Jehovah's Witnesses: Witnessing to the Witnesses – Understanding and Responding to False Doctrine

Dr. Zukeran provides us with a concise summary of the key doctrinal issues in the beliefs taught by Jehovah's Witnesses. Understanding these problems held by their followers in areas such as the resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and false prophecies, prepares us to be more effective witnesses for Christ to members of their faith.

History of the Watch Tower

One of the most aggressive and fastest growing cults is the Jehovah's Witnesses. Today they have a worldwide organization that numbers about 3.5 million members operating in 205 countries. Several factors account for this rapid growth. The first is their zealous door-to-door evangelism. Second, we Christians have failed to make a solid defense of our faith against their attacks when they have come to our door. The result is the Witnesses continue unchallenged in the propagation of their organization and deceive many. Third, the rise of the cults are a fulfillment of the prophetic warnings given by Jesus and the Apostles.

In this essay I want to look at the beliefs of the Witnesses and then give the reader practical witnessing strategies. The history of the Jehovah's Witnesses begins with the founder of the organization Charles Taze Russell. He was a member of the Congregational Church who came to reject the doctrine of hell and eternal punishment. In 1870, with no formal education, he began a Bible society which eventually named him pastor. In 1884, he founded Zion's Watchtower and Tract Society in

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which is now the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society headquartered in Brooklyn, New York. Since then they have mushroomed into an organization which produces more literature in one year than the Christian and Catholic churches combined. And, of all the cults, their missionary forces are the most well trained in evangelism.

Witnesses deviate from biblical Christianity in several areas. I will discuss some of their major doctrinal errors. First, like all the cults, they deny the Trinity. They believe there is one God, Jehovah. Jesus, is actually Michael the Archangel, the first of God's creation, who became flesh at the incarnation. After the resurrection, He returned to heaven as Michael the Archangel.(1) The Holy Spirit is not God but an active force much like electricity or fire.(2)

Second, Witnesses deny the bodily resurrection of Christ, but instead believe He was raised as a spirit and manifested Himself several times in different materialized bodies.(3)

Third, they deny the existence of hell and eternal punishment, but believe in total annihilation after death. Only the elite ruling class, the 144,000, are allowed to go to heaven. The faithful Jehovah's Witnesses remain unconscious after death till they are resurrected in the Millennium. Those who are not in the organization are annihilated after death.(4)

Fourth, Witnesses have a works-oriented salvation. Salvation is not based upon a relationship with Christ, but found in the organization. One must serve the society, and depending on one's faithfulness and absolute obedience, one **may** be saved.(5)

Fifth, they believe that Jesus returned invisibly in 1914 and established His throne in heaven. At Armageddon, God will destroy all evil, and abolish all the world's governments, and establish a new Paradise on earth. Then the living and resurrected Jehovah's Witnesses will inherit Paradise earth.

The 144,000 mentioned earlier will rule with Jesus. At this time all unbelievers who have died will be raised (with some exceptions) and will study under the Witnesses during the Millennium, a period of a thousand years. Studying with them will be the unbelievers who have survived Armageddon. After the thousand years, their faith will be tested because God will release Satan from the abyss. At that point all unbelievers will have to choose between Satan or Jehovah. Those who reject Jehovah will be annihilated.(6)

Clearly the doctrines of the Jehovah's Witnesses deviate in critical ways from sound biblical principles. Next, I want to discuss approaches to evangelizing Jehovah's Witnesses.

False Prophecies of the Watch Tower

One of the most effective ways to evangelize Jehovah's Witnesses is to destroy their faith in the Society. Remember, salvation is found only in this organization. The Watch Tower Society is seen as the spokesman for God. If you can show Witnesses the serious errors of the organization, they will begin to have doubts and questions. This can sometimes lead them to leave the Society.

Attacking the Society's record of false prophecy can cause JWs to to question the organization. This approach is effective because they claim to have the true understanding of the end times. If we can show them that the organization has been constantly wrong in the area of prophecy, this will certainly make an impact. When the Jehovah's Witnesses show up at your door again, begin first by asking them, "Are you prophets of God?" Some will say, "Yes." Others may say, "We are prophets in a sense." You must make it clear there is no such thing as "a prophet in a sense." There are only true prophets and false prophets. Some may deny being prophets. If so, show them a copy of the April 1, 1972, *Watch Tower* article on page 197, which states clearly that they are prophets.

Second, define clearly what makes a true prophet and a false prophet using Deuteronomy 18:20-22. A true prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and predicts future things which come to pass. A false prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and predicts future things which do not come to pass. Make sure they understand this, for this is the most critical step.

Third, ask them, "Is there an organization that fits the character of a false prophet?" That's when you say, "Let's take a look at the Watch Tower Organization." Have handy copies of the articles mentioned here. The 1889 issue, "The Time is at Hand," page 101 states, "The battle of the great day of God Almighty (Rev. 16:14), which will end in A.D. 1914, with the complete overthrow of earth's present rulership, is already commenced." This 1914 prediction of Christ's return never came true.

Then the *Watch Tower* predicted that Christ would return in 1925. The 1918 issue of, "Millions Now Living Will Never Die," p. 89 states, "Therefore we may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the faithful prophets of old, particularly those named by the apostle in Hebrews 11 to the condition of human perfection." This proved to be another false prophecy.

The *Watch Tower* made a third prophecy of the return of Christ; this one was to occur in 1975. The August 15, 1968, issue of, *Why Are You Looking Forward to 1975?*, p. 494, predicted the return of Christ in 1975. Once again the Witnesses were shown to be false prophets. If the Witnesses don't believe these articles are real, tell them to look them up in their church's library.

Another interesting prophecy is found on page 154 of their book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. Here they state, "Some of the generation living in 1914 will see the end of the system of things and survive it." Most of the 1914 generation are dead, and the few remaining are very old. In

just a few years, the *Watch Tower* will again have another false prophecy. When presented clearly, the record of the *Watch Tower's* false prophecies is a very effective tool in witnessing to JWs.

(A free PDF file of copies of these false prophecies, as well as helpful information on the invention of the word "Jehovah," is available here: JW-False_Prophecies)

The Name of God

Another effective avenue of witnessing to the Witnesses is in the name of God. Jehovah's Witnesses state that God's true name is "Jehovah." They say the term "God," is merely a title, and that the real name for God is "Jehovah." In fact they go so far as to say that unless one calls on the true name of God, "Jehovah," one cannot be saved.(7)

Let's take a real close look at the name "Jehovah" and see if it is in fact the true name of God. The term "Jehovah" is actually a false reading of the Hebrew pronunciation of God, or YAHWEH. Allow me to explain where the word "Jehovah" comes from. The words in the Hebrew Old Testament contained no vowels. The words were constructed of consonant letters only. The Scribes knew what vowels to use in the pronunciation of the words by the construction of the consonants, the context, and memory. It was written this way until the fifth century when the Masoretes added the vowels under the consonants in their version of the Old Testament known as the Masoretic Text.

The name of God in the Old Testament spelled YHWH, was considered holy, and was not to be read aloud. Instead, when the Hebrews came upon YHWH, they would say ADONAY, which means "Lord." In order to indicate this substitution, the Massoretes placed the vowels of ADONAY or the English equivalent of e, o, and a underneath the consonants of YHWH. Later some Christian translators mistakenly combined the vowels of ADONAY with the

consonants of YHWH producing the word “Jehovah.” Now the term is recognized to be a late hybrid form never used by the Jews. That’s the origin of the word “Jehovah.” Let’s now look at what other scholars say about the name “Jehovah.”

Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary: “Jehovah” – False reading of the Hebrew YAHWEH.(8)

Encyclopedia Americana: “Jehovah” – erroneous form of the name of the God of Israel.(9)

Encyclopedia Britannica: The Masoretes who from the 6th to the 10th century worked to reproduce the original text of the Hebrew Bible replaced the vowels of the name YHWH with the vowel signs of Adonai or Elohim. Thus the artificial name Jehovah came into being.(10)

The Jewish Encyclopedia: “Jehovah” – a mispronunciation of the Hebrew YHWH the name of God. This pronunciation is grammatically impossible.(11)

The New Jewish Encyclopedia: It is clear that the word Jehovah is an artificial composite.(12)

According to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, p. 680, vol. 7, “the true pronunciation of the tetragrammaton YHWH was never lost. The name was pronounced Yahweh. It was regularly pronounced this way at least until 586 B.C., as is clear from the Lachish Letters written shortly before this date.”

Therefore, for Jehovah’s Witnesses to insist Jehovah is the true name of God and that one is saved only if he calls on that name, is an error. When Witnesses appear at your door explain to them the name “Jehovah” and read what the scholars say about Jehovah. Also remember, God uses many names for Himself such as, King of Kings, the Lion of Judah, the Alpha and the Omega, and others. When JWs realize what the authoritative sources have to say, especially the encyclopedia references, they will begin to realize the need to take a

serious look at this error in the organization.

The Bodily Resurrection of Christ

A third subject area for effective witnessing to Witnesses is the bodily resurrection of Christ. Witnesses believe that Christ's crucified body was disintegrated by Jehovah never to exist again. Accordingly, Jesus was raised as a spirit who then materialized and appeared in several different fleshly bodies as the angels had done. Indeed, it was in this form that He appeared to His disciples; i.e., He wasn't in a human body; He just appeared to be human. He ascended into heaven as a spirit and once again became Michael the Archangel.(13) This doctrine can be easily disproved.

First, in Luke 24:36-43, Jesus clearly states in verse 39 that He is not a spirit but a man of flesh and bone. He even ate food to prove that He was not a spirit but had a physical body. In John 20:24-27, Jesus shows Thomas His wounds. Jesus is clearly demonstrating to His disciples that the body previously on the cross had been resurrected. If Jesus had a different body than the one on the cross, He would have been deliberately deceiving the disciples. Ask the Witness, "Would Jesus deliberately deceive His disciples into believing something that was not true?"

Next, turn to some passages where Jesus predicts the resurrection of His body. In John 2:19-21 Jesus says, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." See Acts 2:26-27, another prophecy of the Messiah's bodily resurrection. Clearly the prophecies and Jesus' appearances prove a bodily resurrection.

Witnesses cite 1 Peter 3:18 and 1 Cor. 15:44-50 to back up their belief. In 1 Peter 3:18 we read, "Christ died once and for all… he being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the spirit." This verse does not prove Jesus is a spirit. This verse says that Jesus was raised in the Spirit and by the

Spirit of God who gives life. Romans 8:11 states that the Holy Spirit was involved in raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus was not raised *as* a spirit but *by* the power of the Holy Spirit.

According to 1 Cor. 15:50, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Since Jesus is in heaven, Witnesses say He must be a spirit.(14) They are correct in saying that the earthly body cannot enter heaven. However, when Jesus rose, He had a glorified body (Luke 24:39). Therefore, He can dwell in heaven because of His glorified state. According to 1 Cor 15:39, “All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another…. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies.” Christ’s glorified body allows Him to travel in the earthly and heavenly dimensions. Some verses indicate that Christ exists in heaven in bodily form. “For in him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” Colossians 2:9. The verb “dwells” in the Greek is *katoikei*, and is in the present tense. In other words, Jesus has a glorified body in heaven, the one that was resurrected. Note also 1 Timothy 2:5, “There is one God and one mediator, the man Christ Jesus.” The verb “is,” is a present tense verb also. How can Jesus be a man if He is Michael the Archangel? Seeing these errors may prompt them to seek the truth.

The Holy Spirit

A fourth avenue of effective evangelism with Jehovah’s Witnesses is the subject of the deity of the Holy Spirit. As I mentioned earlier, the Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that the Holy Spirit is not a person because they see the Holy Spirit as a force—much like electricity or fire. Here is what Jehovah’s Witnesses say about the Holy Spirit.

In their book *You Can Live Forever In Paradise on Earth*, they state, “As for the `Holy Spirit,’ the so-called third person of the Trinity, we have already seen that this is not a person but God’s active force.”(15)

In their magazine *Why Should You Believe in the Trinity?* they state, “To a certain extent it (Holy Spirit) can be likened to electricity, a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations.”(16)

Here are some verses that are effective in proving the deity of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 5 Ananaias and Sapphira lied to the church about the amount they sold their land for and the amount they gave to the church. Peter confronts them on this issue and states in 5:3, “Ananaias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit…?” Peter later states in the next verse, “You have not lied to men but to God.” Here the Holy Spirit is called “God” with a capital G both in our Bibles and in the Witnesses’ Bible. Another interesting question to ask Witnesses is, “Can you lie to a force like fire or electricity?” The answer is “No.” You can only lie to an intelligence, a person.

In Acts 13:2 the Holy Spirit speaks, “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, `Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'” Ask the Witness, “When was the last time electricity or fire spoke to you?” It is obvious only an intelligent person can communicate in language.

Ephesians 4:30 states, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.” Any logical person should realize you can only grieve a living being. Ask a Jehovah’s Witness, “How can you grieve or bring sorrow to an impersonal force like electricity?”

When you put all these facts together, the fact that the Holy Spirit is called God, He can be lied to, He speaks, and He can be grieved, the evidence shows that the Holy Spirit is a person, not an inanimate force. When presented clearly, I have not met any Jehovah’s Witness who have been able to refute these verses.

God bless and good Witnessing!

Notes

1. *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1982), p. 39.
2. Ibid., p. 40.
3. *Reasoning From the Scriptures* (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1985), pp.333-36.
4. Ibid., pp. 76-80.
5. *Live Forever*, pp. 350-55.
6. Ibid., pp. 170-84.
7. Ibid., pp. 41-44.
8. "Jehovah," *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1973 ed.
9. *Encyclopedia Americana*, vol. 16., 1972 ed.
10. "Yahweh," *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 12, 1993 ed.
11. "Jehovah," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, 1904 ed.
12. "Jehovah," *The New Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1962 ed.
13. *Live Forever*, pp. 143-45.
14. Ibid., pp. 143-46.
15. Ibid., p. 40.
16. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1989), p. 20.

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Responses to "The Secret"

Recommended Responses to *The Secret* and Its "Law of Attraction"

The False Teaching of *The Secret*
Kerby Anderson
probe.org/the-false-teaching-of-the-secret/

The message of The Secret and The Law of Attraction is wildly popular. But it's also seductive, wrong, and spiritually dangerous.

***The Secret*: Creating One's Reality**
Russ Wise
probe.org/the-secret-creating-ones-reality/
Former Probe Research Associate and Speaker Russ Wise provides an in-depth analysis of *The Secret*s "Law of Attraction": recycled Eastern/New Age philosophy in materialistic garb that appeals to our self-indulgent desires. Russ examines the teachings of Rhonda Byrne and her stable of Master Teachers to show how they contradict God's word—and reality.

First Person: *The Secret*
Don Whitney
www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=25077
Dr. Whitney, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, provides a fresh and biblical response to the heretical teachings of the runaway best-seller.

The Secret* Exposed: *Why Oprah and millions of readers* can *be wrong.
Mel Lawrenz
www.ctlibrary.com/46138
This commentary from *Christianity Today* offers piercing perspective on the self-indulgent, anti-biblical teachings of *The Secret.*



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The False Teaching of "The Secret" – A Christian Evaluation

Kerby Anderson examines The Secret and The Law of Attraction from a biblical perspective and finds it teaches a dangerous mixture of half truths and outright lies.

Rhonda Byrne and *The Secret*

The book is called *The Secret*, but it didn't remain a secret for very long. Already the book has sold more than three million copies, and there are nearly two million DVDs of the teaching. There seems to be no end to the public's interest in this message presented by Rhonda Byrne.

