

king about the heavens and the city, which certainly doesn't need to be related only to Osijek, could consider the touching or encounters of reality and the ideal, the material with the spiritual. Observing the interrelation of time and eternity, we could imagine that - if God created time, in which mankind lives, - eternity is unending time because God lives in eternity. Through Kuzmič's texts, we could discern that time cannot become eternity because it is a sequence of events that immediately becomes the past, and we just anticipate the future.

Still, the arrival of Jesus Christ in the world made it possible for man to reach eternity in which he will live after time. Exactly that Way, about which Kuzmič speaks in his book, the meaning of life - in it man is not just directed to time, but he has the real opportunity to receive eternity. Just as Jesus reminds to read the signs of the time so that we could interpret events through the eyes of faith, so Kuzmič touches on the need of an awareness of reality - it is

passing, but works remain for eternity.

While speaking about Boris Trajkovski, the forward-thinking Macedonian peacemaker, and a Protestant president in an Orthodox country - who died in an airplane crash on route to a conference in Mostar - Kuzmič cited Tolstoy, "The deeper you become acquainted with life, the less you believe that it can destroy death."

And in the end, instead of a classic conclusion, in his book Kuzmič stresses the message, a little like a pair of gloves tossed into contemporary thought, "Where God and man meet, there heaven and city touch." Kuzmič confirms how it is possible to dive deeply into time, while at the same time holding on to eternity. Even though it will appear to *some new children* that the time about which Kuzmič writes looks far away and hard to understand, it is important that they leave a trail and that they attempt to fathom where to look for an answer - because time is passing, but eternity is here, it just needs to be grasped.

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Stanko JAMBREK

Christianity and New Age Spirituality

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translated by Roger Massey

Stanko Jambrek completed a study of theology and a master's degree in church history at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, and earned his doctorate in theology in the United States and is one of the leading Croatian Protestant

theologians engaged in the study of church history and the New Age movement. He is currently researching the history and present day activities of the churches of the Reformation tradition at the Theological Institute in Zagreb.

His book *“Christianity and New Age Spirituality: Similarities and Differences”* is a serious attempt to portray the differences and similarities between biblical Christianity and New Age.

This is not the author’s first attempt to take on a New Age topic, so this book represents a deeper journey into this study and research. The author, in his first book, *“New Age and Christianity”* (Zaprešić, Matiča hrvatska Zaprešić, 1997) took the position of a Protestant theologian in showing the problems facing modern Christianity as well as the dangers that can influence a “stunted spiritual growth” for believers.

The fact is that a trend is continuing as the 20th century winds down and humanity is being dashed by the waves of new religious movements — just as the words of an old song say, “na istoku ništa novo, na zapadu stare priče” [in the East there’s nothing new and in the West it’s the same old story]. Just about everything that can be labeled “alternative” is washing up in this flood of mystic spirituality. The term *New Age* itself refers to a body of spiritual trends in various circles of western civilization, especially among the dominating conformistic classes.

New Age does not represent the counter-culture from the 60’s and 70’s that flooded Western Europe and North America, leaving its influence and in some circles of other civilizations. Contrary to the counter-culture New Age doesn’t represent a movement that would deal with political or ideological radicalism and it tends not to come into conflict with the existing structures. Paraphrasing Karl Marx who said, “Religion is the opium of the masses,” it could be said that New Age represents the “opium of the middle class.”

Reading this book, one can observe how Jambrek doesn’t go into laborious and

speculative debates with the movement and neither does he shop for ideas, which characterizes New Age. He simply states the facts and offers solutions for eventual problems. The book doesn’t represent some kind of a smorgasbord so that everyone can take what he or she likes — instead, he offers a free choice, but with that shows the possibility of the right choice. He doesn’t convince and doesn’t emphasize exclusiveness. He gives basic ideas and interpretations and theological aspects of New Age, but not in such a way that is only understandable to theologians, but to any reader.

The book consists of four main parts, while in the fifth part, along with the literature; the author presents a short overview of teaching on biblical Christianity and New Age spirituality with a glossary of terms. In the first part of the book, “In Search of Fulfilled Needs” the author portrays the human longing for the satisfaction of their basic needs. Jambrek points out how that longing and searching most often lead a person either into Christian spirituality or into New Age spirituality.

In the second part, “New Age Spirituality,” he lays out the spiritual history and foundational beliefs of the New Age movement. Even though the movement is quite diffused, the author sorts out several unified remarks: pantheism, monism, animism, an impersonal god, the divinity of man, the power to create personal and subjective reality, reincarnation, karma, universal religion and the new world order.

New Age, irregardless of what collection of spiritual tendencies one is talking about, actually represents the throwing out of hierarchical constructs of religious teaching and is directed more towards esoteric and occult doctrines from all over the world, along with a sprinkling of modern scientific and parascientific parad-

gms. Precisely in the middle, in the third part of the book, “Biblical Christianity in Contrast to New Age Spirituality,” the author attempts to show the unbridgeable differences and contrasts between biblically based Christianity and the New Age Movement and its spirituality. On one side is God’s revealed Word contrasted to various sources of revelation. The personal Father God is contrasted to the gods of religions that, in New Age, possess no personality at all. Jesus Christ is presented in New Age as a teacher in contrast to the Christian understanding of him as the Savior of the world. While Christianity speaks of a Holy Spirit as one of the persons of the triune God, New Age doesn’t recognize the idea of a Spirit at all.

Jambrek especially brings to light the various understandings about humanity. While Christianity upholds that humanity is God’s creation, New Age considers human kind to be just another part of everything that exists. He points out that there is similar contrast in the view of sin and salvation — in Christianity, the accent is on salvation, while in New Age, self-realization takes the front seat.

The author pays particular attention to the different understandings of the existence of angels. In Christianity, they are God’s creation and in New Age they represent realization of occult activities. As far as Satan and evil spirits are concerned, the author presents a list of arguments confirming their existence along with various interpretations of the second coming of Christ. The problem lies in that New Age devotees expect an impersonal christ — with a small “c” — while Christians believe

that Christ’s coming represents a collective experience in which “every eye” will witness his coming.

The great worth of this book lies in its fourth part where the author has no intention of remaining on the theoretical level, but crosses over into the practical. In this chapter, “Christianity as a Living Relationship With God,” Jambrek presents testimonies of individuals who have, each in their own way, been involved in the New Age Movement or had some contact with it. Reading about their experiences, it is possible to see where the exit from these experiences in the movement lie, but also what kind of a life to continue to live. It is important to realize that these experiences do not concern only people who live “somewhere out there,” but that many things happen in our “own backyard.” The author wants to provoke a reaction among Christians regarding their spiritual condition, because the fact is that New Age does not represent an emerging religion, but is a symptom of a worldview crisis and fertile soil for the blooming of spiritual syncretism of every kind.

As Jambrek points out, New Age is slowly sinking its roots into the general spiritual crisis that has been encompassing the West for centuries. The appraisal that Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski offered about Marxism — that it was about mankind’s self-worship — goes for what New Age represents as well. Will it follow the same path as all other collective and individual attempts at self-worship, like the comical side of human suffering? The conclusion remains for the readers to decide. Jambrek merely offers the key to opening the door.

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