pp.

This well-organized, carefully documented book answers twenty-eight questions, including "What is channeling?," "Who are channelers?," "Why does it matter who or what the 'spirits' are if they help people?," and "What does the Bible say about channeling?" The answer to the last question, "Have any channelers later turned to God?," is illustrated by two who have.<sup>71</sup>

**Brooks Alexander**, *Spirit Channeling*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988. 32 pp.

This booklet by a senior researcher for The Spiritual Counterfeits Project reflects a thorough knowledge of the subject, but does not document its contents as well as the previous booklet does. Books by Smith and Miller also have substantial sections on channeling.

**Mark Albrecht**, *Reincarnation. A Christian Critique of a New Age Doctrine*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1987. 139 pp.

This is one of several books that specializes on reincarnation. Albrecht, former co-director of The Spiritual Counterfeits Project, delivers a well informed treatment of the teaching's history, beginning prior to 500 B.C. in the East and tracing its spread to and rapid growth in the West during the last century. He relates it to karma, i.e. good and bad deeds have a reaction and one can use personal karma to gain merit and a better situation in a later reincarnation. With clear and accurate answers from the Bible, he responds to those who twist the

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by psychic healers (*A Doctor in Search of a Miracle* [Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1974]), as do books by André Kole and Al Janssen (*Miracles or Magic?* [Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1987]) and Dan Korem (*Powers, Testing the Psychic & Supernatural* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988]).

<sup>71</sup>Victor Ernest, *I Talked with Spirits* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1971); Raphael Gasson, *The Challenging Counterfeit: A Former Medium Exposes Spiritualism* (South Plainfield, NJ: Bridge, 1966).

Bible and early church Fathers to support reincarnation (chap. 4). Arguments for and against the doctrine are offered (chap. 7), along with its philosophical and theological problems (chaps. 8-9).

**Norman Geisler and J. Yukata Amano**, *The Reincarnation Sensation*. Wheaton: Tyndale, 1986. 192 pp.

The authors divide reincarnation beliefs into ten types and thoroughly expose the system's logical fallacies. Acknowledging that about twenty-five percent of Americans accept some form of the teaching, they relate it to its eastern roots, to psychology, to justice and injustice, and to salvation. They give biblical answers, some good (chap. 5) and some not so good (chap. 4), and a chart of reincarnational models. A chapter title in the table of contents promises instructions on how to witness to a reincarnationist (chap. 10), but does not deliver when a reader opens to that point in the text. Overall, however, this well-written book receives a high grade.

#### NOVELS AGAINST THE NEW AGE

**Frank E. Peretti**, *This Present Darkness*. Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1986. 376 pp.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Piercing the Darkness*. Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1989. 441 pp.

Peretti's fast-selling works stress the urgency of prayer in spiritual warfare that encounters unseen angels and demons. The plots are fascinating, and the action fast-moving. His characters engage in eastern meditation, channeling, expanded consciousness, realization of potential claims to be gods, and experience in past and future lives.<sup>72</sup>

A novel can be a poor place to learn Christian doctrine and practice. Unfortunately, Peretti and others sometimes go beyond Scripture. He makes holy angels sarcastic and spiteful<sup>73</sup> and victorious

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<sup>72</sup>Peretti, *Present* 90-99, 236-45.

<sup>73</sup>Peretti, *Piercing* 16.

only when humans pray. He gives all of them wings and swords, and attributes to them different nationalities. Demons dissolve, fall into many bits, vanish in a red puff, have their heads cut off by angels,<sup>74</sup> and roll like a puppy on black tar.<sup>75</sup> Other distinctions that Scripture never makes include designations of particular demons of lust, lawlessness, deception, complacency, despair, murder, and the like.

The author's stories make prayer a priority, which is good. Yet to make God and angels *completely* dependent on human prayer questions His sovereignty. Sometimes He acts contrary to what men think best.<sup>76</sup>

#### EVANGELISM: SATAN'S FORCES VS. GOD'S

**Erwin W. Lutzer and John F. DeVries**, *Satan's Evangelistic Strategy for This New Age*. Wheaton: Victor, 1989. 191 pp.