Some call *The Secret* a transformative message. Others see it as a popular combination of marketing that parallels the success of *The DaVinci Code* with the message found in Eastern religions and philosophies throughout the centuries. Whatever it is, it has exploded in our culture ever since Rhonda Byrne's first appearance on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

The Secret has been promoted as "a feature length, historic and factually based account of an age old secret" which is said to be four thousand years in the making and "known to only a fortunate few." The DVD and the book reveal "this great knowledge to the world." Supposedly it is the secret to wealth, the secret to health, the secret to love, relationships, happiness, and eternal youth.

The basic premise of *The Secret* was borne from the troubles that affected Rhonda Byrne. She is a television producer and

mother in her fifties. A number of years ago she "hit a rocky patch in her business and personal lives."{1} Her father died suddenly and her relationships with her family and work colleagues were in turmoil. It was at that moment of despair when she "wept and wept and wept" that she discovered a long-neglected book entitled *The Science of Getting Rich*.{2}

In the book she discovered how to let your thoughts and feelings give you everything that you desire. She then dedicated herself to sharing these principles with the world in the form of *The Secret*.

Many have called it marketing genius. After all, all of us want to be in on a secret. So why wouldn't we all want to know *the* secret to life? That is what Rhonda Byrne promised in her DVD. "Torchlights flicker on the 90-minute DVD and the soundtrack throbs portentously before it gets down to giving you the secret for getting your hands on that new BMW."{3}

Its success shouldn't be too surprising. After all, many self-help authors have become celebrities and quite financially successful by addressing American's desperate need for happiness and significance.

Several show up as contributors to *The Secret*. For example, Wayne Dyer has written nearly thirty books on the subject of self-help. His 1976 book, *Your Erroneous Zones*, has sold over thirty million copies. Jack Canfield is best known for his *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series. There are currently over 115 titles and 100 million copies in print.

The Law of Attraction

Rhonda Byrne's book and DVD on *The Secret* supposedly bring together "the oral traditions, in literature, in religions and philosophies throughout the centuries."{4} These pieces are brought together to produce this life-transforming message.

While it is passed off as new and exciting, there are many

other teachers who preceded *The Secret* with a similar message. Charles Fillmore, who founded the Unity School of Christianity, talked about "The Twelve Powers of Man," arguing that the causes of all things are "essentially mental." Norman Vincent Peale is best known for his *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Deepak Chopra talks about "The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success." Motivational speaker Tony Robbins believes "it's our decisions, not the conditions of our lives, that determine our destiny."{5}

Rhonda Byrne not only relies on people she calls the guardians of *The Secret*, but also upon a documentary released a number of years ago called *What the Bleep Do We Know?* The film makes all sorts of metaphysical claims based upon their particular interpretation of quantum physics.

According to Rhonda Byrne, the key element of *The Secret* is what is called "The Law of Attraction."{6} You can summarize the law with three words: "Thoughts become things." In other words, if you think hard enough about something, it will take place. Think good thoughts, and you will reap good things. Think bad thoughts, and bad things will happen to you. You create your own circumstances, and you can change those circumstances with your thoughts.

A central teaching of "The Law of Attraction" is that nothing can come into your experience unless you summon it through persistent thoughts. Thus, everything that surrounds you right now (both good and bad) has been attracted to you. As you focus on what you want, you are changing the vibration of atoms of that thing so that they begin to vibrate to you.{7} Ultimately, you determine the frequency or vibration so that you can best acquire wealth, health, and fulfillment.

Do you want something? Then you need to focus on it. In one segment in the DVD, a kid who wants a red BMX bicycle cuts out a picture of it from a catalog. He concentrates on it and even obsesses about it. He is rewarded with a bike.

Do you want to lose weight? Do the same thing. Rhonda Byrne talked about the weight she gained after her pregnancies. But once she applied "The Law of Attraction," she realized her error: "Food is not responsible for putting on weight. It is your thought that food is responsible for putting on weight that actually has food put on weight."

Do you want to get healthy? Visualize health. One woman in the DVD claims to have cured her breast cancer in three months without chemotherapy or radiation. She claims she did this by visualizing herself well and watching funny movies on television.

The Seductive Message

The incredible popularity of *The Secret* illustrates the spiritual hunger in our culture. But while people are hungry for spirituality, they are not willing to attend church to be fed spiritually. Instead they go to the bookstore and buy this book or DVD along with other books dealing with spirituality.

A buyer for West Hollywood's popular metaphysical bookstore, The Bodhi Tree, said that DVD of *The Secret* had "become the biggest selling item in the 30-year history of our store." Why has it become so successful? Here is what a writer for *Time* magazine concluded:

> Mixing the ancient conspiracy hoodoo of *The DaVinci Code* with the psychic science of 2004's cult hit *What the Bleep Do We Know?*, it interweaves computer graphics, historical recreations and interviews with "experts" into a study of "intention-manifestation" – the philosophy that contends our emotions and thoughts can actually influence real-world events. In other words: if you really, truly believe you can beat the lottery and visualize scratching off a winning ticket, you can do exactly that.{8}

The appeal of *The Secret* is understandable. People want to be

wealthy and healthy. But this false philosophy leads to death and destruction. In Colossians 2:8, Paul warns Christians: "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of the world rather than on Christ."

There are countless examples that demonstrate that "The Law of Attraction" does not work. If you don't think so, try this simple experiment. Visualize that you have a million dollars in your checking account. Think lots of positive thoughts about all the money you assume is in your checking account. Then go to the bank and write a really big check. The cashier might even have positive thoughts about your account. But then you will come face-to-face with reality. The bank's computers don't have positive thoughts about your checking account, nor do they have negative thoughts about your checking account. They are just doing the math. Despite all the positive feelings you can muster, your check will bounce.

Even those who accept the metaphysical basis of *The Secret* are concerned with its seductive message that appeals to our materialism. After all, practitioners are using this supposed ancient wisdom to acquire material goods. One of the "experts" in the film says: "*The Secret* is like having the universe as your catalog."{9}

Many wonder if acquiring more possessions is what *The Secret* should be all about. "The get-rich-quick parts really bothered me," says the buyer at the Bodhi Tree. "It's my hope that people won't use creative visualization to obtain wealth for themselves, but in more positive, altruistic ways."{10}

Spiritually Dangerous

We have already shown that the premise of *The Secret* is false. You cannot alter reality simply with your thoughts. "The Law of Attraction" can essentially be summarized with three words: "Thoughts become things." That is not true.

But the teachings of *The Secret* are not only false; they are spiritually dangerous.

Rhonda Byrne makes this observation in her book: "So whatever way you look at it, the result is still the same. We are One. We are all connected, and we are all part of the One Energy Field, or the One Supreme Mind, or the One Consciousness, or the One Creative Source. Call it whatever you want, but we are all One."{11}

Essentially she is teaching that we can become gods. We are God in a physical body. We are the creative source and the have the cosmic power to manipulate the universe according to our own desires. We are creating our own reality and thus can manipulate that reality to our own ends.{12}

Contrast that with the temptation in the Garden of Eden where Satan tells Eve "you will be like God" (Genesis 3:5). Why is *The* Secret so popular? Because we are tempted to be "like God."

It is one of the enemy's oldest tricks in The Book. Satan knows that we are vulnerable to this desire to be "like God." Satan tempted Eve in the Garden with this tactic, and he is tempting millions today with the same tactic.

John warned us of the temptations in the world: "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world" (1 John 2:15-16).

We must choose that which we love and worship. Are we going to love the world and all that is in the world? Or are we going to love God? We must choose what we will love and which view of reality we will accept.

We are admonished "to bring every thought captive to the

obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). The principles in *The Secret* are not biblical principles but pagan, worldly principles that have been around since the beginning.

The Secret calls upon us to use our thoughts for our own selfish desires. Paul, however, tells us in Romans 12:1-2 that we are to present our bodies as a sacrifice to the Lord. We are to be selfless, not selfish.

(For more information on the spiritual dangers of *The Secret*, see Russ Wise's in-depth analysis, which uncovers the occultic connection with several contributors to the project.)

The Secret and Science

To prove "The Law of Attraction," the foundational principle in *The Secret*, Rhonda Byrne's DVD presents physicists who imply that the latest scientific discoveries validate this metaphysical principle. One of the "experts" in the film is Fred Alan Wolf who apparently talked about the relationship between quantum mechanics and consciousness. Evidently, most of this wound up on the cutting room floor.{13}

The other "expert" on the film is John Hagelin, who is affiliated with Maharishi University. Both Wolf and Hagelin distanced themselves from the ideas in the DVD and acknowledged that "The Law of Attraction" does not seem to work in reality the way it is described in *The Secret*.

Some of the ideas in *The Secret* can also be found in the film, *What the Bleep Do We Know?* The documentary combines interviews along with a fictional narrative to bring together thoughts about the possible connection between quantum physics and spirituality. The interviews and computer graphics imply that the latest scientific discoveries (in neuroscience, psychology, physics, etc.) suggest that we can manipulate the universe with our mind.

The film even sets forth the principle that the universe is actually constructed from thought or mental images rather than some substance. It goes on to suggest that "empty space" is anything but empty. And it teaches that our beliefs about who we are and what is reality are influenced by our own thoughts and mental perspective.

The film may be interesting fiction and metaphysics; it is very poor psychology and physics. Scientists have rejected the ideas in the film as nothing more than pseudoscience with no relation to reality.

The message of *The Secret* also bears no relation to reality. It says, "Food is not responsible for putting on weight. It is your thought that food is responsible for putting on weight that actually has food put on weight." Science disagrees.

But the message is also dangerous. Karin Klein with the *Los Angeles Times* recounts the dangerous impact of *The Secret* on those who follow its prescription: "Therapists tell me they're starting to see clients who are headed for real trouble, immersing themselves in a dream world in which good things just come."{14}

It's not surprising that *The Secret* is popular. People are spiritually hungry, and the book and DVD partially feed that hunger. The message is seductive, but as we have also seen it is wrong, and more importantly, it is dangerous. It is one of the enemy's oldest tricks in The Book. We need to exercise spiritual discernment and realize the false teaching in *The Secret*.

Notes

1. Jerry Adler, "Decoding The Secret," *Newsweek*, 5 March 2007, 53.
2. Wallace Wattles, *The Science of Getting Rich*, 1910, www.scienceofgettingrich.net.
3. Adler, Decoding, 53-54.

4. Home page of The Secret, www.thesecret.tv/home-synopsis.html.
5. Adler, Decoding, 55.
6. Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret* (New York: Atria Books, 2006), 28.
7. Ibid., 156.
8. Jeffrey Ressner, "The Secret of Success," *Time*, 28 December 2006.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Byrne, *The Secret*, 162.
12. Ibid., 164.
13. Adler, Decoding, 57.
14. Karin Klein, "Self-help gone nutty," *Los Angeles Times*, 13 February 2007.

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The Secret: Creating One's Reality

The Secret's "Law of Attraction" is simply recycled Eastern/New Age philosophy in materialistic garb that appeals to our self-indulgent desires. Former Probe staffer Russ Wise examines the teachings of Rhonda Byrne and her stable of "Master Teachers" to show how they contradict with God's word, and reality.

The Secret has existed throughout the history of mankind. It had been discovered, coveted, suppressed, hidden, lost and recovered. It has been hunted down, stolen, and bought for vast sums of money. Now for the first time in history, *The Secret* is being revealed to the world . . .

“Fragments of a Great Secret have been found in the oral traditions, in literature, in religions and philosophies throughout the centuries. For the first time, all the pieces of The Secret come together in an incredible revelation that will be life-transforming for all who experience it.”{1}



Knowledge of *The Secret* will bring the knower great wealth, health, joy and for those who persist, their soul mate: everything you have ever wanted. *The Secret* reveals the perennial wisdom of the great teachers and avatars of history: the Law of Attraction. According to Rhonda Byrne, author of *The Secret,* that “secret” (the Law of Attraction) is simply the principle that like attracts like. This Law of Attraction means that when we think positive things or possibly bad things we, as a result, draw those things to ourselves. Another way of putting it is that when we think negatively we will become more negative because we have allowed the negative to be drawn to us.

Rhonda Byrne, a 55 year-old Australian, discovered *The Secret* during a time of great upheaval in her family. Her father, Roland, died in 2004, her business was near bankruptcy, and her relationships were indeed bankrupt. The stress of life was bearing down on her and she found herself in a place where she was receptive to most anything. That “anything” came in the form of a book given her by her daughter Hailey. The book, *The Science of Getting Rich,*{2} was the beginning of a transformation that would lead Rhonda down the corridors of fame and wealth.

Rhonda declared that “It lit a fire in me; it was exactly the opposite of the way I thought life worked.” The rekindled fire within her set her on a quest that ultimately led her to devour much of the occultic literature of our day and then to sit at the feet of many of those “teachers” who deliver its message.

Her discovery of these "great truths" led her to employ her production company to produce a film that would bring this much-sought-after "truth" to the world. The result was *The Secret,* now available in multiple languages.{3} As of this writing the DVD (only available online) has sold over 1.1 million copies since its release in March 2006. The book was only written after the film had been widely received around the globe. It was released in November 2006 and has of this date (spring 2007) sold over 1.2 million copies. *The Bodhi Tree,* a well known metaphysical bookshop in West Hollywood, reports that *The Secret* has been "its biggest selling item in the 30-year history of our store."{4} Not bad results for a first time author!

"If *The Secret* had a plot, it might go something like 'Tony Robbins uncovers the Judas Gospel and learns to use the Force.'"{5} The film is regularly screened at New Age venues including metaphysical group meetings, Unity Churches, and the homes of believers. *The Secret* was well-received on *Oprah*{6} and it has been touted on *Larry King Live* as well as similar shows. The prominent discussion of *The Secret* in the media has given the film major cultural traction.

A *Time* article by Jeffrey Ressner states the *The Secret* is the mixing of ancient philosophy found in the conspiratorial escapades of *The Da Vinci Code* and the psychic science (read science fiction) of the cult hit *What the Bleep Do We Know?*{7}

According to the author and creator, Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret* is "a philosophy that literally can change your life and help you take control of your destiny!"{8} Now, if true, that would be like winning the lottery. Ms. Byrne continues, "If you follow its philosophy, you can create the life you want . . ." Ms. Byrne asserts that the Law of Attraction is "the most powerful law in the universe," and that it is working all the time. "What we do is we attract into our lives the things we want, and that is based on what we're thinking and feeling." She says that when we engage our feelings it becomes

especially potent. Our emotions super-charge the outcomes we desire! She continues, “It is based on this principle that we are actually creating our own circumstances by the very choices we make in life.”{9}

In an interview with Quantumtouch, the interviewer Julie makes a point regarding the global impact of the film. Ms. Byrne responds by saying that *The Secret* is contained in all the ancient wisdom, no matter what philosophy. It is buried within every one.{10} On the surface this statement sounds quite innocent, but her actual meaning goes much deeper. The idea that this “wisdom is buried within everyone” is an indicator that this belief is about our true divine nature.

One of the Master Teachers of *The Secret,* John Demartini, expounds by saying, “We have a magnificent inner calling, vision, mission, power inside us that we are not honoring and harnessing. This movie brings it to the forefront that we can [harness that power].”{11} The premise of this idea is that “we all have a divine essence within us, and we just need to get in touch with it. In other words, as panentheists{12} teach, God is in all of creation, including all human beings, and once a person becomes aware of this, there are no limits to what he can achieve.”{13}

Master Teachings

The Secret is revealed through some of the most high-profile individuals of our day. They include such notables as Jack Canfield, author of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series of books. Jack is a thirty-year veteran of metaphysics and helps individuals achieve their personal goals by helping them understand the Law of Attraction.

