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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4. www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1573136,00.html
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

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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

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19. Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret*, (New York, Atria Books 2006; Hillsboro, OR, Beyond Words Publishing 2006) p. 28.
20. Ibid., p. 27.
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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.
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30. Ibid., p. 51.
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33. Wayne Dyer, *The Sacred Self* (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), p. 237; Redfield, p. 148, "Our higher self, our evolutionary identity."
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36. Byrne, p. 162; Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (Boulder, Colorado, Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1975), p. 130-131, 307.

37. Byrne, p. 164.
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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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Unity School of Christianity

History

The Unity School of Christianity began as a quest for physical healing by its co-founder, Mary Caroline Page, known as Myrtle, the wife of Charles Fillmore. Even before their marriage in March of 1881 Myrtle had already developed an eclectic theology. Charles had a background in Hinduism, Buddhism, Rosicrucianism, and Theosophy.

They became students of metaphysics and after taking some forty or more courses Myrtle developed what was to become known as Practical Christianity. Myrtle became a practitioner of “mental healing.”

A spiritual breakthrough came for Myrtle in 1886 when she attended a meeting lead by Dr. E.B. Weeks, a noted metaphysician. Dr. Weeks made a statement that would change Myrtle’s understanding of herself and set her on a new course of spiritual development. Myrtle was in a state of mental and physical illness and had come to a point where she was not helped by either medicine or physicians. Dr. Weeks’s statement that day brought her the healing she sought. She cherished each word of the phrase “I am a child of God and therefore I do not inherit sickness.”

Myrtle believed that she had discovered a great “spiritual truth” regarding healing, i.e., by repeating this phrase as a positive affirmation she would be healed. She began to offer her services to others and soon developed a following of those seeking divine healing.

The Fillmores were students of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, a

mental healer and metaphysician. Myrtle was also a follower of Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, who was likewise influenced by Quimby. Unity, therefore, was birthed by the Fillmores, but its roots go back to directly to Mary Baker Eddy and both directly and indirectly to Phineas Quimby.

According to Charles Fillmore the name Unity was adopted in 1895, denoting that Unity was devoted to the spiritualization of all humanity and took the best from all religions. He said the following regarding the eclectic belief system of Unity:

> *We have studied many isms, many cults. People of every religion under the sun claim that we either belong to them or have borrowed the best part of our teaching from them. We have borrowed the best from all religions, that is the reason we are called Unity. . . . Unity is not a sect, not a separation of people into an exclusive group of know-it-alls. Unity is the Truth that is taught in all religions, simplified. . .so that anyone can understand and apply it. Students of Unity do not find it necessary to sever their church affiliations.*

Thus many Christians adopt Unity's teachings and bring those back into their churches, not identifying their "new" teachings as Unity's and thereby compromising the doctrinal integrity of the church.

Unity Doctrine and Theology

God

God is not a personality but a spiritual energy "force" or principle of love. Charles Fillmore in his book, *Jesus Christ Heals*, says that "God is not loving. God is love . . . from which is drawn forth all feeling, sympathy, emotion, and all that goes to make up the joys of existence."

Fillmore goes on to say, "God does not love anybody or

anything. God is the love in everybody and everything. God exercises none of His attributes except through the inner consciousness of the universe and man." In other words, God is not a personal being but an energy or force that expresses itself as a pantheistic love that permeates all things.

H. Emilie Cady attempts to reconcile the seemingly incongruous possibility that God can be both personal and impersonal by her statement:

> *To the individual consciousness God takes on personality, but as the creative underlying cause of all things, He is principle, impersonal; as expressed in each individual, He becomes personal to that one personal, loving, all-forgiving Father-Mother.*

It's obvious that Unity's understanding of who God is has fallen victim to its own syncretism. Unity, while attempting to identify itself as being biblical, has offered too much on the "altar of tolerance" and, thereby, has prostituted itself on the bed of other gods.

Donald Curtis, former minister at Unity Church of Dallas and author of several Unity books, has this to say about God: "Every one of us has planted within him a God-seed, and the business of life is to see that this seed grows, unfolds, and expresses in our world."

Curtis goes on to say, "As this seed unfolds through the development of the Christ consciousness, we fulfill our highest objective in this world."

The ultimate goal of those who follow Unity teaching is to recognize their "oneness" with the "Force," thereby realizing their true self, the God-Self. The god of Unity is an adaptation of Hindu belief regarding the divine. God is a part of His creation. God is in all things.