Besides sections dealing with evangelism in the surveys described above, there are specialized works such as this one by Lutzer and DeVries which labels the NA's approach as Satan's "four spiritual laws" from Eden: "you will be like God," "you shall not die," "you will know good and evil," and "your eyes will be opened."<sup>77</sup> Satan's evangelists, NA leaders and other New Agers, are infiltrating the church, home, schools, politics, music, and other realms with their philosophy. Yet Christians can beat Satan at his own game by majoring on the enjoyment of God, His Word, and other Christians. Though a section of chapter 12 shows the way out of the NA error, no detailed evangelistic method to counteract Satan's strategy is given.

**Paul McGuire**, *Evangelizing the New Age. The Power of the Gospel Invades the New Age Movement*. Ann Arbor: Servant, 1989. 169

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>76</sup>For a fuller review of Peretti, see Robert L. Dean, Jr., and Thomas D. Ice, "Frank Peretti and the New Spiritual Warfare," *Biblical Perspectives* 2/5 (Sept-Oct 1989) 1-6.

<sup>77</sup>Lutzer and DeVries, *Strategy* 16-21.

pp.

The theme of McGuire, a feature-film producer and member of The Church on the Way, Van Nuys, CA, is to show New Agers Christ's vibrant power and unconditional love. His prescription is the baptism of the Spirit, followed by speaking in tongues. Yet he backs away from dogmatism on this point by allowing that reliance on God for power is what counts rather than the necessity of the terminology "Spirit baptism."<sup>78</sup> Many will argue that biblical terminology must be used, however, and that his is wrong. The filling of the Spirit is what is needed.

Only a brief section covers methods of evangelization,<sup>79</sup> but it has good points, including prayer, genuine love for the person, a gentle manner, intelligent answers, and the leading of the Spirit.<sup>80</sup> The book is a call to power, love and vibrancy in Christian living as a means of providing an attractive Christian witness.

#### BOOKS BY FORMER NEW AGERS

As former New Agers, Baer, Brooke, and Miller write from their own distinct perspectives of the NA. Other works of this nature are more specialized.

**Caryl Matrisciana**, *Gods of the New Age*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1985. 224 pp.

The authoress, a native of India, describes eastern mysticism from an Indian perspective and tells of aquarian fairs and her early delights in a NA setting. Then she heard persuasive Bible teaching, delivered in the power and love of the Spirit. God saved her and delivered her from alcohol, drugs, immoral living, and out-of-body

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<sup>78</sup>McGuire, *Evangelizing* 78.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 134-36.

<sup>80</sup>McGuire erroneously calls this the "anointing of the Spirit," but later corrects it when he writes, "You should be led and guided by the Holy Spirit" (ibid., 135).

experiences. She served at a cult information center and exposed illegal drug and arms deals in the cults, practices of sterilizing women and children, prostitution, homosexuality, unethical fund-raising methods, and lusts for power (chap. 10). Her descriptions of NA festivals and seminars are like those of Baer. She attributes the masterplan of deception to Satan alone, but notes that NA leaders sometimes push for religious and political unity throughout the world (chap. 16).

#### NEW AGE APPEAL TO WOMEN

**Wanda Marrs**, *New Age Lies to Women*. Austin, TX: Living Truth, 1989. 252 pp.

Most of the material in this book by the wife of Texe Marrs is just as applicable to men and young people as it is to women. An example is, "Every New Age woman moves, walks and talks, and has her very being in the Goddess."<sup>81</sup> The "Goddess" is Mystery Babylon, an anti-God system that pertains as much to men as to women.

The work details the NA return to ancient Babylonian practices such as Satanic rituals and preoccupation with sexual pleasures (chaps. 1, 14). Some statements appear rather exaggerated: "Today there is no area of a woman's life in which she can escape the intrusion of New Ageism."<sup>82</sup> Mrs. Marrs has diligently researched the words and deeds of New Agers. An example is her work on "sacred sex" (chaps. 3, 5). One thing the NA "wants to see go is the joyous, wholesome, and god-fearing [*sic*] lifestyle of the Christian woman and mother."<sup>83</sup> She contends that the NA wants women to see sin and guilt as outmoded relics of fundamentalism and to label negative things such as judgment and the devil as illusions (chap. 13). New Agers say every woman should love unconditionally and do whatever her personal desires urge her to.