Another teacher is Neale Donald Walsch, known for this book trilogy *Conversations with God.*{14} He, too, is a student of metaphysics and teaches that man is divine. John Gray is best known for his popular book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From*

Venus. These teachers speak with one voice. Their message is brief, yet simple: *You create your circumstances; if you live in lack it is your fault; you are an expression of divinity; in fact, you are God.* Another of *The Secret* teachers is Fred Alan Wolf, a physicist. He makes a profound statement on *The Secret* web site: "You! I want to tell you something. You are God in disguise."

Of the twenty-four *Secret Teachers,* perhaps the most troubling is Rev. Michael Bernard Beckwith. He is the pastor of *Agape International Spiritual Centre* in California. His message is that we are co-creators with God and that our abilities are unlimited. Our potential is divine in nature. Dr. Beckwith is troubling, in my view, because he represents a pseudo-Christianity. He has the greatest ability to be used to deceive those whom God has touched by His Gospel. The Christian who is unable to rightly discern God's Word will fall prey to such false teaching as found in *The Secret.*

"Truths" That One Cannot Deny

So what is it that *The Secret* teaches that would be harmful to the Christian? In her section on acknowledgements Ms. Byrne names names and she lists several that stand out as instructive. One name, in particular, is Charles Fillmore, the founder of *Unity School of Christianity*{15} along with his wife Myrtle. Unity is a classic New Age belief system that teaches the divinity of man. Eric Butterworth, a former Unity minister, in his book *Discover the Power Within You,* underscores the New Age premise that Jesus taught the divinity of mankind. Butterworth is of interest because Oprah Winfrey proclaims he is her spiritual mentor.{16}

Perhaps the most revealing of the occult connection between Rhonda Byrne and her stable of Master Teachers is Ester Hicks who channels a non-physical being named Abraham.{17} Hicks is but one thread in the occult pattern that emerges in teachings of *The Secret.* Hicks' story is similar to that of Helen

Schucman, the channel of *A Course in Miracles*.{18}

The premise, *whatever we think about and thank about, we bring about* is central to understanding the Law of Attraction. In Christian circles this concept is known as "name it and claim it," where the individual simply professes a desire and then claims that God will provide it. This is a Christianized form of an occult "truth." Ms. Byrne and her Master Teachers are more than willing to use scripture to make their point. They ask us to turn to Matthew 21:22 and Mark 11:24 where Jesus tells His disciples, "Whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." A common mistake made by those who jump on the metaphysical bandwagon is that they often overlook the whole counsel of scripture. It is instructive that Ms. Byrne did not ask her readers to consider James 4:3 where the writer says, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."

The question the Christian should be asking himself at this point is this: How does one *ask* correctly? Verse 4 offers us a glimpse of God's truth. "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." James then draws our attention to verse 10 where it says, "Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you." The implication here is not for us to command God to act because of our asking or believing, but to allow Him to exalt us because of our humility. This teaching would not fit very well within the context of Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret*.

A central teaching of The Law of Attraction is that *nothing can come into your experience unless you summon it through persistent thoughts.*{19} Another of the Master Teachers, Dr. Joe Vitale, believes that "Everything that surrounds you right now in your life, including the things you're complaining about, you've attracted."{20} According to Ms. Byrne, our feelings are our greatest tool to help us create the positive things in our lives. She says, "Your thoughts are the primary

cause of everything." She continues by stating, "Your thoughts determine your frequency, and your feelings tell you immediately what frequency you are on."{21}

Ms. Byrne says that we are "the most powerful transmission tower in the Universe. In simple terms, all energy vibrates at a frequency. Being energy, you also vibrate at a frequency, and what determines your frequency at any time is whatever you are thinking and feeling. All the things you want are made of energy, and they are vibrating too. *Everything* is energy."{22} Another way of stating this "truth" is to say that *as you focus on what you want, you are changing the vibration of the atoms of that thing, and you are causing it to vibrate to You.* I know this is a mind-blowing concept, but there's more! Ms. Byrne states that one of the most magnificent teachings of *The Secret* is that "You are energy, and cannot be created or destroyed. Energy just changes form. And that means You! The true essence of You, the pure energy of You, has always been and always will be. You can never not be."{23}

"When you are feeling good thoughts, it is communication back from the Universe saying, 'You are thinking good thoughts.' Likewise, when you are feeling bad, you are receiving communication back from the Universe saying, 'You are thinking bad thoughts.'"{24} Our feelings about something turbo-charge our outcome. In other words, we can purposely use our *feelings* to transmit an even more powerful frequency, by adding *feeling* to what we are wanting.{25} Michael Bernard Beckwith clarifies this concept by stating, "You can begin right now to feel healthy. You can begin to feel prosperous. You can begin to feel love that's surrounding you, even if it's not there. And what will happen is the universe will correspond to the nature of your song. The universe will correspond to the nature of that inner feeling and manifest, because that's the way you feel." In other words, don't allow your perceived reality to convince you otherwise, but step out and create your new reality by simply saying it is so and the Universe (God) will

bring it about. Essentially, we are seeking a god to do our bidding as we command.

Marci Shimoff, another of the Master Teachers, makes this observation: "Once you begin to understand and truly master your thoughts and feelings, that's when you see how you create your own reality. That's where your freedom is, that's where all your power is."{26} The Bible offers a different exhortation to the Christian at this juncture. We read in 2 Corinthians 10:5 that we are to destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Our purpose is not to use our thought life to enhance ourselves, but to bring our thought lives into obedience and submit ourselves to a holy God. This thought is totally absent from *The Secret*!

Shimoff adds that we should consider if the Universe is a friendly place for us to hang out. Ms. Byrne says that knowing the Law of Attraction, we would have to say that the Universe is, indeed, a most friendly place where we can create our own reality. *The Secret* (and New Age thought in general) encourages its adherents to practice affirmation as a way to channel one's thought life to a place where it will benefit the individual. Ms. Byrne suggests the following affirmation: "This is a magnificent Universe. The Universe is bringing all good things to me. The Universe is conspiring for me in all things. The Universe is supporting me in everything I do. The Universe meets all my needs immediately."{27}

Lisa Nichols, also a Master Teacher, informs us that the first step to achieving our desires is to *ask.* "Make a command of the Universe. Let the Universe know what you want. The Universe responds to your thoughts."{28} It seems that if one were to "command" God (the Universe) to produce all that he desired and wanted, he might prefer a different outcome. In my view, the secret to living the Christian life is to desire the things that God desires for us rather than making a command to fulfill one's lusts. Dr. Joe Vitale offers this quip: "This is

really fun. It's like having the Universe as your catalogue. It is You placing your order with the Universe. It's really that easy."{29}

Nichols continues by stating that the second step in achieving all that we want is to *believe.* "Believe that it is already yours. Have what I love to call unwavering faith. Believing in the unseen." In the moment you ask, and *believe* and *know* you already have it in the unseen, the entire Universe shifts to bring it into the seen. In other words, God/The Universe immediately tunes to your frequency and then because of the Law of Attraction, he is obligated to supply all your wants. Vitale makes another head-scratching comment when he states, "The Universe will start to rearrange itself to make it happen for you. You don't need to know how it's going to come about. You don't need to know how the Universe will arrange itself."{30} Just simply believe!

The third step according to Nichols is to *receive* that which we have commanded. Nichols states that an important part of our receiving is for us to *feel* wonderful about it. Beckwith comments, "This is a feeling Universe. If you just intellectually believe something, but you have no corresponding feeling underneath that, you don't necessarily have enough power to manifest what you want in your life. You have to feel it." I can understand that! I recognize that I have limited power. What power I may have is only that which God allows me through the Holy Spirit to do His good will—*not mine*. I also recognize that no matter how wonderful I "feel," my feeling about something is not what is going to make it right in God's sight. It is only when I apply His will to the matter that I see appropriate results.

The premise that mankind and the impersonal Universe are interconnected is widely taught within occultic, New Age, literature. They teach that all-is-One. Man is an integral part of *The Supreme Mind* and he is seen as being one with it, to the point that he *is* the source of the Universe.{31}

The Universe and The Higher Self

The concept of an impersonal energy or force that is the "Universe" is not a new thought. It has been around for a long time and has been recognized in numerous belief systems that do not reflect God's truth.

Gary Zukav teaches that we should trust the Universe because it is working toward our best and most appropriate end. He adds that if we do trust the Universe it will provide all that we desire: "Let your higher self complete its task.{32} In other words, allow the Universe (God) to complete its work in you as you come to fully realize that your "Higher Self" is the Divine Teacher.

Wayne Dyer helps clarify the role that the Higher Self plays in our understanding of who we truly are. In his text *Your Sacred Self,* he makes this observation: "When you consult your higher self, you learn that you are a part of the same divine essence that connects all of us to the source of spirit. There is one God, one source with many different manifestations."{33} Dyer says that we relate to others in "terms of the divineness that is flowing through them, which is a manifestation of the energy supporting the physical world. On the path of the sacred way, you experience that force flowing through you and others."{34} He declares that we short-circuit the manifestation of our Higher Selves (the divine spirit within) when we practice a toxic lifestyle. A toxic lifestyle would be one that denied man's personal divinity. Dyer goes on to say, "To allow your highest self to triumph in this conflict between purity and toxicity, you must let go of any idea that at your core you are evil or a sinner."{35}

To sum it up Ms. Byrne makes this observation: "So whichever way you look at it, the result is still the same. We are One. We are all connected, and we are all part of the One Energy Field, or the One Supreme Mind, or the One Consciousness, or

the One Creative Source. Call it whatever you want, but we are all One."{36} The message of *The Secret* is plain for all to see: "You are God in a physical body. You are Spirit in the flesh. You are Eternal Life expressing itself as you. You are a cosmic being. You are all power. You are magnificence. You are the creator, and you are creating the creation of You on this planet."{37}

The Higher Self and Guidance

Rhonda Byrne and her *Secret* Teachers have played their metaphysical hand close to their vest. However, they have allowed their secret teaching to come through on occasion. Ultimately, yielding your life to the Universe and discovering your Higher Self implies that you must at some point submit to its deepest presence.

Ms. Byrne confides that "To love yourself fully, you must focus on a new dimension of You. You must focus on the presence inside of You. Take a moment and sit still. Focus on feeling the life presence inside you. As you focus on the presence within, it will begin to reveal itself to You. It is a feeling of pure love and bliss, and it is perfection. That presence is the *real* You."{38}

Ms. Byrne offers her viewer and reader a sure-fire avenue to connecting with the "Presence" within. She states without reservation that all teachers in her film and in her book use meditation to quiet their minds so they can be in full harmony with the Universe. She says every teacher uses meditation as a daily practice. She then adds that "it wasn't until I discovered *The Secret* that I realized how powerful meditation can be."{39}

To hear the Master Teachers of *The Secret* tell it, one would think that discovering one's Higher Self or inner teacher is the high point of spiritual or self discovery. In her book *The Possible Human,* Jean Huston makes this observation regarding

the Presence. Ms. Houston is guiding her students through an exercise and she tells them that

> *"In the room is a Master Teacher of the skill—this person or being is your Master Teacher, and in the time that follows this teacher will give you deep and potent instructions to help you improve your skill. The Master Teacher may speak in words or not. Teachings may present themselves as feelings. However this being works with you, the learning on your part will be effective and deep. Once you become familiar with your Master Teacher and begin to trust and act on the advice and knowledge that is imparted, you will find it increasingly easy to have access to this kind of deep learning . . ."*

Houston fully discloses the true nature of this inner Presence that Ms. Byrne alludes to. Apparently unable to contain her enthusiasm, she further states,

> *"The Master Teacher is a potent reminder of our inner 'allies' and may often provide much more teaching and wisdom than we had intended when we set out on this journey. And the exercise may also lead you to the discovery that the inner realms have their own subtle machinations for guiding you . . . we must also listen to them, for they have urgent messages to send us. If we cooperate with them—that is, with our own deepest knowing—we begin to notice an astounding change in our lives.{40}*

If this is confusing, allow me to sum it up this way. When you enter the realm of spiritual discovery through meditative practices or some other psycho-spiritual methodology you will at some point find yourself face to face with a demon masquerading as your inner guide or Master Teacher. It is instructive to note that this inner guide or spirit guide will at some point in time bring you an urgent message from the "other side." The subtle deception that lies in wait for its innocent prey is not discriminating. It will consume whomever

it finds to seduce.

Spiritual Discernment

Earlier I mentioned that I believe Michael Bernard Beckwith to be a troubling figure in the unfolding of *The Secret* and its Law of Attraction. Rhonda Byrne became the "Big Get" for many in the world of television and the media. Oprah Winfrey was no different. After Ms. Byrne appeared on Oprah she realized her dreams as her film and book sales went through the roof. After her segment on Oprah *The Secret* was officially out and the book instantly became *the* bestseller literally overnight.

Michael Bernard Beckwith appeared with Ms. Byrne on Oprah and became an instant celebrity. His second Oprah appearance included the taking of questions from audience members. One of particular note was a lady named Maureen. Her question centered around her being a Christian. Maureen stated that her family puts their faith in God, and that it seemed to her that *The Secret* teaches that we should put our faith in ourselves. "And so," she said, "I was wondering, is God anywhere in this?"

Here is what Beckwith had to say to Maureen: "The Secret involves the laws of the universe and they, in turn, describe the nature of how God works. [Jesus] said, 'Pray believing that ye have, that ye may receive.' That's *The Secret* in a nutshell. Pray believing and feeling and sensing that you already have it, and then you're available to receive it."

The disturbing part of his answer came when he offered this thoughtful conclusion to Maureen's question: "*The Secret* isn't about contradicting religion—it supports it. It actually goes underneath the culture and explains to you the sacred laws that these wonderful teachers have brought to us," he said. According to Beckwith, *The Secret* is about supporting the great spiritual traditions in a more modern form. "It really is just putting Christianity, Judaism, all the great teachings

into a current vernacular."

He smoothed the rippling waters created by her question, and by side-stepping her real concern he offered her a decoy. His implication was that the archaic teachings and mis-interpretations of the Bible can no longer be held as the standard of truth, but this new generation of believers is looking for ways to better connect with spiritual truth.

Sadly, there are a multitude of Maureens in the greater Christian church who may be easily persuaded by the decoys of spiritual heresy. It was interesting to see Oprah turn in her chair and catch Maureen's eye and declare that she is a Christian, thereby implying that the teachings of *The Secret* as delivered by Beckwith are rock solid Christian principles.{41}

The greater "spiritual traditions" referred to by Beckwith are no less than the perennial philosophy and ancient wisdom taught by proponents of New Age thought and organizations like the Rosicrucians and other occult groups. The Rosicrucians teach that members will "achieve a gradual inner awakening, leading to a permanent awareness of the unity of all creation and your personal relationship with the 'oneness' of the universe."{42}

Lost in Commonsenseville!?

