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Wars on the apocalypse : the rhetorical battle between the New age and Christian fundamentalism

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**WARS ON THE APOCALYPSE: THE RHETORICAL BATTLE BETWEEN THE NEW AGE
AND CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Timothy James Mize

May, 1995

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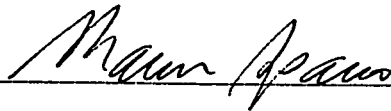
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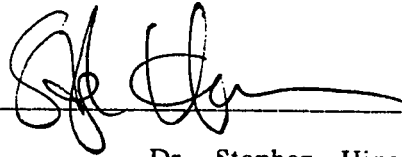
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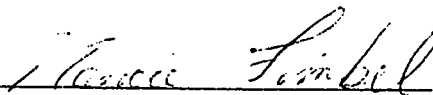


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ABSTRACT

NEW AGE OR APOCALYPSE: THE RHETORICAL BATTLE BETWEEN THE NEW AGE RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE AND CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM

by Timothy James Mize

This thesis analyzes the New Age-Fundamentalist rhetorical conflict over end-of-the-world events and what the coming new millennium holds for humanity. Utilizing apocalyptic rhetoric as a framework, a thematic method for identifying and applying postmillennial and premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric to religious discourse is suggested.

This analysis reveals that New Age rhetoric is postmillennial in form and empowers its audience by emphasizing the human ability to build a better future. The Fundamentalist response to the New Age rhetoric, premillennial in form, argues that the New Age discourse is a sign that the end is near. Thus, the rhetoric of Fundamentalists is also empowering, claiming that New Age is part of Biblical prophecy, and, therefore, all is unfolding according to God's plan. It is suggested that of the two discourses, New Age postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric has a broader, more secular appeal than its Fundamentalist premillennial counterpart.

Dedication

To all those searching for the spiritual; I truly hope you are
successful in your quest--but don't ignore the journey,
for it may be of more value than it appears.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was Spring 1991 when I first decided on New Age as a thesis topic, and over the past three years, I have benefited from the assistance and understanding of a number of people.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE MILLENNIAL WARS

Prediction and prophecy have always been intriguing, especially now. The year is 1995 and the world is soon to end--or so some say. Berosus, the second century Chaldean astronomer, predicted the world would end in the year 2001. Nostradamus and Edgar Cayce have agreed that the forthcoming millennium marks the end of time, and the Mayan Indians concur. According to the Mayan calendar, time will run out in the year 2012. St. Malachy of the 12th century prophesied that there will only be two more Popes after the current one. The last pope will live at the same time as the Anti-Christ, whose presence is an indicator of the end of the world, according to Christian prophecy.

What is both intriguing and startling is the effect of these prophecies. What is the effect of prophesying the end? Some ignore these predictions, some laugh at them, and a few embrace them with passion. Recently, 53 members of a cult group located in Switzerland and Canada, The Order of the Solar Temple, died in a fire reminiscent of the apocalypse. At this writing, it has not yet been determined whether the tragedy was mass suicide or mass murder. The leader of the cult, Luc Jouret, thought of himself as the savior who was to protect his followers from perdition. Espousing end-of-the-world rhetoric, he was reported to have said before the tragedy: "We have arrived at the hour of the apocalypse" (Laycayo, 1994).

In the midst of such tragedies as this and the fiery conclusion to the Branch Davidian conflict in Waco, Texas in 1993, the focus is typically on the psychological state of the cult leader and the followers. But what these tragedies exemplify is the power of a specific rhetorical form: apocalyptic rhetoric. Considering the drama of such recent events, it is important to have

an understanding of apocalyptic rhetoric and the power it wields. It is one of the functions of this thesis to provide such an understanding.

Apocalyptic rhetoric is a rhetoric of deliverance; it points to a world of chaos and promises a utopian-like future for those who commit themselves to the rhetor's faith. The present turmoil becomes a sign that the end is near, and thus so is deliverance. As Jouret claimed: "The present world chaos is not just by chance" (Post, 1994). Jouret's claim illuminates what Brummett (1984) perceives as a necessary condition for apocalyptic rhetoric: "times of physical and social change, in which old systems of meaning could no longer explain the world" (p. 86). Additionally, Reid (1983) notes that apocalyptic rhetoric as a rhetorical form has historically been more widely accepted during periods when "substantial numbers of people were dissatisfied deeply with their present and faced an uncertain future" (p. 237). Examples provided by Reid include the period after the Middle Ages, when the Protestant movement was in danger of being overwhelmed, and the experiences of the early American Puritans. In both cases a significant group of people faced a distressing present and an uncertain future. Reid argues that these two social conditions create an atmosphere by which apocalyptic rhetoric is most widely accepted and most persuasive. Could our move towards a new millennium and the violence erupting in our world provide such necessary conditions?

As we move closer to the year 2000 the uncertainty over what the future holds increases and the tensions mount. Two religious discourse groups, New Age and Fundamentalist Christianity, have conflicting viewpoints over what the new millennium promises for humanity. For those who desire it enough to follow the leadership of the New Age Christ, New Age (whose rhetoric, I will argue, exemplifies the postmillennial apocalyptic form) promises a blissful

utopia. Fundamentalists (whose rhetoric, I will argue, exemplifies premillennial apocalyptic) look at the New Age promises and the talk of a new age Christ and see the New Age religious discourse as a sure sign that the apocalypse is upon us. I argue in this thesis that while the rhetoric of both discourses has an appeal to their respective audiences, because New Age rhetoric emphasizes the power of human ability, it is more likely to appeal to a broader secular audience.

The New Age/Fundamentalist conflict is a spiritual battle of the grandest kind: good versus evil and God versus Satan. Recent reports by the media display indicators of such a conflict. Reverend Joseph Chambers, a Pentecostal pastor in Charlotte, North Carolina, has accused the children's television show character, Barney, of being a New Age demon (Chambers, 1993). A Maryland church rejected a film company's request to shoot there because the movie was going to star Shirley MacLaine. The pastor of the chapel stated: "Given the fact that Shirley MacLaine is a guru for the New Age religion, which is contrary to Christian faith, we certainly would not want to give our endorsement" (San Jose Mercury News, 1993, March 6, p. 2). On the other side, John Dunphy (1983), writing in The Humanist, states that the "battle for humankind's future must be waged and won in the public classroom The classroom must and will become an arena of conflict between the old and the new--the rotting corpse of Christianity and the new faith of humanism" (p. 26). Christian Fundamentalists have interpreted this last reference to humanism to be the same as New Age (Chandler, 1989; Rath, 1990).

What is significant about these examples is that they affect the public sphere. Indeed, the Hatch Amendment, which protects school children from inquiries into their personal beliefs, is being utilized in the fight against the

New Age influence in the classroom. And the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission has deemed Title VII appropriate for judging whether or not Christian employees may legally refuse attendance to New Age business seminars. Thus public policy is being utilized and influenced in this New Age/Fundamentalist conflict. All this is occurring at a time when a new millennium grows near.

It is not my purpose in this thesis to engage in prophecy. It is my intent to illuminate a spiritual, prophetic and rhetorical battle between two religious discourse groups. Specifically, I will argue that the focus of the New Age/Fundamentalist battle is over what the new millennium holds for humanity. I will further argue that through the postmillennial apocalyptic rhetorical form, the New Age discourse has a stronger and broader appeal than its Fundamentalist opponents. The New Age rhetoric appeals to those who look to the new millennium hoping for something better than the status quo. Given that the new millennium is but five years away, such a study is both timely and relevant to all who look to the future with hope and curiosity.

This chapter shall proceed as follows. First, I will outline those current sociological conditions that are conducive to the power of apocalyptic rhetoric: a distressing present and uncertainty over what the new millennium holds. Second, I will provide a brief understanding of the two discourse groups, New Age and Christian Fundamentalists, who conflict over their views of the new era. And finally, I will explain the method I will employ for illuminating this rhetorical battle.

Distressing Times

The times in which we live are filled with uncertainty and despair. Political uncertainty is evident. Democratic President Clinton no longer has his Democratic support in the House and Senate. There is ongoing political turbulence in Haiti, Bosnia, and many of the Russian states. As to the economy, the skyrocketing cost of living and high unemployment have resulted in increasing numbers of homeless families. Other concerns and threats to our society include AIDS, increasing violent crime and the continued disintegration of the two-parent family. And, as if all this were not enough, a changing religious climate has created spiritual confusion. Church membership in mainstream denominations is decreasing (Jacquet, 1990) and 69 percent of Americans perceive religion to be losing influence on American life (Gallup, 1994). Meanwhile, Eastern spirituality in America is growing strong (Ellwood, 1987), and the New Age movement continues its growth. Such changes in the spiritual climate led Jeffrey Hadden, professor of sociology at the University of Virginia, to remark: "We will be spiritually alive in the 1990's; full of conflict over which spiritualities we will embrace" (Chandler, 1992, p. 191). How this conflict will manifest itself is of concern to literary critic Harold Bloom (1992), author of The American Religion: "the twenty-first century will mark a full scale return to the wars of religion" (p. 265).

Amidst the confusion and growing despair, there is a change on the horizon--we are fast approaching a new millennium. And as the year 2000 grows closer, there is an ever increasing interest in what the future holds. Given the rather distressing current state of society, there is a depressing logic in the belief among some that the new millennium will bring the end of the world--the apocalypse.

Prophesying The End

Among many religions is a prophetic belief in a common set of events that will precede the end of existence as we know it. At the end, the world will be in a state of chaos and uncertainty, so much so that there will be a need for a dramatic change from the present turmoil and in some religious systems, a savior that will come and lead the faithful to victory over evil. Given the present sociological conditions as stated previously, and the fact of an approaching millennium, it is understandable that some perceive the apocalypse as imminent.

There have been a number of groups who embrace the fear and the hope of a future apocalypse. Most noticeably, apocalyptic rhetoric is employed by various religious cults. For instance, the Church Universal, led by Elizabeth Claire Prophet, employs apocalyptic rhetoric (Woodward, 1993). This Montana group is so concerned with the apocalypse that it has built a number of bomb shelters to prepare for the holocaust (Melton, 1991), and there Prophet and her followers await the Armageddon (the final battle between God and Satan). In addition, David Koresh and the Branch Davidians employed apocalyptic rhetoric (Kennedy, 1993). This group received a significant amount of attention when Koresh, who proclaimed himself to be Jesus Christ, held his followers hostage and Federal agents at bay at a heavily armed religious camp in Waco, Texas. It was Koresh's belief that since he was Christ, he could bring about the apocalypse. In a sense, he did just that. After almost two months of holding Federal agents at bay outside the Texas compound, Koresh and his followers set fire to the cult headquarters while they were still inside. Koresh and approximately 85 people died, including at least seventeen children, in the apocalypse-like blaze (Kennedy & Sahagan, 1993).

What knowledge of end time events provides is understanding of humanity's current role in the great drama, and most religions have a prophetic scheme of end time events. In the Native American tradition, the Hopi Indians await the return of the "Great Spirit" and the time of purification in which all but those who have followed the teachings of their ancestors will succumb to the destruction of the earth. The familiar Judeo-Christian view entails the concept of the return of Jesus, a final battle between good and evil (known as the battle of Armageddon) in which God destroys Satan. In the Islamic version, the day of judgment will be preceded by the appearance of the Anti-Christ, Ad-Dajjal, who will be killed by Jesus in the battle of Armageddon. This Jesus, by the way, will convert to Islam. And the New Age vision sees the end as a transition period into a new era of harmony and justice and sharing. The New Age apocalypse is the revelation that humanity is divine. Thus, there will be a change in the way humanity perceives itself--it is a transformation of social and spiritual consciousness.

Despite the present uncertainty and the potential doom suggested by end time prophecies, there is also hope that the new millennium will bring about a brighter era. The different views of end time events offer a tragic sense of hope in a world of despair, and therefore each view has a rhetorical value for its audience. It is fitting then that in a special issue of *Time*, (Fall, 1992) it was reported that despite the current despondency, 62 percent of Americans believe that the new millennium will bring more hope than they have now. In addition, 53 percent of the American public believed that the Second Coming of Christ will occur in the next thousand years.

Among the various prophetic interpretations of the end of the world events and the new millennium, there are two religious discourse groups who

are locked in a battle over what the new millennium holds for humanity: the New Age religious discourse and Christian Fundamentalists.

The New Age Discourse Group

The New Age discourse is a conglomeration of Eastern and Western spiritual beliefs and practices: from tarot to shamanism, astrology to hypnotherapy, and reincarnation to channeling. Some label the New Age discourse as a movement, but that does not capture the breadth of beliefs or influence of the New Age. In addition, its lack of structure and formal leadership lends itself less to the term movement than other labels. For clarity, I refer to New Ager's as a discourse community or group, the New Age belief system as a discourse, and the future new age in small case letters. Although the discourse is more popular in the U.S. than any other country, as a belief system, the New Age discourse has practitioners across the world (Melton, 1992).

Previous studies indicate that Americans have little awareness of this religious discourse. Interestingly, of those who have heard of the New Age discourse many have an unfavorable view of the discourse. One poll revealed that of the 29 percent of the Americans who have heard of New Age beliefs, 49 percent held an unfavorable view of them. Additionally, 35 percent viewed New Age discourse as a threat to traditional religions and 34 percent viewed New Age discourse as a threat to American society (Gallup, 1990). It is fitting that of those who hold an unfavorable view, Fundamentalists compose the largest segment. This suggests the question of who will be writing the history of the New Age discourse group in history books: New Ager's or Fundamentalists?

Many who have studied New Age beliefs have argued that this discourse

grew out of the counter-culture of the 1960's (D'Antonio, 1992; Lewis & Melton, 1992), and I tend to agree although many of the New Age beliefs and ideas are centuries old. (See appendix B and C for a more detailed analysis of New Age beliefs and historical notes). New Age beliefs are perhaps best seen as a part of a broader paradigm shift in our culture in recent years. In America, and to a certain extent throughout the world, humanity has collectively shifted its awareness to once buried issues. There has been an increased awareness of the importance of the environment, a heightened realization of the interconnectedness of all of humanity, and a growing appreciation of natural/holistic medicine. The New Age discourse group played and continues to play an important role in this paradigm shift. And such a role makes the New Age a highly influential discourse, since it affirms our current world views. On the surface, however, with its faires, seminars and products, the New Age discourse may appear to be simply a commercial manifestation of a collective intellectual and social change in the way we view ourselves and our world.

But the commercial aspect does not do justice to the discourse. This spiritual element of our paradigm shift is complete with authors, theorizers, activists, and prophesiers. The value and contribution of New Age beliefs to our culture is noted by Michael D'Antonio (1992), author of Heaven on Earth: "The New Age, in the broadest sense, is an attempt to discover ideas and practices that might be added to mainstream culture in order to make modern life richer and more satisfying" (p. 13). The implicit argument D'Antonio is making, that the New Age movement does indeed affect everyday life, is itself a reason for studying the discourse group. The discourse has such varied religious and spiritual beliefs that it has been called a "cafeteria style

religion" (Chandler, 1989, 1992). While Chandler was being both sarcastic and critical, the "create-your-own-path" philosophy may account for the broad appeal of New Age discourse. As D'Antonio (1992) further observes: "The vast majority of New Agers pick up an idea or practice from the movement and add it to their mix of beliefs. They become New Age Catholics who wear crystals, or New Age Jews who consult psychics" (p. 13). Despite its lack of a common core of spiritual practices or doctrine, the majority of New Agers do have one belief in common: the prophetic view that a new era is upon us--a new age of harmony and justice and sharing.

What New Agers predict for our new millennium is a utopia, built by humanity, with a One-World Government and a One-World Religion. Not all, but many New Agers predict the coming of a Christ to guide and assist humanity in the building of the new age. And all those who follow the leadership and teachings of the New Age Christ will indeed enter the new age--the Age of Aquarius. This thesis will focus specifically on that aspect of the New Age discourse that deals with the prophecy of a new age and the prophets behind the vision. This particular segment of the New Age discourse group needs illuminating for the reason that it is the New Age prophecy and New Age Christ that are so adamantly objected to by Fundamentalist Christians. In this grand spiritual battle, prophecy is at the center of the storm.

Christian Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism is a more militant segment of Evangelicalism that considers Biblical truth its primary doctrine. What guides the Fundamentalist Christian in the meaning of social events is a firm belief in the inerrancy of the Bible (Barr, 1977; Boone, 1989; Marty, 1993). To the Fundamentalists studied in this thesis, Biblical authority is absolute and is used to guide the

Fundamentalist efforts to evangelize and admonish behaviors and beliefs contrary to Biblical doctrine. The importance of fighting contrary religious and secular beliefs and practices is pertinent to an understanding of Fundamentalists. Marty & Appleby (1991) argue that Fundamentalists are fighters. Fundamentalists fight both with words and action for their world view and for their literal interpretation of the Bible. They fight against apostasy, modernization and an ever increasing pluralism.

The New Age discourse, then, becomes one more view to fight against. To the Fundamentalists in this thesis, New Age spirituality exemplifies all that is wrong in today's world. Since the New Age movement began receiving attention in the 1980's, numerous books and articles have been written by Fundamentalist Christian authors warning the public of the threat posed by the New Age discourse group (Cumbey, 1983; Hunt, 1983; Hunt & McMahon, 1985; Marrs, 1987; Groothuis, 1986, 1988; Parrie, 1988; Peters, 1991; Rath, 1990). The general argument taken by these critics, according to Melton (1991), is that any deviation from orthodox Christianity is a counterfeit and apostate religion, and that in all probability, Satan created the New Age movement as a parody of Christianity. Thus, Fundamentalists, by confronting New Agers, are engaging in a form of "spiritual warfare" (Melton, 1991, p. 313). And while Fundamentalists may be viewed as extremists by some and the term "Fundamentalism" may have taken on negative connotations, Fundamentalism is still a social and political source of power. Fundamentalist leaders like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell have a significant following and political influence. These leaders also utilize the media to advocate their beliefs. So, given the size of the Fundamentalist discourse community and their access to the media, such a confrontation by Fundamentalists is likely to be a significant

one.

The Fundamentalist perception of Biblical inerrancy is supported by a method of Biblical interpretation known as dispensationalism. Dispensationalism explains apparent contradictions in the Bible as due to different dispensations. Dispensationalism also allows for claims about end-time events based on Biblical prophecy. Thus, not only do Fundamentalists have their own interpretation of end-time events, but through dispensationalism, the supreme authority of the Bible, and the responsibility to evangelize, Fundamentalists consider it their duty to announce those signs that indicate the coming of the end and the coming of the Lord.

Adding to these principles, the Fundamentalists who attack the New Age discourse are premillennialists and thus believe that the end of the world is now upon us and that Jesus will soon return to bring about the millennium. It is especially the premillennial stance that sets the Fundamentalists apart from the more mainstream Evangelicals.

Combining premillennialism with dispensationalism, Fundamentalists believe the new millennium will be the last dispensation. And because the last dispensation has been predicted to be the prophetic thousand years of peace as stated in the Book of Revelation, there must be a set of conditions that confirm this view of the new era before us. As stated previously, there must be social chaos and uncertainty. There also must be increased apostasy and an emergence of Satan's disciple, the Anti-Christ.

A world filled with chaos and uncertainty is granted. Increasing apostasy depends on one's perspective, and Fundamentalists have such a perspective. But what about an Anti-Christ? Enter the New Age discourse group and the New Age Christ. The Fundamentalists discussed in this thesis

perceive the presence of the New Age discourse group as an absolute sign of the end. New Age discourse is apostasy, and the New Age Christ becomes the Anti-Christ. The war over prophecy has begun.

Apocalyptic Rhetoric

The New Age/Fundamentalist conflict is a spiritual battle over prophecy concerning end time events. This conflict is manifested in the rhetoric of the two discourse groups. Specifically, the rhetoric of both groups takes the form of apocalyptic rhetoric.

Apocalyptic is one branch of eschatology (the study of last things) which explains the events which precede and indicate the end of the world as we know it. More literally, it means "revelation" or "lifting the veil" (Heald, 1975).

Apocalyptic rhetoric has several distinguishing characteristics. Reid (1983) states that apocalyptic rhetoric has two basic functions. First, it explains the present distressing situation as being all part of "God's plan." Second, it promises a better future in regards to the return of Christ. Brummett (1984, 1988, 1991) offers a similar view of the apocalyptic by stating that it entails two predictions of the future. First, it predicts an "impending change," for example, a nuclear disaster, a return of Christ or ecological catastrophe. Second, and following the change, there will be a millennium, which is a thousand years of peace, justice and harmony. The appeal of the apocalyptic is understandable; the suffering and injustices of today can be tolerated as long as there is hope for a better future. Inherent within the prediction of an apocalypse or return of Christ is a sense of divisiveness. Apocalyptic as a rhetorical form acts to motivate its audience to choose a side in the ultimate battle between good and evil. If one follows Christian teachings and the

teachings of Jesus Christ, then one will be saved from the prophesied destruction, the apocalypse. Fundamentalists, obeying the scriptural command to evangelize, must take it upon themselves to warn others of apostasy and anything that tempts humanity down the wrong path--the path to destruction. Observe the dichotomy here. The "good" and the "righteous" who follow the correct path will be saved and enter into heaven. The "bad" and the "evil" who choose the way of evil and apostasy will be destroyed. Thus the apocalyptic as a rhetorical form raises issues of choice and division.

Brummett (1984, 1988, 1991) and O'Leary and McFarland (1989) also note that the apocalyptic can be divided into two forms: premillennialism and postmillennialism. Premillennialism is the belief that the apocalypse, however it is viewed, must occur before the millennium and that this apocalypse will occur very soon. Importantly, most premillennialists also believe that Jesus Christ will return before the millennium, and thus it is Jesus who will bring about the thousand years of peace. This particular form of apocalyptic rhetoric is also characterized by a "thrill of impending doom" (Brummett, 1984, p. 84) because it foresees doom for all non-believers and eternal bliss for all Christians. Premillennial apocalyptic is strongly deterministic in nature because humanity must wait for God or Christ to make the world better; humans themselves cannot bring about any utopian period.

Postmillennialism, on the other hand, foresees the apocalypse as occurring after the millennium and also foresees Jesus Christ as returning after the millennial period. The millennium is interpreted not as the personal reign of Christ, but as a period of peace and tranquillity when the church will succeed in converting unbelievers and reforming society. Thus, postmillennial rhetoric is less deterministic than the premillennial form since

humans can be responsible for change. O'Leary and McFarland quote Charles Finney, a postmillennialist, and one of the Great Awakening preachers: "if [people] were united all over the world, the millennium might be brought about in three months" (1989, p. 435). The rhetoric of the postmillennialist is noncommittal and tame (Brummett, 1988) in contrast to the sense of urgency in premillennial rhetoric. Given the closeness of the apocalypse, the premillennialist urges non-believers to convert before it is too late. The typical postmillennialist, on the other hand, sees the apocalypse as being quite distant from the present, so the rhetoric lacks the sense of urgency found in the premillennialist.

Even from this brief description, one can identify the postmillennial and premillennial division as a categorical one. This is perceived as the primary detriment of using these categories, according to O'Leary (1993, 1994). O'Leary perceives the postmillennial and premillennial categories as just that: categories instead of useful means of rhetorical analysis. To date, exploration of these two forms by rhetorical scholars has been rather limited. Contending that the postmillennial form was too vague and merged too easily with other genres, Brummett (1988) focused only on premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric in his textual analysis of the Late Great Planet Earth (1970), Anti-Christ (McBirnie, 1978) and How to Prosper During the Coming Years (Ruff, 1979). While Brummett has attempted to illuminate the postmillennial form in his 1991 work, his model is too broad to be distinctive. Additionally, Brummett does little more than plug specific texts into the postmillennial and premillennial categories. O'Leary & McFarland (1989) analyzed the apocalyptic rhetoric employed by Fundamentalist Pat Robertson before and during the 1992 presidential election. Going beyond Brummett, these scholars

demonstrated that the postmillennial and premillennial apocalyptic models are not entirely distinctive. They contended that each form entails specific philosophies, such as determinism and human agency.

Previous applications of the two apocalyptic forms have been limited in three ways. First, the focus has been more on the premillennial form, leaving the postmillennial model without sufficient exploration and fairly indistinguishable from the jeremiad. Second, with the exception of the few works of O'Leary (1993, 1994) and O'Leary and McFarland (1989), the utility of the postmillennial and premillennial forms has been limited to placing examples into the postmillennial and premillennial categories, rather than using the models to illuminate religious rhetoric. Even O'Leary (1994) attempts to create a more flexible apocalyptic rhetorical model but essentially renames the postmillennial and premillennial categories in Burkean terms. Finally, all previous studies of apocalyptic rhetoric have been specific to Christian religious discourse and no attempts have been made to apply this rhetorical model to a non-Christian religious discourse.

Given such perceived limitations, it is certainly tempting to remain within the confines previous scholars have created or to dismiss the postmillennial divisions as O'Leary (1993, 1994) has done, in favor of a new model. However, I contend that if we employ the themes inherent within the postmillennial and premillennial divisions, these two rhetorical forms can indeed be utilized to illuminate religious discourse in a fruitful manner--especially in terms of this religious conflict.

There are several themes which arise out of the postmillennial form. As previously stated, this form is less deterministic than its premillennial relative. Since the Christ is said to arrive after the millennial period,

humanity must then be responsible for bringing about the thousand years of peace. This implies that humanity has power and control over the future and human destiny. The overriding theme here then is human agency, with all other themes in support of this theme. Both apocalyptic forms, by definition suggest a change, an apocalypse of some kind. The New Age discourse holds that humanity is undergoing a collective shift in awareness and consciousness. This is referred to by New Agers as personal and/or collective transformation (Ferguson, 1980; Capra, 1982). Thus, the first theme in support of human agency is transformation, both personal and collective. It is the process of transformation that leads to the new age, but there is another element involved, and that is the return of Christ. The major distinction between the two apocalyptic forms is when the Christ will return, and this time factor is a result of the perceived role of the Christ, which becomes the next theme. These two previous themes lead to the prediction of a future utopia. This is the theme of the new age itself: when it is arriving and how it is characterized.

To summarize then, those themes arising out of the postmillennial form are human agency, supported by the sub themes of transformation, the role of the Christ, and the prediction of a future utopia, in this case, the new age.

Unlike the postmillennial form, premillennial apocalyptic views Christ as being the builder of the thousand years of peace. The assumption is that such a feat could never be accomplished through human action. Human events and the future must be left up to God; human destiny is all a part of "God's plan." So a strong sense of determinism is the first overriding theme of the premillennial form, supported by three sub themes. The first sub theme is that of salvation, which is the mirror of transformation in the postmillennial form.

Fundamentalists do not believe in collective shifts of consciousness but rather salvation through the teachings of Jesus Christ (accomplished in part through the Biblical command to evangelize and witness to non-believers). The second and third themes are identical to the postmillennial form: the predicted return of a Christ and a predicted future utopia. Christ will return to bring salvation to the righteous, damnation to the evil. And for those who are "saved," there exists eternal life in heaven.

A Method Of Discourse Analysis

My contention is that there is a rhetorical battle occurring and the best means of illuminating this battle is through a thematic analysis via apocalyptic rhetoric. To this end, four texts shall be utilized to accomplish an apocalyptic and thematic rhetorical analysis of the New Age/Fundamentalist conflict.

Essentially, Chapter Two and Three organize the content of New Age and Fundamentalist texts into the themes previously presented. For example, In Chapter Two I attempt to illuminate New Age rhetoric by applying the themes of transformation, the Christ and a future new age. In applying these themes, I will demonstrate how New Age rhetoric appeals to an audience through an emphasis on human agency. In a like manner, in Chapter Three I apply the three themes and demonstrate their appeal through determinism. It is my contention that this method not only appropriately reflects the nature of the two discourse groups but also adds a further dimension to the current status of the apocalyptic rhetoric model.

In addition, a set of guidelines has been established for the selection of texts. There were two guidelines for the selection of New Age texts. First, the texts must be generally representative of the New Age religious discourse.

However, given the breadth of the New Age discourse, it is improbable that any two texts could be representative of the entire discourse. For this reason, I have applied a second criterion: the texts must be cited by Fundamentalist Christians in their response to New Age rhetoric. This effectively narrows the analysis of the New Age down to that specific segment of the New Age discourse group which believes in the return of a New Age Christ, known by some as Maitreya, to others as Limitless Love. It is this segment of the New Age community that draws the most fire from Fundamentalists. The first New Age book for analysis is The Reappearance of the Christ and Masters of Wisdom (Creme, 1980). This text is representative of the New Age discourse. I noted earlier that among the beliefs of New Agers is the belief in the coming of a world teacher, a teacher who will guide humanity into the new age (Melton, 1991). Creme is the channeler for the New Age Christ, known as Maitreya. In other words, Creme receives "transmissions" from Maitreya, and thus Creme is the communication "channel" for the New Age Christ. Maitreya's purpose, according to the text, is "to inspire humanity to create for itself a better and happier world" (Creme, 1980, p. 25). Besides The Reappearance of the Christ, Creme has also published Transmission: A Meditation for the New Age (1983) and Maitreya's Mission (1986) and founded the magazine Share International, which is printed in five different languages and is distributed throughout the world. Thus, Creme represents those New Agers who believe that a world teacher is coming to guide the world into the new age. The second criterion is simpler; this text must be cited by Fundamentalists in their critique of New Age rhetoric. The Creme text is the focus of the Christian bestseller, Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow (Cumbey, 1983). This Fundamentalist critique devotes at least half the book to attacking Creme and the New Age Christ. Other

Fundamentalist New Age critics who attack Creme are Marrs (1987), Hunt and McMahon (1985), Peters (1991) and Miller (1989). Therefore, the Creme text meets both of the criteria.

The second New Age text to be examined is entitled Revelation: The Birth of a New Age by David Spangler (1971). The text is representative of the New Age discourse. Spangler himself is one of the major New Age theoreticians (Melton, 1991) and led the development of the educational program at the Findhorn Community. Findhorn is the New Age community. Founded in Scotland in 1965, it started as a garden where people could enjoy nature, meditate or channel. The garden has become famous for its abundance of crops, despite the poor soil in that region. It is believed by some that the success of the garden is paranormal. Spangler has written numerous books: The New Age Vision (1973), Towards a Planetary Vision (1977), and Channeling in the New Age (1988) are but a few. I have chosen Revelation over the others because it has become the manifesto for the Findhorn Community (Melton, 1991), and it fulfills my second criterion. Like the Creme text, Revelation has been attacked by a number of Fundamentalists in their critiques of the New Age rhetoric: Amano and Geisler (1989), Cumbey (1983) and Marrs (1987). Therefore, this text fulfills both of my criteria for the selection of a New Age texts.

The criteria for the selection of Fundamentalist texts are similar to the ones used to select New Age texts. First, the texts should represent the typical Fundamentalist response to the New Age rhetoric. And second, the texts must respond to or attack the New Age texts chosen previously (Creme and Spangler). The reasoning is that this part of the criteria keeps the study within the boundaries of the conflict.

The first text which represents the Fundamentalist critique of New Age discourse is Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow: The New Age Movement and Our Coming Age of Barbarism, by Constance Cumbey (1983). This text was a bestseller (Melton, 1991) in Christian bookstores and therefore probably the book most Fundamentalist and other Christians would read to find out about the New Age. Cumbey has been credited by both Gordon Melton (1991), founder of the Institute for the Study of American Religion at University of California at Santa Barbara, and Irving Hexham (1992), Professor of Religious Studies, University of Calgary, for bringing the New Age movement to the attention of the Christian community by claiming that the New Age discourse group is conspiring to pave the way for the emergence of the Anti-Christ. Cumbey's conspiracy theory caught on, and other Christian writers published books with similar themes (i.e. Hunt, 1983; Marrs, 1987; De Parrie & Pride; 1988). Additionally, in keeping with my second criterion, Cumbey's book focuses primarily on the New Age Christ and on Creme's 1980 text. Cumbey cites Spangler as well and thus fulfills both of the criteria.

Finally, there is the second Fundamentalist text: Dark Secrets of the New Age by Texe Marrs (1987). Marrs is author of a number of New Age critiques, including Rush to Armageddon (1987) and New Age Cults and Religions (1990). President of Living Truth Ministries in Austin, Texas, his organization publishes free newsletters about Biblical prophecy and the New Age movement. Like Cumbey, Marrs identifies the New Age religious discourse as a conspiracy: "When we analyze The Plan for the New Age . . . we cannot avoid the horrible conclusion that this apostate religion is demonic" (Marrs, 1987, p. 15). It is Marrs' contention that the secret of the New Age movement is that it is Satan's plan for a One-World Religion, and that as the New Age discourse

group grows in power, Christians must endure "a harrowing period of unparalleled persecution and strife" (Marrs, 1987, p. 138). Additionally, like Cumbey, Marrs attacks both Creme and Spangler, thus fulfilling both of my criteria.