Jesus the Christ

Unity also holds an unbiblical view of Jesus. Donald Curtis agrees with Unity theology in that he believes that Jesus the man is fundamentally different from Jesus the Christ. Curtis says, “Christ is the universal principle of love and wisdom. Christ is the only Son of God, but this only Son of God lives in each one of us.”

Curtis makes a primary deviation from biblical understanding in that he holds the position that Jesus is man and that Christ is divine consciousness. He states, “Let us prepare ourself so that the Christ may be born in our own consciousness!” In other words, our spirituality is based on the discovery that the Christ is inherently within each one of us regardless of our personal beliefs or affiliations.

Curtis continues: “When we say ‘Jesus the Christ,’ we must realize that Jesus represents man and Christ represents God in man.” Unity distorts Christ as the Messiah and renders Him as a “universal principle of love” that resides in all of humanity simply waiting to be discovered through self-consciousness.

Unity, along with other New Age belief systems, espouses a mental and spiritual ‘transformation’ that will raise our consciousness. According to Curtis “there are levels of development through which we grow toward full Christ-consciousness when we are truly transformed, fully reborn.”

The pantheistic nature of Unity is expressed in Curtis’ declaration that “we let our self be ruled by the Christ within. We let the Christ teaching unfold in and through us in this great new age. We know that this Christ principle indwells every individual, no matter what his religious beliefs may be. . . . We give thanks for the realization of the mystical Christ, for the Christ consciousness alive in our life.”

Unified Man

According to Donald Curtis, man's primary purpose is to recognize that he is divine. He states: "There is another teaching, however a higher teaching. It is that man has always existed as part of God, and that this God-self, which is the living Essence of everything, individualizes itself in man."

Curtis goes on to say that "within each of us there is a great, wise, and beautiful Being. This is what we really are—the living Essence of everything. We are evolving constantly. We have self- consciousness; now we must develop God-consciousness, a sense of universal unity. And we must endeavor to manifest this God- consciousness in our world to solve our apparent differences through love and understanding."

Unity teaches evolution, both physical and mental or spiritual. It teaches that mankind evolves toward Godhood and that this collective God-consciousness will be man's solution to all his problems. This teaching elevates mankind to divinity, a position that is far from biblical teaching.

In his book *The Way of the Christ*, Curtis says that "man is human, but he is first of all divine." He adds that "as we recognize and identify with the Christ within, we become one with the universal Self-God."

This is nothing more than Hindu philosophy dressed in Western garb: everything is a part of God and God encompasses all that is, whether it be animate or inanimate. This idea, pantheism, is widely held in the East and is being imported to the United States via every means available to man.

Salvation

H. Emilie Cady in her book, *Lessons in Truth*, says that "man originally lived consciously in the spiritual part of himself. He fell by descending in his consciousness to the external or

more material part of himself.” In other words, the fall of man was from the spiritual realm to the physical and this fall has caused him to suffer spiritual amnesia. Therefore man’s dilemma is to reclaim his place in the spiritual realm through right thinking.

Unity teaches that as man discovers his innate divinity he continues to raise his consciousness until he becomes fully God- realized. Once man has achieved this state of understanding he recognizes that he is in perfect oneness with God and is not in need of redemption but that he is indeed the divine.

The unbiblical position regarding salvation held by Unity is clearly seen in the Unity publication, *The Way to Salvation*. This pamphlet states that “Jesus Christ was not meant to be slain as a substitute for man; that is, to atone vicariously for him. Each person must achieve at-one-ment with God, by letting the Christ Spirit within him resurrect his soul into Christ perfection.”

Curtis says that “more than ever, we need to become quiet and focus upon the inner. We need to be still and to know that the presence within is God.” When one becomes fully aware of this divine presence salvation is realized because the individual no longer has a sense of lostness.

Reincarnation

Unity teaches that the individual lives a number of lifetimes within one existence. Dr. Donald Curtis of the Unity Church of Dallas writes that “it isn’t so important that we make it in this particular lifetime, as it is to realize that we do make it, because there is only one lifetime and it goes on forever.”

Article 22 of the Unity Statement of Faith states, “we believe that the dissolution of spirit, soul and body, caused by death, is annulled by rebirth of the same spirit and soul in

another body here on earth. We believe the repeated incarnations of man to be a merciful provision of our loving Father to the end that all may have opportunity to attain immortality through regeneration, as did Jesus."