Deception always comes packaged in a veneer of truth. Otherwise it would not be acceptable! *The Secret* is no different. There are several aspects of the teaching that would be good and right to exhibit in one's life. Here are some examples:

1. *We should be grateful.* Christians should be grateful in all things. The scriptures use the word "contentment." Philippians 4:11 tells us that we are to be content in whatever state we find ourselves. In regards to the teaching of *The Secret* I

found this verse particularly interesting. The verse begins, "Not that I complain of want . . ." My reading of *The Secret* reveals just that. My wants and desires must be brought into manifestation because I simply *ask.* Ms. Byrne makes this observation: "It is impossible to bring more into your life if you are feeling ungrateful about what you have. Why? Because the thoughts and feelings you emit as you feel ungrateful are all negative emotions." The following verses (4:12-13) in Philippians offer us a glimpse into the meaning of the real secret to life: "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance, and want. I can do all things through him who strengthens me." In contrast, the teaching of *The Secret* is that by expressing gratitude we increase our opportunity to receive more.{43}

2. *We should give thanks.* Above all, the Christian should be thankful because of what Jesus did for him on the cross. However, there are those who are less than thankful. Romans 1:20 tells us that we have no excuse of not knowing that God exists because of His creation. Verse 21 says, "Although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools . . ."

Colossians 3:15-17 offers new believers this exhortation:

"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts . . . And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God."

Michael Bernard Beckwith says that we are to sing our own song. The scripture seems clear that our song is to glorify God rather than ourselves. Beckwith comments, "You can begin to feel the love that's surrounding you, even if its not there. And what will happen is the universe will correspond to

the nature of your song."{44} In other words the Universe—God—will comply with the commands in "our song."

3. *We should give liberally.* It is without question that the Christian should be a generous giver because he has been given so much. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 offers this truth:

> *"The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work."*

On the other hand, *The Secret* teaches that "giving is a powerful action to bring more money into your life, because when you are giving you are saying, 'I have plenty.'"{45} The principle here, for those who follow the teachings of the Law of Attraction, is to be positive in your actions and thereby send the correct frequency or vibration into the Universe so you can get more. In my view, the biblical standard is far more pleasing to a holy God.

4. *We should focus on the good in others.* The Christian is to consider others better than himself and not become jaded. Philippians 2:3 offers this counsel:

> *Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

Here once again, *The Secret* or the Law of Attraction is contrary to the teachings of Jesus. Marci Shimoff makes this revealing statement: "But for relationships to really work, we need to focus on what we appreciate about the other person, not what we're complaining about."{46} On the surface this

admonition sounds really great; however, as we have seen before in the Law of Attraction, the actor's actions are really all about getting what he wants. Shimoff continues her comment, "When we're complaining about those things we're only getting more of those things." The dynamics of inter-personal relationships do seem to agree with Shimoff's premise: if we're less than adorable we're going to get that reflected back to us by others. I agree that this may likely be the case. But our doing so as a follower of *The Secret* is to multiply our chances at *getting* what we want rather than looking after the interests of others.

5. *We should praise and bless our enemies.* The scripture clearly teaches that the Christian is to bless others.{47} The Christian who hears this idea from the stable of teachers under Rhonda Byrne will likely believe that *The Secret* is in alignment with God's Word. But not so fast! According to Lisa Nichols, we are to recognize the beauty in those things around us and then "bless and praise them." Ms. Byrne offers this understanding of blessing: "Lisa's wise words, to 'praise and bless' the things around you, are worth their weight in gold. When you are blessing or praising you are on the highest frequency of love. In the Bible, the Hebrews used the act of blessing to bring forth health, wealth, and happiness." In other words, we should confer our blessing so we might gain prosperity! Another head-shaking comment follows the above statement: "Praising and blessing dissolves all negativity, so praise and bless your enemies."{48} Blessing is an important part of the Christian life. We are blessed to be a blessing. Psalm 128:1 and 4 say, "Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! Lo, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord." The Psalmist draws our attention to another truth that *The Secret* chooses to ignore. Ms. Byrne's worldview and that of all likeminded teachers discounts the precept that one should *fear the Lord.* In their view, the "Lord", the Universe, is not to be feared, but to be commanded to act on their behalf and bring them the riches they desire.

Finding Our Way in Commonsenseville

In the Law of Attraction and *The Secret* it is difficult to discern the occultic trappings when our focus is on such commonsense teachings as seen above. However, for the discerning it becomes clear that the perceived "truths" taught as *The Secret* are in reality false teachings for the Christian. They do not line up with God's Word. They are out of focus and agreement.

The Secret is the latest in a series of examples that are used by the enemy of truth to nullify God's authoritative Word. A previous film that made its way into the minds of many unsuspecting viewers was *What the Bleep!?,* a 2004 film dealing with much of the same material as *The Secret.* There have been numerous books touted by Oprah Winfrey and others who sing the praises of the same world view.{49}

Romans 12:1-2 offers us God's truth in light of the emotional feelings encouraged in *The Secret.* Paul exhorts his brothers,

> *I appeal to you therefore by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Note that Paul did not say that we should consult our feelings about the matter, but that our spiritual worship is to present our bodies as a sacrifice to the Lord. The message of *The Secret* is not selflessness, but selfishness and self indulgence.

The discerning Christian must not only become aware of such cultural shifts as noted above, but he must be well-informed of the underlying falsity of such views—to judge rightly using the scripture as his guiding light. Our adversary is not

asleep at the switch. He is looking for those whom he may devour by his cunning deception. The challenge for the Christian is to remain true to the scripture and faithful to the end. Our life's purpose is to glorify our Father. Jesus clarified this truth by saying, "By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."{50} Then Jesus added,

> *And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent. I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gave me to do; and now, Father glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made.{51}*

We have seen by the above information that the purpose of the Christian life is to glorify God—not one's self. It is not about garnering the wealth of the world, or to live in perfect health. Our true motivation in all that we do is to honor our Creator and to point others to the mercies and goodness of a loving Father.

Author's Comment:

This article is dedicated to Maureen who appeared on Oprah 2/16/2007, and the other Maureens who desire to know if the message of *The Secret* is one that they might incorporate into their Christian lives. My prayer is that this article will help them discern God's truth and then apply it in their lives. Proverbs 4:23

Notes

1. www.thesecret.tv/home-synopsis.html
2. Wattles, Wallace, *The Science of Getting Rich*, 1910. For a complete manuscript see: blog.marcaccetta.com/blog/files/the_science_of_getting_rich.pdf
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Japanese, Chinese.
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5. Karin Klein, Self Help Gone Nutty, *LA Times*, Feb. 13, 2007 tinyurl.com/2bldwp
6. From the Oprah.com website: "*One Week Later: The Reaction to "The Secret"*. . . One week later…the reaction to The Secret! Your emails poured in and Oprah.com went off the charts! The secret to making more money, losing weight, falling in love, landing your dream job…and you want more! The questions, the successes and the lives changed. Stories you have to hear! A follow-up to the show everybody is talking about! Talk about this show." http://tinyurl.com/39jkxf
7. What the Bleep!?, www.whatthebleep.com/whatthebleep/ The movie is greatly influenced by the teachings of J. Z. Knight (Ramtha). The three producers of the film were involved with The Ramtha School of Enlightenment and Ms. Knight had creative control over the film. In reality the film was nothing more than an infomercial for Ms. Knight and her school. www.ramtha.com/default.asp
8. The Secret comes to Oprah, 2/8/2007, blog.marcaccetta.com/blog/2007/02/the_secret_come.html#more
9. Ibid.
10. www.Quantumtouch.groupee.net
11. www.newsobserver.com/105/story/538825.html
12. This universal arrangement is not *pantheism* (all is God), but panentheism, (God *in* all things and beings) a term devised by Karl C. F. Krause (1781-1832) to describe his thought. It is best known for its use by Charles Hartshorne and recently by Matthew Fox. Panentheism says that all is in God, somewhat as if God were the ocean and we were fish. If one considers what is in God's body to be part of God, then we can say that God is all there is and then some. The universe is God's body, but God's awareness or personality is greater than the sum of all the parts of the universe. All the parts have some degree of freedom in co-creating with God. At the start of its momentary career as a subject, an experience is God-as the divine initial aim. As the experience carries on its choosing

process, it is a freely aiming reality that is not strictly God, since it departs from God's purpose to some degree. Yet everything is within God. www.websyte.com/alan/pan.htm
13. www.lighthousetrailsresearch.com Napoleon Hill made the statement, "Whatever your mind can conceive and can believe, it can achieve" popular in his book *Think and Grow Rich*.
14. See our article on Neale Donald Walsch: http://christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=63
15. See our article on Unity: christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=46
16. Eric Butterworth, Discover the Power Within You, (New York, Harper & Row 1968). Also see our article on Oprah: christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=103
17. See: Acknowledgments – Inspirational Teachings, Byrne, Rhonda, The Secret, p. xv. www.abraham-hicks.com/teachings_brief.php", www.money-health-relationships.com/abraham-hicks.html
18. Helen Schucman, *A Course in Miracles*. Article, Kenneth Wapnick, *Awaken From the Dream*, (Roscoe, N. Y., Foundation for A.C.I.M. 1987) p. 2. Note the hyperlink in the text to our article on *A Course in Miracles*.
19. Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret*, (New York, Atria Books 2006; Hillsboro, OR, Beyond Words Publishing 2006) p. 28.
20. Ibid., p. 27.
21. Ibid., p. 31.
22. Ibid., p. 156.
23. Ibid., p. 159. See also James Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy*, (New York, Warner Books 1993) p. 42. "In other words, the basic stuff of the universe, at its core, is looking like a kind of pure energy that is malleable to human intention and expectation in a way that defies our old mechanistic model of the universe—as though our expectation itself causes our energy to flow out into the world and affect other energy systems."
24. Ibid., p. 33. Betty Eadie, *Embraced by the Light* (Placerville, CA, Gold Leaf Press 1992), p. 57-58. Also see our article on Ms. Eadie: tinyurl.com/34kxv8

25. Byrne, p. 35; Redfield, p. 153.
26. Byrne, p. 39.
27. Ibid., p. 40.
28. Ibid., p. 47.
29. Ibid., p. 48.
30. Ibid., p. 51.
31. Ibid., p. 160.
32. Gary Zukav, *The Seat of The Soul* (New York, A Fireside Book, 1990), p. 240.
33. Wayne Dyer, *The Sacred Self* (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), p. 237; Redfield, p. 148, "Our higher self, our evolutionary identity."
34. Ibid., p. 237.
35. Ibid., p. 287.
36. Byrne, p. 162; Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (Boulder, Colorado, Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1975), p. 130-131, 307.
37. Byrne, p. 164.
38. Ibid., p. 173.
39. Ibid., p. 23. Also see our article on Meditation, christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=78. See also Psalm 1:2, Joshua 1:8.
40. Jean Houston, *The Possible Human* (Boston, J.P. Tarcher, Inc., 1982), p. 178-180; Zukav, pp. 217, 237; Willis Harman, *Higher Creativity* (Los Angeles, Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1984), pp.108-109.
41. See our article on Oprah, christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=103.
42. AMROC website: "On the Spiritual Level: Achieve a gradual inner awakening, leading to a permanent awareness of the unity of all creation and your personal relationship with the "oneness" of the universe. This leads to an integration of all aspects of your being. From this spiritual foundation, from your connection with the greater whole, everything else flows. The Rosicrucian studies aid you in developing a workable and practical philosophy of life and the inner peace that comes from understanding the nature of the universe and your

relationship to it.
www.rosicrucian.org/about/mastery/mastery04potential.html.
https://www.thesecret.org/mastery/benefit.html
43. Byrne, p. 74, 77.
44. Ibid., p. 35.
45. Ibid., p. 107-108.
46. Ibid., p. 121.
47. Luke 6:28.
48. Byrne, p. 152.
49. See our article on Oprah:
christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=103.
50. John 15:8.
51. John 17:3-5.

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Edgar Cayce: The Sleeping (False) Prophet

This article is no longer available. Please see Michael Gleghorn's article "The Worldview of Edgar Cayce" instead.

We apologize for any inconvenience.

Scientology: Religion of the

Stars – A Christian Perspective

Don Closson gives an overview of the Church of Scientology and its founder, L. Ron Hubbard, from a biblical perspective, including analysis of why it is incompatible with Christianity.

This article is also available in Spanish.

Depending on your perspective, Scientology was either discovered or invented by the successful pulp and science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard. He and his followers claimed to have uncovered deep secrets of the mind and spirit. But while adherents say Hubbard's discoveries can eradicate most of what ails humanity, critics argue that Hubbard invented a new religion with the same creative mind that fashioned popular works of science fiction. Hubbard's critics add that this new religion was formulated to make its founder and close associates very wealthy.



The details of Hubbard's life are highly contentious. The Church of Scientology offers a version that is remarkable in every way. According to the Church, Hubbard was studying Shakespeare and Greek philosophy soon after he learned to read. By age six, he had become a blood brother of the Blackfoot Indians and had learned their tribal secrets and legends, an honor that supposedly few white men could claim. The Church of Scientology also maintains that he became the youngest Eagle Scout ever, and by age nineteen had traveled over a quarter of a million miles to China, Japan, Guam, the Philippines, and other countries.{1} By his late teens they claim that he had absorbed the philosophies of the East. These facts are questioned by Hubbard's critics who have posted their counter-evidence on the Web and in published materials.

The Church claims that Hubbard combined his unique background with personal research that resulted in a manuscript titled "The Original Thesis" which laid the foundation for his book *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health,* published in 1950. This work sold over 150,000 copies that year alone and continues to sell well today. In 1953, Hubbard founded the first Church of Scientology in Camden, New Jersey, and eventually planted churches around the world. In 1967, he appointed himself Commodore of a small fleet of ships from which he managed his empire while sailing the Mediterranean Sea. He returned to science fiction writing near the end of his life, publishing bestsellers *Battlefield Earth* and the enormous Mission Earth series.

Hubbard taught that the principles in Dianetics could do more for the common man than all the traditional psychological theories and therapies combined. Understandably, the American Psychological Association became alarmed. When challenged, Hubbard and his organization would sue health care professionals and anyone else who questioned their auditing therapy. Those who questioned the movement from the inside were labeled "Suppressive Persons," and were punished and driven from the Church.

The Worldview of Scientology: Cosmology

Scientology claims that its belief system does not conflict with the beliefs of Christianity. However, upon investigation the religion holds fundamental propositions about reality that create an impassible gulf between the two worldviews. If one accepts L. Ron Hubbard's view of the cosmos, it will impact every other worldview component. Scientology has unique beliefs about the nature of humanity, ethics, what happens at death, the direction of history, and even how we come to know what is true. These beliefs reveal differences that are not just surface issues; they go to the heart of our existence as human beings.

Scientology assures us that it leaves the nature of God or a supreme being undefined so that it is open to people of various faith traditions. However, it does make claims about the origin of the cosmos we live in and how things have gotten the way they are. In fact, these ideas have much in common with Gnosticism. It appears that L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology, was both aware of this ancient belief system and added original features to it in coming up with a new story of human origins.

Gnosticism competed with the early Christian church and was written about and refuted by church leaders. It combined ideas from Jewish, Christian, and pagan sources, and taught that the material universe is a mistake; in fact, it is evil. Its focus was on enlightened individuals who came to see this physical world for the illusion and mistake that it really is. By discovering secret knowledge, this person would lead others to the truth and eventually help them to transcend the trap of this earthly prison. Hubbard claimed to have been one of these enlightened people and that he had acquired knowledge that no other person has ever possessed, calling himself a "celestial mediator."

Hubbard used the acronym *MEST* to represent the material, energy, space, and time of our universe. He argued that MEST is the product or projection of a vast number of spirit creatures called *thetans* who became bored with a non-material existence and decided to emanate a universe to play in. Over a long period of time, these thetans forgot that this reality, this universe, is a product of their own design, and they began to perceive it as being real.