This thesis will now proceed as follows. In Chapter Two, the New Age prophetic view of the new millennium will be assessed through a textual analysis utilizing postmillennial themes as a framework. Chapter Three will explore the Fundamentalist view of the new millennium within the context of the Fundamentalist response to New Age rhetoric. The means by which the Fundamentalist view is assessed will be through a textual analysis utilizing premillennial themes as a framework. The goal of both Chapters Two and Three will be to illuminate the battle over prophecy concerning end time events. In the final chapter, the functions of the rhetorical forms, postmillennial and premillennial, employed by both New Agers and the Fundamentalist Christians are assessed in terms of their appeal to the apocalyptic audience. Also, the value of the postmillennial and premillennial distinctions will be discussed. In addition, I will discuss the secularization of the New Age/Fundamentalist rhetorical battle. I argue, as suggested by O'Leary and McFarland (1989), that the postmillennial vision leaves more room for secular influence. In this case, the New Age may have the upper hand in the struggle for humanity's soul.

CHAPTER TWO: THE DAWNING OF THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

Now that the rhetorical battle between the New Age and Christian Fundamentalism has been introduced, I will analyze the rhetoric of two representative New Age texts with several goals in mind. My first goal in this chapter is to illuminate the beliefs of New Age as a religious discourse--or at least that segment of the New Age community that believes in a coming New Age Christ. Second, I will provide an understanding of the appeal of the New Age discourse by conducting a postmillennial thematic analysis of New Age texts. And finally, I will illuminate that New Age rhetoric which Fundamentalists find so objectionable.

The thematic analysis in this chapter will progress in this manner. The first theme to be assessed is the notion of transformation. What the New Age discourse means by social and personal transformation will be discussed, as well as who will be transformed and how this process is to take place. Second, the Christ theme shall be analyzed. This theme includes an identification of the Christ, his role in the New Age belief system, and information about his appearance. Third, the theme of the new age itself is assessed--what the new millennium holds for humanity, according to the New Age discursive vision.

What these three themes accentuate is that New Age postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric creates a strong sense of division and emphasizes the power of human agency. Each theme acts as a step towards the new age and deliverance from this world of uncertainty and suffering. And each step requires a choice from the apocalyptic audience. The audience is asked to choose between the New Age path and its corresponding promise of a future utopia or more of the same uncertainty and suffering. Thus, each theme creates divisions, and these divisions act to narrow the New Age apocalyptic

audience to just the most faithful and the most committed.

What this audience is provided with in each theme is empowerment. What in all probability is responsible for the popularity of the New Age movement is that its discourse empowers its followers with an affirmation of the human ability.

New Age Rhetoricians: Creme And Spangler

The texts I will analyze are The Reappearance of the Christ and Masters of Wisdom (1980) by Benjamin Creme and Revelation: The Birth of a New Age (1971) by David Spangler. The point of these books is to give each author's audience an understanding of who the "Christ" is, and to explain his role in the new age. Both texts were written for the New Age community, and thus include terms and concepts which would be familiar primarily to those in that community. Both authors are channelers of supernatural beings who reveal to them what the coming millennium holds for humanity. Creme is the channeler of Maitreya, the esoteric version of the New Age Christ and Spangler is the channeler of Limitless Love, a messenger for the Cosmic Christ. It should be noted that Christ takes a number of forms within New Age discourse, but these two Christs are the most predominant figures.

Benjamin Creme and His Text

In the preface to The Reappearance of the Christ, Creme tells about his experience in meeting and forming a relationship with the New Age Christ. Author, artist and channeler to the New Age Christ, Creme is a theosophist and has been influenced by the writings of such theosophists as Blavatsky and Bailey (See Appendix B for information on theosophy). In the early 1950's Creme began to hear transmissions--internal messages--from an unknown source, and after a while began to dictate them into a tape recorder. Not

knowing what the source was, Creme decided it was some supernatural figure attempting to send a message to the material world. Then, in 1959, Creme was informed by the supernatural figure of the coming of the Christ, Maitreya. Creme was also informed that he would be a part of the plan to bring about the new age and the reappearance of the Christ. In 1972, Maitreya himself, whom Creme calls the Master, began training Creme as a disciple. The training was a spiritual one, which eventually led to the development of a two-way communication process between the Master and Creme. In 1975, Creme was informed by the Master that Creme had to go "public" with his transmissions. This meant public speaking. Quite apprehensive about his first public speaking engagement, Creme describes his experience in this way:

I was very nervous. Although I knew my material, I did not have it in any sort of order. The Master, in his kindness, dictated for me a list of headings which I could glance at, and in fact, so overshadowed me throughout the talk, that He practically gave it. Just before the end, I was suddenly overshadowed by Maitreya Himself, my heart melted, and I had the greatest difficulty in keeping my voice steady (Creme, 1980, p. 20).

Note the personal contact Creme claims to have with Maitreya. Creme relates his contact much like a Christian would witness meeting Jesus. Rhetorically, this paints a picture of Maitreya as being a personal savior, much like the relationship of a Christian to Jesus. By demonstrating Maitreya's personal concern for Creme in this situation, Maitreya is demystified. And the point of the preface as a whole is to show Creme as just an everyday person, who just happens to be the channel for Maitreya. Relating these personal experiences is an important part of New Age rhetoric (Melton, 1991). One is perceived as credible in the movement discourse not for studying New Age beliefs, but for experiencing the spiritual. It is the experience which is

admired not knowledge of texts.

Now that we have an understanding of the author, we need some general information about the text. The focus of Creme's text is a description of the Christ, his role in bringing about the new age, and his message for humanity. The text takes a question and answer format. This format was the result of the lengthy question and answer periods Creme experienced during his lecture tours. Since many of the same questions were repeatedly being asked of Creme, he merely put these sessions in book form. Thus the chapters are divided into the subjects that reflect commonly asked questions of Creme. Examples of chapter headings are: "The Christ and his Reappearance," which serves to define the "Christ," "Christ Consciousness" which shows how the Christ will emerge, and "Effect on Existing Institutions," which discusses the New Age Christ's effects on Christianity and other world religions. Other chapters include discussions of God, esoteric philosophy, and the political effects of the Christ's return. Taken as a whole, this text serves to define the nature and purpose of the Christ, contextualize him within esoteric philosophy, and put this philosophy within the framework of religion and spiritualism.

David Spangler and His Text

Like Creme, Spangler has had an awareness of the different aspects of reality and two worlds for most of his life. As a teenager, Spangler's ability to "commune between dimensions" (Spangler, 1971, p. 19) led him into an exploration of esoteric philosophy and mysticism, with particular attention to the possibility of a dawning new age. In 1970, his interests led him to Findhorn, a New Age community in Scotland. This community's purpose was to engage in "the practical exploration and demonstration of a New Age

consciousness" (Spangler, 1971, p. 20). During the summer of 1970 Spangler became aware of a presence that was "overlighting" him (Spangler, 1971, p. 21). Spangler and several others began meditating together in order to see if this presence could be contacted. It was at this time the presence made itself known to Spangler as Limitless Love and Truth. Between July and September of that year, this supernatural figure transmitted seven messages to Spangler. One turned into a small book for the Findhorn community, the other six are included in the Revelation text. Originally, this text was published in April, 1971 only for members of the Findhorn community in order to create an awareness of the arrival of the Christ. As Spangler admits, "The book was heavily oriented towards the esoteric and the metaphysical. It was written assuming that its audience already had some familiarity with the concepts in these fields" (p. 24). According to Spangler, however, college bookstores began ordering copies. Pretty soon the text was in its second printing (in November 1971).

The format of the text is, like Creme's, somewhat unique. In Part One of the text "Introduction to Revelation," Spangler introduces the concept of the new age and Limitless Love. Limitless Love is not a physical being, but a "personification of a state of being now existing and manifesting within the newly initiated and expanded consciousness of earth life" (p. 150). In this state of being, Limitless Love acts as a spokesperson for different sources of power and life. The main source is the Cosmic Christ. The Cosmic Christ is the one who is carrying new age energies and will one day bring those energies to earth. The Cosmic Christ and Limitless Love are akin to the Christ--Maitreya--that Creme talks of in his book. (They are both Christs, because Christ in the Spangler text is more like spiritual energy than a person. So when I refer to

the New Age Christ in the analysis of the Spangler text, I may be referring to both Limitless Love and the Cosmic Christ. However, it is Limitless Love who gives the revelation about end time events to Spangler.)

Part Two is devoted to the teachings of Limitless Love: "The Transmissions of Limitless Love and Truth." This part is written as though the supernatural figure, Limitless Love, were writing the section himself. Each transmission is dated, and each entry is a chapter. The basic format is Limitless Love responding to questions from Spangler on a telepathic level. Entries are about 3-6 pages in length and are written with Limitless Love speaking in the first person, as in "My Beloveds, what is the revelation which I bring?" (p. 73). The content of the transmissions varies. There is a transmission entitled "World Events" in which Limitless Love states that when a nuclear war breaks out in Asia, the revelation will occur, and New Age followers should not be afraid. This would certainly appeal to those who live in fear of, or expect nuclear annihilation. Another transmission is called "Clarification of the relationship between the Old and New." In this chapter, Limitless Love proclaims that "I am the body of the new heaven and new earth . . . and anything which does not manifest my characteristics is not and shall not be of the new" (p. 84). Other transmissions include: "The Age of Man's Maturity," "Obedience to Law" and "new age Energies and new age Laws: An Article." After these transmissions is Part Three, which is Spangler's explanation and interpretation of the previous transmissions. In sum, the text takes the format of a claim in the introductory chapters, the proof of the claim through the transmissions of Limitless Love, and the interpretation of the proof in the last chapters.

This text, then, has to do with revelations by Limitless Love--the content

of which describes the transformation of our world and the birth of a new age.

Transformation

A familiar aspect of apocalyptic rhetoric is the topic of the change that will take place near the end of the world. Such a change is usually a catastrophic one: an ecological disaster or nuclear war are examples of what the change might entail. The change according to New Agers is not quite as threatening. Rather than destruction, New Agers talk of renewal through transformation of reality. Transformation then, is an important theme in the New Age discourse.

The Ages of Humanity

To understand transformation, one must understand the New Age discursive perception of time. The whole notion of a new age asks the audience to accept the premise that time is not linear and that humanity goes through different ages as part of its evolutionary development. These different ages are astrologically based, and each is an evolutionary step for humanity; each age is distinctively different from the last. Spangler realizes the assumptions underlying the idea of a New Age and therefore addresses this issue directly. "Is there any truth behind calling this time in history and human evolution the beginning of a new age?" (Spangler, 1971, p. 105). In answer to this question, Spangler cites the concept of geological ages as well as the twelve Zodiac signs. Spangler states that the earth moves through twelve different ages during a course of 26,000 years. At our current point in time, according to the astrological perspective, the "vernal equinoxtial point is leaving the constellation Pisces and entering the constellation of Aquarius. We enter the Age of Aquarius" (1971, p. 108). Thus, if the audience accepts certain astrological connections as having the meaning Spangler claims, then it

follows that humankind is leaving one age and entering into another. Creme and Spangler agree that the world is in a transition period between the Piscean Age and the Age of Aquarius: "There is no doubt of the new spiritual awakening which is everywhere taking place, which must lead to an era of world brotherhood--the keynote of the coming age of Aquarius" (Creme, 1980, p. 26). Spangler echoes Creme's notion of a spiritual awakening by stating that his book, *Revelation*, "is a look at the phenomena of transformation occurring upon our world at this time" (1980, p. 35). The sense that New Agers have of our current time being special is understandable given that the new millennium is just a few years away.

The implication here is that ages have distinguishing characteristics. As a rhetorical means of making the new age more appealing than our current age, both Creme and Spangler present the current Piscean age in a negative light. For instance, the Piscean Age is a "time of crisis and uncertainty [a] time of trial and testing" (Creme, 1980, p. 35). Creme further elaborates on the problems of the Piscean age by stating that famine and overpopulation plague our current age. In addition, Creme states that what characterizes the Piscean age is separatism. Humans apparently do not consider the whole of life on a daily basis--they do not see their actions affecting society or the planet as a whole. As a result, humans do not have a right relationship between themselves or with other life forms on the planet. As Creme says: "We must stop exploiting the lower kingdoms and misusing their life" (1980, p. 68). And in reference to the problem of famine: "If one man is starving in a world of plenty, you do not have a right relationship" (Creme, 1980, p. 151).

Another problem Creme identifies as being part of the Piscean Age is

the inability of the Christian Church to modify its doctrine to fit modern needs. "The Christian Churches have released into the world a view of the Christ which is impossible for modern people to accept: as the one and only Son of God" (p. 47). Creme further contends that Christianity has moved far away from the religion which the Christ began through Jesus. Creme specifically points to St. Paul: "the structure of Christianity, of the Church, was built by St. Paul--and St. Paul made a number of mistakes. He distorted Christianity considerably" (p. 159). As a result, "the majority of thinking people today have rejected this view, but are left with no answers to the meaning of life and evolution or any clear idea of the way forward, or any sure faith in the fact of God or His continuing contact with . . . mankind" (p. 25).

Spangler too bemoans the distressing current state of our world, but his method of distinguishing between the two ages is to argue that there are actually two planes of existence. There is the old world of form, which exists at the human level of consciousness, and there is the world that exists beyond the human level of consciousness. The world of form is the Piscean Age, and the world beyond human consciousness is the Aquarian Age or new age. In presenting this distinction, Spangler, like Creme, provides a negative view of the world of form or the Piscean Age. Spangler describes the world of form as distressing and plagued with conflict and disappointment.

What characterizes the world of form, according to Spangler, is conflict. At one point in the text he notes that there is a conflict between "man and Nature" (Spangler, 1971, p. 132). This conflict is manifested by such crises as overpopulation, pollution, and the threat of nuclear war. These are all identifiable crises of our age, and the fear of nuclear war is a fear that reaches a wide audience. At the time the Spangler text was published (1971), which was

before Glasnost and before the end of the cold war, the fear of such a crisis was even more intense. By citing such fears, Spangler creates a rapport with his audience through an identification of common concerns. Overpopulation, pollution, a fear of nuclear holocaust: since these are common concerns many people have, and people naturally seek peace and freedom from these worries. However, as Spangler further states, while "men seek peace, . . . no peace will be found on a human level of consciousness" (1971, p. 74). This is rather disappointing. The only state of consciousness known is at the human level. If the audience cannot find peace here, perhaps peace cannot be found. No matter how hard they try, no matter how long they strive, this peace may be unattainable. They may never know the solutions to the crises. Thus, at the human level of consciousness, humans will always remain in a "hungry world" (p. 45).

Spangler also explains our distressing spiritual situation: "We are either afraid of the transcendental, the mystical . . . or we swing to the other extreme . . . yearning for some messiah to supernaturally deal with our problems" (p. 37). This is an interesting statement. Spangler seems to be saying that the people should not be afraid of the mystical, but they should also not be waiting for a messiah to take care of their problems. In fact, Spangler seems to be pointing to Christianity as being a crutch for humanity; instead of people solving their own problems, they wait for a messiah, Jesus Christ, to solve them. Throughout the text, Spangler bemoans the effects of Christianity on the world of form (the Piscean Age). Spangler (1971) speaks of historical revelations of Second Comings and messiahs which were only "false labors":

New religious movements sprang up around the world in the anticipation of the Second Coming or of new revelation, and new messiahs proclaimed themselves with regularity. Often only disappointment and disillusionment followed some of the more spectacular movements which promised the imminent arrival of the millennium (p. 134).

There are a couple of points to be made here. First, there is the irony of the reference to the "imminent arrival of the millennium." Spangler berates the very thing the New Age movement promises, a utopia in the new millennium. Rhetorically, Spangler is distinguishing one vision, one revelation from another. The implication is that not all prophesied utopia's are the same; some, like the New Age vision, will actually come true. Secondly, there is the obvious disparaging of Christian prophecy. Although Spangler (1971) observes that the positive aspect to these "false labours" was that they kept the concept of a new heaven and new earth alive, he also claims that the Judeo Christian world view has also limited our conception of spirituality: "Man has been held in bondage by medieval concepts of the spirit and of God which inspired fear and encouraged ignorance" (p. 135). Thus, Spangler appears to identify Christianity as one of the problems in society today, since he associates it--in a negative sense--with the current age of form.

Note the appeal to the assessment of our current problems. In describing characteristics of the current Piscean Age, Creme and Spangler build rapport with their audience. Who couldn't identify with the uncertainty and turmoil in today's world? This is an important first step for the apocalyptic rhetor. If one is revealing the future, one might start with how the future compares to the present. And if the rhetor is promising something better, it is a smart move to start by creating a desire in the audience to want something better. Thus, by discussing some of the problems with our current age, the new

age authors rhetorically identify with their audience, which may aid in an acceptance of their claims about the new age, at least for those who need convincing.

A Transition Period

If the audience accepts that humanity evolves through a series of different ages, one logical query may be how do such ages become different? The ending of one age and the beginning of another is a period of social and collective transformation; it is a transition period. Creme, Spangler and other New Agers view the new millennium as the next step in humanity's evolution. In fact, New Agers claim that the world is now in a transition period between the Piscean Age and the Age of Aquarius or the new age. In astrology, the symbol of Pisces is a fish. And the fish is also symbolic of Christianity. In astrological terms, the age of Pisces is the age of Christianity and the Christian Church. This age, according to New Agers, began with the life of Jesus Christ and will end when humanity enters the Age of Aquarius. This view itself, of course, would certainly be objected to by most Christians.

There are two elements to Creme and Spangler's postmillennial theme of a transformation of reality or the transition period: the first is a description of the process of transformation, and the second informs the audience of who will be transformed.

Creme (1980) describes the transition period as the process of Initiation, and through this process "mankind will gradually enter into the Hierarchy-- the 'Kingdom of God', which is the Hierarchy" (p. 89). These terms come out of esoteric philosophy. Hierarchy refers to the various levels of human existence. One ascends through the levels through a process of initiation, and eventually becomes a Master: "The esoteric process known as Initiation is the

scientific path to . . . perfectionment [sic], whereby man becomes unified and at-one with his Source" (Creme, 1980, p. 29). Thus, Initiation is the change humanity must go through in order to enter the new age. Note how vague Creme is here. He really tells his audience nothing concrete in regards to the transformation process. As noted in Chapter One, vagueness is a stylistic element of the postmillennial form. It could be, too, that the process itself is not as important rhetorically as the result of such transformation.

Spangler's *Limitless Love* describes the transformation process in this way:

If, then, it is deemed wise for you no longer to remain in the patterns of the old world earth, you will be withdrawn to other patterns, such as a New Age center. Always be prepared for change. I have stated that all may change in the twinkling of an eye and you may find yourselves in another world of consciousness (Spangler, 1971, p. 91).

Spangler's version of the transition comes in the form of a separation of the two worlds: the world of form and the world beyond human level consciousness. People exist in one, but may be "withdrawn" to the other. Whereas Creme's explanation sounds more like a process in which humanity has to engage itself, Spangler's description sounds more deterministic, as if the transformation will suddenly just happen--quite like the Christian notion of a rapture. However, this transformation involves a move into a different level of consciousness. What this means is not clear. It sounds as though it is a transformation of the mind rather than the physical changes that are more indicative of our traditional notion of a cataclysmic change or apocalypse.

As to who will be transformed and thus enter the new age, the audience is assured that "at the end of this age all of mankind will be in the hierarchy" (Creme, 1980, p. 89). At the same time, Creme (1980) says that there may be some opposition to the change from the elite in society who may perceive "a

loss in their traditional status and power" (p. 34). Presumably, the audience is supposed to know to whom Creme is referring, since the "elite" are never defined. But the reference to those who may suffer a loss of status and power does provide a clue. Creme is asked if Christianity will have a role in the new age. His reply is that "if the Christian churches are flexible enough to the new teachings, the new ideas the Christ will bring, that form will be kept" (Creme, 1980, p. 84). Recall that earlier Creme singled out the Christian Church as one of the problems of the Piscean Age. Although Creme does not state that Christianity is in opposition to New Age discourse, the association is made. The audience is left to draw its own conclusion. The implication is at least that Christianity is not the religion of choice in the new age. "The Piscean civilization is crumbling and the attitudes to religion are changing, but where the form is sufficiently elastic and flexible to be used, it will be used while the people who are in it still need that formula" (Creme, 1980, p. 85). Note how this postmillennial apocalyptic theme of transformation is working here. Creme's rhetoric is describing a new and better age that will mean the end of suffering. Therefore, if there is any opposition to the new age, the opposition is set up rhetorically to be perceived as the advocate of suffering and the enemy of change. Creme's rhetoric functions to set up Christianity as being in opposition to the New Age.

Spangler (1971) also addresses indirectly the issue of who will be transformed. In a previously quoted excerpt from the Spangler text, *Limitless Love* says: "If it is deemed wise for you to no longer remain in the old world earth, . . . " (p. 91). Note the phrase "if it is deemed wise." This suggests that a judgment will be made when the transformation period comes. Should the audience be concerned about this "withdrawing to other patterns"? To this the

audience is told by Limitless Love: "How the worlds will separate is not of your concern" (Spangler, 1971, p. 93). This still does not answer the question. What will happen to those who cannot let go of the old world? Here, Limitless Love states that "Whatever befalls the old world, I am there and I am Life and I am Beauty and I am Perfection" (p. 64). Now the audience may be somewhat reassured. Limitless Love will be present in both worlds, lest the audience fear that those who remain with the old will be left behind and alone. Rhetorically, this reassurance is important. If the audience begins to feel that there will be a judgment as to who can and cannot enter into the new age, then the audience will either stop reading or require an understanding of how the judgment will be made. By not committing to a stance on this issue, the Spangler text avoids an inquiry by saying that whatever world you belong to, Limitless Love will be there. In addition, Limitless Love himself says: "I have not come to sift the good from the bad. I am not a judge" (Spangler, 1971, p. 169). Rhetorically, this sets the New Age view of the future apart from the Christian millennial view. Limitless Love's statement: "I am not a judge" refutes the Christian notion of a "Judgment Day." On the other hand, if Limitless Love is not a judge, and will be present in both worlds, then what motivation is there to decide between the two? At this Spangler's audience is told that they must choose because there may be a time limit on entering the new age:

No man is prevented from coming into the new heaven and the new earth, but there will come a time when the change is irrevocable, when the gap has become too wide and those who have not made that leap. . . will remain in that area and state of consciousness suitable to them . . . (Spangler, 1971, p. 88).

This certainly appears to be a strong warning that perhaps not all will enter the new age; indeed, some may be left behind. But, Limitless Love assures the

apocalyptic audience: "You are my beloveds and I am with you always. In the end of an age, in the beginning of an age and beyond time, beyond form, we are One" (Spangler, 1971, p. 65). As in the Creme text, there is no firm statement on who will enter the new age. The value of this strategy is that the audience is assured through this ambiguity that they are able to gain entrance to the new age. In other words, the audience is allowed to see what meaning they desire. At the same time, the audience has an opportunity to feel special if they are one of the ones to "be withdrawn to other patterns."

In sum, there is no clear stand in either text on who will be transformed and enter the new age. However, Creme does imply that Christians may not be admitted into the new age without some changes in the Christian doctrine. This is an ironic twist on traditional apocalyptic rhetoric. In the premillennial form, apocalyptic is employed to convince people that unless they are Christians--unless they are saved--they will not enter the kingdom of heaven (utopia). However, Creme is saying the opposite. If you are "saved" because you follow Christianity, then you may not enter the new age. For Christians, the only hope is in the transformation of the Christian church. What transforming the Christian Church truly means remains vague, leaving the audience to infer the answer on their own. The ability to infer and come to a conclusion in regards to religious discourse or spirituality may offer a special rhetorical appeal. Such vagueness may appeal to an audience who prefers to create their own spirituality rather than having the structure of one imposed upon them. Thus it is the power of interpretation which New Age rhetoric offers its audience, a power that is not likely to be provided in Fundamentalist rhetoric.

Spangler (1971), as the voice of Limitless Love, also implies that some

may be excluded from the new age. Limitless Love states that: "Form has little meaning to me, for I am concerned with that which is the eternal life of you, the Divine Presence which I nourish and embrace. If forms must be destroyed that this Presence be released, then so be it" (p. 89). Thus, forms may be destroyed during the transition period, but what these forms are is left unclear. Rhetorically, this notion of destruction acts as a fear appeal. The future is always plagued with uncertainty, and while the audience is assured that a better era is approaching, at the same time, the audience is forced to face a fear of not entering the new age. This fear plays on an unwillingness to be left behind and, worse yet, be left behind and destroyed. This fear also provides motivation to join the New Age discourse group and adhere to the New Age belief system. And here is even more motivation from Limitless Love: "Throughout the world, a great sifting is taking place . . . allowing consciousness to find the level of teaching and activity where they can best be reached by the Christ impulse" (Spangler, 1971, p. 178). This sifting refers again to the separation of the two worlds, which is part of the transformational period. And rhetorically, this may again motivate those hesitant readers to align themselves with Limitless Love and the new age energies--or else be "sifted" out.

So both Creme and Spangler discuss a collective transformation of reality. The appeal of this part of the transformation theme is that the audience now knows that the current uncertainty, the despair and turmoil in society, is only temporary. In addition, the audience is informed that to end the suffering, transformation must take place--and this transformation is the gateway to a brighter future.

However, there appears to be a purposeful vagueness in regards to who

will be transformed and thus enter the new age. Spangler implies that some may move to another level of consciousness; some may not. Creme implies that Christianity in its current form may not survive transformation. What is not discussed by either Creme or Spangler is just how flexible the Christian church is in the first place. History tells us that Christianity, especially Catholicism and Fundamentalism, traditionally have not been very flexible in regards to doctrine. It might be concluded, then, that it is probable that Christianity, at least in its present form, may not be admitted into the new age. Creme (1980) further predicts the future of Christianity by claiming that "gradually, Christianity and Buddhism and other religions will wither away-- slowly, as people die out of them" (p. 89). The mention here of other religions is important. Christianity is not being singled out; rather, present religions as a whole may be altered to appropriately fit the new age before us.

The possibility of exclusion contradicts the apparent New Age policy of acceptance, and yet it is also the nature of apocalyptic rhetoric to create divisions. Such divisions are created by the choices an apocalyptic audience makes when deciding between one prophecy and another. One choice implied at this point is that the audience may have to give up an adherence to such familiar structures as religion--or at least Christianity in its current form.

Yet such choice making is part of the appeal of this rhetorical form. There is an elitism to the apocalyptic: only the special few will enter heaven. If the New Age movement had an open door policy, much of the appeal of apocalyptic rhetoric would be diminished because there would then be no "special" group to want to join.

Personal Transformation

Coinciding with a transformation of reality, Creme and Spangler direct their audience to effect their own personal transformation. This personal transformation is a necessary part of the transformation of reality. The transformation of reality must coincide with the personal transformation of humanity.

This aspect of transformation is a spiritual one. For Creme (1980), the process of personal transformation, like his transformation of reality, is called Initiation. It is an "incarnational process" whereby believers should perfect themselves (p. 115). The ultimate goal is to be in contact with God: "Initiation allows a man entry, bit by bit, into the Mind of God" (Creme, 1980, p. 115). In order to achieve this goal, followers must begin by forgiving themselves. Guilt acts as a barrier to transformation. Referring to orthodox Christianity, Creme (1980) claims:

The orthodox teaching down the ages is that Christ . . . died for our sins, and so: Little sinner, if you sin you're denying that terrible sacrifice that he made. It is a tremendous pressure of guilt which is inflicted upon people, so they can't forgive themselves for stealing two prunes (p. 120).

In order to purge ourselves of guilt, Creme says people must learn to forgive themselves. Realizing that this is more easily said than accomplished, Creme (1980) then claims that we must put ourselves in a state of grace:

Being in a state of grace is when you are pure of heart and in mind so that you can receive the love of the guru, or in this case the Christ. Unfortunately, an awful lot of people think they are not in a state of grace because they have been conditioned into experiencing sins which are not really sins (p. 118).

Creme's rhetoric acts both to motivate and distinguish. Observe how this personal transformation offers a way out of our present difficulties. Creme's

audience is shown the means by which it can obtain the New Age version of the new millennium. Indeed, New Agers can be better people, they can know God, they can be free from guilt--if they engage themselves in personal transformation. It compels believers to be more than they are, and to know more than they know. In essence the audience is offered enlightenment--true revelation--if they could but forgive themselves. This rhetoric would certainly appeal to those who have rejected or wish to reject the Judeo-Christian tradition of sin and guilt, and/or those who are looking for a reason for such a rejection.

Crete's rhetoric also acts to distinguish the New Age belief system from the Christian view of the new millennium. Again, Christianity is singled out as a harm to society and to our spirituality. In Chapter One I stated that there has been a decrease in the membership of mainstream Christian denominations, and I argued that such a decrease has been a reflection of our spiritual uncertainty. The implication of Crete's rhetoric is that Christianity may itself be a partial cause of spiritual uncertainty. Crete implies that the Christian religious system is embedded with injustices and inequality. Furthermore, Christianity is a barrier to transformation into the new age. The solution is an adherence to the New Age path, the path to a better and brighter future.

What Crete suggests in his discussion of personal transformation is to reject old ideals in favor of new ones--or at least those that are a part of the New Age belief system. Spangler's *Limitless Love* affirms this concept of rejecting the old in even more concrete terms. *Limitless Love* asserts that there are two parts to personal transformation: the first is for a person to remove himself/herself from the old ideals and structures of society as a means of becoming ready for the second part, which is a union with the

spiritual beings of the cosmos.

According to Limitless Love, as a result of the collective transformation of reality, a new heaven and a new earth are forming, and it is important for people to align themselves with these new energies: "You must consistently, though at times gradually, align yourselves with the new heaven and the new earth" (Spangler, 1971, p. 62). For a person to align himself/herself means to reject old ideas and practices, and allow consciousness to expand: "As you grow and expand your consciousness, consistently remove yourselves from the old" (Spangler, 1971, p. 62). Rejecting past ideals and ways of thinking is a huge task to undertake; thus, Limitless Love advises isolation, so that one may only focus on the new age. Rhetorically, this aspect of the transformation process is reminiscent of the Biblical command to Christians to separate themselves from the sinful world around them. Yet the Bible also states that those who sin can be saved. Limitless Love, however, has no sympathy for this world of chaos, posing that it is pointless to attempt to heal a corpse. "Understand this: you cannot heal other people now involved and engrossed in the limitations and the adhesive conditions of the old world" (Spangler, 1971, p. 88). The old must now make way for the new. Additionally, notice the division created by Limitless Love as he proposes isolation in order to reject old values and practices. This appeal is targeted specifically to those who feel that there is nothing in the world worth saving; thus people may as well give up and start anew. The appeal of this rhetoric is probably limited to those who see nothing but a dark future, with no chance of improvement from their current situation. As Limitless Love describes it:

I am not ruthless, for I am Love: but I am Love and Truth combined and I move to bring about the total blessings of man, not momentary alleviation of some perpetual cycle of torment which will only repeat itself again and again (Spangler, 1971, p. 89).

The first part of personal transformation then, according to Limitless Love, is for people to reject the old and align themselves with the energies of the new age. The purpose of this is to reach the second aspect of personal transformation.

Unlike Creme's Maitreya, Limitless Love poses the possibility of a sort of spiritual possession. Apparently, there are a number of spiritual Masters who are now entering the earthly plane, but the only way they can truly manifest themselves is through human bodies:

What appears on the surface as a small but growing community is becoming, on the inner, the equivalent of a chakra within your body, unfolding many petals of power, of Light and Love. You are becoming, in fact, the body through which a spiritual being may manifest" (Spangler, 1971, p. 55).

Chakras are centers of spiritual energy within the body. These spiritual beings will attach themselves to a person's chakras so that they may be "fully attuned to the limitless spiritual energy the Masters bring" (Spangler, 1971, p. 56). This aspect of personal transformation consists of allowing a person to absorb the energies of the spiritual beings, like Limitless Love: "Though I speak to you as consciousness, my energy goes directly to the atomic heart of you" (Spangler, 1971, p. 57). The ultimate goal of this part of the personal transformation process is to take part in nuclear evolution, whereby a person's consciousness and eventually their body can extend into the "heights of interstellar space" and be at one with the spiritual cosmos.

The rhetorical value of the transformation theme as a whole is its promise of understanding and unlimited human potential at a time of

confusion and self-imposed limitations. It is one thing to promise a brighter future, it is something else to point out the path to heaven on earth. In Christianity, salvation through Jesus Christ is the path to eternity. In New Age discourse, it is a transformation of reality through astrology and a personal transformation of consciousness that leads to enlightenment in the new age. Such enlightenment is at this point beyond understanding. Yet, the appeal of extending the audience's awareness to the "heights of interstellar space" is a grand one. And in a time where religious structures are decaying and people find themselves struggling for meaning, grand spiritual appeals may be more powerful than would seem reasonable. Such appeals are truly characteristic of apocalyptic rhetoric: the grandiose promises counteract the collapse of the world around us.