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<sup>81</sup>W. Marrs, *Women* 17.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 205.

A lot of space is devoted to explaining how present NA developments will lead to the man numbered 666 and the Mystery Babylon of the Apocalypse. Her final chapter invites the searching woman to come to Christ, but gives little detail in counteracting NA belief and practice.

#### NEW AGE INFILTRATION TO CHILDREN

Two books about the NA impact on children are well researched and quite readable.

**Berit Kjos**, *Your Child & the New Age*. Wheaton: Victor, 1990. 180 pp.

The first, by a mother of three, tells of NA deceptions opposed to Judeo-Christian values in schools. She does not condemn the schools or the media, but wants to help families unite "in confident, loving resistance."<sup>84</sup> She is competent and articulate in contrasting humanist and Christian approaches. The book frequently furnishes practical help to parents in showing how to combat counterfeit spirituality in children, school influences such as NA value clarification, NA globalism, and the manipulation of children's minds via movies, TV, toys, games, magazines with offensive titillation, and music.

Mrs. Kjos sees NA thought as ancient occultism with a beautiful facelift to mask the evil about which Paul warns (1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 4:3-5). She has no problem with teachers who use meditation and guided imagery because of its effectiveness, but she objects to others who use it to push NA ideas because of a connection with the Essence or Force.<sup>85</sup>

**Johanna Michaelsen**, *Like Lambs to the Slaughter*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1989. 352 pp.

Michaelsen, the sister of Hal Lindsey's wife, also wrote *The*

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<sup>84</sup>Kjos, *Your Child* 7.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

*Beautiful Side of Evil* (Harvest House, 1982) in which she described personal involvement in occultism and psychic surgeries before her conversion to Christ. In the earlier book she contrasts the seemingly beautiful side of evil offered by the occult with a false "Jesus" and the real beauty she found in the genuine Jesus.

*Like Lambs* graphically appeals to Christian parents and educators to become aware of occult influences in schools, toys, games, TV cartoons, etc., which lead away from biblical beliefs. She devotes chapters to the singling out of gifted children to receive occult teaching, meeting one's spirit guide in school, the roots and dangers of certain Halloween practices, and witches and Satanism. The book, though not as practical as the one by Kjos, has one chapter of practical counsel. Spirit-filled Christian parents who pray to God for protection and guidance of themselves and their children are the greatest need. The miscellaneous appendices treat such topics as what witches believe, sympathy for the devil in NA teachings, the folly of claiming to be God, how to approach teachers, and tips for writing effective letters to congressmen and editors.

## CONCLUSION

The best scholarly surveys, in order, are Miller, both works of Groothuis, and Hoyt. The best popular surveys are Martin and Amano/Geisler. The best works by former New Agers are Miller, Baer, Brooke (two works), and Matrisciana. The most valuable on special subjects are Albrecht and Geisler/Amano (reincarnation), Smith (answer to Shirley MacLaine), Ankerberg and Weldon (astrology), and Reisser/Reisser/Weldon (medicine). Baer, Martin, and McGuire are best on evangelism. Peretti's novels are fascinating, but must be carefully screened. Of the books on children, Michaelsen's is better for detail and Kjos for practical help. If he could afford only four volumes, this reviewer would choose, in order, Miller, Groothuis (*Unmasking*), Baer, and Martin.

9.1. Some New Age books 9.2. Historical, descriptive and analytical works. NOTES. Basically, New Age has found a remarkable level of acceptance because the world-view on which it was based was already widely accepted. The ground was well prepared by the growth and spread of relativism, along with an antipathy or indifference towards the Christian faith. Furthermore, there has been a lively discussion about whether and in what sense New Age can be described as a postmodern phenomenon. An adequate Christian discernment of New Age thought and practice cannot fail to recognize that, like second and third century gnosticism, it represents something of a compendium of positions that the Church has identified as heterodox. 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. 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. Discover the best Christian books, from classics to contemporary hits like The Purpose Driven Life and 90 Minutes in Heaven. His book Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God is an excellently written exposition on the radical, unconditional, self-sacrificing love of God. He tackles the issue of performing to gain God's approval, and challenges readers to encounter God's love for themselves. 90 Minutes in Heaven by Don Piper.