According to Hubbard, this "agreed upon" reality is not the product of a self-existing creator God who exists outside of the cosmos as the Judeo-Christian worldview teaches, but is instead an illusion and a barrier to overcome in order to advance as an individual. Much like Hinduism and Buddhism, Scientology finds that the reality in which we dwell is part

of our problem instead of a gift from a holy God. This belief alone should be enough to keep Christians from trusting in the gospel according to Hubbard.

The Worldview of Scientology: Human Nature

Hubbard claimed to have mastered Eastern thinking at an early age, so it is not surprising that his view of human nature borrows from Hindu and Buddhist thought. Much like Vedanta Hinduism, Scientology teaches that the only real component of humanity is an inner spirit being or spiritual spark. According to Hubbard, our minds are just a database of pictures or a conduit for the spirit, and that our bodies, along with the rest of the cosmos, are only imagined and are a hindrance to discovering the truth about our real nature.

Scientology teaches that this inner spirit being is a thetan that is both "good" and "divine." It is a being of infinite creative potential that projects or creates the universe in partnership with all other thetans. Thetans are immortal creatures who dwell in illusionary physical bodies, but over time have become confused and now believe that their physical bodies are real.

According to Scientologists, thetans who have not benefited from the practices of Scientology are trapped in a reactive state of mind and cannot operate normally. In this state, humans are more like conditioned machines rather than individuals with a free will. Even worse, they have collected negative experiences called *engrams* as they have migrated again and again into new bodies in a never-ending cycle of reincarnation. Each of these engrams must be tracked down by a trained Church of Scientology auditor and removed before a person can advance to a healthier mental state.

Once freed by the practices of Scientology, the thetan within is promised increased freedom, intelligence and even spiritual

powers. This increased capacity is claimed by many who have been “cleared” through auditing. Church publications make no guarantee regarding the results of auditing, but they do say that “auditing techniques work 100 percent of the time if they are applied correctly.”{2}

According to Hubbard, the problems facing humanity are educational rather than moral; a lack of training, not rebellion against a holy God. We are not morally deficient, but instead ignorant of our true nature. Our only “fall” is our belief that we are primarily physical beings rather than spiritual entities.

Scientology offers us a plan for self improvement; through hard work and applying Hubbard’s discoveries, anyone can reach a god-like existence. Through successful auditing, you too can become an OT or Operating Thetan, and wear Scientology’s OT bracelet, a sign that you have reached “total spiritual independence and serenity.”{3}

This is directly in conflict with the message of Christianity which states that our problem is a moral one, and the only solution is accepting the gift of forgiveness provided by Christ’s death on the cross.

Scientology and Knowledge

Hubbard was enthralled by creative people and the creative process. As a successful screen and science fiction writer, he placed the artist at the pinnacle of culture. He wrote that “A culture is only as great as its dreams, and its dreams are dreamed by artists.”{4} His stated desire was to better the entire culture by improving the lives of its most creative thinkers. As a result, the Church of Scientology built Celebrity Centres around the world for the special needs of artists and celebrities. Here, celebrities can go through the necessary process of auditing to clear themselves of negative engrams that is provided by the Church, while in an

environment that keeps fans and the paparazzi at a distance. Artists are also highlighted in Scientology's publications, and celebrity Church members Tom Cruise, Kirstie Alley, and John Travolta are all outspoken proselytizers for the church.

Part of Scientology's attraction to, and reliance on, artists and celebrities results from Hubbard's view of reality and the nature of knowledge itself. He believed that reality is the projection of billions of thetans who created it out of boredom. Matter, energy, space, and time have no independent or objective reality; they are dependent on thetan creativity. Hubbard argued that truth itself is so strange that a typical person cannot distinguish between science and science fiction. At one point Hubbard compared being a thetan to the fantasy world in *Alice in Wonderland*. He noted that thetans can "mock up [invent, or make] white rabbits and caterpillars and Mad Hatters," implying that they would find themselves right at home in Lewis Carroll's Wonderland.{5}

Only operating thetans can see reality for what it is and Hubbard claimed to have greater insight than everyone else. Since Hubbard was considered to be the most enlightened thetan, anything he declared to be true was to be accepted by his followers without question. He used and nurtured this obedience when the Church came under attack by individuals and the government, especially when someone inside the organization began to question his authority. As noted earlier, those who disagreed with Hubbard were labeled "Suppressive Persons" and marked as fair game to be deprived of property via lawsuits or even to be physically injured by other Scientologists.

Christianity acknowledges and celebrates humanity's artistic gifts which they believe reflect our being created in the image of God, the ultimate creator and artist. It also affirms the role of reason in the process of investigating the nature of God's creation. But as the book of Hebrews says, "in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son . . . through whom he

made the universe."{6} Our faith is in this Jesus, not the words of L. Ron Hubbard or the Church of Scientology.

Scientology and the Christian Faith

I recently received an email from someone who was dialoguing with a Scientologist. The Scientologist confidently claimed that Jesus died on the cross because the Jews could not accept his Buddhist teachings. She explained how Jesus had studied in China and become a Buddhist prior to his ministry in Palestine, and that the traditional view of what Jesus taught and why he died was only an opinion. Finally, this follower of L. Ron Hubbard and the Church of Scientology argued that one's sins can be forgiven only if a person pays to experience the auditing process offered by the church and eventually become an OT or Operating Thetan.

Other beliefs held by Scientologists add to the chasm that separates it from biblical Christianity. People who have left Scientology claim that it teaches a "back-story" to the current human condition. But only those who have attained the highest levels within the organization are given access to the information.

Hubbard's story goes something like this. Seventy five million years ago an evil leader called Xenu decided to eliminate the excess population from a galactic confederacy consisting of twenty-six stars and seventy-six planets. With the help of psychiatrists, he tricked billions of people into submission and exported them to the planet Teegeeack or Earth. The paralyzed victims were stacked around active volcanoes in which hydrogen bombs were placed. According to the story, the bombs were detonated and the disembodied souls or thetans were captured and brainwashed into believing in the existence of a God and the devil. Hubbard blamed the evil Xenu for planting the ideas of Catholicism and the image of crucifixion into the minds of the hapless thetans. This process also deprived the thetans of their own sense of identity, resulting in their

clinging to the few physical bodies that remained after the explosions.

As a result, those who have not benefited from Scientology's auditing process are possessed by a collection of dysfunctional thetans trying to control their every thought and action. Once cleared by Hubbard's auditing, all the confusion supposedly disappears. There is more to this "history according to L. Ron Hubbard," but it quickly becomes obvious that Scientology and its founder are teaching another gospel.

Either one can be saved via Hubbard's auditing process, which promises to give people "total spiritual independence and serenity," or we are saved by placing our faith in what Jesus Christ did on the cross, but not both.{7} Either we are divine-like beings who can overcome all our moral and mental deficiencies in the Church of Scientology, or we are creatures that were created "good" but are fallen due to rebellion against a holy God. To argue that the two systems are compatible doesn't make much sense.

Notes

1. *What is Scientology?* (Bridge Publications, 1993) p. 26-32.

2. Ibid., 93.

3. Ibid., 150.

4. Ibid., 259.

5. John Weldon, Scientology: From Science Fiction to Space-Age Religion
(Christian Research Institute, Statement DS-170, 1993). PDF available at www.equip.org/free/DS170.pdf

6. Hebrews 1:2

7. *What is Scientology?*, 150.

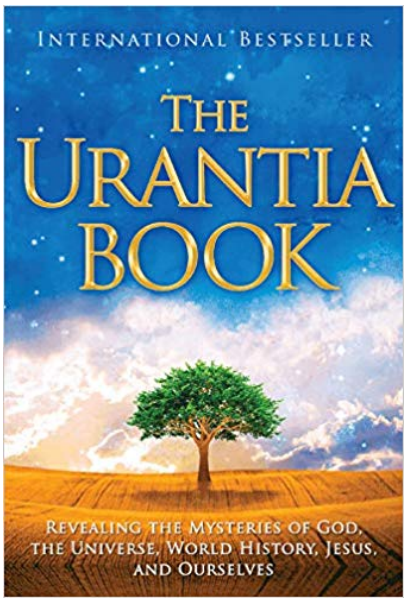
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The Urantia Book – A Biblical Worldview Perspective

Dr. Michael Gleghorn takes a hard look at the claims of The Urantia Book *and finds it lacking in substance and evidence.*

This article is also available in Spanish.

Introduction to *The Urantia Book*



Not long ago a woman wrote to me about a very painful episode in her life. About fifteen years ago her husband embarked on a spiritual quest that ultimately destroyed their marriage and family. He began reading *The Urantia Book*, a massive tome of 2,097 pages that was allegedly revealed by celestial beings from higher universes. He also became involved in various occult practices such as channeling and astral projection. Eventually, she and her husband divorced, leaving both her and her children hurt and confused.

Of course, it would probably not be fair to blame all of this family's difficulties on *The Urantia Book*. Although my correspondent's experience was quite negative, others describe their own encounter with *The Urantia Book* in very positive terms. If you visit the official Urantia Foundation Web site you can read many of these testimonials for yourself.{1} One woman wrote, "I have found *The Urantia Book* to be the most

enlightened source of wisdom I have ever come across." And another person declares *The Urantia Book* to be "the most conclusive and inspiring book on our existence."

So what is *The Urantia Book*? Where did it come from and what does it teach? And how do its doctrines compare with those of biblical Christianity? These are just a few of the questions that we want to consider in this article.

The Urantia Book claims to have been revealed by superhuman personalities from higher universes. The word "Urantia" is simply the book's name for Earth. The book consists of 196 papers and is divided into four major parts entitled: 1. "The Central and Superuniverses," 2. "The Local Universe," 3. "The History of Urantia," and 4. "The Life and Teachings of Jesus." The alleged "authors" of these papers refer to themselves by their order of being with such glorious titles as Divine Counselor, Perfector of Wisdom, Brilliant Evening Star and Chief of Seraphim. Although originally written in English, the book has since been translated into Dutch, Finnish, French, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. In addition, translations into a number of other languages are currently underway. These include Arabic, Chinese, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Romanian, and Swedish—-just to name a few.

Although devoted Urantians are absolutely convinced that every part of *The Urantia Book* was revealed by celestial intelligences, there are a number of problematic issues that need to be addressed. We'll consider a few of these later in this article. Before we do so, however, it is first necessary to give some account of the origin of *The Urantia Book*.

The Origin of the Urantia Papers

The Urantia Book was first published in 1955. But the alleged "revelations" from extra-planetary personalities apparently

began early in the twentieth century.{2} Who received these "revelations"? And who wrote them down in the massive volume that has come to be known as *The Urantia Book*?

While there is not space to specifically mention everyone who played a role in this process, two individuals were key in the reception and recording of this "revelation." The first, Dr. William Sadler, lived from 1875 to 1969. He was a psychiatrist, teacher, and prolific writer. The other individual's identity cannot be known with certainty. Dr. Sadler referred to this person as the "contact personality" and the "sleeping subject."{3} In a manner similar to that of Edgar Cayce, the so-called "sleeping prophet," the "sleeping subject" of our story was the vehicle through whom the celestial visitors supposedly communicated their revelations to Dr. Sadler and others. This small group of people, known as the Contact Commission, "was the focal point for the production of . . . the final text of The Urantia Book."{4}

Although members of the Contact Commission were sworn to secrecy regarding the identity of the "contact personality," Martin Gardner has made a strong case that the evidence points to Wilfred Custer Kellogg, Sadler's brother-in-law and a relative of the famous Kellogg family.{5} Of course, not everyone agrees with Gardner's conclusions. Ernest Moyer, a Urantian researcher, while acknowledging his inability to determine the identity of the "sleeping subject," is nonetheless convinced that it was not Wilfred.{6}

Although the identity of the "sleeping subject" may never be known with certainty, we have a fairly good record of how the Urantia papers came into being. Although there is some debate about the precise date in which Dr. Sadler first became aware of the "sleeping subject," it was probably in the summer of 1912.{7} "In 1923 the Sadlers began to invite twenty or thirty friends over for Sunday afternoon teas to discuss religious topics. At about the fourth meeting Sadler began telling the group, which came to be called the Forum, about the sleeping

subject and his startling revelations."{8} He invited Forum members to help prepare questions for the celestials. The following Sunday members returned with hundreds of questions. "Shortly thereafter," Sadler wrote, "the first Urantia paper appeared in answer to these questions . . . This was the procedure followed throughout the many years of the reception of the Urantia papers."{9} By the time this process was over there were 196 papers, consisting of 2,097 pages of material, that had allegedly been channeled through the "sleeping subject."

Problems with *The Urantia Book*

In his article, "A History of the Urantia Movement," Dr. Sadler stated, "The [Urantia] Papers were published just as we received them. The Contact Commissioners had no editorial authority. Our job was limited to 'spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.'"{10} But is this really so? There is actually ample evidence for questioning this statement.

Urantian researcher Ernest Moyer has carefully documented that Dr. Sadler made changes to the text of *The Urantia Book.*{11} The unsettling thing about these changes, at least for loyal Urantians, is that they were made after 1935, the date that Dr. Sadler claimed *The Urantia Book* was "completed and certified" in its entirety.{12} The evidence for such changes is compelling. Matthew Block, another Urantian researcher, discovered that human sources published after 1935 were later incorporated into *The Urantia Book*. For example, a book by Charles Hartshorne, published in 1941, lists seven possible meanings of "absolute perfection." Block discovered that these same seven meanings were reprinted in *The Urantia Book* almost word for word. This is merely one of several examples that could be offered of human sources published after 1935 that were later plagiarized in *The Urantia Book*.{13}

But not only were changes made after the book had been

"completed and certified," they were also made after *The Urantia Book* was first published in 1955. Many examples could be offered, but let me simply mention two. First, both Martin Gardner and Ernest Moyer point out that in the first printing of *The Urantia Book*, toward the end of the account of the Last Supper, Jesus is said to have addressed the twelve apostles. However, as the context makes clear, only eleven of the apostles were currently present. Judas had already left the group. According to Gardner, "in later printings 'the twelve' was replaced by 'the apostles,'" thus eliminating the error.{14} Second, both Gardner and Moyer also note that in the first printing of *The Urantia Book* the wise men are said to have visited the newborn Jesus "in the manger." However, according to a later passage in *The Urantia Book*, this visit must have occurred when Jesus and his parents were in a room at the inn. Gardner notes, "When this contradiction was noticed, the words 'in the manger' were removed from the next printing."{15}

What are we to conclude from such known and acknowledged errors, contradictions and plagiarisms in *The Urantia Book*? Such problems clearly raise doubts about the integrity of this "revelation." Wherever the information in *The Urantia Book* has come from—whether extra-planetary personalities, human beings, demonic spirits, or some combination of these—the source of this information is not entirely trustworthy. Moreover, it is not entirely biblical either.

The Bible and *The Urantia Book*

In his appendix to *The Mind at Mischief*, Dr. Sadler stated that the information imparted through the "sleeping subject" was "essentially Christian."{16} Since this information is allegedly contained in *The Urantia Book*, we would expect the contents of this book to likewise be "essentially Christian." But are they?

If we compare the teachings of *The Urantia Book* with those of the Bible, we quickly discover that *The Urantia Book*, far from being consistent with biblical Christianity, actually denies or distorts almost every fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. For example, contrary to the testimony of Jesus in the New Testament—that the Scriptures are the word of God (Matt. 15:3-6), inspired by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 22:43), and completely true and accurate in all details (Matt. 5:17-18; Luke 24:44; John 17:17)—*The Urantia Book* has Jesus declaring to Nathaniel, "the Scriptures are faulty and altogether human in origin" (*UB,* 1767).