Yet to gain such understanding, the apocalyptic audience must in turn make a choice. Again, Creme and Spangler are suggesting that the audience must choose between New Age and Christianity, since Christianity may act as a barrier to transformation.

The Christ

The path to the new age is one of transformation. Transformation is also the "change" which will occur before the new age will arrive. Still, there is another essential element preceding the new age, and that is the return of the Christ. The return of the Christ is a central theme of New Age rhetoric and it is this theme that Fundamentalists attack. Here, I will discuss the key elements of the Christ theme: the identity of the Christ, his role in the new age and the time of his appearance.

Importantly, the themes of this New Age postmillennial rhetoric are not mutually exclusive. Rather the themes taken together form the path to

enlightenment. The first step is transformation, but the New Age Christ does play a role in this transformation, as we shall see.

The Identity of the Christ

In response to questions about the identity of the Christ, Creme (1980) makes an effort to make the New Age Christ distinguishable from Jesus Christ as well as the Anti-Christ.

Creme (1980) informs us that his view, grounded in esoteric philosophy, is that the Christ is not a person, but the name of an office to be held. This office is part of a spiritual hierarchy which exists on the spiritual plane. Created by the "Lord of the World" some 17 million years ago, the purpose of this hierarchy is to "develop self-consciousness in all beings" (p. 71). Members of the hierarchy are persons who, while on earth, realized their divinity, and thus became a Master and a member of the hierarchy. One function of the Masters is to train disciples. Benjamin Creme (1980), the author, is one such disciple. However, the Masters are the custodians of energies which are released into the world. And it is these energies which "make us what we are" (p. 71) and which will form the new age.

At the apex of the hierarchy is the office of the Christ, which is currently held by Maitreya. However, the Christ is known by different names, depending on the religion. Christians will know him as the Jesus, Buddhists will know him as Lord Maitreya, and the Hindus will know him as the Krishna (Creme, 1980, p. 28). This characteristic of the New Age Christ is intriguing. Such a description could function rhetorically to provide Creme and his philosophy with a broad appeal across a number of religious beliefs. Why the Christ will be known differently to people of different religious beliefs is a point worth considering. Is it merely to gain the attention of all humanity,

since the coming new age affects all humanity? Or is it to deceive those looking for a savior? Perhaps this is the Anti-Christ after all, and Christians may be deceived into believing that it is Jesus Christ returning to initiate apocalyptic events. Another explanation is that this Christ concept may be able to unify the different religions and peoples like no other world leader. Imagine having a Christ who appears in the appropriate form to different religious groups, but has the same exact message! Since, later in the text, Creme explains that the Christ will unify all religions into one and all governments into a One-World Government, this explanation appears to be contextually appropriate.

Creme also makes a distinction between the Christ and the Anti-Christ. A question is posed: "There is a great deal of talk of the Anti-Christ. Can you say something about this"? This appears to be a reference to an opposing viewpoint, perhaps the first hint of a conflict between Creme's revelation and the Fundamentalist Christians' interpretation of Creme's assertions. It should be pointed out that it is not typical for a New Age text to discuss the Anti-Christ. Yet the question is posed to Creme and Creme responds at length. One may infer that this discussion is taking place due to references made by the Christian community regarding the New Age Christ. Creme's (1980) position is that the Anti-Christ is the "Will aspect of God" (p. 101) or the destructive aspect of God. This destructive aspect is necessary in order to make way for the building aspect, which is the Christ aspect. So the Anti-Christ is an energy: "It is the destructive force of God Himself, which prepares the way for the Christ" (Creme, 1980, p. 101). Here, Creme reframes the concept of the Anti-Christ from something evil into something godly by describing it as something positive--even though it is destructive.

Traditionally the description of the Anti-Christ has been filled with fear-inducing metaphors, all originating in the Bible. In the Biblical books of John and Revelation, the Anti-Christ is described as a "deceiver," "false Christ," "false prophet," "beast," and "dragon." Clearly, the traditional Christian view of the Anti-Christ is negative, and anyone posing as a Christ should be feared and avoided, since to follow an impostor is to take the path to Hell.

This perception of the Anti-Christ sets up a rhetorical boundary for Creme and the New Age Christ. If the New Age Christ is to emerge as a world teacher, then people must be convinced to at least listen to him. Rhetorically, Creme's choices are limited. He can state that this Christ is not the Anti-Christ, or attempt to change the traditional perception of the Anti-Christ. Creme chooses the latter strategy. Notably, Creme doesn't even state what this Anti-Christ talk is about or who is talking about the Anti-Christ. In this way, Creme avoids conflict by not even recognizing opposition to the Christ. Instead, he reframes the traditional view by stating that the Anti-Christ is a necessary part of God.

In doing so, Creme provides the opposition with quite a rhetorical challenge. For if a group accuses Maitreya of being the Anti-Christ, the group is actually, by Creme's definition, attacking God. This is important because, as we shall see in Chapter Three, the primary argument Fundamentalist Christians use against New Age rhetoric is that the New Age Christ is in fact the Anti-Christ. Fundamentalists have two reasons for doing this. First, if a group such as Fundamentalist Christians were to make this accusation, they would first have to redefine Creme's description of the Anti-Christ, and then restate their own interpretation. And second, since Creme has created a positive image of the Anti-Christ, how would it look if Maitreya was attacked?

The accusers may be depicted as attacking something positive without justification. Thus Creme makes a strategic rhetorical move in redefining the traditional view of the Anti-Christ.

In the act of reframing the traditional conception of Christ, Creme's argument for Christ as an office diminishes the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the only Christ. The result is a disempowering of the traditional Jesus Christ and at the same time, an elevation of the stature of the New Age Christ. Creme effectively contextualizes the Christ and deals with the issue of two Christs, one historical and one living. Now there is room for the New Age Christ to emerge.

Spangler (1971) too reframes the traditional view of Christ: "It is important to realize here that, in the cosmic context of Revelation, the Christ and the Second Coming and the new manifestation of the Aquarian Christ do not refer to specific people but to universal events and principles" (p. 176). This is similar to Creme's explanation of the Christ as an office. By redefining the Christian notion of Jesus Christ and the Second Coming, the audience can more readily accept the notion of an Aquarian or New Age Christ. Rhetorically, this is important because in order to accept the New Age Christ, the Christian Christ needs to be redefined as something other than the only path to heaven. But redefined for whom? The Spangler text was written for a New Age audience, which would be more inclined to accept Spangler's claims. Creme and now Spangler seem to be targeting a segment of the New Age community who may have a background or prior experience with the Christian view of Christ. Religious beliefs are difficult to change, but this reframing of the Christ may make the claims regarding the New Age Christ easier to accept. Limitless Love, in his August 18th, 1970, transmission to Spangler (1971), sets himself apart from Jesus by claiming:

I do not send you forth, who hear my voice, to proclaim the kingdom of the saved and the disaster of the lost. None are saved. None are lost. There is always only what I am . . . Those who attune to that will not be saved. They will only be attuned to what I am in my new revelation (p. 75).

This is an obvious reference to Christianity and distinguishes Limitless Love from Jesus Christ. Traditional Christianity and Jesus Christ enforce a dichotomy: either you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and follow him, or you perish in Hell for eternity. This dichotomy is found in the New Testament (e.g. John 3:16-17, Luke, 8:12, Acts 4:12). Limitless Love separates himself from this dichotomy and, therefore, distinguishes himself from Jesus Christ.

There is also a rhetorical appeal here. Many are accustomed to the Christian dichotomy: follow Christianity and get to heaven or do not follow and suffer. In other words, Limitless Love is presenting another path to heaven. All a person needs to do is be attuned to the reality of Limitless Love. It should be pointed out that any alternative to the Christian path to heaven may certainly be objected to by Fundamentalist Christians. Spangler (1971) further claims that Jesus Christ was actually a mere vehicle for the Cosmic Christ: "Through the channel made for him by the human consciousness of Jesus, the Christ entered the very structure and life of the earth" (p. 121). In this way, Jesus Christ is seen as subordinate to the Cosmic Christ. In fact, far from being the Son of God, Jesus was just a human being who realized the reality of the Cosmic Christ and the Christ within himself: "Another individual fully awoke to the reality of the Cosmic Presence. Like the Buddha, he became enlightened, awakened to the Christ within himself. Unlike the Buddha, this individual went a step further. . . he became one with the Cosmic Christ . . . thus, Jesus became the Anointed One" (Spangler, 1971, p. 120). This redefining of the role of Jesus

Christ may have a specific rhetorical appeal to some audiences. For instance, some may have turned away from Christianity, perhaps even for the reasons stated by Spangler. Yet they may be sensing some guilt at turning away from Jesus Christ, the messiah. By redefining Jesus simply as a forerunner of another Christ, they make it easier to accept a New Age philosophy and reject traditional Christianity. Now the audience isn't rejecting a messiah but merely a human who realized his divinity. The value of this is that the audience can now follow the New Age Christ with a greater ease of conscience.

So, the Cosmic Christ is not Jesus, and Limitless Love is not the New Age Christ. But since Limitless Love is the spokesperson for the Cosmic Christ and the supernatural being who is revealing information about the future, the audience needs to have more of an understanding about this entity. According to the Spangler (1971) text, Limitless Love is the embodiment of the new age. He is revelation; he is the new age energies; he is Christ; he is God; he is "all these things and more" (p. 152). Spangler explains the audience's confusion as the audience attempts to understand exactly who and what Limitless Love is. Spangler (1971) explains that, when Limitless Love claims that "I am all these things and more," this is like a teaching tool. Because people are beings in a world of form, they can better understand who Limitless Love is by comparing him with other forms, like their conception of God or Christ. Because he is more than form, this confusion readies the audience for a "move into a freer, more abstract consciousness" (p. 152). Thus, the vagueness, and the resulting confusion the audience may have in interpreting the text, is really training for the new age. Yet rhetorically, where there is confusion and vagueness, there is a search for meaning through interpretation. The greater the abstraction, the greater the vagueness and the more diverse the

interpretations. It's almost like filling in the blank as the audience chooses. And to those who may have turned away from a perceived narrow interpretation of the Bible by Fundamentalist Christians, this New Age rhetoric may be quite appealing because such rhetoric invites interpretation. And in fact, as I shall explain in Chapter Four, Fundamentalists are just now attempting to deal with the issue of Christians who are turning to the New Age movement.

The Role of the Christ

After Creme and Spangler discuss the identity of the New Age Christ, they both define the New Age Christ as the one who will lead humanity into the promised utopia.

Creme (1980) states that the primary role of the Christ is as a guide for humanity: "This will be his main function in the coming age--to lead humanity into the Spiritual Kingdom, the Kingdom of Souls, or the Kingdom of God--which already exists . . . as the Masters and the Hierarchy" (p. 67). Creme (1980) states that people will follow the Christ because he will be the "World Teacher" (p. 65), known by all religions. His teachings shall include "the political, economic, social, financial, educational, and the scientific areas" (Creme, 1980, p. 64). In addition, the Christ will be the savior of the poor, the powerless and the destitute: "He seeks to save millions from misery and death through starvation, and to release from bondage those now languishing in the prisons of the world for the crime of independent thought" (Creme, 1980, p. 37). Observe the breadth of the appeal of this New Age Christ. His role is much broader than the Christian Christ. This Christ is not concerned with just the spiritual well-being of humanity but with political, social and economic issues as well. It is as if one would not have a reason to listen to this Christ.

All of this makes the Christ sound like a savior. However, Maitreya is not a savior but a teacher whose purpose is to teach people how to save themselves. Note that the key word Creme uses to describe this Christ is "guide." Creme's rhetoric functions in a way to shift the responsibility for building a better future from God and Christ to humanity. Creme is saying that humans have the power to bring about this new age. This is different from the Christian Christ who ascended from the earth some two thousand years ago for the purpose of preparing a place for believers in heaven. When Creme (1980) speaks of Maitreya and his followers, he states that "Through them He can work. They [emphasis Creme's] will change the world through His influence" (p. 36). Creme (1980) later says in more concrete terms: "The Christ and the Masters are not going to do anything but show the way. They are not going to build the new age. We have to build it" (p. 158).

This reveals the true relationship between the Christ and humanity, and it is empowering. If Creme is saying that people have to build the new age, this assumes that a new age can be built. Humanity need not wait for divine intervention; people have the power to change society for the better. There can be an end to the suffering and the disappointment. Note how positive this rhetoric is. It motivates and encourages people to act, to build a better society. This is not the doom and gloom, deterministic apocalyptic rhetoric found in Christian apocalyptic. In fact, this postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric is rather inspiring. Perhaps that is the appeal for the audience. On the one hand, Creme's rhetoric states that presently, things are bad, but, instead of dwelling on the suffering and famine, he inspires his audience to change their present situation for the better, to take responsibility for the future and bring about the new age.

The role of the Cosmic Christ is a little different, as explained by Spangler and Limitless Love. The Cosmic Christ is coming to "inaugurate the Aquarian dispensation" (Spangler, 1971, p. 177). The use of language here is revealing. The Fundamentalist concept of dispensationalism assumes an element of predetermination. That the Cosmic Christ will inaugurate the new age furthers this element of predetermination.

How the Cosmic Christ inaugurates the new age clarifies this notion of predetermination. The Cosmic Christ will bestow upon humanity energies that will lead to enlightenment:

As the energies of the Cosmic Christ become increasingly manifest within the etheric life of earth, many individuals will begin to respond with the realization that the Christ dwells within them. They will see themselves as the new saviors, the new messiahs. . . . They will see themselves as being the Second Coming personified (Spangler, 1971, p. 177).

So, the Cosmic Christ is not a teacher, like Maitreya, and comes not to build the new age but to empower the audience with the ability to build the new age on their own. Thus, this truly is the Aquarian dispensation. In Fundamentalist dispensationalism, not only is human history predetermined, but what happens in each dispensation is also preordained by God. In the New Age view, the arrival of a new age is predetermined, but what the new age will be is up to humanity. This would appear to conflict with the Fundamentalist view of end time events. Two strong points of clash are the New Age notion of a Christ within humans and of the New Agers as the Second Coming personified. Actually, this is more than conflict; to the Fundamentalist, it is blasphemy.

On the other hand, for the New Age community or those who seek individual empowerment and/or control over their destiny, the concept of the self as a divine being is at least a confidence boost if not motivational. As

Limitless Love states: "Co-create with what I am as love and truth and wholeness" (Spangler, 1971, p. 230).

So the role of the Christ according to the Spangler (1971) text is only to provide enlightenment via the energies of the Cosmic Christ. In some ways the Cosmic Christ seems almost metaphorical; Christ is in us, but the Cosmic Christ has to awaken our "Christ impulse" (p. 183). This metaphorical element is somewhat distinct from the Christ in the Creme text--Maitreya--who is said to have taken physical form, but the function is the same. The role of the New Age Christ is to empower humanity with the knowledge that the destiny of humanity does not rest with a single divine entity--God--but rather rests within humanity. Yet it is more than knowledge that is provided, for the transformation theme acts as a spiritual map to show the path to enlightenment.

However, there is also the sense that, despite the suggestion of metaphor in the Spangler text, the New Age Christ is real, his presence is needed and his appearance is imminent.

The Time of His Return

The Christ, Maitreya, took on human form on July 7, 1977 in "his mountain centre in the Himalayas" (Creme, 1980, p. 20), and began his mission on July 22, 1977, in a "well-known modern country" (p. 21). Creme is very specific when it comes to dates, yet he is vague when it comes to locations. Maitreya has, according to Creme, appeared in a multitude of locations around the globe. Yet it is never revealed in the text where people can go to find Maitreya or when he will fully reveal himself to the world.

So when it comes to something as concrete as where the Christ is living and how he will be recognized, Creme is very vague. This vagueness is typical

of New Age, postmillennial rhetoric and the rhetoric of end time events. Rhetorically, this vague style may serve an important function. By not making a definite statement about where the Christ is or when he will be seen, Creme's statements cannot be verified, and the audience has to accept or reject his statements on faith. And perhaps this is what Creme wants. Perhaps he wants his audience to choose to believe. This notion of choice relates another point about the vagueness which is the emphasis on human free will. Creme is not dogmatically insisting that the audience must believe--he leaves it to them. And at this point, no harms are associated with deciding not to believe. Thus, Creme places a high value on choice. This parallels the New Age religious philosophy of finding one's own path, the path appropriate to the individual (Melton, 1991). People choose the path they want because that path is right for them. In the same way, the audience may choose to believe and recognize the Christ because that is what they desire. Of course, there is also the possibility that all this vagueness suggests that Creme is creating prophetic fiction--that there is no New Age Christ. Creme may simply be making all this up. The audience can believe what it wishes. Contemporary violence and despair create a desire in people to believe in the improbable.

To continue, the time of the appearance of the Cosmic Christ is quite different in the two authors' accounts. "By Christmas, 1967 . . . cosmic blessings had been placed on Earth. The Christ, imprisoned in his tomb of matter for nearly two thousand years, had ascended and blended with the Cosmic Christ approaching with new energies" (Spangler, 1971, p. 148). Apparently, those energies needed to realize human divinity are already here on earth, and Spangler argues that people are awakening to a new reality because of the awareness of the Christ within them. By the time of the new millennium, the

combined Christ energies will bring about the new age. In the meantime "it is up to each person to be responsible for the unfolding of the indwelling Christ nature within each person" (Spangler, 1971, p. 176). Here, it is as if New Agers are to minister to each other's spiritual growth, like a Christian would witness to non-believers.

The Christ theme provides two rhetorical effects on the apocalyptic audience. First, it acts to place the responsibility for creating a new age upon humanity rather than on Christ. Spangler accomplishes this by reframing the role of the Christ in the new age. Such reframing also produces a second rhetorical effect, which is to urge the audience to choose between the traditional view of the Christ as a savior of humanity and the New Age view of the Christ as a guide for humanity. To achieve the New Age discourse promise of a future utopia, the New Age apocalyptic audience must make the preferred choice: an acceptance of the Christ as a guide and Jesus as a mortal who realized his divinity. Such a choice may be difficult for those who have a background in Christian teachings. While choices are a natural part of rhetoric, choice making for the apocalyptic audience can effect this audiences' destiny.

Together, the themes of transformation and the Christ combine to lead us to the last theme, which is the promise of a future utopia, in this case, a new age. Rhetorically, these themes do motivate and compel the apocalyptic audience to build a new age. The rhetoric of these themes is mystical, spiritual and, as we shall see in the next chapter, much more optimistic than the apocalyptic rhetoric of the Fundamentalist. Despite its superficial appearance with the crystals and mantras, New Age rhetoric mirrors aspects of Fundamentalist Christianity. New Age discourse has salvation, its own path to

heaven. The New Age movement has its Christ who brings enlightenment and the promise of a better future. And New Age discourse group has its Aquarian dispensation, the promised utopia, to which I now turn.

A Future Utopia

Pertinent to the persuasive appeal of apocalyptic rhetoric is the promise of a future utopia or heaven. The apocalyptic audience is told that if they just have faith and follow the right path, then they will be saved from this world of uncertainty and suffering. Importantly, the themes of transformation and the Christ acted rhetorically upon the audience to weed out all those except the most committed. Those who are steadfast in their faith will be rewarded. This section analyzes the theme of a promised utopia and how the rhetorical vision of a future utopia acts as a final test of the faithful.

Characteristics of the New Age

Crete describes the new age as having such idealistic and utopian characteristics as "Sharing, Justice, Freedom, Co-operation and Goodwill" (1980, p. 52, 66). Crete expands each of these five characteristics throughout the text. Together, they paint a picture of an ideal world, one of stark contrast to the present day world.

Sharing will solve the starvation problem: "Mankind will soon see that there is no alternative to sharing the produce of the world" (Crete, 1980, p. 62). Crete (1980) also claims that sharing is the only solution to the violence in today's society. Of the five characteristics, sharing seems to be the most important:

The principle of sharing is the key to this glorious future for humanity. When the world is truly One, when the produce of the world is shared among all men, the secrets of the Divine Science, held in the custody for us by the Masters of Wisdom, can safely be revealed, and through its agency man can create a civilization such as the world has never seen. Man will come to realize himself as the Divine Being he is, and will express that divinity in a new creativity and livingness, under the guidance of the Christ and the Masters (p. 70).

The first half of this quote is picturesque pathos, using the value of sharing to appeal to his audience. But the latter half of this excerpt is a key insight into why the audience has the power to build and maintain this utopian vision. People will, in this new age, realize the divinity of humanity. And with this new realization, all things are possible, such as a "new creativity and livingness [sic]." The mention of human divinity is similar to Spangler's "Christ impulse" concept. The idea that humans are divine beings is fairly typical of New Age rhetoric, and it parallels both the New Age rejection of Christian doctrine and the premise that the Aquarian Age is to be an age of wholeness. Since many New Agers believe that all life is composed of energy, then God, Christ and humans must all be composed of energy. Couple this with wholeness, and it is clear that God and Christ exist within humans. The reason people have not realized this earlier is attributed to the teachings of Christianity, as Creme claimed in his discussion of transformation.

But note that Creme has placed the promise of human divinity within the context of sharing. The implication is that humanity will use its divinity for the good of all. Though the notion of human divinity would appear arrogant to those who believe in an external, omnipotent God, there is no hint of arrogance here. In fact, the premise of shared resources has the broad appeal to those who are impoverished or who suffer from perceived injustices of a capitalist system.

The characteristics of justice and cooperation may be combined because of their importance to the economy as well as to the restructuring of power in the new age. Creme (1980) suggests that a barter system "based on an agreed value for each country's produce should be substituted for the present system, wherein a distorted value is placed on manufactured goods to the disadvantage of those countries whose main produce is natural commodities" (p. 27). Also, because of the injustices in the class system, "the present caste system has to go in the interests of the One Humanity" (Creme, 1980, p. 34). Creme appears to be directly appealing to the poor and underprivileged and to those who have fallen between the cracks of class distinctions. Thus, Creme's rhetoric again has an appeal to equality in a world of discrimination. This is one of the common appeals of New Age rhetoric, and it gives it a broader appeal than Fundamentalist Christianity. The discourse reaches out to those "unsaved" and others who may have been denied a promised utopia because of not fitting the Fundamentalist doctrine. Again there is a sense that Christianity, like other aspects of our current age, creates injustice and inequality. The New Age discourse group positions itself as offering a similar vision of heaven but is more inclusive with its membership.

Freedom is another aspect of the utopian period and is referred to primarily as free-will. Creme (1980) reassures his audience that neither the Hierarchy nor the Christ will infringe on our free-will. At the same time, he states that humans have given their freedom full reign and have made many mistakes. This indulgence of human free-will has resulted in a lot of suffering. Fortunately, human free-will and the "Divine Will" are "coming into direct alignment" (p. 161). When the free-will of humans is in correct alignment with the Divine Will, "all is well" (p. 161). Once again, Creme seems to offering

a heaven similar to that of the Christian heaven, without the burden of obedience to an omnipotent God.

Finally, there is goodwill, which acts as a call for action. Creme would like people to spread the word that the Christ is returning. And since Creme acts as the channeler for the New Age Christ, Creme also asks that people spread the message which Maitreya brings. Creme (1980) claims that "the energy typically called goodwill is one of the most potent factors in changing world conditions . . . join groups and work with others along these lines. . . . take part in the work of transforming the world" (p. 98).

These characteristics make the new age sound like a true heaven on earth for those desiring a change from our world's present uncertainty and turmoil. The preceding characteristics demonstrate a marked contrast between the present age and the new age. Yet, are these characteristics actually new? Creme presents his audience with life as it could be--with sharing, justice, cooperation, free-will and goodwill. Such characteristics have a broad appeal--to both New Agers and Christian Fundamentalists. In fact, Jesus Christ himself taught these very virtues.

Creme (1980) presents a picture of an ideal life where things are simpler: "We will have to learn to live more simply. But the Masters will show that it is possible to live a simpler life, a happier life, when the wherewithal of that life is shared with all men everywhere" (p. 69). The picture painted is a simple one, as though the world might become one happy family, a world commune--which, in a time of uncertainty and confusion may be just what the audience wants to hear.

Given this picture of a world commune, what will happen to such structures as government and religion, at least as they are now known? Creme

(1980) explains that in the new age there will be a One-World Government, and at the head of this government there will be "either a Master or at least a third-degree Initiate. So the great international agencies will be under the direct control of a high member of the hierarchy" (p. 169). In addition, there will be a One-World Religion in the new age: "But eventually a new world religion will be inaugurated which will be a fusion and synthesis of the approach of the East and the approach of the West" (Creme, 1980, p. 88). And the leader of this One-World Religion is to be Maitreya as well. Obviously, Maitreya is to assume quite a lot of power in the new age.

Similar to Creme's characteristics of the new age, Limitless Love reveals that once people enter the new age, there are several laws which must be obeyed. These laws are created because the energies of the new age are very potent, and thus rules must be created to govern humanity in a fair and effective manner. However, these rules, as shall be seen, are more akin to principles to live by, rather than laws. The first law is the law of love. Persons in the new age must "transcend a purely personal and selfish viewpoint" (Spangler, 1971, p. 98). The second law regards truth. Truth is defined as "the exercise of that faculty of discrimination which sees what is the right action at any given time. . . it accepts only what is right and true for that time and place" (p. 98).

The third law is a "responsibility to the cycle of energy flow" (Spangler, 1971, p. 99). Basically this means that "new age energies will not carry a person along; he must work with them and give of his energy of life to increase the flow" (p. 99). This sounds like volunteer work, actually, a kind of a call to arms. This law serves as a reminder that it is our responsibility not only to build the new age but to also ensure the continuation of the new age.

Finally, the fourth law states that all individuals must be willing to work and externalize new age energies through "living application" (p. 101). Again, this is like a call for action, everyone must take part in building a new life in the new age.

The picture of a promised utopia painted by Creme and Spangler is a grand one and one that appeals to our fundamental values and desires. Such characteristics appeal to what the audience holds most dear: justice, love, and freedom. The vision presented is a perfect world, and it is waiting for the most faithful followers of this New Age prophecy.

There is yet one final test of the faithful. Beyond transformation and acceptance of the identity and role of the Christ, the description of the new age by Creme and Spangler implies one last challenge: a rejection of separatism and individuality. The final change humanity must undergo is an alignment of human wishes and desires with new age energies.

When Creme (1980) discussed free-will he mentioned that humanity's free-will and the Divine Will are "coming into direct alignment" (p. 61). This alignment must be made freely and with confidence if the new age is to be attained. Creme explains that when the will of humanity is not in alignment with the Divine Will, humanity is being selfish, engaging in the accomplishment of individual desires and needs. Such an individualistic view of life leads to trouble: "When we express our separative free-will, our sense of ourselves as separate entities, selfishly oriented, there the trouble starts" (Creme, 1980, p. 162). Thus the last leap of faith for those who desire to make the New Age vision a reality is to give up their individual desires and needs and align themselves with the desires of the Divine Will, or at least to see themselves as part of a community of believers.

Additionally, when Limitless Love discusses the new age, he claims: "I am the revealed future and in me there is no destruction. There is no suffering but there is change and there is a new maturity for those who can accept it and a continued adolescence for those who cannot" (Spangler, 1971, p. 82). On the one hand, this absence of destruction has a strong rhetorical appeal for the audience with the current problem of AIDS and the still real threat of nuclear annihilation: "This new humanity, filled with my presence, cannot be touched by whatever falls upon the old. Should nuclear devices be used, the energies will be the revelation of me" (p. 74). This seems to indicate that if nuclear war does occur, what will follow the destruction is the revelation of Limitless Love and perhaps the beginning of the new age. Typical of the apocalyptic, despair is entwined with hope.

But note the qualifier in the statement from Limitless Love: "there is a change and a new maturity for those who can accept it." Again there is one last test of the faithful. If change is accepted and, as Spangler explains, humanity aligns itself with Limitless Love, the world will be protected from harm. But what of those who do not align themselves with Limitless Love, those who cannot accept the change? Will they be protected from these destructive forces? The answer: "Those who remain within the thought patterns of destruction and separation and who create these in their relationships with others will attract these forces to them, for these forces represent the heaven and body of the old earth" (p. 92). Here, separatism or individualism is associated with destruction. In essence, the Spangler text, like Creme's, requires the audience to reject individualism or at least the desire to fulfill individual needs above others. Those who can meet this requirement can align themselves with the new age energies and enter the new age, with all its

promises. For those who cannot accept the change and cannot reject their need to fulfill their individual desires--their destiny is questionable.

The theme of a promised utopia places the apocalyptic audience in a dilemma. The characteristics and laws of the new age reflect many of the values and desires people hold dear. This makes the vision of a heaven on earth very attractive. Yet, at least in the American culture, people's importance as individuals is also highly valued, so much so that they compete to see who is better than whom. There seems to be little room for this kind of self importance in the new age. The apocalyptic audience then, in the case of New Age rhetoric is asked to choose between potentially competing values. Such a choice acts once again to narrow the apocalyptic audience down to only the most faithful and the most desirous of attaining the New Age vision. This audience, then, are those who have been asked to take more than one leap of faith--an audience so tired of the current state of the world, or their position in it, that they are willing to gamble on the New Age vision.

New Age Rhetoric: An Analysis

Now that a postmillennial apocalyptic thematic analysis of New Age rhetoric has been presented, the implications of these themes can be assessed.

Use of Vagueness

Throughout the previous analysis, both Creme and Spangler use language that is very clear in some respects, quite vague in others. It is clear that the new age is to be very much like a heaven on earth, with suffering and destruction to be replaced by love and sharing. It is also clear that the New Age Christ is not Jesus Christ. Beyond these two elements, there exists a strong ambiguity in New Age rhetoric.

One specific example is the reference to a "change" by Limitless Love.

Generally, it can be assumed that people do not like being told that they need to change. Yet some religions say just that. In fact, there is a promise by some religions that if a person changes in prescribed ways that person will receive certain rewards. But in the Spangler text, it is left unclear how people should change. Thus the vagueness allows for a wide interpretation of what change really means. This may be rhetorically appealing to those who dislike religious systems that impose absolute rules and doctrines on its members, specifically, this may well appeal to those who desire to reject Fundamentalism or those who have rejected a Fundamentalist doctrine. In the New Age religious discourse, the audience decides how to change and to what extent, and in this way they are allowed to feel a part of the new age with even a minimal amount of commitment. It is almost like a negotiated religious system, quite a change from the arguably more authoritarian Christianity.

The implications of such a system are intriguing. This may yet be another strong reason for the broad appeal of New Age discourse. Usually it is the religious system that imposes a set of standards or philosophy on its members. In the case of New Age movement, there appears to be a flexibility that allows its followers to bring in elements of their own value system and create their own personal New Age spirituality. As pointed out in Chapter One, the New Age belief system has a flexibility that allows one to adhere to New Age and another religious system. A Jew integrates New Age elements and becomes a New Age Jew. Or a Christian becomes a New Age Christian. (Recall the statements of Creme: "If Christianity is flexible enough") Additionally, such a negotiated system may give New Age discourse an enduring quality, perhaps even beyond the new millennium. Attitudes and values may change over time but that can be quite acceptable in the New Age movement. Given

the wide variety of interpretations of New Age rhetoric, it may be that elements of the New Age discourse are more easily assimilated into our present culture and into other religious systems.

Creating Divisions

Crete and Spangler rhetorically create a handsome vision of the new millennium, complete with an explanation of how to obtain this new world. But any apocalyptic vision is targeted to a specific audience and thus apocalyptic as a rhetorical form must act to define that audience. The means by which apocalyptic rhetoric defines its audience is by creating boundaries and divisions. As inclusive and broad as New Age rhetoric appears, it too divides and at least implies an exclusiveness.

The New Age apocalyptic audience has been given a series of choices, and, notably, each correct choice leads to the New Age movement's promise of a utopia. Such choices include a willingness to align oneself with new age energies, allowing for a possible possession by a supernatural being and the ability to place the needs of the many over the needs of the self. In other words, the audience is asked to have enough faith in the New Age prophecy that it is willing to reject our current way of thinking in favor of a presumed better one.

Of all the choices the audience is asked to make, the choice between the New Age discourse and other religious forms--especially Christianity--is the most important. Consider the consistency with which Christianity is implicated in the Crete text. It associated with a world of suffering and in fact may have been the cause of suffering, due to its lack of flexibility in the modern world. Crete argues that Christianity's assumption of sin and guilt act as barriers to transformation and thus barriers to enlightenment. Even people's view of

Christ has been thwarted by the Christian church. In fact, he believes the reality of human divinity has been held secret by Christianity, restricting our ability to build a better world.

All of this may suggest that in order to attain the new-age-promised utopia, the New Age audience must reject Christianity. However, there is the other possibility that only the more rigid Christian Fundamentalism may simply exclude itself. Christian Fundamentalism assumes a literal interpretation of the Bible, but other forms of Christianity may be more open to the New Age interpretation of Christian concepts, such as the identity and role of the Christ.

Notably, if the audience accepts the New Age interpretation of the Christ as a guide, then it is assumed that this audience desires a leader or guide over a savior. If it is further assumed that audiences look for rhetoric that affirms their own already held beliefs and values, then the New Age postmillennial apocalyptic audience is likely to hold the belief that they do not need a savior--that they have the power to change their world--if they were just taught how. Thus the New Age audience is likely to be comfortable with the notion of a Christ but is willing to reject parts of Christianity.

New Age postmillennial rhetoric acts to create boundaries for its audience by imposing a series of choices. However, New Age rhetoric also creates divisions. Reid (1983) argues that apocalyptic rhetoric functions to set its audience for the prophecy of the rhetor and against the perceived enemies of that prophecy.

One of the attractions of New Age rhetoric is that it appeals to people's fundamental values of justice, love and freedom. New Age discourse also advocates a change from our current situation, and, in times of crisis and

turmoil, any change may be perceived positively.

Given the current distressing situation, advocates of change like to place blame for the current ills. And in many ways, Fundamentalist Christianity is blamed for our present difficulties. Given its apparent inflexibility, Fundamentalism, especially, may be seen as opposed to any change from our current course. Thus, Creme and Spangler associate Christianity with continued suffering. In this way, New Age rhetoric acts to set its audience against Christian Fundamentalism and fulfills a negative function.

Together, the positive and negative functions of New Age postmillennial rhetoric act to create a sense of community. New Age rhetoric, by creating an identifiable enemy to attaining the New Age promised utopia, results in an "us" versus "them" division. The effect of this division is to make the apocalyptic audience more unified and cohesive. This sense of community is important in matters of faith, for one's faith is confirmed, in part, by the knowledge that others hold the same beliefs. Community, then, fosters strength in the faith that the prophecy will become reality.

Affirming the Human Ability

The one most striking feature of New Age rhetoric is its overwhelming confidence and optimism regarding human ability. In a time of crisis and uncertainty, in a time when it seems as if humans have little control over the events which occur in the world, New Age rhetoric instead tells people the future is what they make of it.

The rhetoric of Creme and Spangler creates a sense of control over human destiny and thus what the new millennium holds. Such control is achieved through a discourse that provides its audience with both knowledge

and guidance. It points to a future utopia but also provides the audience with a spiritual map in order to arrive at the desired destination. In essence, New Age rhetoric provides not only a prophecy but control over that prophecy.

In addition, this New Age postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric is consistently positive, in contrast to the traditional gloom and doom of the more deterministic premillennial model. In the traditional use of the apocalyptic, there is irony to the revelation. The supernatural figure reveals the end of the world events to a person, but with the implication that humans have no control over such events. This postmillennial example is different. The New Age apocalyptic audience not only is informed of the revelation but is directed to do something about it. Thus, there is a built-in defense mechanism against any claims that the has not arrived. If the prophesied new age is not attained, people can only blame themselves. There is no blaming God, Christ or anyone else if the promises of Creme and Spangler are not realized.

However, despite the strong emphasis on human agency, there are also trace elements of determinism in the rhetoric of Creme and Spangler. By basing the future on astrological assumptions, New Agers imply that at least periods of time are determined not by humanity but by the stars. Thus the new age will come, whether people like it or not. The transformation of reality, too, is predetermined. Yet, rhetorically, these elements of determinism do not act to limit the audience's choices but rather offer an opportunity. The new age is coming but the audience must make it a better one. Typical of the apocalyptic, the audience is given the sense that they live in a special time--and they should take advantage of it.

Observe how well the sense of this being a special moment in time fits into the current social paradigm shift to a greater awareness of the spiritual.

Indicative of the shift of social awareness referred to in Chapter One, such a shift causes uncertainty as people struggle to regain a sense of meaning. This is a time of uncertainty, and the approaching new millennium adds to people's distress. In this context, New Age rhetoric seems to offer a sense of direction and meaning when people need it most.

Perhaps more than anything else, this analysis of New Age rhetoric reveals its postmillennial form as motivating and inspirational. Ironically, this New Age rhetoric contains nothing new. It empowers by telling the audience what they want to hear--perhaps what they already know: that humans have great, even unlimited potential. People can make a difference in the world--if they only believe that they can. Far removed from the deterministic premillennial form, New Age rhetoric asks its audience not to look towards the heaven for answers regarding the coming millennium--they need to look inside themselves.

Given such an overwhelmingly optimistic outlook towards humanity and the future, one wonders how the Fundamentalists deal with such an empowering rhetoric. This is to be revealed in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE: THE END IS NEAR: FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIANS
RESPOND TO NEW AGE RHETORIC

In 1982, Maitreya, the New Age Christ, informed Benjamin Creme that he would at last emerge into the public view. Acting on this information, Creme placed a one page advertisement announcing the appearance of the Christ in major newspapers. On Sunday April 25, 1982, the one-page announcement appeared in Part 1 of the Los Angeles Times, and on page 61 of the New York Times, as well as in other papers in major cities across the globe.

This advertisement caught the attention of an enraged Fundamentalist Christian community, who objected to anyone announcing a reappearance of a Christ. Fundamentalists were concerned that people would think that *the* messiah, Jesus Christ, had returned, and Fundamentalists also feared that the Christ referred to in the advertisement could be the Anti-Christ.

The purpose of this chapter is to develop an understanding of the Fundamentalist response to the New Age religious discourse through a rhetorical analysis of Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow (Cumbey, 1983) and Dark Secrets of the New Age (Marrs, 1987). Such an understanding is attained through a premillennial thematic analysis of the Fundamentalist response to New Age rhetoric.

There are three premillennial themes examined in this chapter, and all three parallel the postmillennial themes of Chapter Two. The first theme is salvation, and this parallels the New Age transformation theme. Fundamentalists Cumbey and Marrs argue that the New Age transformation process is demonic in nature, and the only way for a person to be enlightened is to be saved through salvation. The second and third themes are the same as the postmillennial New Age themes of the Christ and the new age. In the Christ

theme, Fundamentalists reject the New Age Christ, reframe the New Age Christ as the Anti-Christ, and reassert that Jesus Christ is the one and only Christ. In the third theme, Fundamentalists argue that the belief in New Age promises leads to the persecution and death of Christianity--and, ultimately leads to Hell--while a belief in Christianity leads to the only true Heaven. In all the themes the method is to refute individual New Age claims and then reassert the Fundamentalist view.

Fundamentalist Rhetoricians: Cumbey And Marrs

One of those concerned Fundamentalist Christians who saw the announcement regarding the Christ was Constance Cumbey, an attorney in Michigan who then took it upon herself to awaken the Christian community to the "threat" of the New Age movement. Cumbey's 1983 book, The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow, became one of the most popular New Age critiques among Christians. Cumbey herself became a spokesperson for the Fundamentalist response to New Age discourse and the New Age Christ.

Following Cumbey's lead, author/evangelist Texe Marrs, President of the Living Truth Ministries in Austin, Texas published his critique of the New Age movement in 1987. The book is entitled Dark Secrets of the New Age: Satan's Plan for a One-World Religion.

These books represent the typical Fundamentalist response to the New Age religious discourse. Just as the two New Age texts examined in Chapter Three were primarily written for the New Age community, these two texts have been primarily written for the Fundamentalist Christian community. The general premise of these texts is that if something is not inspired by God, then it is inspired by Satan. Since the New Age discourse group rejects the Judeo-Christian belief system, it must be led not by God but by Satan. To support this

argument, both Cumbey and Marrs translate New Age rhetoric in light of Biblical prophecy and use Biblical warnings about the end-of-the-world events in their appeal to the Fundamentalist Christian audience.

Constance Cumbey and Her Text

Cumbey first began to take notice of the New Age discourse group when more and more New Age books began to find their way into secular bookstores. When she saw the Christ announcement, Cumbey felt compelled to temporarily abandon her legal practice and devote herself to exposing what she believes to be the errors of the New Age belief system. After publishing Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow, Cumbey became quite a controversial figure for attacking evangelical Christians for using New Age terminology. She spent most of 1983 through 1985 on the lecture circuit admonishing New Age ideas, followers and organizations.

Cumbey's accusations against evangelicals drew enormous criticism from her fellow Christians. Responding to Cumbey's attacks became a major part of the 1985 "Conservative Baptist Conference on the New Age Movement" (Melton, 1991). Cumbey lost most of her popularity after 1985 and went back to her legal practice in 1988.

While Cumbey's book has been attacked by her fellow Christians, it still remains a highly popular book in Christian bookstores, and other Fundamentalist authors have followed Cumbey's lead, especially in terms of her conspiracy approach to New Age rhetoric. So despite the controversy, Cumbey's book remains the Fundamentalist critique of the New Age movement.

The point of Cumbey's text is to awaken and inform the Christian community of the New Age threat. As Cumbey states at the end of her preface: "It is the purpose of this book to inform the unsuspecting of the events that

may lie immediately ahead, and of the persons and organizations helping to manipulate them" (p. 18). The "unsuspecting" and the "manipulated" here refer to the Christian community. Up until 1983, the New Age religious discourse group had not been recognized as a concern by the Christian community (Hexham, 1992). Cumbey (1983) realized the ignorance of the Christian community in regards to the New Age promises and thus became the one to sound the alarm:

If there is a movement afoot that is larger than Eastern religions and larger than the gargantuan enterprise described in The Aquarian Conspiracy, then we need to expose it for what it is. The Christian world--myself included--has been blissfully asleep for far too long. It is time that somebody sounds the alarm--awaking sleeping Christians to this Movement and warning innocent participants to come out of it (p. 34).

The Cumbey text is organized to awaken the Christian community to the threat of the New Age discourse group. The book has thirteen chapters, followed by seven appendixes. The first three chapters attract the reader's attention by focusing on the New Age Christ, as in Chapter One: "Maitreya: The New Age Messiah" and Chapter Three: "The Age of Aquarius, or the Age of the Anti-Christ?" Chapters Four through Twelve describe the New Age movement by explaining its history and comparing it to the evils of the Third Reich. The last chapter, "How to Help New Agers," takes the evangelistic approach that it is the duty of Christians to show New Agers the errors of their ways and lead them down the more righteous path to salvation through Jesus Christ. Finally, the Appendixes include a listing of selected New Age organizations, a discussion of the Great Invocation (a prayer written by theosophist Alice Bailey and now used by groups who follow Maitreya), and an outline of Cumbey's text.

Texe Marrs and his text

Marrs, author of Dark Secrets of the New Age (1987), is a retired U.S. Air Force officer who now heads the Living Truth Ministries in Austin, Texas. His previous book, Rush to Armageddon was also a critique of New Age rhetoric, although the focus of the book is on apostasy in general. Marrs has also filmed a documentary which exposes the hidden threat of the New Age movement to Christianity and the world. He spends much time on the lecture circuit and is planning a new critique of the New Age movement, this one aimed at how New Age discourse is attracting children to its belief system.

Whereas Cumbey provides a more general overview and attack on the New Age movement, Marrs focuses on the New Age proposal for a One-World Government. The overall claim of the Marrs text is that the New Age discourse community has a Master plan for world dominance, which it is now putting into action.

The general organization the text takes is a discussion of Biblical prophecy concerning end-time events, then a placement of the New Age rhetoric into this context, in order to portray the movement in a negative manner. The first two chapters introduce the argument that New Age rhetoric fits Biblical prophecy. The next two chapters describe the New Age movement's agenda in general, and chapters five through seven provide an in-depth argument that the New Age Christ is the Anti-Christ. Chapters eight through eighteen discuss the New Age plan for world dominance and the affects of the Plan on the Christian community. Finally, the last chapter, "What must Christians do?" directs the Fundamentalist audience how to witness to New Agers (how to show them the light of Christianity) and how to prepare

for the end of the world.

Salvation

The first premillennial theme to be analyzed is the theme of salvation. Salvation is best equated to the New Age theme of transformation. Cumbey and Marris both refute the New Age claims regarding the transformation of reality theme as well as New Age personal transformation.

The argument that humanity is entering the Age of Aquarius is based on astrological assumptions. Cumbey and Marris claim that belief in astrology is occultic in nature and, therefore, the notion that the world is being transformed is occultic. Cumbey further argues that the New Age discourse group uses astrology to attract new members: "Astrology is the entry point for the young and confused" (1983, 132). The association of New Age practices with cult practices is a common rhetorical strategy of Fundamentalists responding to New Age rhetoric.

Also, in discussing the transformation of reality theme, both Creme and Spangler argue that Christianity may act as a barrier to transformation. The two New Age author's rhetoric implies that Christianity may be the cause of some of today's problems. Cumbey (1983) claims that the opposite is true: Christianity is not the problem, the New Age movement is: "I faced a growing and troubling uncertainty that what I was witnessing was indeed apostasy in the fullest sense of the word" (p. 27). Marris confirms this view of the New Age discourse group: "We cannot avoid the horrible conclusion that this apostate religion is demonic" (1987, 15). The rhetorical choice of Cumbey and Marris is in keeping with premillennial rhetoric. In order to state that the end is near, premillennialists must demonstrate that apostasy is increasing. Cumbey and Marris attempt throughout their texts to illustrate how the New Age movement

is a clear sign of increasing apostasy. Thus Marris (1987) concludes: "The growth of the New Age religion is truly phenomenal and reveals how close we are to the last days" (p. 12). For Marris at least, the growth of the New Age discourse means the growth of apostasy.

Part of the transformation of reality aspect of New Age rhetoric is the process by which humanity is transformed. Creme referred to this process as Initiation, while Limitless Love spoke of being "withdrawn to other patterns" (Spangler, 1971, p. 91). Both Creme and Spangler implied that Christianity would have to be flexible to be accepted in the new age. Cumbeys and Marris interpret this transformation process to mean that Christians are targeted for "purification" or "cleansing" by the New Age leaders (Marris, 1987, p. 19). Cumbeys reframes Creme's Initiation process: "Creme says that in order to enter the New Age, we must take a Luciferic initiation" (1983, p. 21). In reference to Limitless Love's "withdrawn to other patterns" (Spangler, 1971, p. 91) statement, Cumbeys exclaims: "Those of us who refuse to accept the 'Christ' will be sent to another dimension!" (1983, p. 67).

In addition, both Cumbeys and Marris react strongly to what appears to Fundamentalists as possession. Marris accuses Limitless Love of being a "demon spirit" (1987, p. 19), and Cumbeys observes that Creme "went into frequent transmission from demonic beings" (1983, p. 51).

The association of New Age practices with cult practices or with evil is an effective rhetorical strategy given the beliefs of the audience who are likely to read these books. Such a strategy would confirm the Fundamentalist dichotomy of good versus evil, and God versus Satan.

Importantly, as will be demonstrated in this chapter, Fundamentalists Cumbeys and Marris focus on specific New Age rhetoric that confirms the

premillennialist view. For the audiences of Cumbey and Marrs, this explains the popularity of New Age discourse within an understandable frame of reference--the attraction of the New Age rhetoric is understandable when explained in terms of the Biblical prophecy of increased apostasy. Thus, New Age movement is popular because it is a part of God's plan for end time events.

After refuting New Age claims regarding transformation, both Cumbey and Marrs are careful to reassert the Fundamentalist view of salvation. Cumbey (1983) quotes the scripture verse of Isaiah 35: 1-4: "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with a vengeance, even with a recompense; he will come and save you" (p. 18). Marrs (1987) too, quoting John 3:16 in the Bible, reminds his audience of the promise of a future utopia for those who believe in Jesus Christ: "For God so Loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (p. 22).

It is typical of the Fundamentalist to utilize the Bible as a source of authority when responding to New Age claims. Recall, too, that dispensationalism suggests that the Bible can and should be used to understand human events and how such events are a part of God's plan.

It is also interesting that the verse John 3:16 echoes the promises made by Limitless Love. It could be that Fundamentalists recognize these similarities, and this is why they take pains to reassert the Fundamentalist view.

In summary, Fundamentalists Cumbey and Marrs attempt to refute the New Age interpretation of salvation. Since salvation is the means by which one is saved and enters heaven--at least in Fundamentalist Christianity--the interpretation of salvation is an important one. This struggle over interpretation is also indicative of the broader struggle that Wuthnow calls the

"struggle for America's soul" (1989, p. 17). Indeed, as the millennium fast approaches, both religious discourse groups perceive that the soul of humanity is at stake.

The Christ

However, it is not only the New Age interpretation of salvation which comes under fire. The New Age discursive argument that Christ is an office or merely energy is a direct challenge to the very foundation of Christian Fundamentalist beliefs. For a Fundamentalist to be assured that he or she is going to heaven rests on the belief that Jesus was indeed the one and only Son of God, and that he died and was resurrected. For this reason, Fundamentalists react with a dramatic defensiveness to the New Age interpretation of the Christ.

Cumbey claims that the New Age Christ is the Anti-Christ

Cumbey claims that the New Age Christ spoken of by Creme and Spangler is actually the Anti-Christ. Recall that Creme distinguished Maitreya from the Anti-Christ. Cumbey (1983) had purchased the Creme text in a local New Age bookstore, and has this to say about it:

I realized that this was not an average New Age text about an average false Christ. This book was clearly special. It appeared that this so called Christ was saying he would do the very things the Bible alerted Christians to watch for in the coming Anti-Christ (p. 87).

Cumbey interprets Maitreya as the Anti-Christ, despite the efforts by both Creme and Spangler to distinguish the New Age Christ from Jesus and the Anti-Christ. Note the biblical reference here. The typical response to New Age claims is to reject them on Biblical grounds. Such a technique offers authority to the Fundamentalist response, and so it is not Fundamentalists attacking New Agers, it is Fundamentalists conveying God's judgment on apostasy. This

rhetorical strategy acts as a justification for the Fundamentalist attack on the New Age movement.

Cumbey's description of the Anti-Christ is vastly different from Creme's position that the Anti-Christ is the "Will aspect of God" or the destructive aspect of God. The implication of Cumbey's claim is that the New Age discourse group is being deceitful, which fits the Biblical description of the Anti-Christ. Importantly, Cumbey's rhetoric needs not only to deny Creme's claim that the Anti-Christ is the "Will aspect of God," but also to reemphasize the traditional Christian view of the Anti-Christ.

Cumbey faults Maitreya's emergence

Besides claiming that the New Age Christ is the Anti-Christ, Cumbey also acts to distinguish the New Age Christ from Jesus Christ. In this way, Cumbey reaffirms the Fundamentalist view of Christ.

Cumbey refutes the manner in which the New Age Christ is said to be making his gradual appearance. Remember that Creme stated that Maitreya is waiting for universal acceptance before making his appearance in the world. Recall also the vagueness in the Creme text regarding the New Age Christ. Finally, there is the fact that the continuous claims regarding the appearance of the Christ have never become a reality (Chandler, 1991; Melton, 1991). Cumbey (1983) takes advantage of the unfulfilled prophetic claims and vagueness and argues that this could not possibly be Jesus Christ: "Everyone will know when Jesus comes to earth again. It will be as clear as a flash of lightning in the sky" (p. 23). It is important for Cumbey to point out that the New Age Christ is not Jesus, although this point has already been made by Creme and Spangler. If the New Age Christ is not Jesus, and Christian doctrine posits that there is only one Christ, then it is more likely that this impostor is

the Anti-Christ.

Also, Cumbey takes offense at the spiritual hierarchy presented by Creme as the Masters of Wisdom, and by Spangler as the Solar Logos. Recall that both Creme and Spangler argued that Jesus was a man who realized his divinity and therefore is a part of the spiritual hierarchy. Cumbey (1983), insulted by this classification of Jesus, says: "Guess who is at the bottom of this chart? None other than the 'Master Jesus!' They have demoted our Lord and Savior to the lowest possible spot on their 'Hierarchy of Masters'" (p. 66). Cumbey's rhetoric works on an emotional level here and reaffirms the Fundamentalist interpretation of Christ. A belief in Christianity assumes an acceptance of a specific spiritual hierarchy: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each member of this hierarchy plays a specific role with the Son, Jesus Christ, acting as the savior of humanity. But New Age discourse offers a different hierarchy, with Jesus Christ playing a lesser role than the New Age Christ. For New Agers Creme and Spangler to designate Jesus Christ in such a manner is a direct insult to Fundamentalist Christians. Cumbey smartly reacts to this New Age claim with indignation, rousing her audience to anger with such language as "demoted" and "lowest possible spot."

Cumbey Claims that the New Age Christ Fulfills Biblical Prophecy

In order to interpret New Age rhetoric in light of Biblical prophecy, Cumbey (1983) turns to I John in the Bible: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is Christ? He is the Anti-Christ, that denieth the Father and the Son" (p. 31). This gives Cumbey the justification she needs to redefine the New Age Christ as the Anti-Christ. This is important rhetorically because of Cumbey's audience. Most Fundamentalists are probably very familiar with Biblical prophecy. Cumbey explains the existence of the New Age discourse and the

New Age Christ in a way that is understandable to her Fundamentalist Christian readers. She interprets New Age discourse in Christian Fundamentalist terms.

Note what is occurring here. Cumbey is rhetorically taking the New Age Christ out of the context of esotericism and placing him within a Fundamentalist Christian world view. This rhetorical move allows Cumbey to apply Biblical guidelines to recognizing the existence of the Anti-Christ. Thus Cumbey is now able to claim that the Bible says the New Age Christ is the Anti-Christ. Cumbey increases her credibility by drawing on the supreme authority of the Bible while attempting to diminish the credibility of Creme and Spangler.

Armed with this Biblical premise, Cumbey (1983) attacks the rhetoric of New Agers Creme and Spangler. She refers to the New Age movement's support of the Christ as the "best financed con job this world has ever seen" (p. 16). Cumbey (1983) has put together a chart that lists elements of Biblical prophecy in one column and describes how the New Age movement fulfills the prophecy in the other column (p. 78). One such example is from Revelation:

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads [666]: And that no man might buy or sell, save that he had the mark or the number of his name.

Cumbey applies this Biblical passage to the claims of Creme and Spangler in regards to the process of Initiation. Cumbey (1983) interprets this initiation process as the manner in which people will receive the mark of the beast on their foreheads (p. 78).

Cumbey further claims that when Reader's Digest ran the ad on Maitreya, the ad was sponsored by Lucis Trust. Cumbey states that Lucis Trust is

a mere abbreviation of Lucifer, another name for Satan. Lucis Trust is a publishing company for the Theosophical Society, the forerunner of the New Age movement. Cumbey argues that it would not make sense for a theosophical organization with the name Lucifer to sponsor an ad about the return of Jesus, but it would make sense for such an organization to sponsor the appearance of the Anti-Christ.

Cumbey (1983) continues with I John: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is the Anti-Christ" (p. 81). Cumbey then claims that "Benjamin Creme, as well as the rest of the New Age movement . . . consistently deny that Jesus is the Christ and they insist that Maitreya is the Christ and Jesus is his disciple" (p. 81). The implied conclusion for the audience is that the New Age discourse group can be identified with the Anti-Christ.

In another instance, Cumbey (1983) claims that the New Age discourse group makes use of the numbers "666." According to Cumbey: "New Agers consider the 666 a sacred number" (p. 22). Cumbey also states that the 666 number is found throughout Spangler's books. These digits, according to the Book of Revelation in the Bible, are the mark of the beast or Anti-Christ.

Observe the sense of urgency Cumbey creates, a typical stylistic element of premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric. That Biblical prophecy is being fulfilled means that Jesus Christ is soon to return. While this may be cause for celebration among Christians in general, Biblical prophecy also states that before Jesus returns, Christians will be persecuted by the Anti-Christ. Interpreting New Age rhetoric in terms of Biblical prophecy is at least sobering, if not cause for alarm. If the New Age movement can be identified with the Anti-Christ, the audience now must consider that the end of the world

is fast approaching. Cumbey's approach to critiquing New Age discourse creates a sense of urgency to choose between Jesus Christ and the false New Age Christ. Cumbey employs fear appeals to achieve this sense of urgency. Cumbey challenges the audience to choose quickly but carefully. The "correct" choice will lead to Heaven choosing the New Age path will lead only to Hell.

Recall from Chapter Two that Spangler also created a sense of urgency with his claims about the time limit for entering the new age. Thus, in this instance, both New Age discourse and the Fundamentalist Christian response rhetorically create a sense of urgency. This is interesting because, typically, a sense of urgency is associated with premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric. The existence of this urgency in both discourses acts rhetorically to build a tension between the two. Both New Agers and Fundamentalist Christians are urging the audience to make a commitment to their Christ, and to commit soon, before it is too late. Both discourses are in a sense recruiting followers for a spiritual journey which New Agers claim will lead to a Heaven on earth. Fundamentalist Christians attack this claim, stating that the New Age journey will only lead to death at the hands of Satan. In sum, both discourses argue that the end of the world is coming whether the audience likes it or not, and they had better choose wisely, whether the choice is Maitreya, Limitless Love, or Jesus. The choice they make will have lasting consequences.

Cumbey's rhetoric also reinforces the Christian dichotomy of right/wrong, God/Satan, and in this case, the Christian heaven or new age hell. As Cumbey (1983) puts it: "You have to pledge loyalty to Lucifer or Maitreya to get a permit to do business in the New Age" (p. 22). Note the strategy of association here. Now it is not just the "New Age Christ" or the "Anti-Christ;" Maitreya and Satan are one and the same.

Marrs Claims that the New Age Christ is the Anti-Christ

Marrs has three arguments for persuading his Fundamentalist audience that the New Age Christ is actually the Anti-Christ. The first is blasphemy. Marrs claims that the New Age Christ sounds too much like the actual Christian messiah, and therefore the New Age Christ is a "blasphemous imitation of the true Christ of the Bible" (p. 57). The blasphemy that is referred to is the New Age discourse declaration that there is no personal God in heaven: no God who loves and no God who is to be feared. Marrs (1987) continues his blasphemy argument by claiming that "The Plan of Satan, now being meticulously executed by his New Age followers, is to mimic the prophesied return of Jesus Christ" (p. 57). Calling this "Satan's boldest trick ever," Marrs attacks Creme for announcing the return of Christ in national newspapers, misleading those who may not be able to distinguish between the Christ announced in Creme's ads and Jesus Christ.

In addition to blasphemy, Marrs uses guilt by association in order to incriminate the New Age Christ. Marrs (1987, p. 66) outlines the seven signs that will aid the audience in recognizing the Anti-Christ:

1. He will come disguised as a angel of light.
2. He will exalt himself and magnify himself above every god.
3. He will come as a man of peace.
4. He will corrupt men and gain their allegiance through deceit and flatteries.
5. He will be given supernatural strength to show signs and perform miracles.
6. His rise to power will result from his exercise of will.
7. He will be a destroyer or slayer.

Here Marrs takes seven characteristics of the Anti-Christ as described in the Bible and then contends that it is no coincidence that New Age leaders paint a picture of the coming New Age Christ that exactly corresponds to these seven

criteria. Marrs presents an explanation for each of the criteria, complete with the corresponding scripture verse. Quoting scripture as proof has a high rhetorical value for the Fundamentalist audience, since the Bible is perceived as the "word of God" and the "truth" for Christians. So Marrs appears to be laying out these seven criteria to establish solid proof that the New Age Christ is indeed the Anti-Christ. But what Marrs has actually done is set up his own criteria for recognizing the Anti-Christ, one that fits his interpretation of the New Age Christ. By quoting scripture, Marrs has created the illusion that these seven signs come directly from the Bible, and that they are either the only indicators or the most important indicators for recognizing the Anti-Christ. In fact, Marrs has compiled these signs for the convenience of his audience. While Marrs provides an explanation of each of the seven criteria, along with the coinciding Biblical passage, he still fails to provide an exact link to the New Age Christ. It should be remembered, however, that in the Fundamentalist dichotomized view of the world, everything that is evil is associated with Satan, and since the Anti-Christ is evil, Marrs' use of Biblical passages that are not specific to the Anti-Christ may be acceptable as proof in the eyes of his Fundamentalist audience. Thus, Marrs' rhetorical approach of guilt by association is legitimized by the premise that if something is not of God, then it is evil. Marrs interprets the New Age movement as against God, and, therefore, it is evil or of Satan.

The final method by which Marrs attempts to persuade his audience that the New Age Christ is the Anti-Christ is by appealing to the audience's lack of thorough knowledge of Biblical prophecy. Marrs claims that Christians should have no problem recognizing the Anti-Christ for what he is: "Any Christian with even a rudimentary knowledge of the Bible will recognize this Lord

Maitreya for who and what he really is: a deceiver and a servant of the devil" (p. 60). In a sense, Marrs (1987) seems to be assuring Christians that they won't be fooled. But Marrs has a qualification in his statement: "Christians with even a rudimentary knowledge" Throughout his text there are statements which assure Christians--but with some qualifier attached: "Christians who have studied scripture can easily identify Lord Maitreya, the New Age messiah. . . the beast with the number 666" (p. 36), "Christians who know their Bible" (p. 44) and "To the solid Christian it seems ludicrous" (p. 47). On the one hand, Marrs is reassuring to fearful Fundamentalists, yet he also provides his audience with a rhetorical slap on the face, a kind of wake up call, and a warning to read the Bible and be informed, or else be deceived by the Anti-Christ. Why such a harsh wake up call? Marrs almost seems to be insulting his audience. Note the bluntness of his language. Marrs is even more straightforward in his claims and accusations than Cumbeys. Marrs is suggesting a concern that either today's Christians do not study their Biblical prophecy or that New Age rhetoric is so deceptive that it can fool all but those Christians who do study. This suggests an assumption that both Cumbeys and Marrs have about their audience: that they are ignorant of the New Age movement and its threat to Christians, and not attending to prophecy. Drawing on this assumption, Marrs uses strong rhetorical measures to warn his audience of the inevitable: the end of the world is coming, and the existence of the New Age discourse group is a sign of the end. The sense of urgency is characteristic of premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric.

The Christ theme of Cumbeys and Marrs

Cumbeys and Marrs' rhetorical use of the apocalyptic is actually similar to the New Age movement's use of the apocalyptic. Each of these discourses

shows the other in a negative light by presenting the other as the cause for the current distressing situation. Ironically, despite the rhetorical picture of opposites the two discourses paint of each other, the rhetoric each employs is quite similar. They both have a Christ; both are apocalyptic in nature, and both provide a sense of urgency.

A further irony in regards to the rhetorical similarities between the two discourses is that despite their objections to each other, New Agers and Fundamentalists need each other. New Agers need Fundamentalists as an enemy so the New Age as a religious discourse can be strengthened in unity against an antagonist. In a like manner, Fundamentalists need the New Age movement in order to demonstrate the reality of Biblical prophecy. In the case of both discourses, an external enemy is needed to rally the faithful against the opposing discourse. Although Fundamentalists attack New Age discourse, they are necessarily drawn to it in order to fulfill prophecy and maintain a sense of purpose, which is warning Christians and others that the end is near.

However, the meaning attached to the presence of the New Age Christ is somewhat different. New Agers perceive the reappearance of the Christ as a sign that humanity is entering a transition period which will lead to the new age. So the New Age Christ is a positive symbol, one of hope and rebirth. In contrast, Cumbey (1983) sees the New Age Christ as a more negative sign of the presence of evil: "This [New Age and the Christ] is the great apostasy or 'falling away' spoken of by the Apostle Paul and the Anti-Christ's appearance could be a very real event in our immediate future" (p. 39). And: "If God is ready for end time events, the clock might not be turned back" (p. 183). Typical of premillennial apocalyptic, the audience can almost sense the urgency mixed with a sense of dread.

A Future Utopia

Thus far, Fundamentalists Cumbey and Marrs have argued against the New Age theme of transformation and against the New Age interpretation of the Christ. It is noteworthy that these Fundamentalists spend more time attacking New Age discourse than defending their own view. This offensive position reinforces my Chapter One definition of Fundamentalists as "fighters." In this case, armed with the knowledge of Biblical prophecy, Fundamentalists are fighting apostasy. Such rhetorical choices confirms that the audience is primarily composed of Fundamentalists, who may need more educating on the New Age philosophy than on their own belief system.

Since Fundamentalists claim that the Anti-Christ is present in our world, this would indicate, in the premillennialist view, that the end of the world is near. The last theme, the promise of future utopia, is used by Fundamentalists to point out the differences between the new age utopia and God's promise of everlasting life in heaven. First, the Fundamentalists argue that the New Age promises lead only to suffering, persecution and death for Christians in the new age utopia. Second, a picture of the new age utopia as a world dominated by Satan is painted. Finally, the Fundamentalists reaffirm God's promise of eternity in heaven for those who follow the teachings of Christianity.