The rejection of the Bible as a fallible human document sets the stage for the rejection of many other biblical doctrines as well. For example, *The Urantia Book* rejects the Bible's views about God, Christ, man, sin, and salvation. Contrary to the biblical position that there is only one God (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:21), *The Urantia Book* espouses polytheism, the belief in many "Gods." Martin Gardner points out that the term "Gods" (a capitalized plural) "appears more than a hundred times" in *The Urantia Book*.{17} For instance, on page 364 we read, "We are all a part of an eternal project which the Gods are supervising and outworking." Although *The Urantia Book* does acknowledge the existence of one supreme God, it rejects biblical Trinitarianism in favor of its own view that there is actually a "Trinity of Trinities" (*UB*, 1170-73). But this is only the beginning. According to Gardner, there are so many "gods" in *The Urantia Book* that its polytheism "puts Greek and Hindu mythology to shame."{18}

The view of Jesus presented in *The Urantia Book* is equally disturbing and unbiblical. To begin, the virgin birth is rejected. Jesus was simply born of Joseph and Mary (*UB*, 1344-45). Nevertheless, although he had human parents, he is also presented as the incarnation of Michael of Nebadon, the creator of our universe and one of "more than 700,000 Creator Sons of the Eternal Son."{19} This clearly conflicts with the

New Testament's view of Jesus, which reveals that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38). Furthermore, John tells us that Jesus is the one and only eternal Son of God in an absolutely unique sense (John 1:1-2, 14; 3:16). He is *not* merely one of more than 700,000 other Creator Sons; He is truly unique.

These doctrinal differences are only the tip of the iceberg. There are many other differences between *The Urantia Book* and the Bible. However, due to space considerations, I can only mention the following.

The Urantia Book declares, "There has been no 'fall of man.'" (*UB*, 846). This explains, at least in part, why there is also no need for any blood atonement for sin (*UB*, 60). *The Urantia Book* tells us, "The whole idea of ransom and atonement is incompatible with the concept of God as it was taught and exemplified by Jesus of Nazareth" (*UB,* 2017). The notion of "substituting an innocent sufferer for a guilty offender" is dismissed as a "childish scheme" (*UB*, 2017). What, then, was the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross? According to *The Urantia Book*, "We know that the death on the cross was not to effect man's reconciliation to God but to stimulate man's *realization* of the Father's eternal love and his Son's unending mercy" (*UB*, 2019). Obviously, these teachings strike at the very heart of the Christian message.

Genesis 3-5 and Romans 5 make it quite clear that there has indeed been a "fall of man" into sin and rebellion against his Creator. The entire race was ruined and condemned because of Adam's disobedience. Paul tells us plainly that "the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men" (Rom. 5:18). The ideas of ransom and substitutionary atonement are not incompatible with Jesus' view of God. Indeed, Jesus Himself stated that He came "to give His life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). The Bible tells us that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), but it also tells us that "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). Contrary to *The Urantia Book*, Jesus did not die

merely to stimulate man's *realization* of the Father's love; He died to reconcile us to God (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:22). It is because Christ died for our sins that God can now offer us salvation as a free gift (Rom. 6:23). We cannot earn this gift; we can only gratefully receive it through faith in Christ (Rom. 3:22-28; Eph. 2:8-9).

The Urantia Book proclaims a different God, a different Jesus, and a different Gospel than the Bible. Its message, allegedly revealed by higher spiritual beings, is fundamentally at odds with biblical Christianity. In light of this, it's sobering to think of all the biblical warnings about lying and deceptive spirits (e.g. 1 Kings 22:22-23; John 8:44; 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 20:7-10). Dr. Sadler once wrote that if there was anything supernatural about mediumistic phenomena, it was probably demonic.{20} But when he actually encountered someone whose channeling he thought genuine, he did not resort to this hypothesis. He embraced the revelations and eventually helped publish *The Urantia Book*. It's a pity he didn't stick with his original hypothesis. Who knows? It may have even been true.{21}

Notes

- See "What People Are Saying About *The Urantia Book* . . ." at http://www.urantia.org/about.html#What (Dec. 2, 2003).
- Martin Gardner, *Urantia: The Great Cult Mystery* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1995), 114.
- William S. Sadler, "A History of the Urantia Movement," at http://www.urantia.org/pub/ahotum.html.
- "Where Did *The Urantia Book* Come From?" at http://www.urantia.org/about.html#Where (Dec. 2, 2003).
- Gardner, *Urantia,* 97-134.
- See Ernest Moyer, *The Birth of a Divine Revelation,* chapters 16-17, at http://www.world-destiny.org/tocp.htm.
- Gardner, *Urantia,* 114-122.

- Ibid, 116.
- Sadler, “A History of the Urantia Movement,” at http://www.urantia.org/pub/ahotum.html.
- Ibid.
- See Moyer, *The Birth of a Divine Revelation,* chapters 34, 37, and 43 at http://www.world-destiny.org/tocp.htm.
- Sadler, “A History of the Urantia Movement,” at http://www.urantia.org/pub/ahotum.html.
- For more information, see Gardner, *Urantia,* 321-57.
- Gardner, Urantia, 126. See also Moyer, *The Birth of a Divine Revelation,* chapter 43, at http://www.world-destiny.org/tocp.htm.
- Ibid.
- Gardner, *Urantia,* 125.
- Ibid., 25.
- For example, see Sadler, *The Truth About Spiritualism* (Chicago: McClurg, 1923), 207-08 and *The Physiology of Faith and Fear* (Chicago: McClurg, 1912), 467.
- Sadler made a distinction between mediums and seers. He viewed the former as those who claim to communicate with the dead; the latter, as those who might genuinely be in touch with some sort of divine reality (see Gardner, *Urantia,* 109). Although Sadler thought it possible that demonic spirits might be behind some mediumistic phenomena, he believed the “sleeping subject” was a seer—not a medium. Nevertheless, if demonic spirits actually exist, and if they can impersonate the spirits of the dead, then why couldn’t such spirits also impersonate celestial beings from higher universes?

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Character of the Cults: A Christian Perspective

Written by Patrick Zukeran

Dr. Zukeran compares the beliefs of several modern cults against a conservative biblical worldview. This analysis makes it readily apparent that cults are not representing a scriptural view of true Christianity.

Challenge of the Cults

This church is growing so rapidly, sociologist Rodney Stark predicts that by the year 2080, it will become the most important world religion to emerge since the rise of Islam.{1} What church is Dr. Stark describing? It is not a Christian church but the Mormon Church, an organization labeled as a cult. The rise of the Mormon Church represents the growing challenge facing the church, the kingdom of the cults.

What is a cult? The greatest authority on the cults, the late Dr. Walter Martin, described a cult as "A group of people gathered around a specific person's misinterpretation of the Bible."{2} Cults are groups that claim to be in harmony with Christianity but deny foundational Christian doctrines such as the Trinity or the unique deity of Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 7:15-17, Jesus gives us a warning about the coming of the cults. He states, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them." What Jesus was warning was that cultists will look, act, and sound like Christians. However, that is only in external appearance. One can parade as a true believer for a time, but eventually one's words, actions, and especially one's beliefs—their "fruit"—will give one away as a counterfeit.

The growth of the cults can be attributed to several factors. First, it is a fulfillment of the warning given by Jesus and the apostles. In Matthew 24:23-26, Jesus warns us that as His return draws near, there will be an increase in false prophets who will ensnare many in their false teachings. In 2 Peter 2:1-3, Peter warns us that false teachers will arise from within the church.

The second factor in the growth of the cults is the breakdown of the family. Cults provide the family atmosphere many from broken homes long for; the cult leader often takes the place of a father figure.

Finally, we can attribute the growth of the cults to the failure of the church. As my mentor repeatedly stated, "The cults are the unpaid bills of the church." The cults thrive because Christians are lacking in biblical and theological understanding. Dr. Martin stated, "The rise of the cults is directly proportional to the fluctuating emphasis which the church has placed on the teachings of biblical doctrine to Christian laymen. To be sure, few pastors, teachers, and evangelists defend adequately their beliefs, but most of them – and most of the average Christian laymen – are hard put to confront and refute a well-trained cultist of almost any variety."{3} If the church engaged in solid and in-depth Bible teaching, the cults would not flourish as they do today.

Doctrinal Character of the Cults

How do you know if a religious group is a cult? Jesus said that you will know false prophets by their fruits. In stating this he was not only speaking of their words and actions but of their doctrinal beliefs as well. Cults deviate from biblical Christianity in several key areas of doctrine.

Cults promote false teaching on the nature of God. The Bible teaches there is one God revealed in three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The central feature

that distinguishes cults from biblical Christianity is the doctrine of the Trinity. All cults have a distorted view of this doctrine. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses condemn the doctrine of the Trinity, and Mormons teach tritheism, three gods who make up the godhead.

Second, cults teach a false view of Jesus. The Bible teaches that Christ is 100 percent man and 100 percent God. This has been called the *hypostatic union*. In 2 Corinthians 11:4, Paul warned about false teachers teaching another Jesus. A modern-day example of false teaching is Christian Science which teaches that Jesus was not God but a man who displayed the Christ idea. He neither died for sins, nor was He resurrected.

Third is a false teaching on salvation. All cults have a works-oriented Gospel. The death of Christ is believed to give followers the *potential* to be saved. So after believing in Christ, one must serve the organization to attain salvation. Salvation is found in the organization and one is never really sure if one has done enough to be worthy of salvation. In the International Church of Christ, for example, disciples are scrutinized by their discipler daily to determine if they performed as worthy disciples. Failure to meet the standards may result in discipline. Disciples can never be certain they have done enough for salvation.

Fourth, there is extra-biblical revelation and the denial of the sole authority of the Bible. Cults claim that extra revelation is given to the leader whose words are seen as inspired by God and equal to the Bible. If there is a conflict between the Bible and the leader's words, the latter takes precedence. So in reality, the leader's writings take precedence over the Bible. When interacting with cultists, I often hear them claim their teachings are consistent with the Bible. However, when I point out where their teachings deviate from the Bible, they eventually claim the Bible to be in error. In most cases, cultists claim the Bible has somehow been corrupted by the church.

Sociological Structure of the Cults

Not only do cults deviate doctrinally from biblical Christianity, they have distinctive sociological characteristics. The first is authoritarianism. The leader or organization exercises complete control over a follower's life. The words of the leadership are ultimate and often considered divinely inspired. Going against the leadership is equivalent to going against the commands of God.

The second characteristic is an elitist mentality. Most cults believe they are the true church and the only ones who will be saved. This is because the group believes they have new revelation or understanding that gives them superior standing.

Third is isolationism. Due to their elitist mentality, cultists believe those who do not agree with them are deceived or under the influence of Satan. Therefore, many feel their members must be protected from the outside world, and physical or psychological barriers are created. Members are prohibited from communicating with those outside the organization who do not agree with the teachings of the group.

Fourth, there is closed-mindedness and the discouragement of individual thinking. Because of its authoritarian nature, leaders are the only ones thought to be able to properly interpret the Bible. All members are to turn to the organization for biblical interpretation and advice on life decisions. Therefore, individual thinking and questioning is discouraged. There is an unwillingness to dialogue and consider other viewpoints.

Fifth is a legalistic lifestyle. As mentioned earlier, salvation is not based on grace; cults teach a works-oriented gospel. This leads to a lifestyle of legalism. Followers must live up to the group's standards in order to attain or maintain their membership and hope for eternal life. Followers are required to faithfully serve, and attend meetings,

studies, and services. As a result, there is tremendous pressure to live up to the requirements of the organization.

Finally there is a difficult exit process. Since salvation is found in the organization, leaving the organization is considered by many to be leaving God. All former members who leave cults are shunned by members which often includes members of their own family. Many are warned that if they leave, they will be condemned to hell, or seduced by Satan. Many ex-members are harassed by the organization even after they leave. Exiting members often end up distrusting any religious organization and end up feeling isolated and alone.

Life in the cults is marked by fear of judgment, pressure, and legalism. This is a far cry from what we are taught in the Bible. Jesus and the apostles taught that the new life in Christ is one of grace, love, and freedom from the law. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus said, “Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.” The peace and rest promised by Christ is seldom experienced by those in the cults.

Cultic Methodology

When you receive a knock on your door in the mornings, who do you assume it to be? A salesman? A Girl Scout selling cookies? For many of us, we assume it to be a Jehovah’s Witness or a Mormon missionary looking to tell us about his or her organization. One of the reasons cults have grown is their methodology.

The methods cults use to win converts are moral deception, aggressive proselytizing, and Scripture twisting. By moral deception I mean cults use Christian terminology to win converts. For example, New Agers use the term *born again* to support reincarnation. Mormons use terms like the *Trinity* and *salvation by grace* but these terms have different meanings than what the Bible teaches. Therefore, many untrained

Christians are deceived into believing these groups are actually Christian.

Aggressive proselytizing is another method of the cults. Although many Christian groups use aggressive evangelism, they do so out of a love for God and a desire to see others come to know Christ. Many cultists proselytize for much the same reasons but added to this is the desire to win God's approval. They work *for* grace rather than *from* grace. The cults require their members to evangelize. Many groups hold their members accountable for the number of hours they spend witnessing for the organization. Many members feel guilty if a day or so goes by without them proselytizing.

Scripture twisting is another method of the cults. Cultist quote verses in the Bible that support their position, but skip over the verses that do not. Often, there is gross misinterpretation of Scripture so that contradictory verses will better fall in line with their views.

For example, Jehovah's Witness and Mormons try to use verses to show Jesus is a created being. However, their position is easily shown to be incorrect when you explain the context and correct meaning of the terms. Also, when you show additional verses that contradict their position, they are often surprised and realize they have never seen those verse before or that the organization's explanations of those verses are unable to be supported.

To successfully engage in conversation and effectively witness to those in the cults, Christians must be prepared in the following ways. First Peter 3:15 states that we must always be "prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." We must be prepared by knowing the word of God through diligent study of it. Second, we must be prepared to overcome our fears and lovingly reach out to cult members, exercising the fruits of patience and gentleness as

we share the truth.

Danger of the Cults

The rise of the cults pose a serious challenge to the church because they present several dangers to the church and families involved. First, there is a spiritual danger. First Timothy 4:1 states "…that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." Ultimately the spirit behind all lies and deception is the devil, so the ultimate force behind the cults is the evil one.

Galatians 1:8 states, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other that than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned." The false gospel of the cults cannot lead anyone to salvation. There are eternal consequences for false beliefs. For this reason Jesus and the apostles are very harsh on false teachers.

There is also a psychological danger. The mind controlling techniques used by the organizations can cause immense damage mentally and emotionally. Living under the pressure, guilt, and dependence on the organization has proven to have tremendous negative effects on individuals.

Third, there is domestic danger. Individuals are taught that loyalty to the organization is equivalent to allegiance with God. Therefore, loyalty to the organization supercedes loyalty to family. Thus, if a family member begins conducting himself in a way the organization does not approve of, the cult will often separate the family from the individual member. Isolation can be emotional or physical. Numerous families have been separated as a result.

In some cases there is a physical danger. The teachings of David Koresh cost the Branch Davidians their lives. Hobart Freeman taught that believers did not need medicine for

illnesses, and told his followers to throw all theirs away. As a result, he and fifty-two of his members died from curable conditions.

In light of this threat, what are Christians called to do? First, we are called to study and know the Word of God. Paul writes to Timothy and all saints saying, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” Christians should master the Bible so that they will not be deceived by any false teaching. Second, Titus commands us to be able to confront and refute false teachers. Finally, in Acts 20, Paul exhorts the leaders of the church to protect their flock from the false teachers that will prey upon the sheep. Every Christian is called to know the truth so well they can confront false teaching, and protect their church and family from it.

Notes

1. Richard Ostling, *Mormon America* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper Collins Publishing Inc. 1999), p. XVI.

2. Walter Martin & Hank Hannegraph, *The Kingdom of the Cults* (Minneapolis, Mich.: Bethany House Publishers, 1997), p. 17.

3. Norman Geisler, *When Cultists Ask* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1997), p. 15.

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Wicca: A Biblical Critique

Dr. Michael Gleghorn examines some of the fundamental doctrines of Wicca, offers a biblical critique of those doctrines, and highlights the differences between Wicca and Christianity.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

The Goddess and the God

By some estimates, Wicca "appears to be the fastest growing

religion in America."{1} But what exactly is "Wicca" anyway? One scholar writes, "The modern religion of Wicca, otherwise known as Old Religion, Magick, Witchcraft, the Craft, and the Mysteries, is part of the neo-pagan movement."{2} In this article I hope to accomplish two things. First, I want to outline some of the fundamental doctrines of Wicca; second, I want to offer a biblical critique of those doctrines.

Let's begin with Wiccan theology. Although some Wiccans are devoted exclusively to the Goddess, most worship both the Goddess and the God. Raven Grimassi, a Wiccan scholar, has written, "The Source of All Things, also known as the Great Spirit, is generally personified in Wiccan belief as a Goddess and a God."{3}

It's important to point out that the Goddess and God are merely *personifications* of this ultimate source of all things. The Source itself is both "unknowable" and "incomprehensible."{4} It is perhaps for this reason that some "Neo-Wiccans" have simply abandoned such personifications altogether, choosing rather to view the gods as simply "detached metaphysical concepts."{5} But for those who embrace such personifications, the Goddess has often been associated with the moon (and has thus sometimes been called the *Queen of Heaven*).{6} She is also known in three aspects, corresponding to the three stages of a woman's life: Maiden, Mother, and Crone.{7} She was alleged to have reigned "with a male consort called *The Horned One* who was a nature god and was also associated with the sun."{8} Interestingly, this god was not only viewed as the consort of the Goddess, he was also her son as well. Each year he was born of the Goddess, became her lover, and died-only to be reborn once more the following year from his own seed! This was known as the Year God cycle and was associated with the fertility of the land and the annual cycles of seedtime and harvest.{9}

Interestingly, modern Wicca shares many similarities with the ancient fertility religions of Canaan, religions specifically

condemned by God in the Bible.{10} For instance, the Wiccan Goddess is revered by some as the *Queen of Heaven,* by others as *Astarte*.{11} But in the Bible, the worship of Ishtar, the queen of heaven, and Astarte, or Ashtoreth, is repeatedly condemned, as is the worship of her consort, known sometimes as Baal, sometimes as Tammuz.{12} Thus in Judges 2:11-13 we read: "Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord . . . they provoked the Lord to anger . . . they forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreth." But if the only true God rejected the ancient Canaanite religions and their practices, would His reaction to modern Wicca likely be any different?

The Watchers

"The Watchers is a concept common to most Wiccan Traditions, although they are viewed differently by the various systems within Wicca."{13} Raven Grimassi describes these "Watchers" as "an ancient race who have evolved beyond the need for physical form."{14} However, he is quick to add that, historically, the "Watchers" have been conceived in a diversity of ways. For instance, in the early Stellar myths the Watchers were "gods who guarded the Heavens and the Earth."{15} Later, he says, "the Greeks reduced them to the Gods of the four winds, and the Christians to principalities of the air."{16}

The connection, observed by Grimassi, between the Wiccan concept of the Watchers and the Christian concept of angels may find some validation in the Bible. In Daniel 4:13-17, the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar relates a dream to Daniel. He tells him that during the dream a "watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven" and pronounced a judgment that is said to be "by the decree of the watchers . . . a command of the holy ones . . . that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind." Most conservative commentators understand the "watchers" in this passage to be angels. One

commentator writes, “The king is probably referring to the angels which were known to him through the Babylonian religion.”{17} But that these beings are indeed the biblical angels seems evident from the fact that they are acting as *messengers* of the Most High God.{18}

In light of this connection between the “watchers” and angels, it is interesting to note that “Rabbinic and Cabalistic lore” made a distinction between good and evil Watchers.{19} This distinction parallels the biblical distinction between good and evil angels, or angels and demons. Indeed, Grimassi notes, “In the *Secret Book of Enoch*, the Watchers . . . are listed as rebellious angels who followed Sataniel in a heavenly war.”{20} We find a similar incident recounted in Revelation 12:7-9, where we read of a heavenly war in which Michael and his angels cast Satan and his angels from heaven to earth.

With this in mind it is interesting to note that Richard Cavendish, in his book *The Powers of Evil*, “lists the Watchers as the Fallen Angels that magicians call forth in ceremonial magick.”{21} This remark is especially noteworthy when one considers Grimassi’s comments concerning “the relationship that exists between a Wiccan and the Watchers.”{22} Grimassi points out that “every act of magick that a Wiccan performs is observed and noted by the Watchers.”{23} Furthermore, he says, “There is a definite link between the ‘powers’ of a Wiccan and their rapport with the Watchers.”{24} But since the God of the Bible clearly prohibits magic, is it likely that these “Watchers” should be thought of as good spirits (inasmuch as they oppose the ordinance of God)?{25}

The Art of Magick

Wiccans view magick as a genuine possibility because of humanity’s intrinsic connection both to Deity and a supernatural order. Raven Grimassi states: “The art of magick is one of creation. . . . The power to create from *thoughts* is linked to the divine spark within us. We create in accordance

with the divine formula that created all things."{26}

But how is this possible? Grimassi explains, "The astral plane is the link between the divine world and the physical. . . . Whatever manifests on the astral plane will eventually manifest on the physical plane."{27} And human thought can manifest on the astral plane.{28} Thus, for one accomplished in the art of Wiccan magick, the power to secure a desired effect in the physical world is alleged to begin with the careful creation of a thought-form on the astral plane.{29} Grimassi continues: "Thought-forms begin to appear in the astral material, which then become vehicles for the spirits or deities that have been invoked (through which they will respond to the desire of the magickal intent)."{30} If done properly, "the magickal seeds planted in the astral plane" will eventually bear fruit on the physical plane.{31} This is the basic theory behind Wiccan magick. And one practitioner has boasted, "No matter what type of coven magic is used, it is usually effective."{32}

Might there actually be some truth to this? Indeed, there might. The book of Exodus tells us that the Egyptian magicians were able to duplicate, by means of "their secret arts," the initial plagues God brought upon Egypt!{33} Furthermore, the text never hints that this was done by any means other than some genuine secret power. In light of this we might ask why God is so opposed to the practice of magic. After all, couldn't such power be used for good, as well as evil? But God specifically warned the Israelites: "There shall not be found among you anyone" who practices divination, witchcraft, sorcery, or spiritism.{34} Why is this?

Could it be that the "secret power" of magick is due, not to its various rituals, symbols and gestures, but rather to the supernatural intervention of spirit beings? In Acts 16 we read of a demon-possessed slave-girl described as "having a spirit of divination . . . who was bringing her masters much profit by fortunetelling."{35} This passage clearly ties the power of

divination to demons. With this in mind, it's interesting to remember Grimassi's admission: "There is a definite link between the 'powers' of a Wiccan and their rapport with the Watchers."{36} Wiccans view the Watchers as a race of highly evolved spiritual beings.{37} But these beings are linked with angels and demons in other religious literature (including the Bible).{38} Is it possible that God prohibits magic because He wants to protect people from involvement with demons?

The Summerland and Reincarnation

Like Christians, Wiccans do not believe that physical death is the end of personal existence. Nevertheless, in its details the Wiccan doctrine of the "afterlife" differs substantially from the biblical view. How so?

To begin, Wiccans do not accept the biblical doctrines of heaven and hell. Rather, they believe that after physical death, "Wiccans pass into a spirit world known as the Summerland . . . a metaphysical astral realm of meadows, lakes, and forests where it is always summer. It is a Pagan paradise filled with all the lovely creatures of ancient lore, and the gods themselves dwell there."{39} The Summerland is viewed as a place of rest and renewal for the soul before its rebirth into the physical world.{40}

The belief in the soul's rebirth into the physical world, also known as reincarnation, is another way in which Wiccan doctrines differ from those of biblical Christianity. Though the doctrine of reincarnation is completely unbiblical, many Wiccans actually believe it is taught in the Bible. Raven Grimassi cites John 9:1-3 as evidence that even Jesus and His disciples believed in reincarnation!{41} In this passage Jesus' disciples ask Him about a man born blind: "'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him.'" Grimassi comments: "Jesus does

not denounce the question of this man's existence prior to this birth, but explains that [his blindness] had nothing to do with his sins prior to his present life."{42} But is this interpretation correct? Is Jesus really affirming that this man existed *prior* to his present life?

It's important to understand both the disciples' question, and Jesus' response, from within the historical context of first century Judaism. "The Jewish theologians of that time gave two reasons for birth defects: *prenatal sin* (before birth, *but not* before conception) and *parental sin*."{43} In other words, first century Jewish rabbis did not believe that birth defects resulted from bad karma in a previous incarnation! Rather, they thought such defects arose either from the sins of the parents being visited upon their children, or from the sin of the child while still in the mother's womb.{44} Although Jesus denies that either of these causes was responsible for this man's blindness, we must still bear in mind that His *disciples* were asking this question from within a first century Jewish context. We must also remember that elsewhere the New Testament explicitly affirms, "[I]t is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."{45} Thus, far from affirming the Wiccan doctrine of reincarnation, the New Testament clearly denies it.

Is Wicca Another Way to God?

Scott Cunningham claimed, "All religions have one ideal at their core: to unite their followers with Deity. Wicca is no different."{46} He also wrote, "Perhaps it's not too strong to say that the highest form of human vanity is to assume that your religion is the only way to Deity."{47} But is it really true that there are many ways to God, or is there only one?

Although it's quite common in today's pluralistic society to assume that all the enduring religious traditions of mankind are equally valid ways to God or Ultimate Reality, there are tremendous philosophical difficulties with this belief. Since

we are here concerned with both Wicca and Christianity, let's briefly compare some of the fundamental tenets of these two religions and see what we come up with.

Wiccans appear to believe in the essential divinity of human nature. Raven Grimassi writes, "[E]verything bears the 'divine spark' of its creator."{48} He also claims, "Souls are like brain cells in the mind of the Divine Creator, individual entities and yet part of the whole."{49} Thus, there doesn't seem to be any clear distinction in Wicca between humanity and Deity. This explains why the Witch Starhawk could confidently declare, "there is nothing to be saved *from . . .* no God outside the world to be feared and obeyed."{50}

Christianity, however, maintains a firm distinction between God and man. Man is created in God's image, but he is neither God nor a part of God. Furthermore, although man bears God's image, his nature has been corrupted by sin, which separates him from God. Man's need, therefore, is to be saved from his sins and reconciled to God. This explains the significance of Christ for Christianity. As Peter put it, "Christ . . . died for sins once for all . . . that He might bring us to God."{51} Christians believe that God dealt fully and finally with man's sin through the death and resurrection of His Son.{52} Thus, contrary to Wicca, Christianity teaches that there *is* something to be saved from and that there *is* a God outside the world to be both feared and obeyed.

Because of their differences, the law of non-contradiction makes it impossible for both of these religions to be true. It's therefore interesting to note Charlotte Allen's observation: "In all probability, not a single element of the Wiccan story is true. The evidence is overwhelming that Wicca is . . . a 1950s concoction . . . of an English civil servant and amateur anthropologist" named Gerald Gardner.{53} But surely such questionable historical origins cast doubt on the truth of Wiccan religious beliefs as well. Christianity, however, is firmly rooted in the historical reality of Jesus

of Nazareth, whose claim to be the *only* way to God was clearly vindicated when God "furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."{54}

Notes

1. Charlotte Allen, "The Scholars and the Goddess" *The Atlantic Monthly* (January 2001): 18.

2. Fritz Ridenour, *So What's the Difference?* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2001), 209.

3. Raven Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries: Ancient Origins and Teachings* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2000), 33.

4. Scott Cunningham, *The Truth About Witchcraft Today* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 1999), 76.

5. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries,* 33.

6. Ibid., 25.

7. Cunningham, *The Truth About Witchcraft Today,* 73.

8. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries,* 26.

9. Ibid., 88-89.

10. Ridenour, *So What's the Difference?,* 210. This is not to imply, of course, that Wicca itself is ancient. The antiquity of Wicca has been seriously challenged by modern scholarship.

11. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries*, 25; Cunningham, *The Truth About Witchcraft Today,* 72.

12. For instance, see Judges 2:11-17; 2 Kings 23:4-14; Jeremiah 44:15-23; Ezekiel 8:14-15. For documentation concerning the consort of Ashtoreth being Baal and/or Tammuz see J.D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney, eds. *The New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan:

Zondervan, 1987), s.v. “Ashtoreth,” 100-01; “Tammuz,” 986. For documentation that Ishtar, the queen of heaven, was associated with Tammuz see Trent C. Butler, gen. ed. *Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), s.v. “Ishtar,” 721; “Tammuz,” 1321.

13. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries,* 99.

14. Ibid., 100.

15. Ibid., 101.

16. Ibid.

17. Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 103.

18. Compare Daniel 4:17 with 4:24.

19. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries,* 102.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., 103.

22. Ibid., 106.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid. This is not to imply that Wiccans explicitly worship Satan or demons (understood in the Christian sense). They are very careful to say they do not, and we should take them at their word. At the same time, is it legitimate to ask if one can be deceived by the devil without actually worshipping the devil? For while Wiccans may not worship the devil, the Bible seems to indicate that they have nonetheless been deceived by him. Wicca, for example, rejects the biblical doctrines of God, man, Christ, sin, salvation, etc. As a religion, therefore, Wicca helps prevent men and women from coming to a saving knowledge of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible, however, declares that this is also one of the

activities of Satan! It reveals that the devil “has blinded the minds of the unbelieving” to keep them from saving faith in Christ (see 2 Cor. 4:3-4). It is for this reason that Christians, while acknowledging that Wiccans do not worship the devil, nonetheless view the religion of Wicca as a means of Satanic deception since it keeps its followers from saving faith in Christ.

25. See Deuteronomy 18:9-13.

26. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries*, 140.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., 150.

29. Ibid., 140-41.

30. Ibid., 140.

31. Ibid., 159.

32. Cunningham, *The Truth About Witchcraft Today,* 125.

33. See Exodus 7:11-12, 22; 8:6-7.

34. See Deuteronomy 18:9-13.

35. See Acts 16:16-18.

36. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries*, 106.

37. Ibid., 100.

38. Ibid., 101-03.

39. Ibid., 30.

40. Ibid., 32.

41. Ibid., 113.

42. Ibid.

43. Norman L. Geisler and Ron Rhodes, *When Cultists Ask: A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), 175.

44. Ibid.

45. Hebrews 9:27.

46. Cunningham, *The Truth About Witchcraft Today,* 77.

47. Ibid., 66.

48. Grimassi, *The Wiccan Mysteries*, 26.

49. Ibid., 27.

50. Starhawk (Miriam Simos), *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 9, cited in Ridenour, *So What's the Difference*, 213.

51. 1 Peter 3:18.