Christianity Eliminated

Cumbey claims that the New Age discourse group is actively seeking to eliminate Christianity and that by the time the new age arrives, Christianity will be destroyed. This perceived intent by New Agers is made obvious when Cumbey (1980) states: "They [New Agers] intend to utterly root out people who believe the Bible and worship God and to completely stamp out Christianity"

(p. 20). The warnings continue throughout the Cumbeys text, at one time stating that New Agers plan to outlaw Christian religious practices and symbols, and at other times predicting the persecution of Christians at the hands of the New Age Christ: "New Agers have threatened violence and even extermination of Jews, Christians and Moslems who fail to cooperate with Maitreya and his new religion" (p. 20). At one point, Cumbeys (1983) claims that Fundamentalists have been specifically targeted: "We must realize that we have been the victims of a gigantic propaganda drive directed against all Jews and Christians in general and Fundamentalists in particular" (p. 87).

Observe that Cumbeys includes Moslems and Jews in her list of who will be persecuted. This claim offers insight into the assumptions or beliefs held by Cumbeys's audience. Cumbeys implies in her rhetoric that today's Fundamentalists and other religious groups are "victims" of the New Age movement. Cumbeys's use of the word "victim" assumes that an abuser or an assailant does indeed exist. The New Age movement then becomes not merely a "giant propaganda drive," but a true enemy portrayed as being in a physical combat with Fundamentalist groups. This victim-assailant appeal is typical of the Fundamentalist dichotomy of morality and religion, and would certainly then appeal to her Fundamentalist audience. Also, her identification of other groups besides Fundamentalist Christians may act to build a sense of community: an "us" versus "them" division. Such an identification may act to broaden Cumbeys's appeal to a wider audience.

In addition, Cumbeys's victim-assailant imagery draws a rhetorical picture of the New Age discourse group as being stronger than Christianity. It is as if Fundamentalists are David to the New Age Goliath, despite the fact that Fundamentalists far outnumber New Agers. This acts as a reminder that in

order to fight the power and evil of the New Age movement, Fundamentalists must rely on the power of God to save them. Thus, Cumbey is in a sense testing the faith of her audience, challenging them to hold fast to their beliefs despite the "abuse" from the New Age movement.

Finally, Cumbey appears to be painting a picture of a New Age conspiracy against Christians. The conspiracy approach in Cumbey's rhetoric is not new to apocalyptic rhetoric. Reid (1983) notes that the conspiracy element of the apocalyptic has a long history in Christian rhetoric. The first function of the conspiracy approach is to reveal an enemy or hate object. For Christians, the enemy is Satan, or the Anti-Christ. Reid (1983) points out that early Christians saw the Roman Empire as the last of the Anti-Christ forces; later some Protestants thought that the Roman Catholic Church was evidence of the presence of the Anti-Christ, and the Puritans "saw the Anglican hierarchy as Anti-Christ" (p. 233). The second function of the conspiracy approach is that of "arousing fears of conspiracy" (p. 240). According to Reid, the point of these two functions is to legitimize the cause behind the use of apocalyptic rhetoric. In this case, Cumbey as well as Marris is attempting to legitimize the attack on New Age religious discourse. In fact, by interpreting the New Age rhetoric in light of Biblical prophecy, Cumbey and Marris give the Fundamentalist Christian response to the New Age discourse "divine authority" (Reid, 1983, p. 241). In other words, it is as if the Fundamentalist response to the New Age movement is an act commissioned by God. This divine authority not only legitimizes the Fundamentalist Christian response to the New Age but also legitimizes the form the response takes. The *ad hominem* attacks against Creme and Spangler are justified because of divine authority and because this is the prophetic struggle between God and Satan or between

Jesus Christ and the Anti-Christ.

Both Cumbey and Marrs have claimed that the New Age movement will bring about the destruction of Christianity. Cumbey, however, further identifies four methods by which New Agers will stamp out Christianity. One method is by deceiving the Christian community into believing that the New Age Christ is actually Jesus Christ, the messiah. This deception is accomplished by the very use of the name of Christ. Cumbey (1983) quotes the book of Matthew: "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (p. 23). If the New Age discourse community is successful in having Christians follow Maitreya, then Christianity loses its strength.

Yet another method New Agers will employ to eliminate Christianity is to infiltrate Christianity. Cumbey (1983) here speaks of "fostering Eastern religious values first in our culture, then in our seminaries" in addition to the acceptance of pluralism (p. 39). Note that Cumbey does not specify the New Age movement in this statement but instead refers vaguely to "Eastern values." Rhetorically, Cumbey is making a broader appeal here. Hexham (1992) states that "evangelical writers seem unable to recognize and adapt to the reality of cultural and religious pluralism in modern society. As a result, they tend to identify all religious change, especially if it involves Eastern religions, with the New Age" (p. 162). Hexham makes a good point here, although he does not address the underlying rhetorical effect of the New Age-Eastern religion association. Just as evangelicals associate Eastern religions with the New Age belief system, in this instance, Cumbey is associating all of New Age discourse with Eastern religions. One basic premise of Fundamentalist Christianity is that it is the one and only way to heaven. The New Age movement presents its philosophy as an alternative, complete with a Christ. Cumbey then points to

New Age discourse as yet another example of how society has turned further away from traditional Christianity, another example of religious pluralism. So, Cumbey is actually broadening her criticism here beyond New Age rhetoric and points out yet another aspect of growing apostasy in our society--religious pluralism, with the New Age movement as a prime example.

The third manner in which New Agers will stamp out Christianity is through the New Age initiation process. Cumbey utilizes the New Age rhetoric of vagueness here. Both of the New Age authors spoke of the concept of initiation but never really defined what initiation was or what it meant in terms of who would make it through the transition period. Cumbey (1983) takes the concept of initiation and interprets it this way: "Spangler says that in order to enter the we must take a *Luciferic* [italics mine] initiation" (p. 22). Cumbey later interprets the Luciferic initiation as yet another means for destroying innocent Christians. Clearly, Cumbey is capitalizing on the New Age movement's vagueness, utilizing the vagueness to add to her fear appeals.

Cumbey's rhetoric acts to thrust the New Age movement into a spiritual battle: Christians versus New Agers and Satan. Cumbey is describing the enemy to the Fundamentalist Christian audience in such a way as to inspire a hatred of the New Age, much like the leader of an army before a great battle.

Cumbey continues her description of the New Age enemy as she outlines the fourth and most frightening method by which New Age community will destroy Christianity. Cumbey, with her broadest rhetorical brush yet, claims that the New Age discourse group is actually a Fourth Reich, paralleling the philosophy of Hitler's Third Reich. Throughout the text, Cumbey claims that the New Age movement has all the characteristics of Nazism, right down to the goal of "replacing the cross with the swastika" (p. 118). While discussing the

development of the New Age movement, Cumbey (1983) describes how New Agers are blinded to the fact that "point for point the program of the New Age movement has complete identity with the programs of Hitler" (p. 56).

She draws parallels between Nazism and the New Age movement. She claims that both Nazism and the New Age philosophy have their roots in occult practices and teachings. Here, Cumbey cites the teachings of the forerunners of the New Age movement: Blavatsky and Bailey. Cumbey also asserts that both the New Age movement and Nazism are governed by a Master plan. In the days of Hitler, it was Mein Kampf; with the New Age movement, it is Maitreya's plan. Just as Nazism sought to destroy Christians and Jews, so does the New Age movement. In fact, Cumbey (1983) argues that racism is just as prevalent in the New Age discourse as it was in the Third Reich: "the doctrine of Aryanism is an integral part of the New Age, as well as of Nazism" (p. 103). Cumbey does little to support these claims but the rhetorical point has been made. New Agers are guilty by association.

Cumbey is at once creating fear within her Fundamentalist audience by utilizing the memories of one of the most horrifying time periods in human history. In fact, not only does Cumbey draw parallels, but she further posits that what happened in Germany could happen in the U.S., since the pre-war atmosphere is the same. Just as pre-Nazi Germany had suffered from defeats in war and a failing economy, "The United States finds itself in a very similar situation. We have the wounded national pride and shame of a Vietnam War gone sour. The country has long been in the throes of a defective economy" (p. 109). In true apocalyptic fashion, Cumbey asserts that the United States is vulnerable to the rise of Aryanism, via the New Age movement. Typical of the pessimism of premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric, Cumbey stresses the

distressing state of society, and the New Age discourse community is appearing more and more as a sign of all that is wrong with our world.

Guilt by association is a primary rhetorical strategy of Cumbeys. When discussing the history of the New Age movement, Cumbeys (1983) makes this claim: "The New Age teachings are the same old lies that have been about since the snake beguiled Eve in the Garden of Eden. The snake promised Eve that if she ate of the forbidden fruit 'thou shalt not surely die. . . thou shalt be as gods' " (p. 67). Cumbeys does not simply say that the New Age teachings are not new, or that some New Age philosophies, such as human divinity, have been around for centuries. Instead, in a rhetorically powerful move, Cumbeys associates New Age teachings with the claims of the snake in the Garden of Eden. In Christian theology, the snake was the devil that tempted Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, the result of which was the birth of sin. Were it not for the "fall of humanity," there never would have been a need for Jesus Christ and the resurrection. Cumbeys's Fundamentalist Christian readers are only too familiar with the story of the snake and the Garden of Eden, and the snake and Satan have long been both the symbolic and real enemies of Christians.

Marrs (1987), like Cumbeys, also claims that the New Age movement is intent on destroying Christianity:

Are we today racing towards Armageddon? Are the days of the Christian numbered? Over the past few years, as I studied the New Age World Religion and sought to understand fully its aims in fulfilling Satan's end time Plan, I began to draw some frightening conclusions. If this is the revived Babylonian religious system of Revelation 17--and much of the evidence points to this--then Christians will soon be compelled to endure a harrowing period of unparalleled persecution and strife. My own firm conviction is that the new age is the last age (p. 137).

Note how Marrs believes that the New Age movement is "fulfilling Satan's end time Plan." Earlier, it was suggested that Marrs chose the seven signs for recognizing the Anti-Christ in order to fit his interpretation of the New Age Christ. It was argued that Marrs may be making Biblical prophecy fit the New Age. But here, Marrs claims that the New Age movement is directly fulfilling Biblical prophecy. Marrs did not have to make Biblical prophecy fit New Age discourse, nor has he taken the New Age rhetoric out of context and placed it into Biblical prophecy. The New Age movement, claims Marrs, simply is the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.

Rhetorically, Marrs is separating himself from his own rhetoric, pointing to the Bible as the authority. Marrs implies that the Book of Revelation actually says that the presence of the New Age religion is a sign that the end is near. Since the Bible is believed by Fundamentalist Christians to be the divine Word of God, then it becomes God who is saying that the New Age movement is a sign that the end is near.

The rhetoric of Creme (1980) and Spangler (1976) compels Marrs (1987) to draw his conclusion about the fate of Christians. Recall this statement by Spangler: "Throughout the world, a great sifting is taking place. . . allowing consciousness to find the level of teaching and activity where they can best be reached by the Christ impulse" (p. 178). Marrs interprets this statement and other statements by New Agers who refer to a "sifting" or "cleansing" that will take place as part of the transition period to the new age. Marrs (1987) concludes that "Biblical Christians won't survive the cleansing process" (p. 142). Christians who do not survive this process will be "banished to the hell reserved for Satan and his minions" (p. 143). In order for Christians to survive, they must not only survive the cleansing process but also obey the

New Age Christ. For those who disobey the New Age Christ, the punishment is severe. Citing the Book of Revelation, Marris (1987) quotes: "as many as would not worship the beast should be killed" (p. 176). Marris, like Cumbey, takes the conspiracy approach in his use of apocalyptic rhetoric. His premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric describing the fate of the Christians in the new age reveals once again the classic element of urgency. The intended effect of the conspiracy approach is to cause the audience to panic. It creates a highly emotional sense of urgency--the need to do something, to fight this conspiracy somehow, before Christianity is destroyed. Part of both postmillennial and premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric is presenting a vision of the future in order to motivate the Fundamentalist audience to act on the vision. Creme and Spangler exemplify this aspect of the apocalyptic as they inspire New Agers to build the new age, and Marris utilizes the vision of the future in order to motivate Christians to set themselves against the New Age movement--to fight the great battle between Christians and Satan.

New Age Utopia Not What it Appears

Cumbey's rhetoric relating to the theme of a promised future utopia provides two different visions of the future: one obtained by following the New Age path, the other by following the path of Christianity and Jesus Christ. For the vision of the future in the new age, Cumbey focuses on how the New Age discourse community will affect the government, religion, and society as a whole. Her point is to warn her audience of the danger in taking the New Age path and at the same time to point out the better Fundamentalist Christian alternative. This is yet another characteristic of premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric: providing a vision of the future.

Beginning with the government, Cumbey (1983) claims that the New World

Government advocated by the New Age discourse community will do more harm than good, and be all too powerful: "The structures New Agers propose are both Orwellian and apocalyptic in their scope, organization and possibilities" (p. 63). Cumbey's "apocalyptic" reference is revealing. Her choice of wording here provides a clear indication that she is consciously placing New Age within Biblical prophecy regarding the end of the world and the apocalypse. Cumbey also claims that New Agers are proposing such worldwide agencies as a World Food Authority, World Water Authority and a Universal Credit Card. Cumbey (1983) combines an Orwellian fear appeal with premillennial apocalyptic: "While they [New Agers, such as Creme and Spangler] promote simpler life-styles, at the same time they call for the interconnection of the entire world by incredibly sophisticated computers with snooping capabilities that are Orwellian in scope" (p. 42). Here, Cumbey delivers a one-two rhetorical punch. Cumbey blends a vision of Orwell's 1984 with the Biblical end of the world scenario, a frightful vision indeed! This reference to a secular source, and the familiarity the audience is likely to have with the 1984 novel, has the possibility of appealing to a broader audience. This rhetorical move is atypical of Cumbey's rhetoric, which is itself insightful. Cumbey's rhetoric here is almost desperate in its appeal. The allusion to 1984 appears to be a frantic rhetorical attempt to warn her audience of the impending doom awaiting those who follow the New Age movement.

In addition, Cumbey's claim that the New Age discourse group proposes the creation of "gigantic global agencies" such as the World Water Authority and the World Food Authority, is an interesting move. Her rhetoric regarding the New World government has both a political and a religious appeal. Cumbey

(1983) appeals to the audience's sense of nationalism when she claims that when proposing the dissolution and/or destruction of individual nation states " . . . New Age spokesmen openly discuss their replacement with a bioregional parliament and a Planetary Guidance System" (p. 63).

These statements by Cumbeby provides another insight into her audience. While there is a separation of church and state in this country, the United States has also been called a "Christian nation" by Christian Americans throughout the years. With the words "In God We Trust" proudly stamped on our currency, patriotism and a belief in the Christian God have been almost synonymous. So Cumbeby's appeal to nationalism is not just political, but an appeal that would be attractive to those who long for America to once again become "one nation under God," as it was before the days of a broad religious pluralism.

Cumbeby clearly believes that the New Age movement will have an adverse effect on our government, implying that in the new age there will be no U.S. government, no national boundaries, and no Christian nation. Her claims, perhaps perceived by some as absurd extensions of New Age rhetoric, nonetheless act as a strong fear appeal for her Fundamentalist audience.

Cumbeby now draws a picture of the New World religion. She contends that such New Age spokespersons as Gregory Bateson, David Spangler and Foster Bailey advocate that "religious freedom and separation between Church and State must end in the New Age" (Cumbeby, 1983, p. 69). Cumbeby also refers to New Age forerunner and theosophist Alice Bailey for an outline of the New World religion. From the Bailey writings, Cumbeby notes that there will be a reorganization of world religions. Part of the purpose of this reorganization is to ensure that "out of date theologies" are offset (p. 74). Cumbeby interprets

Bailey by stating that there will be a dissolution of the orthodox Jewish faith.

To complete the picture of the New Age movement's promised utopia, Cumbey (1983) claims that there is no escaping the influence of the New Age discourse; it is now embedded in many important aspects of society. When discussing how the New Age discourse has infiltrated industry, Cumbey (1983) states: "For suddenly courses in 'New Age Thinking' have become the order of the day--particularly for middle and upper-level management personnel and salesmen. From General Motors and Chrysler Corporation through AT&T and Southwestern Oil such courses have been offered" (p. 131). Cumbey (1983) also warns that the New Age influence has affected more people than just employees taking training seminars:

The movement has further infiltrated our society as well as our churches by using vehicles such as Holistic Health Centers, Montessori schools, Waldorf education, Transcendental Meditation (TM), mind control courses, hunger projects, Whole Earth catalogs, many health food stores and vegetarian restaurants, disarmament campaigns, and nearly every other social cause, including animal liberation (p. 40).

In creating a vision of the future in the new age, Cumbey extends her conspiracy argument and strengthens her fear appeal. Earlier she stated that the intent of the New Age movement is to stamp out Christianity. Now she extends the New Age threat to all of society. In essence, the New Age movement conspiracy is not just something for Christians to be concerned with but the whole of our assumed Christian nation. In extending her conspiracy approach into her vision of the future in the new age, Cumbey succeeds in demonstrating the prevalence of what she considers to be New Age thought. She also expands the scope of the New Age discourse by bleak descriptions of the new age future. According to Cumbey, the New Age is not a typical movement that is restricted to attempting to change just certain aspects of

society or public policy. Rather, it is a conspiracy to drastically alter the whole world and the audience's fundamental lifestyle. The picture Cumbey paints is done with such broad strokes that it eliminates any positive aspects of the New Age discourse. This is typical of the pessimism of premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric.

According to Marrs, the New Age One-World Religion and a One-World Government will be run by the Anti-Christ. Thus Marrs contends that the New Age community's advocacy of this New World Order is an additional sign that the last days are at hand. The New World Order is pertinent to the creation of the new age itself. Recall that both Creme and Spangler advocated the creation of a One-World Religion and Government. Their reasoning was that the world is plagued with problems, Christianity being one of them, and solving these problems requires a One-World Order.

Marrs finds such a solution unacceptable, in part because the New World Order may be based on the United Nations. Marrs (1987) quotes New Ager Lola Davis who says that one way to prepare people for the New World Order "would be to encourage their participation in this admirable organization that is leading the way towards One-World" (p. 37). But Marrs labels the United Nations as anti-Christian because it allowed a convocation of spiritual leaders to read the following statement to the U.N. assembly:

The crises of our time are challenging the world religions to release a new spiritual force transcending religious, cultural and national boundaries into a new consciousness of the oneness of the human community and so putting into effect a spiritual dynamic toward the solutions of the world's problems . . . we affirm a new spirituality divested of isolarity [sic] and directed towards planetary consciousness (p. 38).

Marrs observes the lack of such terms as sin, redemption, God, Jesus, and prayer and concludes that allowing such a statement to be read means that the

U.N. itself is anti-Christian. Marris further contends that because the U.N. Assistant Secretary General Robert Mueller advocates the formation of a One-World religion, Mueller exemplifies the anti-Christian nature of the United Nations. Marris (1987) attacks Mueller because of Mueller's description of the New World Order that is dawning "as glorious and beautiful [as] Aphrodite emerging from the sea" (p. 43). Marris reminds the Fundamentalist audience that Aphrodite was the Greek version of the Babylonian Goddess who tainted the world with Satanism. Indeed, states Marris, Aphrodite is described in the Bible as "the great whore" and "as a beast rising out of the sea." Thus, Marris concludes that Mueller and the rest of the U.N. are anti-Christian.

Typical of the Fundamentalist response to New Age rhetoric, Marris reinforces the Fundamentalist dichotomy: either the New World Order is inspired and led by Christians following the will of God, in which case the New World Order is good, or the New World Order is based on the very anti-Christian U.N., meaning the New World Order is a bad thing. Like Cumbey, Marris extends the threat of the New Age influence beyond Christians to society as a whole, including political institutions. With his One-World Order arguments, Marris extends his conspiracy approach beyond that of Cumbey.

Note too Marris' use of language, and how it is more richly symbolic than Cumbey's. Compare the imagery created in Marris' Aphrodite reference and earlier calling Maitreya a "deceiver, a servant of Satan," to Cumbey's "it appears as though Maitreya was indeed the Anti-Christ." Marris, much more than Cumbey, uses imagery to evoke an emotional response from his audience. While Cumbey did accuse some organizations of having a New Age orientation, she focused more on those who call themselves New Agers. Marris, on the other hand, attacks public officials and political institutions by name. Rhetorically,

Marrs paints a clear picture of the enemy for his Fundamentalist audience.

Marrs also attacks the roots of the idea of a New World Order. Marrs traces the concept back to the writings of theosophist Alice Bailey. Apparently, the Plan for a New World Order is based on the communication Bailey had with a supernatural being called "the Tibetan, Djwhal Khul." Marrs (1987) states that "The Tibetan apparently had an open line to Satan because everything he has taught Bailey about the Plan is in perfect accord with the Satanic 'revelations' received telepathically from demon spirits by many other New Agers" (p. 41). Marrs associates Bailey's teachings with Satanism and evil. Again, Marrs is claiming guilt by association, knowing that for his Fundamentalist audience, Satanism and the mystical world are perceived as anti-Christian.

Marrs also claims that the One-World government cannot possibly solve any of the world's problems, especially with the Anti-Christ at the helm. Marrs (1987) quotes New Age author Marilyn Ferguson who claims that "the political system needs to be *transformed*, not reformed" (p 40). Marrs interprets this in a negative light, proclaiming that there will be no national boundaries, "no division among governments, and the end of patriotism and nationalism" (p. 40). The implication is that nationalism and patriotism are good and yet unity is bad. Like Cumbey, Marrs appeals to those who associate patriotism with a Christian nation. The end of patriotism and nationalism would spell the end of the U.S. as a Christian nation. Marrs assumes that boundaries and divisions are good. In Fundamentalist Christian thought, this makes sense. The Bible teaches that Christians should set themselves apart from the world. Christians should see themselves as special, as different from the rest. In Christian theology, Christians are different: *they* are saved, *they* will go to heaven and

they will have eternal life, whereas no one else will. It is essential for the continuance of the Christian faith that Christianity and Christians be seen as different. The assumption that America is a Christian nation sets America apart from other countries on a spiritual level. If boundaries are abolished, America is no longer different or better. Marris fears that the U.S. cannot remain a Christian nation with all the other religions present within this New World Order.

Marris is also building to a larger argument, namely that the One-World Government will have too much control over individuals. Marris states that the New Agers who write about the One-World Government describe it as a "Satanic high tech world" (p. 172). This worries Marris (1987), who, like Cumbey, presents an Orwellian vision of the future under the New World Order: "A chilling Orwellian 1984 world of monstrous proportions may be the fate of mankind if some future New Age movement ruler employs the nightmarish tools of oppression that will soon become available" (p. 172). Because Marris feels that the Anti-Christ will head the One-World Government and the One-World Religion, the audience is left to assume that New Age dictator is the Anti-Christ.

Marris has intertwined several rhetorical strategies to set his audience against the notion of a One-World government. First, the unification of governments is portrayed in a negative light because it means the elimination of nationalism and patriotism, and will result in a centralized world government, with too much control over individual freedom. Such terms as "nationalism" and "patriotism" can be perceived as God terms that carry a tremendous emotional impact. With such terms come notions of pride in one's country, a sense of uniqueness, purpose, and perhaps competition with other

nations. But note the distinctions of Marris' appeals. On the one hand, Marris appeals to his audience's sense of nationalism. At the same time, with his government control argument, Marris may be appealing to those who may be patriotic, but favor individual rights over governmental control.

The second aspect of the New World Order is the establishment of a One-World Religion. As in the One-World Government, the New Age Christ or the Anti-Christ will form and lead the One-World Religion. Apart from the New Age Christ at the head, the One-World Religion will also be overseen by a spiritual cabinet of twelve persons. Marris (1987) quotes New Ager Vera Alder:

There will thus be the Spiritual Cabinet of twelve whose rightful head would be none other than the Christ himself. He whom the Christians know as Christ, the Jews know as Messiah, and the Orient knows as Maitreya may eventually be recognized as one and the same Being. In this way could a 'World Religion' develop quite naturally, and in harmony with a World government (p. 179).

Marris interprets this to mean that the Anti-Christ will be the head of the Spiritual Cabinet. Marris perceives the twelve person cabinet as an imitation of Jesus and the twelve apostles, a further blasphemy by the New Age movement.

Marris (1987) also contends that the content of the One-World Religion is anti-Christian, espousing the wisdom of Eastern philosophy and denying the validity of the Christian view of God:

The New Age religion allows believers to discard "ignorant" notions of an external God and to accept such "wise" Eastern doctrines as that of the Law of Rebirth and that of "Christ" as a state of consciousness. It is plain to see that the "new" religion . . . is simply a warmed over version of the old Babylonian religious system which demonically led to the occultic Hindu and Buddhist religions (p. 39).

Marris argues that not only will the traditional teachings of Christianity be discarded but that the One-World Religion will supplant the "false teachings" of traditional Christianity. Marris represents New Age ideas as against Christianity. Marris' rhetorical choice to present the two discourse groups as

opposites and as enemies acts to maintain the battle between the two, a point which will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

Note also Marrs' language here. His reference to the "old Babylonian religious system" and his choice of the phrase "demonically led" carries a powerful rhetorical weight for his Fundamentalist audience. Marrs (1987) refers again to the Babylonian System:

We cannot avoid the horrible conclusion that this [New Age] apostate religion is demonic. The astonishing truth is that the New Age World religion fits all the criteria of the Babylonian harlot church in the latter days. Revelation 17 reveals this as a Satanic religious system that just prior to the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ shall rule "peoples and multitudes, and nations and tongues" and shall be full of "abominations and filthiness." Led by the Beast who ascends "out of the bottomless pit," it will be at its core, the mirror image of the Mystery Religion established by the founders of ancient Babylon (p. 15).

Babylon is an important aspect of Biblical prophecy. In the Book of Revelation, Babylon is symbolic of the area which will be the Beast's confederated empire. Babylon is also symbolic of apostate Christendom. The confederated empire is also called the "great harlot" (Revelation 17: 1) and on the forehead of the great harlot is written: "Mystery, Babylon the Great, The Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (Revelation 17: 5). Unlike Cumbey, Marrs frequently uses imagery to present a repulsive picture of the New Age practitioners and their belief system. With his references to Mueller and Aphrodite, as well as the New Age religion and the harlot church, Marrs consistently presents New Agers as deceitful and lacking in purity, and the New Age belief system as a whore-like imitation of Christianity. So Marrs' use of language in his text calls up a host of negative and even repulsive images for the Fundamentalist Christian, images now associated with the New Age movement.

Reaffirming God's Promise

Having painted a bleak picture of the new millennium by following the New Age path, Cumbey and Marrs remind their audience that for those who follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, a future utopia will become a reality. To this end Cumbey (1983) quotes Isaiah 35: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing" (p. 18). Marrs also notes that despite the persecution of Christians in the last days, Christians should be steadfast in their faith: "Whatever fate awaits us, we need not be alarmed. Instead, we should be joyful that everyday is a day we can live for our Lord" (p. 117).

Despite the strong deterministic nature of the Fundamentalist response, the audience is told by Cumbey (1983) to not simply watch the growing apostasy, but to ready themselves spiritually:

However, we Christians must realize that God's timetable takes precedence over the New Ager's timetable. Clearly the times are in God's hands. Nothing can happen, the whole New Age movement notwithstanding, until He is ready. However, if God is ready, are we ready? It is time for a real soul-searching by all God's people (p. 53).

Marrs (1987) suggests that Christians should not only ready themselves spiritually but "confront and fight New Age apostasy" (p. 264). But the power to confront apostasy comes not from within, as in postmillennial apocalyptic, but from God, as the audience is directed to "use prayer both as a resource and a powerful vehicle to ward off God's enemies" (p. 265).

Despite the similarities to the element of human agency in postmillennial rhetoric, the true power to change lies with God. Therefore, this great battle shall not be won by Christians but by Jesus and God himself.

Nonetheless, Christians are not supposed to stand idly by and watch the battle unfold:

If you are a Christian, you are on the front line of the battle. And there is no way out. You'll either have to see this war through and come out on the other end victorious--or through your inaction you will become an accomplice in Satan's Plan. The fact is, once you surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, Satan declared war on you. Now you are counted as sheep to the slaughter (Marrs, 1987, p. 30).

Given the determinism of Fundamentalist rhetoric, how does the Fundamentalist Christian advocate action when premillennialism dictates a predetermination? This paradox is resolved by Marrs by setting up the battle up as an either/or scenario: "see this war through . . . or . . . become an accomplice in Satan's Plan." By making the issue one of good versus evil, the Christian is obligated to fight evil.

Additionally, this battle cry certainly echoes the doomsday quality of premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric. "Sheep to the slaughter" is not exactly uplifting but it is in keeping with the determinism of the Christian doctrine, which holds that the events of humanity are all a part of "God's plan." This is another rhetorical attempt by Marrs to remind the Christian audience of their duty to be devout, good Christian soldiers.

Although the claims presented by Cumbey and Marrs are identical, Marrs' use of language distinguishes his rhetorical style and echoes the stylistic element of premillennial apocalyptic. Reid (1983) argued that apocalyptic rhetoric was laden with metaphors and symbolic meaning. This language acted to produce a dichotomized symbolic world; good is associated with light and evil associated with darkness. Reid (1983) further states that openness is associated with light, while evil "works furtively under the cover of darkness" (p. 236). Given this symbolism, the very title of the Marrs text:

Dark Secrets of the New Age is a reference to evil and deception. Reid (1983) also states that apocalyptic rhetoric contains a vivid imagery that frequently represents sin. Marrs uses such graphic images as harlots, whores, and Aphrodite to paint a picture of the New Age movement as an embodiment of sin. Such a rhetorical act reinforces the dichotomy and the sense of opposition created by Cumbey and Marrs.

This final premillennial theme, a promise of a future utopia, has rhetorically accomplished a divided vision of a good age/bad age, heaven or hell. Fundamentalist Christians Cumbey and Marrs remind their audience of God's promise of eternal life but also point to a worst case scenario if the New Age vision is chosen. Like New Age rhetoric, the implication is that humanity must choose a path and soon.

The conspiracy approach utilized by both Fundamentalist authors adds to the sense of urgency and pessimism of the premillennial rhetoric. This is unlike New Age rhetoric, which is strikingly more positive in its outlook for the future. Whereas New Age rhetoric motivates its audience based on the assumption of a coming better future, Fundamentalist rhetoric in this context motivates its Christian audience based on a coming doom, a future apocalypse.

That the Fundamentalist rhetoric relies so heavily on fear appeals is interesting, considering its audience. The fear appeal demonstrated in this chapter would seem to be directed towards an audience who may not be able to distinguish between the two views of the future. Yet this audience is presumably composed of Christian Fundamentalists, who should be able to distinguish the difference on their own. Thus the goal of the Fundamentalist response is likely to be to inform the audience of the New Age apostasy so the audience may know how to fight such apostasy. The goal of this

Fundamentalist rhetoric is to motivate the audience to **fight**. This goal is in sharp contrast to the New Age movement's rhetorical goal of motivating its audience to **build** a better future.

Fundamentalist Rhetoric: An Analysis

This chapter has presented the Christian Fundamentalist response to New Age religious discourse, through a thematic analysis of Fundamentalist premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric. Through the themes of salvation, Christ and a promised future utopia, Fundamentalists Cumbey and Marrs have attempted to contextually place New Age discourse within the Biblical scheme of end time events.

I have attempted in this thematic analysis to reflect the essence and emphasis of the rhetoric of Cumbey and Marrs. Notably, the themes of the Christ and a promised utopia are more developed than the theme of salvation. It may be that this reflects a desire to point out the problem of the New Age path before attempting to "save" anyone. It is also likely that the New Age rhetorical themes of the Christ and a future utopia simply provided more impetus to attack from a Fundamentalist perspective.

However, it is also noteworthy that these Fundamentalists attack Creme and Maitreya more than they attack Spangler and Limitless Love. The reason for this may be that Creme has placed his rhetoric more in the public sphere, with his one-page Christ announcement, public appearances, and newsletters regarding recent appearances of the Christ. It could be also that Maitreya is more akin to Jesus than is Limitless Love. Creme claims that Maitreya has taken physical form, and he presents and records his teachings as an apostle would have done with Jesus. For these reasons, Fundamentalists appear to perceive Maitreya as more of a threat than Limitless Love and therefore

respond appropriately.

Out of this thematic analysis of the Fundamentalist response to New Age rhetoric there is now a sense of what characterizes the Fundamentalist response to New Age religious discourse: a strong sense of determinism, control and purpose.

The rhetoric of Cumbey and Marrs has been shown to be deterministic and pessimistic. Given the sharp contrast of the Fundamentalist pessimistic rhetoric with the positive and upbeat New Age movement's use of postmillennial apocalyptic, why do the Fundamentalists make such a rhetorical choice? The rhetoric of Cumbey and Marrs would probably have little appeal to any other audience. But the Fundamentalist Christian audience is accustomed to the determinism of Christian doctrine.

There is an irony to traditional apocalyptic rhetoric. A supernatural figure reveals a prophetic view of the end of the world to a human, who records the vision. The classic example is the angel who appeared to the Apostle John, who then recorded the angel's revelation in the Book of Revelation. The irony is that, although knowledge is power, in premillennial thought human events are predetermined by God. So the apocalyptic audience in this case has knowledge of future events but cannot alter such events.

The rhetoric of the Fundamentalists in this context has much the same effect. Yet, despite the strong deterministic nature of premillennialism, the rhetoric is not without appeal. First, it offers the audience understanding by framing the reality of the New Age movement into a Fundamentalist's frame of reference. Thus the audience is offered a means, a structure by which to understand the chaotic events of today's world. The chaos, the apostasy and the strength of the New Age discourse are all part of God's supreme plan. It may

simply be that God is teaching humans--as He does in every dispensation.

With understanding comes a sense of control. The Fundamentalist audience may not have control over end time events but they do have control over their own spiritual nature and can certainly witness to New Agers about the dangers of their path. And of course, Fundamentalists are to "pray without ceasing," as Cumbeys stated.

In addition, this premillennial approach is an appropriate means of awakening the Christian community to the threat of the New Age movement. The arguments presented by these two Fundamentalists, drawing on Biblical prophecy and creating distress within the audience, act on an emotional level. The rhetoric of Cumbeys and Marrs acts to arouse suspicion and even a hatred of the New Age discourse community. The blatant emotional attacks by Cumbeys and Marrs demonstrate this.

The emotional sense of urgency is impossible to miss. The diversity of emotional appeals by Cumbeys and Marrs is confusing at times, and almost contradictory. A variety of Christians are appealed to, along with nationalists, Christian patriots, Jews and Muslims. There are also anti-government control appeals mixed with appeals to maintain strong national boundaries. Cumbeys and Marrs appear to cast out the widest rhetorical net possible, in a desperate attempt to warn as many people as possible of the New Age movement's threat. It is not necessarily an efficient strategy, but, if the sole purpose is to sound the alarm, then such a rhetorical approach may be effective for those willing to listen.

However, the emotional argument has a purpose beyond awakening the Christian community to the threat of the New Age religious discourse group. When arguing that the New Age Christ is actually the Anti-Christ, both

Cumbey and Marris spend a great deal of time explaining Biblical prophecy regarding the Anti-Christ. Yet it might be assumed that if the primary audience are at least Christians, if not Fundamentalist Christians, they should already be familiar with the prophecy. Recall, however, that Marris always qualified certain statements: "Christians who have studied the Bible. . . devout Christians will be able to recognize. . . true Christians will know." Why does Marris make all these qualifications? The answer may be that Marris realizes that Christianity has become weak over the years, perhaps because of the influence of the New Age movement. It may be that one purpose of the Fundamentalist's rhetorical response to the New Age community is to create an identifiable enemy that parallels Biblical prophecy. It is here that the Fundamentalist rhetoric is most powerful because it awakens the Christian to the New Age movement's threat and creates a sense of community. Marris says the Anti-Christ cannot come if there is a reaffirmation of the true Christ in people's communities. So the intent is to have the Christian community awake to fight this spiritual war--to be strong in the battle and armed with the word of God. Rhetorically, this not only has the effect of creating a sense of community but also a sense of purpose and pride that may be lost in modern-day Christian Fundamentalism.

In the conspiracy approaches of Cumbey and Marris, the New Age discourse community has become a hate object for Christian Fundamentalists. This has the effect of strengthening Fundamentalism. Reid (1983) makes this point when discussing the functions of apocalyptic rhetoric and quotes Eric Hoffer (1951): "Mass movements can rise and spread without belief in a God, but never without a belief in a devil" (p. 238). Consider this: the Fundamentalists not only have created a devil, which is the New Age

movement, but also believe they have the support of God in fighting this devil through the Fundamentalist interpretation of Biblical prophecy concerning end time events. With the Fundamentalists drawing the battle lines, creating an identifiable enemy, and having the backing of an omnipotent God, the Fundamentalist response to New Age rhetoric is a rhetorical force that should not be underestimated.

Thus far, there has been an examination of the rhetorical battle between the New Age movement and Christian Fundamentalism. This battle is waged on two levels. On the rhetorical level, both groups employ apocalyptic rhetoric but both employ this rhetorical style to achieve different ends. New Agers employ postmillennial apocalyptic to present a vision of a bright future, a heaven on earth, a new age. Fundamentalist Christians employ premillennial apocalyptic in order to present New Age rhetoric in a different light. For Fundamentalists, there is no bright future ahead--that is a New Age lie. Whereas New Agers posit that following the path of the New Age Christ will lead to utopia, Fundamentalists warn that following the New Age path will only lead to the apocalypse and the Armageddon.

I turn now to consider the use of apocalyptic rhetoric by both discourses and what it reveals about the nature of apocalyptic rhetoric and the postmillennial and premillennial distinctions. Is the New Age movement truly a threat to Christianity, or are the Fundamentalists using New Age discourse rhetorically to strengthen and revitalize Fundamentalism in America? Whose rhetoric is more effective or more appealing? Finally, what does the study of this rhetorical battle suggest about religious discourse and what effect does the New Age/Christian Fundamentalist conflict have outside of the two discourses? These are the questions to be addressed in the final chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR: WHILE THE BATTLE WAGES: THE EFFECTS OF THE
NEW AGE/FUNDAMENTALIST CONFLICT

I have presented the argument that a rhetorical battle is waging between the New Age movement and Christian Fundamentalism. At the heart of the battle is an interpretation of end-time events. New Age apocalyptic rhetoric posits that the end is a transition period to a glorious new age that is to be created through human action. The Fundamentalist's opposing view is that the very existence of the New Age religious discourse group is a sign of the end of the world. Denying the role of human action in changing future events, Fundamentalist apocalyptic rhetoric offers the advice of prayer and the knowledge of the reality of the deceptive New Age movement and the New Age Anti-Christ. The Fundamentalists claim that the very existence of the New Age religious discourse community is a sign that humanity is headed for doom and that Christians are to be persecuted at the hands of the New Age Christ. As the views of the future have been presented, accusations and *ad_hominem* attacks have been made by both discourses.

This final chapter has three main parts. First, in order to provide a greater sense of the rhetorical battle, I will present the New Age community's response to such Fundamentalist attacks as demonstrated in Chapter Four. This response also confirms my previous arguments that New Age rhetoric is apocalyptic in nature and acts to reinterpret Biblical prophecy to fit the New Age world view. Secondly, I will extend and present further analysis of the functions of apocalyptic rhetoric in the context of this rhetorical battle. In particular, I will demonstrate the appeal of this rhetorical form to the audience of the respective discourses. Lastly, I will provide suggestions for the future study of the rhetorical battle and New Age rhetoric. For instance, I will

suggest that the rhetorical battle has entered the public sphere and, thus, necessitates further analysis by rhetorical and other religious scholars.

New Agers Fight Back

In general, New Agers have taken the Fundamentalist criticism lightly, judging from the relative shortage of books and articles written by New Agers that specifically attack the Fundamentalist response. There are some references to Fundamentalist critiques made in various New Age texts; Creme's vague reference to those opposing the New Age philosophy is certainly one. Primarily, two strong responses to the Fundamentalist attacks stand out. In the 1986 Share International Newsletter, founded by Benjamin Creme, there was a response specific to the Fundamentalist Anti-Christ allegations by Peter Liefhebber. The one-page article, entitled "666-and Other Misunderstandings" (Liefhebber, 1986, p. 21) reframes the Fundamentalist interpretation of the book of Revelation. Specifically, the article argues that the Fundamentalist's literal interpretation of Biblical prophecy is incorrect. In reference possibly to Constance Cumbey's mention that the Christ will return "as a flash of lightning in the sky" (Cumbey, 1980, p. 47), Liefhebber states that "for Fundamentalist Christians it is unthinkable that the Christ could return to earth in any other way than on a cloud at the end of the world" (p. 21). Liefhebber adds that Biblical prophecy is symbolic not literal, as the Fundamentalists have interpreted it. Liefhebber also argues that the 666 label has been inappropriately applied to a variety of individuals throughout the centuries, and it is again being incorrectly used to label Maitreya as the Anti-Christ: "The number 666, referred to as the number of 'the beast', has been juggled thousands of times by amateur numerologists and declared applicable, simultaneously, not only to Maitreya but also to Stalin, Hitler, Brezhnev, Nixon

and Ronald Reagan" (p. 21). Finally, Liefhebber argues against the Fundamentalist time frame by claiming that the apocalypse that is supposed to precede the return of Christ in Biblical prophecy has already occurred. Apparently World War II was the destructive force of the Anti-Christ, getting rid of most of the evil forces in the world so the world could be rebuilt for the better. This confirms Creme's perspective on the Anti-Christ. This destructive aspect of God made it possible for the Christ to return and for humanity to build the new age. Liefhebber concludes by briefly discussing the coming of Maitreya, and the joy the new age will bring to all, reinforcing the New Age view of the coming millennium.

Rhetorically, Liefhebber continues the rhetorical path of Creme, Spangler, Cumbeys and Marrs: he reinterprets Biblical prophecy and redefines terms. Liefhebber does not personally attack Fundamentalists such as Cumbeys or Marrs but rather clashes with the premises that they argue from. This is a wise rhetorical choice. Not responding in kind to personal attacks leaves the Fundamentalists appearing irrational, at least to a secular or non-Fundamentalist audience. In contrast, New Agers appear to be innocent victims in the rhetorical/religious battle.

Another response to the attack by Fundamentalists is an article in the magazine Common Ground. This New Age resource guide is published in San Francisco, California, with a quarterly circulation of about 150,000. The article "Christianity and the New Age: Finding Common Ground," by Meynell & O'Murchu (1991) appears at first to seek a commonality between the two religious discourses. As Meynell and O'Murchu state: "I long for these two streams to acknowledge their points of convergence and share the same vision of a united humanity" (p. 136). This is certainly appealing rhetorically and

appears to be an attempt to build a bridge between the two discourses. This rhetoric focuses on the future: the New Age discourse community continues its apocalyptic visions. What is meant by convergence is clarified by Meynell and O'Murchu's vision of the church of the future. In essence, they argue that if only Christianity were flexible enough to change towards the needs of society, we wouldn't have this New Age/Christian conflict: "A truly Christian church must be global, broad and inclusive: not in the traditional sense of converting everybody to its point of view, but by being a catalyst and model for the inclusiveness and unity that cherishes all the diversity and richness of universal life" (p. 136). Thus, when the authors earlier spoke of the "same" vision, they actually meant the New Age vision. The authors also describe the church of the future as having "radical equality" and "radical inclusiveness." New Agers believe Christians must learn that "new life is only possible through the letting go and death of the old" (p. 137). This idea echoes Spangler's concept of a separation of the old and new. Thus, these authors extend the function of apocalyptic rhetoric, which acts to create divisions and force the audience to choose which vision to accept: the New Age view or that of Fundamentalist Christians. Interestingly, Meynell and O'Murchu have adopted the Fundamentalist strategy of pointing towards the opposing discourse group as the current distressing problem, thus continuing the apocalyptic tendencies of the New Age movement.

Here is one of the Fundamentalist counter attacks from an article in Christianity Today (Hexham & Hexham, 1988, September 2). The rhetorical battle against the New Age movement is likened to early Christian conflicts:

In the early church, Christians faced similar challenges. Classics like Augustine's City of God show how Christians responded to those challenges and met head-on the superstitions of their day. We must do the same. And that means, like the early church, we must out-think as well as outlive our opponents. (p. 21)

The term "opponents" indicates that the rhetorical battle continues, and such use of language continues the division and acts rhetorically to maintain the New Age/Fundamentalist conflict. Observe the finality of the conflict: "we must outthink as well as outlive." Given this "us" or "them" scenario, there is little or no room for compromise or understanding. Yet this is the nature of apocalyptic rhetoric: it creates divisions rather than understandings. Thus, it is very much a rhetoric suited for warfare. I shall expand on this use of language later in this chapter. What the preceding excerpts provided was a more current look at the rhetorical battle, and it should be noted that the battle continues still, but is now masked as a more secular conflict in the world of education and business, as I shall later demonstrate. The point here is that this rhetorical conflict did not take place in a single moment in time--it is not simply a product of the 1970's but a conflict that is now at least fifteen years old and still going strong. Also noteworthy is that the rhetorical style has not dramatically changed for either discourse. For a rhetorical conflict to last this long suggests that the rhetoric acts not only to maintain the battle but must have a long-term appeal for the respective audiences. Therefore, I will first demonstrate how this rhetorical battle has been maintained through the discourse group's use of language. Second, I will provide an analysis of the functions of apocalyptic rhetoric within the context of this spiritual battle as well as demonstrate the appeal of apocalyptic rhetoric to its respective audiences.

The Language Of The Rhetorical Battle

The conclusions in this last chapter will focus on what has been previously stated by New Agers and Fundamentalists in Chapters Two and Three. But sometimes what also bears scrutiny is what has not been stated. Most notable is the almost complete absence of an attack by New Agers on the Fundamentalists. While Fundamentalists Cumbey (1983) and Marrs (1987) blatantly attack the motives and integrity of New Agers Creme (1980) and Spangler (1971), the New Agers have not responded in kind.

This may parallel Spangler's (1971) notion of a separation of the old and the new. To reciprocate the Fundamentalist's ad hominem attacks would indicate that the Fundamentalist views are still meaningful. By not reciprocating, the New Age discourse community is consistent with its philosophy of continually looking forward and not being held back by old ideas and structures.

In addition, a refutation of the Fundamentalists' claims may serve to validate them. The smarter rhetorical move has been chosen by the New Age religious discourse group: that of ignoring the ad hominem attacks by Fundamentalists. From the standpoint of a secular audience, the ad hominem attacks by Fundamentalists create the perception that the New Age belief system is merely an innocent alternative to the Judeo-Christian world view and that the Fundamentalists are being unjust in their response. Intentional or not, this puts the New Age discourse community in a slightly better light for a secular audience, as we see New Agers "turn the other cheek." What can be missed as all this goes on is that the New Age movement may not be as innocent as it appears. There are indications in the two New Age texts examined in Chapter Three that New Age beliefs may indeed be a threat to

Christianity. But such indications are sometimes lost in the over-emotional attacks by Fundamentalists.

However, the emotional language used by Fundamentalists does serve a purpose. Marsden (1991) notes that for over a century, warfare metaphors have been used to describe conflicts between religion and the secular world. Examples are such conflicts as religion versus science, creation versus evolution, fundamentalism versus humanism. Marrs (1987) refers to the New Age/Christian conflict as "spiritual warfare" (p.32), while Cumbeys (1983) notes that "The battle is a spiritual one" (p. 191). Additionally, Dr. Walter Martin, cult expert and founder and director of the Christian Research Institute International, also uses the militaristic language to describe the New Age/Christian conflict:

In dealing with the New Age cult, we are in reality dealing with spiritual warfare against the forces of darkness, and we are told by God to put on the whole armor of heaven so that we will be able to withstand the forces of Satan. There is no substitute in this conflict for knowledge of the Word of God and the proper use of the sword of the spirit and the shield of faith to deflect all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (1989, p. 108).

Applying warfare metaphors to this conflict is in keeping with the Fundamentalist view of the secular world. Hofstadter (1962) described the Fundamentalist mind as perceiving the "world as an arena for conflict between absolute good and absolute evil, and accordingly, it scorns compromise" (p. 135). Thus, the warfare metaphors combined with the use of apocalyptic rhetoric add to the sense of urgency to choose between good and evil--they create a further polarization of two discourse groups already locked in conflict. However, it is not just Fundamentalists whose premillennial apocalyptic contains the language of war. Marilyn Ferguson, author of the Aquarian Conspiracy (1980), refers to the growth of the New Age movement as

a revolution (1980). Jack Underhill, publisher and editor of the New Age publication Life Times: Forum for a New Age, takes a similar view, speaking almost as a commander-in-chief of the New Age movement:

We start the revolution in each of us and work out from there, getting groups of similar minded rebels together and drafting campaigns to make the enemy surrender. In this new age we are our own commanders and infantry, truly special forces of a sort that has never been seen at war before. Therefore, we must charge on to the only true victory there is, that of spiritual liberation (1986, p. 2).

Marsden points out that the use of the language of warfare reinforces the dichotomized thinking of Fundamentalism, and also assures that the battle and the hostilities continue. I pointed out earlier that the New Age and Fundamentalist discourse communities need each other. Indeed, the language of warfare may represent their need for an enemy and a need to fight each other in order to survive.

A Sense Of Community

Obviously, both New Agers and Fundamentalist Christians write for a purpose. Since they all write for members of their own discourse community, we might conclude that the function of apocalyptic rhetoric has been to create a greater sense of community around each respective discourse. This sense of community has been accomplished by two methods. In both postmillennial and premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric there is an identification and description of a current distressing situation. Such a rhetorical act can serve the function of creating a scapegoat. New Agers Creme and Spangler both blame Christianity for many of society's problems: conflict, authoritarianism, separatism, and therefore lack of unity. The Christian Church has given people a limited view of God and spirituality, and thus has prevented humanity from becoming truly spiritual and learning their true potential. On the other

hand, Christian Fundamentalists have also employed scapegoating.

Fundamentalists point to the New Age discourse group as the problem because they present a deceptive view of the future and support the rise of the Anti-Christ.

Identifying the Enemy

Now, both New Agers and Fundamentalist Christians have an identifiable enemy--each other. The existence of an enemy has the ability to create a sense of community based on a fear of the enemy and specific threats to a common goal. The New Age philosophy and its predecessor, Theosophy, have posited that Christianity is the enemy to all those who wish to attain a higher spiritual plane. According to the writings of Alice Bailey and other theosophists, Christianity must be eliminated in order for the world to be truly spiritual. The writings of Creme and Spangler, who were both influenced by theosophy, echo this claim.

Perhaps the greatest problem which confronts the New Age religious discourse community is that its philosophy is too vague, and the term New Age so broad that its unity is questionable. I argued in Chapter One that the New Age belief system defies an all encompassing definition. What holds the New Age discourse community together is the simple assumption that a new age is coming. But is this enough to create unity? While certain events such as the Harmonic Convergence and the publishing of Ferguson's Aquarian Conspiracy (1980) have drawn new followers and strengthened the discourse group, the continued unity is important if the new age is to be fully realized. If Christianity is seen as the enemy to the New Age movement and to personal spiritual fulfillment, this can act rhetorically to bond New Agers together and strengthen the religious discourse group.

Of course, historically, Christians have had a number of enemies, from Julius Caesar, who approved the crucifixion of Christ, to Satan himself. But who is the enemy of Fundamentalist Christianity today? Today's enemy, besides the devil, is a changing world and a new religious diversity and pluralism. A survey of American religious beliefs by George Barna (1991) reported that only 43 percent of Americans have a lot of confidence in the Christian Church and only 28 percent of Americans feel that the Christian Church is relevant to their lives today. While this refers to the Christian church and not the Christian faith, it is one strong indicator that Christianity has is loosing dominance in the American culture. In regards to Fundamentalism specifically, it could be that its worst enemy is the passing of time, and the changing views of a changing world. While time cannot be stopped, it can be taken advantage of, and, as we near the year 2000, there are increasing apocalyptic warnings. It could be that Fundamentalist Christians are taking advantage of the approaching turn of the century to predict the end of the world and persuade others to convert to Fundamentalist Christianity before it is too late. In doing so, Fundamentalists may hope to regain their dominant role in American religious culture. To regain dominance, however, Fundamentalism must first regain a sense of pride and community. Painting a picture of the New Age movement as the enemy may result in an empowerment and unification of Fundamentalists in their struggling discourse. Like the W.W.II soldiers boasting with pride as they were sent to fight Hitler, the Anti-Christ of the past, today's Fundamentalist Christian soldiers are being readied for the ultimate battle.

In both cases, the description of the current distressing situation has functioned rhetorically to create an identifiable enemy, which in turn results

in a greater sense of community within each respective discourse.

The Strategy of Discernment

The other means of attaining a sense of community is through what I will term a strategy of discernment: a purposeful use of distinctions and contrasts employed by a discourse community in order to define itself. It is an attempt at definition by negation or delineation. As apocalyptic rhetoric acts to create divisions, this strategy, as used by the New Age and Fundamentalist discourse groups, acts also to discern between the two discourses for the benefit of the audience. Given some of the similarities between the two discourses, this becomes an important rhetorical goal. Popular Fundamentalist author and cult expert Dave Hunt (1983) states: "We must be certain that the Christ we proclaim is clearly distinguishable from the New Age false Christs around us; we must be certain not to add to the confusion and thereby contribute to the preparation of the world for the Anti-Christ" (p. 261). Russell Chandler (1989) echoes Hunt by advising a clear discernment between the New Age and Christian world views in an increasingly pluralistic society.

For Fundamentalists and New Agers both to engage in a strategy of discernment, the assumption must be made that there is a need for distinctions. Both groups assume confusion exists and that people may not be able to distinguish between the New Age vision and its Christian counterpart. Brummett (1984) notes that apocalyptic rhetoric flourished when old systems of meaning no longer worked. New Agers contend that Christianity is no longer sufficient to provide a sense of meaning and purpose. Thus there may be a greater need for order. New Age theorist Marilyn Ferguson plugs New Age discourse into this need for order. She contends in her 1980 book, The Aquarian Conspiracy, that the New Age or Aquarian paradigm will offer a new

system of meaning. While the old way of looking at life served its purpose, it is time for a new understanding of the world. The framework of the New Age paradigm, according to Ferguson, will allow for new exploration and a more accurate interpretation of a changing reality. Thus, Ferguson uses the concept of a paradigm change to provide a means of discerning between the two discourses. Her argument is that because people are hanging on to an old paradigm, they are suffering from confusion and a lost sense of meaning; are unable to appropriately interpret the changes in the world around them. The New Age discursive explanation is simple. The confusion is a natural part of the move from the Piscean Age to the Aquarian Age and the separation of the old and the new. Her explanation is appealing and provides an understanding and a sense of order in which to place the current reality. The sense of order it provides is why apocalyptic rhetoric has customarily flourished in crisis situations (Reid, 1983).

Here then, we have two orders, two visions of the future. Despite the differences, there are some striking similarities between the visions presented by the discourses, which have been illuminated through the thematic analysis in this thesis. In Chapter Two I argued that New Age prophecy mirrored its Fundamentalist counterpart. For example, both discourses provide a means of being saved from ultimate destruction at the end of the world. In the New Age discourse, being saved means being transformed, whereas in Fundamentalist Christianity, one is granted salvation. Both discourses also predict a return of a Christ and a future utopia. Perhaps the most significant difference is in redemption. Fundamentalism posits that to be redeemed one must admit sin and therefore guilt. New Age rhetoric, however, asks one to redeem oneself by rejecting the concepts of sin and guilt and by

building the New Age. With this comparison, it is little wonder that New Age rhetoric is so appealing and why Fundamentalists are so concerned.

Given these similarities, each discourse must provide a sense of difference between the two. This is, in fact, the nature of apocalyptic rhetoric. It is a rhetoric that separates and divides, a rhetoric that acts to separate Fundamentalists from those whose beliefs or doctrines differ from their own (Averill, 1989). It emphasizes the dichotomy of good versus evil and God versus Satan. However, it is not just the Fundamentalists that discern. Each discourse engages in a rhetoric of discernment in the description of the future in order to distinguish between the New Age vision and Christian prophecy. In both the New Age and Fundamentalist texts examined in this thesis, the rhetoric of discernment starts early. In the case of New Age rhetoric, Both Creme and Spangler provide a means of distinguishing the New Age Christ from Jesus Christ, and Creme at least provides a means for distinguishing Maitreya from the Anti-Christ. Fundamentalists Cumbey and Marrs also provide a means of discriminating between the New Age Christ and Jesus Christ by associating the New Age Christ with the Anti-Christ. In this instance the rhetoric of discernment is particularly strong, since in the eyes of a Fundamentalist Christian audience, Jesus Christ and the Anti-Christ are polar opposites.

The strategy of discernment plays its biggest role in the third apocalyptic theme, the prediction of a future utopia. This is where apocalyptic rhetoric is the most powerful and where the postmillennial and premillennial distinctions become even more meaningful. In providing a vision of the new age, Creme and Spangler distinguish their utopia from heaven by claiming that the new age will be built by humanity, not by God or Jesus Christ. This is the motivational aspect of the apocalyptic, and both Creme and Spangler

employ it to motivate their audience to act--to start building a better future now.

Given the ensuing battle and the need to discern between the two discourses, it is ironic that the New Agers and Christian Fundamentalists need each other. The New Age movement needs an enemy, a portrait of the inadequacy of the current system of meaning, and Fundamentalists need New Age discourse in order to ground their apocalyptic warnings in something real. Like the notion that apocalyptic rhetoric arises out of crisis, here is an indicator that this battle is perhaps not so much prophetic as it is convenient, and perhaps rhetorically necessary.

Additionally, the postmillennial rhetoric is positive, reflecting the power of humanity and the bright future millennium that awaits humanity. While postmillennial rhetoric still retains a mild element of determinism, the emphasis is on human action, power and change. By contrast, the Fundamentalist premillennial rhetoric paints a bleak future of the same new age. Instead of such New Age rhetorical ideals as sharing and justice and equality, Cumbey (1983) and Marrs (1987) paint a picture of repression, control and persecution. Yet, this rhetoric not only discerns, it is also motivational. This is the Fundamentalist call for reaffirming the audience's belief in the Christian God and Biblical prophecy. It is a call to hold fast to one's belief in Jesus Christ, despite the coming persecution. This rhetoric is dramatic in its appeal: good Christian soldiers holding fast to their faith, knowing that they are standing up for a noble cause, a higher truth than themselves. As McGinn (1979) observes: "by fitting a present situation into the framework of an inherited prophetic message, the believer is not only enlightened, but motivated" (p. 9).

The Fundamentalist rhetoric is steeped in fate, determinism, and faith in an external, omnipotent God. This is a far cry from the sense of personal choice, the role of human agency in creating a utopian society and the optimism displayed by the New Age rhetoric. New Age rhetoric asks the apocalyptic audience to discern and decide between a new age and more of the same--the suffering and confusion of the human level of consciousness. So, too, the apocalyptic warnings of the Fundamentalists the audience to be able to discern and to decide what they want: a new age or apocalypse--death at the hands of the Anti-Christ or life with the grace of God. The rhetoric of discernment pushes people to choose which community to belong to, which vision to accept. At the same time, it argues that one vision is most certainly better than another. Russell (1960) confirms this by noting that the apocalyptic works on the reward system. But in order to be rewarded, one must belong to the correct apocalyptic discursive group. Only those belonging to the right group will make it through the apocalypse.

There is a contradiction to be noted here within the New Age movement's rhetorical use of the apocalyptic. On the one hand, New Age discourse seems very inclusive. It offers anyone a chance to a part of the New Age community. It also appears to reject the Christian dualism, the notion of good-bad, right-wrong, God-Satan (Ferguson, 1980). Yet, as New Age rhetoric acts to propose a better path and a future that seems to exclude Christianity, New Age discourse too sets up a dichotomy similar to its Christian "opponent." Taken together, both the rhetoric of the New Age movement and Fundamentalist criticism seek to draw a dividing line, preventing any common ground from being suggested or any mediation. With Fundamentalism, this division is almost expected but it becomes rather surprising to see the New Age

community mirror this rhetorical act. Given its apparent openness, the obvious rejection of Christianity seems contradictory, perhaps even hypocritical.

The creation of an enemy and the rhetoric of discernment through the use of the apocalyptic serves to create a sense of community and, therefore, strengthens both discourses, by uniting them internally against an external opponent. The rhetoric of discernment and the creation of an enemy go almost hand in hand here. First, the discourses distinguish one from the other; then, they reveal (the definition of apocalyptic) that the other is an enemy. The other discourse, the other Christ, is not just different, it is to be hated and also feared. There is a disturbing implication in the use of apocalyptic rhetoric to create a sense of community. The power of unification in this context is placed on an external enemy. Thus, to remain unified suggests that the perception of the other discourse should remain constant. This places a barrier to building common ground and attempts at resolution. The rhetorical battle must be maintained so that the unity is maintained.

The Strategy Of Vagueness

One thing the rhetorical battle offers the respective audiences is a sense of community and a sense of order. The battle offers two ways of explaining current distressing events and provides an understanding of the future. These are two strong rhetorical appeals resulting from the New Age/Fundamentalist conflict. In addition, apocalyptic rhetoric in this context offers a sense of control to the audiences of the conflict. In the case of the New Age discourse group especially, such control is a result of the use of what I term a strategy of vagueness, a rhetorical tool that allows a discourse group to appeal to diverse audiences.

The New Age religious discourse community seems to defy definition. It has no real leader, its philosophy is too loose to pin down and only by analyzing one set of beliefs within New Age discourse (the belief that the Christ will return or has returned to guide humanity into a new age of peace and sharing), do we now have a notion (albeit an incomplete picture) of what the New Age religious discourse is about. We saw in Chapter Three a strategy of vagueness, employed by New Agers Creme (1980) and Spangler (1971) within their postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric. Much has been noted about the strategy of vagueness employed by the New Age religious discourse group in terms of its offering control over the present and the future. However, both discourses have been vague, especially in support of each of their respective claims. For instance, Fundamentalists Cumbey (1983) and Marrs (1987) attempt to link Maitreya to the Anti-Christ by referring to the prophetic "666" sign. Yet the link is never made. Instead, both mention the sign of "666" and the New Age Christ in the same paragraph, but never provide verifiable and concrete examples of the mark in relation to the New Age Christ or attempt other arguments to convince the audience that the New Age Christ is the Anti-Christ.

This vagueness is inherent within apocalyptic rhetoric and necessarily so. The less specific and more ambiguous a prediction of the future, the less chance there is of the prediction being incorrect. Beyond the sense of control one obtains with the vagueness of New Age rhetoric, for both discourses, this strategy of vagueness may also decrease the readers uncertainty about the future. Brummett (1984) argues this point about premillennial apocalyptic but not the postmillennial form. At first, this notion of decreased uncertainty may seem the opposite of our usual perception of the effects of vagueness. As a

student embarks on the arduous task of writing a thesis, the student begins with a vague idea about the thesis topic. Should this vagueness continue, the student may become distressed and confused. The vagueness of the apocalyptic may act this way as well but in this case the rhetoric becomes reassuring.

The rhetorical battle over what the future holds creates uncertainty and confusion--at first. The vague picture of the future painted by the two discourses acts to motivate their audiences to focus on the uncertain future. And here is another power of the apocalyptic: it gets its audience thinking about the future so that they are compelled to fill in the holes created by the rhetoric of vagueness and thus decrease uncertainty. The key to the strategy of vagueness is that it is interactive. Not only does the apocalyptic rhetoric do something to an audience, but *the audience also does something to the rhetoric*. The audience, invited by the appeal of vagueness, can choose to manipulate the rhetoric to suit their needs or desires. At this level, the rhetorical battle over the future and the audience's contributions to the rhetoric, acts to fill in the missing pieces about the future and in this way the battle can reduce our uncertainty. The role of the audience in interacting with apocalyptic rhetoric should not be overlooked. O'Leary (1994) points to the need to analyze the role of the audience in shaping apocalyptic rhetoric. The strategy of vagueness in the postmillennial form may be one avenue of exploration in addressing this need.

Additionally, McGinn (1979) suggests that apocalyptic audiences seek out apocalyptic rhetoric. This assumes there exists audiences who have need of apocalyptic rhetoric. Such audiences would likely be confused about the current distressing events and uncertain about the future. In this case, postmillennial apocalyptic may be especially appealing, in that it offers a

certain amount of control over apocalyptic rhetoric and thus control over an audience's perceived reality. Perhaps then, the rhetoric of the apocalyptic not only has an appeal because it creates a sense of order, but ironically, to the apocalyptic audience, the strategy of vagueness, a lack of concreteness and order, may also have an appeal.