52. See Romans 4:25.

53. Allen, "The Scholars and the Goddess," 19.

54. See John 14:6 and Acts 17:31.

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The Worldview of Edgar Cayce — An Evaluation of His

Teachings from a Biblical Perspective

The Edgar Cayce Readings

By all accounts Edgar Cayce was truly a remarkable man. Beginning in 1901 and continuing until his death in 1945 he gave thousands of psychic readings. Broadly speaking, these readings were of two types: health readings and life readings. The health readings consisted of a psychic diagnosis of a patient's physical ailments and a prescription for how these ailments should be treated. The life readings consisted of answers to all sorts of personal, religious, and philosophical questions. One rather interesting aspect of these readings is the manner in which they were given: Cayce would lie down on the couch and put himself into a trance state resembling sleep. It was this manner of giving readings that led one of his biographers, Jess Stearn, to refer to Cayce as "The Sleeping Prophet."{1}

Just how accurate were these readings? Although it is impossible to verify everything Cayce said, some contend that his accuracy rate was over ninety percent!{2} But "with all his vaunted powers," writes Stearn, "Cayce was a humble man, religious, God-fearing, who read the Bible every day of his life."{3} Indeed, Cayce read through the entire Bible every year and regularly taught Sunday school throughout his life. It is probably for reasons such as these that many people believe that the worldview of the readings is generally consistent with biblical Christianity. But is this really so? How well does the worldview of the Edgar Cayce readings compare with that of the Bible?

Herbert Puryear writes, "The content of . . . the Edgar Cayce readings is . . . always Christ-centered, supporting the

ultimate importance of the unique work of Jesus of Nazareth."{4} But as I hope to demonstrate in this article, such a claim can only be true by redefining the person and work of Jesus Christ to mean something quite different from what the Bible teaches.

For instance Thomas Sugrue, Cayce's earliest biographer and long-time friend, begins his chapter on the philosophy of the readings by stating, "The system of metaphysical thought which emerges from the readings of Edgar Cayce is a Christianized version of the mystery religions of ancient Egypt, Chaldea, Persia, India, and Greece."{5} The worldview of the readings actually has much more in common with New Age metaphysics and occult philosophy than it does with biblical Christianity.

Although I have little doubt that, as a person, Cayce was kind and humble and motivated by a sincere desire to help his fellow man, it obviously does not follow that the worldview revealed in the readings is therefore true. And while I certainly acknowledge that Cayce regularly read and taught the Bible, it by no means follows that the philosophy of the readings is therefore biblical.

The Nature of God

According to Dr. Herbert Puryear, "More consequences for thought and action follow from the affirmation or denial of God than from answering any other fundamental question."{6} It's difficult to overestimate the importance of this observation. Equally important, however, for those affirming the existence of God, is the kind of God they affirm to exist.

There can be no doubt that God is of primary importance in the Edgar Cayce readings. The readings certainly affirm the existence of God, an affirmation that they obviously share with biblical Christianity. This being said, however, there is a marked difference in what each source affirms about the nature of God.

Dr. Puryear writes, “The clearly articulated philosophy of the Edgar Cayce readings is a thoroughgoing monism.”{7} The doctrine of monism claims that all reality is of the same essence. In other words, “All is one.” Indeed, in the introduction to his book Dr. Puryear claims that “the oneness of all force” is the “first premise of the Edgar Cayce readings.”

What effect does this first premise have on the view of God presented in the readings? Dr. Puryear writes, “With the premise of the oneness of all force we affirm that *God is*, that He is *all that is*, and *all that is*, is God.”{8} This view is known as pantheism. It comes from two Greek words: *pan*, meaning “all” or “every,” and *theos*, meaning “God.” In other words pantheism, like the Edgar Cayce readings, teaches that everything is God – a view substantially at odds with the biblical doctrine of God. Let’s look, then, at what the Bible *does* say about God.

Let’s first acknowledge that the Bible, like the Edgar Cayce readings, does indeed affirm that God is one. Moses wrote, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!” (Deut. 6:4) But the biblical affirmation means something very different from the doctrine of pantheism espoused in the Cayce readings. The Bible is affirming that there is only one Lord God. It is not teaching that “All is One,” nor that the name we should give to this all-inclusive Oneness is “God.” The biblical view that the Lord is one is sometimes referred to as monotheism. It holds that there is only one God – *not many*, as Israel’s polytheistic neighbors believed. It also holds that God, as the Creator of all that exists (other than Himself), is not to be identified with any created thing.{9} This view contrasts with the doctrine of pantheism, which clearly blurs the distinction between Creator and creation.

Since the view of God presented in the Edgar Cayce readings is basically pantheistic,{10} it is also, by virtue of this fact, clearly unbiblical. Next we’ll see how this effects the

readings' presentations of both Christ and men.

Christ and Men

How did the view of a pantheistic God influence Cayce's doctrines of Christ and men?

Thomas Sugrue, in summarizing the philosophy of the readings, says that in the beginning God "projected from Himself the cosmos and souls."{11} Thus, according to this view, everything that exists (including man) is somehow part of God. Or as Cayce put it in one of his readings: "Each person is a corpuscle in the body of that force called God."{12}

But if the readings affirm the divinity of man, what becomes of the Christian belief in the uniqueness of Jesus? Dr. Puryear declares, "In Jesus we are told that God became incarnate. If we could only see clearly that Jesus' claim for divinity is a claim for the divinity of us all, we would understand that His relationship to God is a pattern which all of us may and one day must attain."{13} Thus, contrary to the Bible, the readings do not understand Jesus' uniqueness in terms of His being God's one and only Son.{14} In fact, the readings actually deny that there is any essential difference between Jesus and the rest of humanity. All souls – yours, mine, and Christ's – were projected from God, and all share the same divine essence. The Christ soul was simply the first to complete its earthly experiences and return to God.{15} But concerned with the plight of its brother souls, the Christ soul decided to return and help us. According to Sugrue, the Christ soul incarnated as Enoch, Melchizedek, Joseph, Joshua, Jeshua, and finally – Jesus!{16} As Jesus, He triumphed over death and the body and once again returned to God, becoming "the pattern we are to follow."{17}

How do such teachings square with the Bible? Not very well, I'm afraid. The Bible maintains a careful distinction between God and man. God is the Creator; man is His creature. God

created man in His image (Gen. 1:27); He did not project him from His essence. The Bible also maintains a clear distinction between Jesus and other men. Jesus is the completely unique God-man; no other man is like Him. He was both fully divine and fully human (John 1:1, 14). We are merely human. He was sinless (Heb. 4:15); we are sinful (Rom. 3:23). He claimed to have come not merely to be our example, but "to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18:11) and "to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). We, of course, are the lost sinners He came to ransom and to save (Rom. 5:6-11). Thus it's clear, even from this brief summary, that the readings' doctrines of Christ and men differ substantially from those of the Bible.

Problems and Solutions

The Bible identifies man's primary problem as sin, a state of moral corruption that has infected our very nature. It is our sinful nature (and the sinful acts arising from it) that is the source of so many of our problems. The Bible warns us that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 3:23). Death is understood primarily as separation. Physical death is the spirit's separation from the body (Jas. 2:26); spiritual death is a person's separation from God (Eph. 2:1-7). All men are conceived in a state of spiritual death, alienated from their Creator and in need of reconciliation with Him (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12; 2 Cor. 5:20).

The Bible presents Jesus as the solution to our problem. It tells us that He died for our sins and, as Divine confirmation of this fact, that He was raised for our justification.{18} It assures us that *whoever* believes in Jesus will receive God's forgiveness and the free gift of eternal life!{19}

The Edgar Cayce readings offer a very different perspective on man's fundamental problem and how it should be solved. Before exploring this perspective, however, it's helpful to remember that the doctrine of God presented in the readings is essentially pantheistic: God is *everything* and *everything* is

God.{20} We've already shown that this view is substantially different from that of the Bible. And as Douglas Groothuis observes: "Differing descriptions of ultimate reality lead to differing descriptions of the human problem and to differing prescriptions for its solution."{21} Let's now see how the different descriptions of God in both the Bible and the readings contribute to their different perspectives on man's problem and its solution.

Having declared that God "projected from Himself the cosmos and souls,"{22} Thomas Sugrue goes on to observe: "At first there was little difference between the consciousness of the new individual and its consciousness of identity with God."{23} Over time, however, there was a "gradual weakening of the link between the two states of consciousness."{24} Eventually, "The individual became more concerned with . . . his own creations than God's. This was the fall in spirit . . ."{25}

According to Dr. Puryear, these unfortunate souls "were cutoff from an awareness of their oneness with the whole."{26} And while the full explanation is more involved, the readings seem to ultimately identify this ignorance of our oneness with God as our fundamental problem.{27} Of course, if this is so, the solution is rather obvious: we must remember and reaffirm this inherent oneness. Dr. Puryear claims that it is "God's quest" to bring us back into a remembrance of our divine heritage "and into full accord with Him."{28}

Our summary reveals that while the readings' perspective on man's problem and its solution is unique, it more strongly resembles the viewpoint of non-dualistic Hinduism than biblical Christianity. It is important that Christians be aware of these differences.

Death and Beyond

One of the greatest human mysteries concerns the experience of

death and what (if anything) happens afterward. The book of Hebrews declares, "it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). Most biblical scholars agree that this verse leaves no room for the doctrine of reincarnation – a doctrine explicitly affirmed in the Edgar Cayce readings. But if this is so, then how did Cayce conclude "that an acceptance of reincarnation in no way went against Holy Writ"?{29}

When Cayce gave his first "life reading" for Arthur Lammers, he spoke of reincarnation as a fact.{30} On waking from his trance and being told what he had said, Cayce was shocked. He even considered that the Devil might be trying to trick him.{31} But after thinking the matter over, Cayce eventually concluded that even Jesus had taught about reincarnation!{32}

In Matthew's Gospel, immediately after the appearance of Moses and Elijah to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, His disciples ask, "Why . . . do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus answers: "Elijah has come already, and they did not know him." But notice how the passage concludes: "Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist" (Matt. 17:10-13). Reflecting on this passage, Cayce wondered how the disciples could draw such a conclusion. Had they understood John to be the reincarnation of Elijah?{33} And why did they draw this inference so quickly? Had Jesus already taught them "the laws of reincarnation?"{34}

There are several difficulties with this position. First, the theological context of first century Judaism was decidedly *theistic* – not *pantheistic*.{35} We should thus be very careful before concluding that Jesus taught His disciples about reincarnation. His statement probably meant no more than that John had come "in the spirit and power of Elijah" – just as the angel Gabriel had said He would.{36} Second, Jesus made His remarks *after* Elijah's appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration. But "since John had already . . . died by then, and since Elijah still had the same name and self-

consciousness, Elijah had obviously not been reincarnated as John . . .”{37} If he had, then we should have read about Moses and *John* appearing to Jesus – not Moses and *Elijah*! “Third, Elijah does not fit the reincarnation model, for he did not die.”{38} The Bible tells us that he was taken up into heaven while still alive!{39} And finally, such an interpretation would clearly contradict the passage in Hebrews cited earlier. Thus, I think we can safely conclude that Jesus did *not* teach the doctrine of reincarnation.

We’ve seen that while Edgar Cayce was a kind and humble man, the worldview of his readings is “world’s apart” from that of the Bible. Christians must carefully avoid being taken captive by this philosophy.{40}

Notes

1. Jess Stearn, *Edgar Cayce: The Sleeping Prophet* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968).
2. Thomas Sugrue, *There is a River: The Story of Edgar Cayce,* rev. ed. (Virginia: A.R.E. Press, 1994), back cover.
3. Stearn, *Edgar Cayce,* 8.
4. Herbert B. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 197.
5. Sugrue, *There is a River*, 305.
6. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer*, 229.
7. Ibid., 209.
8. Ibid., 209.
9. See, for example, Exodus 20:1-6 and Romans 1:18-25.
10. A rather unique feature of the particular version of pantheism presented in the Cayce readings is that “God” is viewed as, in some sense, personal. Dr. Puryear, in a discussion on meditation, writes, “The godhead we seek is a personal one . . .” (*The Edgar Cayce Primer,* 146). This certainly distinguishes the pantheism of the readings from that of most New Age literature (which tends to conceive of “God” as impersonal, rather than personal). Nevertheless, the view of God presented in the Edgar Cayce readings is still pantheistic and, therefore, unbiblical.
11. Sugrue, *There is a River,* 307.

12. Cited in Sugrue, *There is a River,* 320.
13. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer*, 221.
14. This, according to New Testament scholar D.A. Carson, is the real meaning of John 3:16. See Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998), 161.
15. Sugrue, *There is a River,* 314.
16. Ibid., 315-16.
17. Ibid., 316.
18. See 1 Corinthians 15:3 and Romans 1:4; 4:25.
19. See John 3:16; Romans 6:23; Colossians 1:14.
20. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer,* 209.
21. Douglas Groothuis, *Are All Religions One?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 24.
22. Sugrue, *There is a River,* 307.
23. Ibid., 309.
24. Ibid., 310.
25. Ibid.
26. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer,* 213.

27. This seems evident from the fact that, before we can take the next step (i.e. living the Great Commandment) we must first recognize and reaffirm our oneness with the whole. In other words, before we can tackle our other problems, we must first overcome our primary problem: ignorance of our oneness with God. The following remarks from Dr. Puryear help make this clear:

> *If we get the sense of such a Reality and affirm God, the oneness of all force, then we may take the next step and address that which the readings evaluate as the ultimate agenda for mankind: the living of the great commandment. We are to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves. This Edgar Cayce represented as the ideal for all mankind and the answer to all the problems of mankind . . . A major hindrance and barrier to loving God and others lies in the inadequate understanding we have of ourselves, of our basic spiritual nature, of the spiritual*

> *nature of others . . . We must come to understand fully that we are spiritual beings and that all of us are children of God (Ibid., 229-30).*

Notice that it's only after we affirm this pantheistic notion of God that we may take the next step of living the Great Commandment (the solution to all our other problems). Thus, if we can first remember and reaffirm our oneness with God, we can then begin to recognize that, "As children of God, love is . . . the very nature of our being" (Ibid., 231). Armed with this knowledge, we can begin fulfilling the Great Commandment – and watch our problems disappear!

Of course, any Christian would certainly agree that fulfilling the Great Commandment is a worthy ideal for the human race. But there remains a serious problem. In the readings, both God and my neighbor have been redefined. They are supposed to be understood from within a pantheistic worldview. And, as I've already noted previously, this is quite different from a biblical worldview. Thus, what a Christian theist (on the one hand) and a pantheist (on the other) understand by fulfilling the Great Commandment is something very different indeed!

28. Puryear, *The Edgar Cayce Primer,* 213
29. Noel Langley,*Edgar Cayce on Reincarnation,* ed. Hugh Lynn Cayce (New York: Paperback Library, 1971), 176.
30. Sugrue, *There is a River*, 202.
31. Ibid., 210.
32. Ibid., 220.
33. Ibid., 222.
34. Langley,*Edgar Cayce on Reincarnation,* 173.
35. Norman L. Geisler and Ron Rhodes, *When Cultists Ask: A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), 106
36. Ibid. See also Luke 1:17.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.

39. See 2 Kings 2:11. See Colossians 2:8.

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See Also:

• **Edgar Cayce: The Sleeping (False) Prophet***Probe Answers Our E-Mail:*

• You're a Christian Fundamentalist Narrow Thinker

• How Dare You Judge Edgar Cayce!

• You Can't Say Edgar Cayce was a Failure as a Prophet!

• Family Members are into Freemasonry and Edgar Cayce!