Also, New Age rhetoric reduces uncertainty by a kind of deductive logic. The principles of sharing and justice provided by Creme (1980) and the promise of protection from nuclear war from Limitless Love are very appealing. All the audience has to do is extrapolate from these examples and the entire rhetoric becomes positive. Then, Fundamentalists respond in a way that would seem to increase audience uncertainty by saying that the New Age movement is a fraud, and that Christians will be persecuted in the new age. Still, even a negative view of the future can reduce uncertainty. The future the Fundamentalists predict may not be a pleasant one but at least the Christian audience is informed of the inevitable. One of the goals of Fundamentalist premillennial rhetoric, besides awakening the Christian community to the threat of the New Age movement, is to get people to believe in the prophecy of the Bible. Thus, Fundamentalist rhetoric becomes a way of preparing Christians for the inevitable. The reduced uncertainty in the Fundamentalist case is a reassurance that all is going as God had planned.

The strategy of vagueness acts to reduce the uncertainty of an audience. In the case of postmillennial apocalyptic, it reduces uncertainty by allowing for limited audience control over the rhetoric, a unique feature of postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric. In addition to the appeal of the strategy of vagueness, apocalyptic rhetoric in the context of the New Age/Fundamentalist conflict offers control over one's destiny through action and understanding.

Postmillennial Rhetoric Offers Real Control

The rhetoric of vagueness is one of its strongest appeals of New Age rhetoric, in that it gives control to the audience. It provides a spiritual choice of what path to take, allowing the audience to "create" their own spirituality within the loose parameters of New Age philosophy. The only belief one should have is that humanity is on the verge of a new age. The New Age premise that humans are all divine frees the New Age audience to experience their own spirituality without any ties to a structured religion or an external God. In addition, the New Age position that humanity can build a better society puts the audience in charge of the future, and therefore in control of their own destiny. The strength of this appeal should not be underestimated. The power of human action is distinctive of the postmillennial form, and, in fact, falls in line with what most Americans believe to be true. Barna (1992) reported that in 1992, 82 percent of Americans believed that they had the power to control their own destiny. Of course, for New Age rhetoric to be appealing, one must want control. This may mean that New Age rhetoric is appealing to those who already believe they have control or who would like control over their lives and their spirituality. This covers a wide range of people. It would more than likely appeal to the middle class (Strozier, 1994), yuppies (Raschke, 1988) as well as baby boomers (Brown, 1992), who are more likely to have in their control future or continued success and therefore like the sound of a New Age because it fits their own vision of the future and personal goals. In this respect, the New Age movement is a very white collar, mainstream religious discourse group--which is rather ironic, considering the public perception of the New Age movement.

The rhetoric of the New Age discourse community may also appeal to

those who are tired of the rigid structure and authoritarian hierarchy of Fundamentalism and wish less dogmatism and more control over their spirituality. Baker's (1991) survey of New Agers resulted in a book of sixty accounts of personal transformations to New Age thinking. In almost every case, the individuals turned away from Christianity to New Age philosophy. This included rejections of Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Fundamentalism. The offer of real spiritual control may be a strong appeal of New Age rhetoric. The ability of the New Age discourse group to attract new adherents away from Christianity is a point that should not be overlooked. A number of recent Christian publications, such as Christianity Today and The Plain Truth, deal with the move of Christians to the New Age movement. One such article in The Plain Truth, September 1993, attempts to grapple with the issue of why Christians are turning to the New Age movement. The author's apparent lack of understanding of the rhetorical appeal of New Age discourse may reflect the shock of Fundamentalists at the Christian migration to New Age beliefs. The article explains the matter in this way: "These people had attended Christian churches, but did they hear the gospel? Apparently not" (Hague, p. 16).

Postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric, exemplified in New Age religious discourse, offers its audience control over their lives and the world in which they live through understanding, knowledge and importantly, action. The knowledge the New Age revelation provides, offers a true sense of control because it allows the audience to act on an informed decision about the future. New Age rhetoric posits that humans have brought about an end to the Piscean Age through a new spiritual awakening. This is empowering. It is as if the Aquarian Conspiracy described by Ferguson (1980) is a reality. And if

humanity has control over the stages of human development, if humanity can bring about what Ferguson calls a paradigm shift, then certainly humanity has real control over other areas of life. So it is through knowledge and the role of human agency that New Age rhetoric offers its audience control of their destiny and their world.

Premillennial Rhetoric Offers Symbolic Control

The Fundamentalist critique of New Age rhetoric has an appeal as well. As with the New Age postmillennialism, the Fundamentalist premillennial response also offers the Fundamentalist audience a sense of control. Brummett (1984) stated the manner in which premillennial apocalyptic offers a sense of control. Brummett asserts that the apocalyptic audience suffers from disorientation and confusion about the events happening within the world. Barkun (1974) suggests that the crisis does not necessarily have to be of catastrophic proportions, such as a natural disaster but rather a perceived loss of control. For instance, there may be confusion about the diminishing influence of Fundamentalist Christianity, and the growing strength of the New Age discourse community. The Fundamentalist audience may be suffering from a loss of control over the religious make up in America.

Premillennialism assists its audience in attaining symbolic control over distressing events. In contrast to the New Age postmillennialism, control within premillennialism must be symbolic given the rhetoric's deterministic nature. Brummett (1984) contends that the three ways of attaining such symbolic control are by providing a better understanding of the current distressing situation and how it will be resolved, by placing the current distressing situation in context by showing that it is a sign of impending doom, and a promise of an enduring new order.

Brummett's first method, is an understanding the current distressing situation. This understanding creates a sense of symbolic control by explaining why things are the way they are. In fact, Reid's summary of the apocalyptic is this: "It's all part of God's plan" (1983). In the case of the Fundamentalist discourse, if the apocalyptic audience accepts the premise that the power and influence of Christian Fundamentalism and morality are waning, then what the Fundamentalist response to the New Age rhetoric has done is point to the existence of the New Age movement as the cause. This Fundamentalist response may act rhetorically to simplify the confusing world the Fundamentalist lives in by putting the blame on the New Age discourse community.

To some this may be an overly simplistic response to an increasingly pluralistic society but it may be appropriate for the Fundamentalist audience. And indeed, it follows the Fundamentalist adherence to dispensationalism. If Fundamentalists believe the upcoming millennium is the last dispensation, then there should be signs indicating just that. The New Age religious discourse community may indeed be such a sign, or it may simply be a timely coincidence. Whatever the case, Fundamentalists have already determined that the New Age is apostasy, and a sign of the coming apocalypse.

Premillennial apocalyptic also creates a symbolic sense of control over the distressing situation by providing signs of impending doom. The deterministic quality of Fundamentalist Christianity is a logical result of the perspective that God is always in control, and the events of history are all part of His plan. Given this premise, signs provide a means of understanding the greater plan God has for humanity. The prophecy of the Book of Revelation, which Fundamentalists used to interpret New Age rhetoric, is essentially a

guidebook to reading the signs that will lead to the end of the world. While there is a sense of doom, there is also a sense of hope. Fundamentalists have pointed to the New Age movement and interpreted it as part of Biblical prophecy, almost as if to say: "Look, the prophecy is being fulfilled at last. Our Christ will return, but first we must suffer at the hand of the New Age Anti-Christ, so we can be with Jesus in heaven." Thus, the signs provided by Fundamentalists place the present times within the context of God's master plan, and because there is a plan, the audience need not worry about the chaos erupting in the world.

Finally, there is the third sense in which premillennial apocalyptic creates a sense of symbolic control, which is the promise of an enduring new order. What must be stressed here is the emphasis on enduring. This is distinguished from the present period which by contrast is only temporary. This point is rhetorically significant because it means the present confusion and suffering are only temporary. Also, the enduring order distinction is important in order for this aspect of symbolic control to be rhetorically effective. If the premillennial audience does not believe that the Kingdom of God will indeed last forever, then this premillennial rhetoric loses some of its appeal.

What Cumbey (1983) and Marrs (1987) do to create this last sense of symbolic control is to employ a rhetoric of discernment. Cumbey and Marrs place New Age rhetoric within the context of biblical prophecy to demonstrate that the new age is not the enduring new order but a sign that the Kingdom of God is coming. As Cumbey states: "we Christians must realize that God's timetable takes precedence over the New Ager's timetable. Clearly, the times are in God's hands. Nothing can happen, the whole New Age movement

notwithstanding, until he is ready" (1983, p. 53). This acts as a reassurance that it is not the New Age that will be the enduring new order, but the heaven created by God. As a further reassurance to the Christian fearful of the power of the New Age order, Cumbey quotes the book of Isaiah 35:1-4: "say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with recompense; he will come and save you" (1983, p. 18). Marrs echoes Cumbey: "Because we are Christians, Jesus has given us freedom from worry. We know that it is He who is within us is greater than he who is in the world. God is our victorious, all-conquering King" (1987, p. 263). Note the motivational aspect here to join the ranks of Fundamentalist Christianity, with the appeal of symbolic control. If one joins the Fundamentalist discourse one receives symbolic control.

So, the final means by which Brummett (1984) contends premillennialism offers symbolic control is accomplished in two ways. First, the apocalyptic audience is reminded that the Kingdom of God is coming and it will last forever. Second, as a sign that heaven is fast approaching, Fundamentalists contend that the new age order is a temporary, yet also a necessary step towards eternity with God.

The means by which premillennial apocalyptic offers control is by placing power with God. Note the distinction here between postmillennial and premillennial apocalyptic. Postmillennial rhetoric empowers with knowledge that can be acted upon, whereas premillennial rhetoric acts to disempower its audience in terms of action. The premillennial audience is essentially stripped of the power to act upon the revelation and change the future.

Given this distinction, the assurance that God will take care of the faithful becomes even more important. But given the number of those who

desire or feel they have control over their future, New Age rhetoric would appear to have a stronger appeal, at least for a broader and perhaps secular audience. The strong appeal of New Age rhetoric to a secular audience will be addressed momentarily.

The Value Of Postmillennial And Premillennial Rhetoric

Through the thematic analysis of what the respective discourses offer their audiences, we have now a sense of the appeal of the two apocalyptic forms, and thus the appeal of New Age rhetoric and the Fundamentalist response. Note that these two discourses are indeed opposite in their visions of the future, and yet similar in some respects in terms of how those visions are to be obtained. The postmillennial and premillennial categories seem to accurately reflect the nature of the two discourses, thus validating Brummett's (1984, 1991) contention that the two categories are a useful means of analysis.

The method employed in this thesis draws in part from the works of Brummett (1984, 1991). Brummett outlines apocalyptic rhetoric as that which "bemoans the distressing state of the world," predicts a total, apocalyptic change, and "foresees a millennium" (1984, p. 84). But where Brummett's criteria essentially stress the recognition of apocalyptic rhetoric, I have attempted to provide a means by which apocalyptic rhetoric may be more meaningfully applied. For example, in his 1984 article, Brummett excluded postmillennial apocalyptic from considered study, stating that it "tends to merge with other genres" (p. 84), and his more recent (1991) proposed postmillennial framework is too broad to create distinctions.

The themes presented in this thesis: transformation/salvation, the Christ theme and the promise of a future utopia are simply logical extensions of the postmillennial and premillennial division and yet appear to add more

depth to applied apocalyptic rhetoric. Indeed, whereas Brummett once rejected postmillennial apocalyptic, this thematic approach embraces it. It may be, in fact, the first time the apocalyptic as a rhetorical form has been applied to a non-Christian discourse.

The themes offered here, especially in the context of postmillennial rhetoric, are by no means set in stone, however. For example, more analysis and exploration of the postmillennial rhetorical form is needed, especially in terms of distinguishing it from the jeremiad. As Brummett (1991) correctly suggests, a strong critical method for identifying postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric may open the doors to rich new discourse analysis. Such discourses may include religious discourses (New Age, Theosophical, Shamanistic), motivational seminars ("be all you can be"), and environmental rhetoric (we can restore the earth to its original beauty).

There is an anomaly to the application of postmillennial rhetoric to New Age discourse. By definition, premillennialists stipulate that Christ will return before the millennium and postmillennialists believe Christ will return after the millennium. However, to distinguish these two categories based solely on a time frame is to miss the essence of apocalyptic rhetoric. If New Age rhetoric were analyzed according to when the New Age Christ was returning, it would be called premillennial, since the Christ is said to return before the New Age or before the millennium. I have expanded the use of these two terms, defining New Age thought as postmillennialism because of the nature of the Christ. In premillennial thought, Jesus Christ must return before the millennium in order to bring about the thousand years of peace. In premillennial thought, it is only Jesus that can bring about a better age. However, the nature of Jesus Christ and the nature of the New Age Christ are

different. The New Age Christ is described as a leader who will assist humanity in building the new age. Essentially, the time element of premillennial and postmillennial distinctions should be thought of as specific to Christian apocalyptic only. In that context, the time element is rhetorically effective; when Jesus will return can act as a motivation to the premillennial audience. But with a comparison of two different Christs, the motivation is based not so much on when the Christ will return but his role. It is this distinction which further justifies labeling New Age discourse as postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric.

However, the postmillennial and premillennial categories should not be treated as entirely distinct, and the thematic analysis in this thesis demonstrates intriguing areas of overlap. The two apocalyptic forms should be thought of as two ends of a continuum, and in the context of the New Age/Fundamentalist conflict, both ends are represented. As O'Leary (1994) suggests, further study should focus not on the extremes but on areas of overlap. In this case, however, the value of contrasting postmillennial themes with premillennial themes is that such an approach has revealed elements of the two discourses which may have been overlooked otherwise. By examining the interaction of the two apocalyptic forms, I have shown that despite its seeming inclusiveness, New Age rhetoric can be divisive in that it appears to at least reject Christianity if not exclude it from entry to the New Age. Such divisiveness in the New Age rhetoric is not unlike its Fundamentalist counterpart. Despite their opposition, a study of postmillennial and premillennial rhetoric reveals an interdependence between the two discourses that compels them to maintain the battle for the purposes of internal unity.

This interdependence is reflective of the notion that the two apocalyptic forms, as stated above, exist on a continuum. The strength of determinism within the rhetoric may be an indicator as to where on this continuum the rhetoric should be placed. However, determinism is not the only factor involved in making a premillennial or postmillennial distinction.

The postmillennial and premillennial divisions also reflect differences in their source of power. In premillennial apocalyptic, the power to change for ourselves or our world for the better rests with God, thus power is externalized. The limitations of symbolic control and the relative denial of the role of human agency in premillennialism reflect this external source of power. In contrast, human agency, as manifested through real control over destiny and the ability to manipulate New Age rhetoric reflects the internal source of power in postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric. Given the strength in the belief that we can shape our own destiny, one may assume that the New Age may have more of an appeal because of its internal source of power. To a secular audience, New Age rhetoric may indeed be more appealing. Yet to the Fundamentalist audience, nothing is more appealing than an omnipotent God.

The utilization of premillennial and postmillennial rhetorical themes as a method for analyzing religious discourse groups has been beneficial in this context. One problem with these distinctions is that they have historically been centered around when Christ is predicted to return. I have argued that this distinction is too limiting and that if we look at the nature of the Christ, not just at his predicted return, there may be a greater heuristic value in the premillennial and postmillennial apocalyptic forms.

In expanding our study of postmillennial rhetoric, I have argued that postmillennial rhetoric empowers its audience with knowledge of future

events and with real control over their future. The rhetoric of vagueness within the postmillennial form allows for audience interaction and manipulation of the rhetoric to suit their needs. Whether this ability to manipulate the rhetoric is specific to New Age discourse or an inherent element of postmillennial rhetoric remains to be seen.

Finally, I would propose a means by which postmillennial rhetoric may be distinguished from the jeremiad. What needs to be added to our current understanding of postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric is the focus of the determinism. In the jeremiad, the role of determinism is to motivate people to act in order to prevent something bad from happening. The role of determinism in postmillennialism, at least in the context of New Age rhetoric, is to motivate in order to progress towards the more positive goal of building a new age. Jeremiad has the focus on prevention, postmillennialism has the focus on creation.

Implications Of The Battle

For the most part, the rhetorical thematic analysis of postmillennial and premillennial rhetoric has related to the discourses themselves. However, one of the problems with battles is that they are hardly ever contained. Military camps are formed, recruiting becomes accelerated, and even those who wish to remain neutral are forced to take a position. No one is immune to the effects of war. At this point I wish to offer some of the broader implications of this rhetorical battle for the purpose of suggesting areas of future discussion and study.

The Effectiveness of Apocalyptic Rhetoric

Reid (1983) has argued that apocalyptic rhetoric flourishes at times of social unrest and uncertainty about the future. In contrast, O'Leary (1994) argues that apocalyptic rhetoric need not rely on context--it simply may be persuasive.

At the beginning of this thesis I outlined the current social context in which this rhetorical battle is taking place. This battle unfolds in a very special context--at the verge of a new millennium. Given this circumstance, I must side with Reid. To use a simple analogy, when a person is off balance it makes sense to reach for something solid. I submit that our world and the often horrific events in our world have thrown us all off balance, and we are reaching, searching, for a sense of direction, and a sense of purpose. Apocalyptic rhetoric provides some such direction and purpose. The revelations of New Age believers and the Fundamentalist response offer a road map of human events, providing their followers with a path towards a brighter future amidst the turmoil and confusion around them.

To say that the rhetoric of one discourse is more effective than the other is difficult. They both offer hope, that much is clear. Both also offer power through understanding.

The rhetoric of the Fundamentalist appears as a desperate cry in a world of change and where there is a new tolerance for differing religious beliefs. The Fundamentalist response to New Age discourse has several fronts to battle. First, it sees the New Age movement as a sign of impending doom, and so sees purpose in awakening Christians and others to the threat of the New Age Christ. But pointing fingers and passing moral judgments is now seen as an unforgivable violation of political correctness and respect for differing religious and spiritual beliefs. In fact, a 1993 Gallup Poll revealed that 67

percent of American perceive Christian Fundamentalists as intolerant and extremist (Gallup, 1993). With this kind of public perception, how credible is the Fundamentalist message? The voice of Fundamentalism once commanded respectful attention and thought. But the Fundamentalist's claims of New Age apostasy may go unheard by most Americans. Yet, Fundamentalists have the authority of the word of God and dispensationalism to support their claims. This support, coinciding with the upcoming last dispensation (time being another front to battle), compels Fundamentalists to cry out again, making broad accusations, creating labels, and even name calling, attempting to appeal to fellow Fundamentalists, Christians in general, those who feel uncertain about their future, and anyone else who might listen. Finally, some of the cries were heard. The Christian community "awoke" to the reality of the New Age and began discussing it, analyzing it, and writing about it. But for the broader secular world as a whole, the appeals to sin, guilt and a coming apocalypse fall on closed or unresponsive minds.

The rhetoric of the Fundamentalist response, then, may have been effective for the Fundamentalist segment of the Christian community, but it is not likely to be effective for the secular society as a whole.

However, the rhetoric of the New Age discourse community, postmillennial in form, offers to believers something that Fundamentalism denies--real control over the future and one's destiny. New Age rhetoric, reflecting the current wave of increased social and environmental awareness, fits nicely within our current world view. As Barna (1992) pointed out, a majority of Americans feel that they have control or at least should have control over their own future. New Age rhetoric offers just that. In a pluralistic society, the New Age movement proposes understanding,

inclusiveness and sharing. Without a doubt, New Agers reject Christianity but then rejection is not the same as exclusion. Robert Burrows, a Christian and editor of the Spiritual Counterfeit Project in California, states: "It is a fallacy to suggest that because the New Age movement rejects Christianity, it is intent on exterminating it" (Backes, 1987).

So New Age apocalyptic rhetoric not only offers real control over human events and individual destiny, but it also fits well within our current social consciousness. New Age rhetoric appeals not to a sense of guilt but to a need to be free from guilt. Postmillennial rhetoric appeals not to human limitations but to unlimited human power. For these reasons, as well as those stated throughout this thesis, New Age rhetoric not only appeals to members of its own discourse, as does the Fundamentalist response, but it also has a broader secular appeal.

A Rhetorical Battle in a Secular World

In fact, the rhetorical battle has begun to move into a new arena: the public sphere. Secular apocalyptic rhetoric has been the study of few scholars of rhetoric, with Mixon and Hopkins (1988) being two examples. Yet, the argument is made by McGinn that examples of secular apocalyptic abound: "The hunger for apocalypse is far more widespread. The case has been advanced that like so many of the traditional modes of religious discourse, apocalypticism has not so much disappeared from the scene as it has adopted a variety of secular disguises" (1979, p. 2).

Whether it is because of the New Age's rhetorical emphasis on unlimited human potential, or simply its positive perspective on the future, the New Age has indeed entered into the secular world. In doing so, the New Age discourse group changes the context of the spiritual battle as Fundamentalists pursue

the New Age movement and its influence into the public domain. What are fast becoming seen as legal and constitutional conflicts are truly manifestations of the New Age/Fundamentalist spiritual conflict taking place in the secular world. For instance, Marrs (1987) and Groothuis (1988) both note that one tactic to employ in the fight against the New Age influence in the classroom is to utilize the Hatch Amendment. The Hatch Amendment offers federal protection against inquiring into a student's personal beliefs or subjecting the student to psychological examination or treatment without prior written consent of the parent. Both Marrs and Groothuis refer to Phyllis Schlafly's Child Abuse in the Classroom (1985) as evidence of New Age philosophy and other violations of the Hatch Amendment.

Fearful of the growing number of New Age management training seminars, Fundamentalists have fought the required attendance to such seminars. There has been a growing number of lawsuits regarding being fired for non-attendance. The Equal Opportunity Commission has taken the complaints and lawsuits seriously enough to rule that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 applies in the case of New Age seminars. Title VII protects employees from discrimination based on race, sex or religion. It has been used in the past to establish such policies as a day off on the Sabbath. In September of 1989, the EEOC issued a statement that New Age seminars be handled using the Title VII guidelines: "If a worker challenges a training session on religious grounds, employers must provide a 'reasonable accommodation' unless it creates an 'undue hardship' on the company" (Brannigan, 1989).

The implications of the New Age movement's move into the mainstream compel Fundamentalists to react in a manner typical of the determinism of premillennial apocalyptic. Fundamentalist author Elliott Miller observes: "If

New Age influences continue to grow, it will become increasingly difficult for Christians to participate in day-to-day cultural life" (1989, p. 103). So what can Christians do? Miller concludes: "Ultimately, direct resistance can only go so far toward curtailing New Age advances" (1989, p. 106). The final verdict is still that humans cannot change prophecy or future world events. The future and fate of education must be left to God. There is now a sense by Fundamentalists that the New Age movement cannot be controlled. The influence of the New Age rhetoric is too broad; its integration into the mainstream may have been the last straw. Marris warns his readers about the broad New Age influence: "If you doubt for a moment the death grip that New Age leaders have on our children, examine the current trends in each of the following areas: schools, books, cartoons and movies, toys and games, rock music" (Marris, 1987, 233).

Note how Marris has changed his focus from a general appeal to the Fundamentalist audience, and is now appealing to Fundamentalist Christian parents specifically, in hopes that this will effectively motivate his audience to fight the New Age influence. As the New Age movement moves into the public domain, Fundamentalists struggle for an adjusted rhetorical response. Yet, there is still the determinism, as Marris (1987) continues:

There is much you can do. Our God is strong enough to protect our innocent children. We must put our boys and girls off-limits to the New Age and its spiritual leader, Satan. . . . There is a lesson here. We as Christians should be rightly concerned at what our schools, industry, and others are doing to our children. But we need not be paralyzed with fear about the prospects for our children. God has the answer, and we can turn to Him with confidence" (p. 247).

Note the rhetorical form Marris takes. While it is deterministic in nature, and thus typical of the premillennial style, the rhetoric also acts to set boundaries, and as Hexham argues, "replaces traditional disincentives" (1992, p. 162). Instead of warning children to refrain from swearing or to stay away from

dirty movies, parents now should keep their children away from the evil New Agers and their influence. The position Marrs takes is that parents should do what they can, set guidelines and create boundaries--a logical step as the New Age religious discourse successfully enters the mainstream.

The New Age movement's move into the secular world is an indication of the power of postmillennialism. O'Leary & McFarland (1989) argued that the postmillennial vision "leaves more room for political activism" (p. 441). It may be that the New Age use of postmillennial rhetoric has given the New Age discourse group the upper hand in the current secular battle. Fundamentalists are certainly on the defensive. But for me to predict the outcome of this continuing battle would be as Chandler stated: "a fool's errand" (1992, p. 13). My purpose here has been to point out that the battle exists, and yet there is much more to be said. The New Age movement alone is rich discourse, and the possibilities for the scholar of rhetoric are at the moment, beyond measure. As the current rhetorical battle has now entered the public sphere and involves public policy, others may feel compelled to study this conflict.

Concluding Thoughts

This thesis has focused on what I have argued to be a rhetorical battle between the New Age religious discourse community and Christian Fundamentalism. By this analysis of New Age discourse and Fundamentalist Christian rhetoric, it is my hope that our understanding and utilization of the postmillennial/premillennial model has been expanded. In addition, I have proposed a framework for postmillennial rhetoric in hopes that it will increase the flexibility of this rhetorical form. While the application of this postmillennial framework appears fruitful in this context, further study is needed to assess its heuristic value.

The advantage of this rhetorical study is that it is the first true analysis of New Age rhetoric. While both Brummett (1989, 1991) and O'Leary (1993, 1994) have correctly identified New Age rhetoric as apocalyptic, and in fact as postmillennial, these conclusions were advanced without sufficient analysis and without any significant meaning attached to such conclusions. I have attempted to provide a better understanding of the New Age religious discourse community, its rhetorical appeal and the Fundamentalist response to New Age rhetoric. I have also presented a brief overview of how this rhetorical battle has taken a secular form. There is much more to say about the secular aspect of this conflict but that must be left for future analysis. Indeed, as a new age grows nearer, perhaps this will be an incentive for additional studies of New Age discourse. Even at the year 2000 and beyond, there is, to paraphrase O'Leary (1994), always another millennium . . . or so we assume.

To again quote Bloom: "We are a religiously mad culture, furiously searching for the spirit" (1992, p. 22). As we head towards the end of this millennium, could it be that in our uncertainty about the new era, we have become an apocalyptic audience? Have we, in our "search for the spirit," sought out apocalyptic rhetoric in order to explain and predict the future in a time of violence, fear, uncertainty and confusion? Is the New Age/Fundamentalist conflict an indication of our search for spirit?

The future as always, is unknowable. But through an analysis of these two discourse groups, an understanding of their histories and their rhetorics, we are at least presented with some predictions as to what the future holds. We are offered two views, but perhaps the future will reveal a hybrid, a blending of the two discourses. Marianne Williamson's (1992) Return to Love, a Christian interpretation of the New Age A Course in Miracles (Singh, 1987), may be an

example of such a New Age/Christian blend. For this reason, it may be fruitful for the rhetoric of Williamson to be examined. Apart from a possible integration of one discourse into another, there is the choice that both discourses have left us with concerning the new millennium: new age or apocalypse? Only time will tell.

"Before reaching us, divine revelation has passed through social contexts whose coloring it tended to assume . . ."

Ferdinand Prat, Preface, Jesus Christ, 1951

APPENDIX A: A REVIEW OF APOCALYPTIC RHETORICAL THEORY

I have only touched on apocalyptic rhetoric as a theoretical construct in Chapter One. As a rhetorical form, the apocalyptic has received very little attention by rhetorical scholars. An understanding of how apocalyptic discourse has been treated in our field may be useful in order to gain insights into the New Age/Christian Fundamentalist exchange. Specific to this thesis, the following bodies of literature will be examined in order to note the context in which apocalyptic rhetoric is applied, whether or not the postmillennial and premillennial categories are utilized, and how the study illuminates our understanding of apocalyptic as a rhetorical form.

Heald (1975) focused on the examples of apocalyptic rhetoric in the pre-Colonial American period. Little explanation of apocalyptic rhetoric is provided when compared to the later theory building articles of Brummett (1984, 1988, 1991), O'Leary (1993, 1994), O'Leary and McFarland (1989) and Reid (1983). Heald does define apocalyptic as "lifting the veil, or revelation" (p. 33). He argues that the apocalyptic "collectively describes those biblical passages which, through visions or dreams predict the day of judgment, the redemption of the chosen, the triumph over the wicked, the end of the temporal world - the millennium, the apocalypse" (p. 33). Heald's purpose here is not to add to apocalyptic theory but to describe how apocalyptic rhetoric was employed by 18th century American clergy against the British and the French. The sermons of New England clergy between 1774-1776 were examined for their apocalyptic content, and it was concluded that the ministers employed the apocalyptic for two reasons. The first was to reassure their congregations that they were the chosen people of the colonies, and the second was to justify defending territorial boundaries against the Roman Catholic French, who

were labeled as agents of the Anti-Christ. What Heald noted was the good-bad, right-wrong dichotomy of apocalyptic rhetoric, a point also discussed by Brummett (1984). Heald's use of apocalyptic contributes to our understanding of the rhetoric of the pre-Colonial period in American history and diverges from the study of the jeremiad which has been previously applied to this period.

While this article is interesting because of its historical context, it lacks an explanation of how apocalyptic was operationalized as a method for analysis. The link between the general definition and examples of apocalyptic rhetoric is missing, and it does not employ the postmillennial/premillennial division utilized in this thesis.

Reid's 1983 article reads much like an introductory essay on apocalypticism and typology. While no premillennial or postmillennial distinctions are made, Reid does distinguish between typology, which refers to biblical prophecies already fulfilled, and apocalypticism, which refers to biblical prophecies yet to be fulfilled. Importantly, Reid engages in a brief discussion of the historical periods when the apocalyptic flourished, which were periods when most of the population was not satisfied with the current situation and faced an uncertain future. This illuminates the contextual nature of apocalyptic rhetoric: that it is most powerful as a response to the needs of a distressing situation. This poses a question about the New Age/Fundamentalist conflict: is it because a new millennium is drawing near that we have such a conflict? Reid also argues that the apocalyptic vision creates "graphic images drawn from everyday experiences, fantasies, hopes and fears of ordinary people" (1989, p. 235). Reid then explains how the rhetoric of apocalypticism works. First, the apocalyptic vision explains the present distressing situation.

It reassures the audience by telling them that it is part of God's plan or "God's will" (p. 237). In this way, the audience can take heart in that the situation is under control. A further reassurance comes in the second part of the rhetoric of apocalypticism. The audience is assured that there is a better future ahead in the new millennium. Thus, there is an odd sense of hope in the rhetoric, the "darkness of the present is evidence [sign] of an imminent Utopia" (p. 238).

Reid continues by addressing how apocalyptic functions when it is used rhetorically. First, it specifies a hate object. Examples of hate objects provided by Reid, are, the devil, the Anti-Christ, the Jews and the oppressive rich. Reid also notes that the "history of apocalyptic rhetoric shows that although the Antichrist has changed his identity . . . there is a long and consistent history of using it to generate hatred against clearly identified enemies" (p. 290). The second rhetorical function of apocalypticism is to arouse a fear in the audience of a conspiracy against the believers. These two functions act to set the audience against something (a negative function), although apocalypticism can also create a sense of being for the side of God (a positive function). Finally, Reid claims that apocalyptic rhetoric can build a feeling of commitment in the audience by turning a cause into a campaign for God (another positive function).

Perhaps the greatest value in the Reid article is in its arguments for the negative conspiracy functions of apocalyptic rhetoric. In addition, the appeal of apocalyptic rhetoric is important to this thesis. I argue that the identification of a hate object is a strategy utilized by both New Agers and Fundamentalists. Thus, the Reid article provides a means for a more insightful analysis between New Age religious discourse and the Fundamentalist Christian response to New Age rhetoric.

Much of the critical method of this thesis derives from the works of Brummett (1984, 1991), O'Leary (1993, 1994) and O'Leary and McFarland (1989). Brummett's 1984 article acts to further our understanding of apocalyptic rhetoric as a rhetorical genre. Brummett identifies the functions of apocalyptic rhetoric by stating that it bemoans "the distressing state of the world, predicts a radical end to this epoch . . . and foresees a millennium" (p. 84). Brummett is also one of the few rhetorical scholars to state the division of the apocalyptic into premillennialism and postmillennialism. Premillennialism is explained as the belief that a change or apocalypse will occur very soon, and that Christ will return before the millennium. Because of the immediacy of premillennialism, the rhetoric is characterized by the "thrill of impending doom" (p. 84). Postmillennialists believe that the apocalypse and return of Christ will occur after the millennium, and thus the rhetoric is "tame, even non-committal" (p. 84).

Additionally, Brummett makes a distinction between the apocalyptic and the jeremiad. The jeremiad is a treatise which leads its readers to believe they are a chosen people. Once this is accepted, the chosen people are told that they must atone for their sins, or else dire consequences will follow. In terms of the distinction between the jeremiad and the apocalyptic, apocalypticism is more deterministic than the jeremiad, as it "sees dire consequences as inevitable" (p. 85). However, since the apocalyptic always includes a millennium, there is an optimism in anticipating the dire consequences, since it means the reign of Christ and the overthrow of Satan is near. While the distinction between the apocalyptic and the jeremiad is important, even more important and more relevant to this thesis is a method of distinguishing the jeremiad from postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric, as these two forms are very similar.

Finally, Brummett notes that the apocalyptic has been employed substantially during "times of social and physical change, in which old systems of meaning could no longer explain the world" (p. 86). This explanation comes under fire from O'Leary (1994) and McGinn (1979), who claim that change is a constant and cannot be the only explanation of the appeal and endurance of apocalyptic rhetoric.

Brummett's 1984 article, while not applied to a particular discourse, is useful in understanding the postmillennial/premillennial divisions, as well as once again illuminating the contextual conditions for apocalyptic rhetoric.

Brummett (1988) moves beyond general definitions and premillennial-postmillennial distinctions and seeks to answer how apocalyptic moves an already believing audience into making a secular commitment. More recent scholarly works, such as O'Leary's Arguing the Apocalypse (1994), point towards the need to assess the role of the audience in understanding apocalyptic rhetoric. Brummett's 1988 essay, written before O'Leary's book, is one of the first to focus on the role of the apocalyptic audience. According to Brummett, the apocalyptic audience suffers from a strong disorientation and apocalyptic rhetoric allows them to make sense of their world. Apocalyptic tells what secular commitment the audience should now make in order to prepare for eternity. The move from belief to secular commitment occurs through *transfer*. The process of transfer occurs when an apocalypticist cites a prediction from a sacred authority (the Bible), then cites the same prediction from a secular authority. For instance, Brummett explains that the rhetor might cite a sacred authority that predicts a plague of locusts in the last days of the world. The rhetor would then cite some secular source that makes the same prediction. In this way the prophecy is constant, but the source has changed.

Thus the rhetor gains credibility by affirming prophecy, and the audience now links their faith to more secular authorities and the rhetor.

While no further discussion of the postmillennial and premillennial models is offered and only brief and mainly historical examples are used in support of his claims, Brummett does illuminate our understanding of how the apocalyptic moves an already believing audience to secular commitments. I do have a concern with the assumption made in regards to the secular commitment and actions. If premillennialism is fundamentally deterministic and does not admit that humans can make the world a better place, then how can a premillennial audience take action based on the apocalyptic rhetoric? Brummett's argument points to the paradox of premillennialism: How can one justify human action and commitment within the framework of determinism? This paradox of premillennialism has been the object of study by religious scholars over the years and the most thorough discussions of the premillennialist dilemma have been by Weber (1987), Daniels, Jensen and Lichtenstein (1985), and O'Leary and McFarland (1989). It could be that Brummett's concept of transfer is better applied to a postmillennial audience, which typically assumes that humans can act to change the world in preparation of the coming of Christ.

Mixon & Hopkins (1988) propose a theory of secular apocalypticism by looking at the historical public speeches of two populists and Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream." The authors define Biblical apocalypse as a form of eschatology "in which the writer seeks to reveal the future by means of a narrative that describes the end of the present age and the inauguration of a new age" (p. 246). While the authors do not make a premillennial-postmillennial distinction, they do note that a rhetoric of apocalypticism

responds to an apocalyptic situation. This is similar to Brummett's (1984) "bemoaning the present distressing situation," but Mixon and Hopkins seem to be making this a causal relationship, as if the situation caused the apocalyptic rhetoric. However, the authors note that the jeremiad is also a response to a crisis situation. The authors distinguish between the apocalyptic and the jeremiad by contending that the apocalyptic is more deterministic, that "no amount of change (repentance) can avert the judgment" (p. 246). This distinction, paralleling Brummett's, may offer a good general way to differentiate the apocalyptic from the jeremiad but the distinction is still too vague to be applied in a variety of contexts. In fact, O'Leary (1994) argues that in the extreme postmillennial stance, the apocalypse is avoided entirely. O'Leary, then, moves the jeremiad and postmillennial apocalyptic even closer together. Clearly, the uncertainty of the jeremiad/postmillennial relationship is an ongoing point of discussion for rhetorical scholars.

Mixon and Hopkins offer a broader definition of crisis, which is useful for understanding New Age apocalyptic rhetoric. These two authors note that the Greek word "eschaton," part of eschatology, means not only "last things but also, "boundaries." From this, authors Mixon and Hopkins claim that the apocalyptic does not necessarily concern itself with the end but an end. Used in this way, the apocalyptic can be used to point to a transition period in the life of a person, group, or time. This applies well to New Age discourse when New Age rhetors refer to the "transformation" of the individual and humanity or the beginning of a new age.

Finally, the authors contend that there is a major distinction between secular and Biblical apocalyptic. In the Biblical form, the agent of change is always God, whereas in the secular form, the "agent may be any force, even

the imagination, in which internal means replace external means for transforming the world". This parallels the postmillennial and premillennial distinctions. Postmillennialism allows for the role of human agency in initiating change, whereas premillennialism perceives God as the only true agent of change.

The two valuable elements in this article are the broadened definition of crisis and the agent of change distinction. As seen in Chapter Two, both of these concepts readily apply to the analysis of New Age rhetoric, although there is little difference between Brummett's postmillennial agent of change and the Mixon and Hopkins secular version. Perhaps that is why Mixon and Hopkins left out the premillennial and postmillennial division.

O'Leary and McFarland (1989) also make a distinction between premillennialism and postmillennialism as they analyze the apocalyptic rhetoric employed by evangelist Pat Robertson during the 1992 presidential election. O'Leary and McFarland contend that premillennialism "stresses God's omnipotence and control over earthly affairs" (p. 434). This is similar to Brummett's notion of determinism. Thus, "believers are not urged to actively resist the forces of evil in the social realm, since only God can conquer these forces; rather, they are to pray and wait patiently for the Lord's return" (O'Leary & McFarland, 1989, p. 434). Here the authors operationalize the idea of determinism. They argue that Pat Robertson employed the premillennial form of apocalyptic rhetoric during his days at the "700 Club," and this conclusion is based on analysis of newsletters written by Robertson and Robertson's 1982 book, The Secret Kingdom. Postmillennialism, by contrast, is characterized by an optimism not found in premillennialism. The utopian period can be brought about by "human exertions" if "people were united all over the world"

(O'Leary & McFarland, 1989, p. 435). When Robertson hit the campaign trail his rhetoric changed from premillennial to a more postmillennial apocalypticism, as concluded from the analysis of his 1986 book, America's Dates with Destiny, a book which outlines Robertson's political ideology. The conclusion provided by O'Leary and McFarland is that Robertson switched to the postmillennial form to broaden the appeal of his rhetoric and resolve the deterministic/politically active paradox. This point relates to the ease with which the New Age movement has entered the secular world, as briefly demonstrated in Chapter Four.

An important aspect of the O'Leary and McFarland article is the argument that postmillennialism and premillennialism do not have to be perceived as two mutually exclusive categories. The authors note the overlap and the move towards postmillennialism as a means of broadening the audience appeal. One of the difficulties in employing these terms in analysis is the temptation to merely insert discursive elements into these categories, or worse, attempt to fit all of apocalyptic discourse into these categories. Authors O'Leary and McFarland have demonstrated the flexibility of the two categories, a point which I attempt build upon in this thesis.

In his more recent works, O'Leary perceives the postmillennial and premillennial distinctions as too restricting and proposes a new theory of apocalyptic rhetoric. O'Leary's Arguing the Apocalypse (1994) and his article, "A dramatic theory of apocalyptic rhetoric" (O'Leary, 1993) develop the position that apocalyptic rhetoric should be examined in terms of claims and their corresponding proofs: "The rhetor who announces that the world is nearing its end is making a predictive claim; it should surely be the province of the rhetorical critic to discover how such claims are advanced and

supported, and the dynamics of audiences responses to them" (1994, p. 11).

While O'Leary's point is well taken, Brummett's 1991 text, Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric, Brummett does focus on "those strategies, arguments and stylistic features that are peculiar to the apocalyptic, that support its social and political claims" (p. 15).

More intriguing is O'Leary's theory that apocalyptic rhetoric is best looked at from the perspective of Burke's dramatisitic view and the tragic and comic frames as discussed in Burke's Language as Symbolic Action (1966). O'Leary, who has contributed greatly to the study of apocalyptic rhetoric, argues that the premillennial and postmillennial distinctions are too restricting, and do not allow for the interaction between the rhetor and the audience. O'Leary critiques Brummett's critical method for this very reason: "As a critical method (at least as practiced by Brummett) genre theory seems unable to provide a coherent account of the dynamic social processes that generate variations in religious discourse" (1994, p. 237).

O'Leary also claims that too much attention has been placed on the psychological predisposition of the audience as a way to explain the consistent appeal of the apocalyptic. O'Leary's view of the previous rhetorical studies of apocalyptic rhetoric by Brummett, Reid and others, is that: "It is curious, however, that even those rhetorical scholars who attempt to account for the appeal of apocalyptic never seriously entertain the hypothesis that people are actually persuaded by apocalyptic arguments" (1991, p. 11).

O'Leary argues for the value of viewing apocalyptic in terms of Burkean tragic and comic frames, in terms of their frames of acceptance. The tragic plot sees destiny as fate, whereas the comic frame conceives of destiny as fortune. In the tragic view of time and human events, human action is seen

as "closed and predetermined," and in the comic view, time is seen as open ended; thus there is the possibility of change (O'Leary, 1993, p. 392). The resemblance to the traditional postmillennial and premillennial distinctions should be noted. Recall that postmillennialism is less deterministic, allowing for the role of human agency in initiating change. In the postmillennial view, Jesus is not arriving until after the millennium, and so the apocalypse is seen more as a transition period, rather than as the end of time. Observe how close these distinctions are when compared to O'Leary's framework. In fact, O'Leary even identifies postmillennialism as an example of the comic frame (1993, p. 409), and premillennialism can be seen as almost identical to the tragic frame. Thus, I fail to see a significant difference between the two critical methods. In fact, it is one goal of this thesis to further demonstrate the utility of the postmillennial and premillennial distinctions, with the assumption that predictive claims and the role of the audience can be revealed by employing postmillennial and premillennial themes to the New Age/Fundamentalist conflict.

Lastly, Brummett's postmillennial and premillennial distinctions made in Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric (1991) are those which most closely match the distinctions made in this thesis, the most notable exception being Brummett's view of postmillennialism and New Age discourse as an example of this rhetorical form. In his most recent work, Brummett (1991) diverges sharply from his earlier conclusion that postmillennialism is too closely related to other discourses to justify its study. In his description of premillennial apocalyptic rhetoric, Brummett stays within the parameters of his earlier definitions (1984, 1988), which are that premillennialists believe that the apocalypse will occur before the millennial period and therefore

premillennial rhetoric has "a thrill of impending doom" (1991, p. 53). Notably absent from most of his descriptions of premillennialism is that most premillennialists believe that the Christ will return before the millennial period, and thus Christ will be responsible for bringing about the peaceful millennial period (Boettner, 1979; Boyer, 1992; Weber, 1979). This element of apocalyptic rhetoric is important in understanding how to apply postmillennialism to New Age discourse, since the New Age Christ is said to return before the millennium. For the Christ to return before the millennial period is not typical of postmillennial thinking and must be justified if New Age discourse is to be perceived as an example of postmillennial rhetoric. One such justification is presented in Chapter Four.

However, of more importance than premillennialism is Brummett's discussion of postmillennialism. By far, Brummett's most significant contribution to the study of apocalyptic rhetoric is his recognition of postmillennial rhetoric as a distinctive rhetorical form and his choice of New Age rhetoric as an example of postmillennialism. Beyond this, however, Brummett's framework and description of postmillennialism are too vague and ambiguous to be utilized.

Brummett (1991) correctly argues that because of its similarities to the jeremiad, postmillennialism "tends to disguise itself as other discourses that are defined by the kind of gradually evolving millennium they foresee" (p. 52). Brummett further notes that postmillennialism is so common that it goes unnoticed, because it entails such ideas as "progress." Described by Brummett as "opaque," postmillennialism must somehow be distinguished from other rhetorical forms, such as the jeremiad. However, Brummett provides no method to distinguish between these two forms. Apart from the nebulous

nature of postmillennialism, Brummett does correctly observe the vagueness inherent within the postmillennial form of the apocalyptic. This vagueness becomes evident primarily when apocalyptic rhetors describe when the millennial period will occur, and the end time events themselves. Brummett states that such vagueness is justified, since "the actual apocalypse [and the return of Christ] may be many centuries away (Brummett, 1991, p. 51).

Brummett also claims that postmillennialists see the present period as a special time, as the beginning of a new and better era. However, this provides too little distinction to postmillennialism, especially since some premillennialists may view the current period as special because Jesus is soon to return.

In addition, there are distinct weaknesses in Brummett's claim that New Age discourse is an example of postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric. First, Brummett refers to New Age rhetoric not only as apocalyptic but as postmillennial, yet without any analysis of the New Age movement to position it as either. Second, no definitions of New Age beliefs, background of the discourse or rhetorical analysis of the discourse are offered. Third, as previously mentioned, the New Age Christ is believed to return before the millennial period, and Brummett makes no effort to justify this atypical element of postmillennial rhetoric. Finally, Brummett posits that postmillennialism is progressive within the established order. In other words, the postmillennialist works within the established order in seeking change. "Postmillennial discourse is progressive in the sense that the changes it foresees and advocates are reforms that do not depart radically from the current social and political system" (p. 61). But as is revealed in Chapter Two, the New Age movement does indeed advocate quite a radical change in our political and social system. Using Brummett's framework for postmillennial

apocalyptic rhetoric, New Age discourse does not appear to fit as an example of this rhetorical form.

From the preceding review of previous works on apocalyptic rhetoric, we have a sense of how apocalyptic rhetoric is currently understood and treated. In terms of a framework, there has been a difficulty in distinguishing the apocalyptic from the jeremiad. Brummett (1984, 1991) and O'Leary and McFarland (1989) are the only rhetorical scholars to utilize the postmillennial and premillennial distinctions. Postmillennial rhetoric has been all but ignored until Brummett's (1991) attempt to distinguish it from other genres. In addition, most of the previous scholars agree that apocalyptic rhetoric is usually in response to a crisis situation or a distressing situation. This makes apocalyptic rhetoric presumably quite contextually dependent. To place this thesis in context with previous studies, I affirm the dependent contextual nature of apocalyptic rhetoric, demonstrate the flexibility of the postmillennial and premillennial divisions by applying them to both a Christian and non-Christian discourse, and suggest a means by which the jeremiad may be distinguished from postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric.

My hope is that future rhetorical scholars will find this thesis a useful addition to the study of religious discourse and apocalyptic rhetoric.

APPENDIX B: COMMON NEW AGE BELIEFS

Because of the breadth of New Age beliefs, an in-depth understanding of the New Age philosophy is not appropriate for Chapter One. However, here I do outline some of the basic New Age beliefs, followed by how the New Age/Fundamentalist conflict developed.

"This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius" was a hit song in the 1960's. Although it was made popular by the musical "Hair", the phrase "Age of Aquarius" refers actually to the very real belief that our world is entering a whole different age. Astrology is key to understanding this New Age belief. This astrological perspective assumes that the course of human events takes place in ages. Religious scholar Gordon Melton, author of the New Age Almanac (1991) and founder of the Institute of American Religion, explains that New Agers have separated time into three stages. This concept is borrowed, Melton claims, from the "Three Ages of History" conceived of by Joachim de Flores (Joachim of Fiore). Fiore was a 12th century Italian abbot and a dominant figure in the establishment of apocalypticism in the Middle Ages. According to McGinn (1979), Fiore perceived the three stages as the Age of the Father, the Age of the Son, and the Age of the Holy Spirit. Using astrology, Fiore equated the Age of the Father to the Age of Aries, the Age of the Son to the Age of Pisces, and the Age of the Holy Spirit to the Age of Aquarius. More importantly, the Piscean Age is perceived as a time when Christianity is the dominant religion and world view. New Agers see the Age of the Aquarius as a time when Christianity will be replaced by an entirely different religion, just as Fiore saw Christianity replacing the Judaism of the Age of the Father.

There is much disagreement as to when the new age begins. Some New

Agers believe that the New Age has already begun (Arguelles, 1987; MacLaine, 1983); others believe that the world is in a transition period (Ferguson, 1980). Still others may reject the notion of when and focus on New Age philosophy, which is a belief in the power of humanity to create a utopian society (Spangler, 1988). But despite some discrepancies on when it will occur, the belief that the future holds for humanity a new age, a golden age, is the most prevalent New Age belief.

Holism

New Agers argue that while the Piscean Age is characterized by a society and social structure of separation and hierarchy, the new age will be characterized by wholeness. This is perceived as the primary distinction between the current age and the new era. Marilyn Ferguson, author of The Aquarian Conspiracy (1980) states: "two key principles seem to emerge from all mystical experience . . . flow and wholeness. The second principle of wholeness--non-distinction--represents the connectedness, the context of everything" (p. 380). George Trevelyn agrees: "The spiritual world view is a vision of wholeness" (1984, p. 7). New Agers have adopted General Systems Theory, arguably to create an appearance of legitimacy (Miller, 1989). Among the New Age theorists, Marilyn Ferguson and also Fritjof Capra, author of Turning Point (1982) are the strongest advocates of Systems Theory, and in fact, both acknowledge the works of Gregory Bateson, who is widely cited by interpersonal communication scholars. Capra (1982) argues for the adoption of holism: "To the extent we fail to recognize this interdependence and connectedness, to that extent we feel alienated, become ecologically insensitive, and are at risk for conflict with others. Our current global crisis is making this fact desperately clear" (p. 77). Whereas Capra basically stays

within the realm of science in his use of holism, Ferguson applies it to the mystical experience felt by New Ager.

Transformation

In order for a person to become a New Ager, it is customary for the person to experience transformation. This concept is similar to the Christian concept of being born again, and it is the experience that converts outsiders into the New Age religious discourse community. In this sense, New Age refers not just to a set of common beliefs, but to a mystical experience with what is known as the "Divine Spirit" or the "Solar Logos" or the "One." Such a transformation, according to Ferguson, can be individual or social. For example, Ferguson sees the "Aquarian conspiracy" as both the cause and effect of social transformation (1980, p. 67). This transformation is usually described as a move from one level of consciousness into a higher level. Achieving the higher level means a person is "one" with the universe and all of humanity. Additionally, Ferguson attempts to make New Age beliefs distinctive by showing how they are different from Christian beliefs: "Human nature is neither good or bad, but open to continuous transformation and transcendence" (p. 29). Note Ferguson's reference to the good/bad dichotomy in the Christian tradition. Ferguson not only advocates transformation but sets the New Age philosophy apart from Christianity.

Included within social transformation is a belief in the critical mass theory. Ferguson posits that everything is interconnected: "humankind is embedded in nature" (Ferguson, 1980, p. 29). With the principle of holism, there is the belief that everything in the universe is interconnected. Humans can control natural events. As long as enough people concentrate and desire control, they can initiate enormous change. So, if enough people, enough to

form a critical mass, concentrate on attaining a higher consciousness, then humanity may pass a threshold and in doing so cause a collective social transformation. This was the reasoning behind the Harmonic Convergence worldwide meditation of 1987.

The logic of the critical mass theory is based on the phenomenon of the hundredth monkey, a theory that first emerged from Lyall Watson's 1979 book, *Lifetide*. According to Watson, in 1952, on Koshima, a small island near Japan, scientists began leaving sweet potatoes for the island's monkeys. The hope was that this would stop the monkeys from raiding the farmers' gardens. One of the monkeys learned how to wash the dirt off the potato, and passed that knowledge on to the other monkeys on the island. By 1958, all the monkeys on the island were washing the potatoes. Watson argues that at this point the monkeys now reached a critical mass, because suddenly, monkeys on a neighboring island began washing their potatoes as well. Watson's theory is that the monkeys' behavior on Koshima reached a point (critical mass) where the actions of the group affected the entire collective consciousness of the species. New Agers perceive this as true evidence for shared psychic powers (Peters, 1991). It has been observed that even before Watson, the critical mass concept had been used. Mahesh Yogi in 1975 claimed that if one percent of the world's population were to engage in meditation, the age of enlightenment would begin. This became known as the "Maharishi effect" and was propagated by the Transcendental Meditation (TM) movement (Peters, 1991, p. 78).

Although one goal of the New Age movement is to obtain social transformation, in order to attain this goal, personal transformation must first occur. Ferguson (1980) outlines the three stages of personal transformation. The first stage is the entry point, where something disturbs a person's

understanding of the world. For many, the point of entry may be a mystical or psychic experience. Because a person cannot enter the new age without transformation, this first stage is crucial. This is certainly one reason for the numerous New Age Fairs, workshops, retreats, and books about transformation.

There is a well known commercial side to the New Age movement which, perhaps justifiably, has come under fire from critics of the New Age movement. This economic aspect of the discourse can include anything from The Course in Miracles, to pastlife regression, to crystal power. Most of the New Age products on the market have to do with the transformational aspect of the New Age philosophy. These products may be likened to purchasing a baptism, as they often promise a new spiritual life for the consumer. In many cases (like The Course in Miracles), the function of New Age workshops and teachings is to disturb a person's complacent understanding of the world. The goal for Ferguson and Capra is a personal and social paradigm shift. The entry point experience "hints that there is a brighter, richer, more meaningful dimension to life" (Ferguson, 1980, p. 90).

The second stage in the transformational process is exploration. This is described by Ferguson as a deliberate release from the self. A person should now think in new ways and liberate their inner knowledge. At this stage, a person experiments with a new freedom; other ways of thinking and other philosophies are explored. Again, this is where many New Age products and services are used. It is much like straying off the familiar path and attempting to find a new one. One may participate in channeling sessions, join the Church of Divine Man, engage in lucid dreaming or creative visualization. Ferguson (1980) also notes that at this stage especially, there is usually an internal conflict between the new and old beliefs.

At the third and final stage, the integration stage, a person should now be comfortable with new beliefs and newly discovered inner knowledge. The person has found his/her own path to a higher level of consciousness, and may now be a true New Ager.

The transformation aspect of New Age philosophy can be seen as an initiation into the discourse itself, as well as into the new era of humanity. This process of initiation is discussed by both Spangler (1971) and Creme (1980) and is treated in Chapter Two. A related issue discussed in that chapter is the role transformation plays as a requirement to entering the new age and who survives this initiation process.

Human Divinity and God

As believers proceed through the transformational process, many claim that they feel a sense of empowerment. It is as though the letting go of old beliefs has been the equivalent to a release from bondage. As a result, many New Agers believe they have unlimited power and potential. In fact some feel as though they are actually divine beings. "You are God," proclaims Jack Underhill, editor of Life Times magazine (1986, p. 6). Shirley MacLaine also asserts human divinity: "The Source fills and organizes all life. It is the beginning and the end; the Alpha and the Omega. It is the God of all creation. And it is very much within us" (1983, p. 326). Note that MacLaine refers to God as the "Source." New Agers do not use the name God but Source, Cosmic force or Christ consciousness. They see God not as a heavenly Father but as a unifying principle by which the universe operates. Benjamin Creme (1980), channeler for the New Age Christ, also claims: "God is the sum total of all that exists . . . every manifested phenomenon is part of God. And the space between these manifested phenomenon [sic] is God. So, in a very real sense there isn't

anything else. You are God. I am God" (p. 108). Of course the concept that God exists in all things, pantheism, is not new at all. Like astrology, tarot, and meditation, this is another aspect of the New Age that has been adopted from various Eastern traditions.

In addition to pantheism, there is a further New Age premise that there is only one God, and He is simply called different names by different religions. A point of contention is whether this belief is specific to New Agers. In a survey by Barna (1991), 64 percent of Americans believed that Christians, Jews, Muslims and Buddhists all prayed to the same God.

Esotericism and the Christ

A portion of the New Age discourse community, the segment that is the focus of this thesis, believes that a Christ will return to guide humanity into the new age. Importantly, this is not Jesus Christ, but a leader known as the Christ. The distinction here is important, because the claims about a returning New Age Christ are what Fundamentalists have largely attacked.

The notion of a leader who is to guide humanity into the new age is derived from the teachings of esotericism and theosophy. Esotericism is derived from the Greek word "esoterós" meaning 'inner' (Goring, 1994). Conceptually, esotericism posits that there is a deeper meaning to religion beyond the rituals and symbolism, and this deeper meaning transcends the symbolic and leads to enlightenment. However, the esoteric aspect of religion is understood by only a small group of individuals within that religion. Esotericism was present within the mystery religions of the Roman Empire and was a part of the Christian tradition until the 14th century secularization of Christianity.

Of importance to the development of the New Age Christ is the Esoteric

Section of the Theosophical Society. Theosophy is a philosophy which is based on direct experience or contact with the divine (Goring, 1994). Followers of theosophy argue that it is through inner exploration that the structure and power of the spiritual universe is discovered. The theosophists' contact with divine and inner exploration has influenced such New Age principles as transformation and the importance of experiencing the mystical.

The Theosophical Society was founded by Helena Blavatsky in 1875 in New York City. Chandler (1991) and Melton (1991) both credit Blavatsky with bringing Eastern thought to the Western mind. Although the publicly stated goal of the society was the study of Eastern philosophy and comparative religion, the Esoteric Circle within the Theosophical Society had other goals. Key to the Esoteric Circle were the belief in a ruling spiritual elite (called Masters or Masters of Wisdom), the superiority of the Aryan race or the Great White Brotherhood, and the belief that a new age was dawning, an age to be ushered in by a Christ figure, Maitreya, who is claimed by Creme (1980) to be the current head of the Great White Brotherhood.

The beliefs of the Esoteric Circle in the Theosophical Society can be readily found within the New Age religious discourse (Melton, 1991). Among such elements are ruling spiritual Masters, a fervent belief in astrology, channeling and the emergence of a new age. Additionally, some influential theosophists like Alice Bailey claimed that Christianity would oppose the teachings of the New Age Christ, and so Bailey set herself to teaching others about the Christ and how he would form a One-World Religion and One-World Government. Bailey was the author of such books as Discipleship in the New Age (1944), The Reappearance of the Christ (1948), and Education in the New Age (1954). Bailey is also known for her New Age prayer, written in 1937.

Bailey argued that one day it would become the world prayer. In fact, Bailey (1948) states that the Invocation, "if given widespread distribution, can be to the new world religion what the Lord's Prayer has been to the spiritually minded Jew" (p. 32). Bailey advocated the use of the prayer for calling up the spirit of the Christ. The Great Invocation, as it is called, is widely known within the New Age discourse community, most often propagated at New Age Fairs, where it is handed out on small blue cards. The idea is still that it will invoke the spirit of the Christ, but also that if enough people have it and use it, the power of the critical mass is created. Also, any purchase through the Lucis Publishing Company, which publishes all the works of the Theosophical Society, will come with a copy of the Invocation. Here is the text of the Great Invocation as printed in Bailey's The Reappearance of the Christ (1948, p. 31).

From the point of Light
 within the mind of God
 Let light stream forth
 into the minds of men
 Let light descend on earth.

From the point of Love
 within the Heart of God
 Let love stream forth into
 the hearts of men
 May Christ return to Earth.
 From the centre where the
 Will of God is known
 Let purpose guide the little
 wills of men-
 The purpose which the
 Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we
 call the race of men
 Let the Plan of Love
 and Light work out
 And may it seal the door
 where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love
and Power restore the Plan
on Earth.

Bailey explains that the "Plan" is a call for all humans to "let their light shine" with the expression of Love, and that it is only through humanity that the Plan can achieve success (1948, p. 63). Bailey adds that the concept of God within the invocation simply refers to the existence of a universal intelligence. The role of the Christ in the Plan is to lead the world into the new age. Bailey makes the important distinction that the role of the Christ is not to build the new heaven, not to judge humanity, but to guide humanity. Thus, the Christ in the teachings of theosophy is whoever is the current head of the spiritual elite or hierarchy.

The New Age Christ, derived from the teachings of esotericism and theosophy, is quite different from the Christ that Christians are expecting. It is also important to note that not all New Agers believe in the return of a Christ. However, a significant number do hold this belief, and perhaps more importantly, it is this belief which is most harshly attacked by Fundamentalists. It is this point which served to limit the treatment of the New Age movement in Chapter Two to believers in a second coming or a coming Christ.

The characteristics of holism, transformation, divinity, and a coming Christ act to clarify the premises of the New Age religious discourse. I complete this overview of the New Age religious movement with the development of the New Age/Fundamentalist conflict.

APPENDIX C: DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW AGE/FUNDAMENTALIST CONFLICT

The Theosophical Society, mentioned earlier, was the predecessor of the New Age religious discourse, according to Gordon Melton (1991). Besides those beliefs mentioned earlier, another belief of the Society, this one furthered by Esoteric Circle member Annie Besant, was the coming of a new race of humanity. Besant (1909) argued that transitions in humanity are marked by the development of different races, or different stages in humanity. For example, the fourth race was known as the Atlantean race and the current race is known as the Teutonic race. The coming race will be the Aryan race. The Aryan nature of the new race is a point responded to by Fundamentalist Constance Cumbey, who feels that New Age belief system has its roots in Nazism.

Apart from theosophy, another element of the New Age belief system is the influence of such Eastern religions as Hinduism and Buddhism. These influences, according to Melton (1991), were heightened by the repeal of the Asian Exclusion Act in 1965, which allowed the large scale migration from Eastern countries to America. This migration provided for a greater acceptance of Eastern philosophy and concepts.

However, a religious discourse cannot be successful without a means of providing information about the discourse to the public. In 1972, the first New Age community directories were published, such as the Spiritual Community Guide and the One Year Catalog. It was also the year that Richard Alpert, who advocated the use of drugs to attain enlightenment, published his first book as Baba Ram Dass. Common Ground, the Bay Area's guide to New Age movement events, people and organizations started publication in 1976.

In April, 1982, Benjamin Creme announced to the world, via whole page ads in major world newspapers, that Lord Maitreya, the Christ, was present within the world, and that he was to aid humanity in building the new age. The media ran his story and Creme added hundreds to his following. But when no evidence was found of the Christ, this part of the New Age discourse lost some credibility.

In 1987, Creme again took out one page ads in major newspapers declaring the Christ was truly here. The media paid little attention, but the core followers of theosophy, esotericism and Creme remained loyal. To continue getting the word out, Creme began to chart the appearances of the Christ in his newsletter, *Share*. One month, Maitreya is in Kenya, the next month he is reported to have healed a sick person in Africa. His last reported appearance was in Sweden on January 8, 1995. The reported reason for the sporadic appearances is that Maitreya is waiting until he has broad acceptance before fully revealing himself to the world. Despite the delay of Maitreya's appearance, Creme and his followers still remain a loyal segment of the New Age movement.

The first in the series of published responses by the Fundamentalist Christian community regarding the New Age movement and beliefs began with the book, Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow, by Constance Cumbey (1983). This book attacks the New Age movement, claiming that it is a satanic conspiracy with roots in Nazism. Cumbey also attacks Creme, resulting in Creme's new founded popularity. Although some other Christian authors, such as Groothuis (1986, 1988), Chandler (1989, 1991) and Amano & Geisler (1989) have been less radical in their critiques and have not furthered Cumbey's conspiracy theory, Cumbey's Fundamentalist critique has become the standard,

and her claims are echoed by other such popular Fundamentalist authors as Marrs (1987), Hunt (1983, 1985) and DeParrie & Pride (1988).

A major event in the development of New Age movement was the Harmonic Convergence, which has been heralded as the new age apocalypse (Basil, 1988). The Harmonic Convergence was claimed by Arguelles (1987) to have been an occurrence which would result in a collective shift in the human mind's orientation--an orientation more in line with the new age. The event was the brainchild of Jose Arguelles who said that if a sufficient percentage of the global population would gather and meditate at 350 sacred sites around the world, a collective shift in consciousness would take place. The event was to take place on August 16th and 17th, 1987, according to Arguelles. The event was highly publicized by the media; both Time and the Wall Street Journal covered the event of the decade. Although Arguelles stated that 144,000 people were needed for the "ritualistic surrender," the total worldwide participation figure was estimated at 20,000 (Chandler, 1991). The publicity over this event provided a tremendous boost in popularity of the New Age movement.

Also in 1987, the New Age discourse group gained notoriety for its influence in business and education. New Age training seminars in such businesses as AT & T became controversial because of the spiritual undertones in the seminars. In education, "Values Clarification," a method for teaching values in elementary and high school, angered some Christian parents who saw the method as opposite to Christian values.

I have ended my overview of the New Age discourse group with this historical development in order to show that the New Age belief system has indeed developed slowly over a period of a hundred years. This overview

suggests that the New Age movement is not the fad as Christians in the 1960's perceived (Hexham, 1992), but a true religious discourse group that developed as a result of a number of sociological factors, as well as a desire to attain the spiritual without the ties of Christianity.

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