Charles Fillmore rejected the standard understanding of reincarnation as described by the Hindu or the Buddhist. He could not accept their respective teachings regarding the Law of Karma or the Transmigration of the soul. For him reincarnation was a much more simple way for God to offer man a second chance at perfection.

This teaching of reincarnation is perhaps the most destructive of all the false teachings of Unity. The belief in reincarnation undercuts the primary tenets of the gospel. One would have to deny the deity of our Lord, His physical resurrection, and His Second Coming to accept the error of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore.

Reincarnation undercuts Christian doctrine in three ways. First, it assumes that God is impersonal and is therefore unknowable. Second, reincarnation denigrates the Atonement of Christ, and third, it denies the fact that Jesus physically resurrected from the dead. We need to look at each of these more closely.

The Bible does not offer any evidence to support these assumptions. On the contrary, the Bible clearly teaches that God is a personal Being and that He is knowable. Isaiah 43:25 and Jeremiah 31:20 tell us that God remembers; Exodus 3:12 and Matthew 3:17 say that God speaks; Genesis 1:1 and 6:5 along with Exodus 2:24 say that God sees, hears and creates. Elsewhere the Bible tells us that God is a personal Spirit (John 4:24 and Hebrews 1:3). Since God is a personal Being, He has a will (Matthew 6:10, Hebrews 10:7-9 and 1 John 2:17). Because God has an expressed will, He will also judge His creation (Ezekiel 18:30 and 34:20, and also 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Unity attempts to denigrate the Atonement of Christ in order to build a better case for reincarnation; however, the Atonement delivers man from the cyclical concept of rebirth. Reincarnation does not offer us either peace or hope. The Atonement offers us peace because we do not have to rely on our own righteousness, and it offers us hope because of what Jesus did on the cross. Jesus has dealt with our sin on the cross and our response is to simply accept His work on our behalf.

Likewise, Unity cannot accept a physical resurrection for our Lord. Unity holds that the disciples expected Jesus to be reincarnated, not resurrected. The biblical claims that Jesus rose physically, appeared to and was recognized by many, was physically touched by some, and ate fish with others are troublesome and must be explained away or spiritualized into meaninglessness if Unity is to seem plausible. (See Luke 24:16 and 31.)

Conclusion

The Unity School of Christianity is recognized as a cult because it exhibits several cultic characteristics. One such characteristic is syncretism. Syncretism is the attempt to combine or reconcile differing beliefs, usually by taking the most attractive features from several sources and combining them into a something new. Unity has taken what some would call “the best qualities” of various religious view points and combined them into a new and more acceptable faith.

Another characteristic of cults that is true of Unity is the denial of the biblical doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ’s person and His finished work on the cross. In Unity, salvation comes by recognizing our inherent divinity and our oneness with God.

Unity is, in my opinion, the most deceptive of the cultic groups that use the word Christian in their name. Unity’s

distinction is that the follower of its teaching is encouraged to remain in his respective church home whether it be Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, or whatever. The followers of Unity considers their denominational affiliation as a mission field where they can subtly disseminate their ideas.

I recall that when I first became a believer and was attending a Methodist church, there was a particular woman in the church who often greeted me with the phrase, “Greetings to your higher self.” It was a peculiar way to greet someone, yet I never asked her what she meant by it. It was several years later when I became a student of the cults that I understood the significance of her greeting. She was a follower of Unity’s teachings, that each of us has the divine residing within us and that the higher self is God.

According to Charles Fillmore, Unity is the blending of various religions and belief systems into one unified system of thought. The Fillmores introduced beliefs into their system that had been commonplace in Eastern religions and occult practices.

The Fillmores introduced a pantheistic view of God to their followers and saw God as being both male and female. God is seen as an energy or force that resides in all things both animate and inanimate. Likewise God is seen as being impersonal and a part of His creation.

Jesus is a principle of “love” that brings oneness to all things. This Christ principle is present within each one of us and ultimately unifies us in a salvation experience.

Unity teaches that man’s primary problem is that he has spiritual amnesia and needs to reconnect with his destiny. He needs to regain the realization that he is evolving toward divinity.

Salvation, according to Unity, comes by recognizing one’s divine nature. Unity does not recognize the Atonement of

Christ but rather seeks what Eastern mystics refer to as at-one-ment or realizing oneness with the divine on a spiritual level.

Since Unity does not recognize the work of Christ on the cross (the Atonement), but rather accepts evolution as a positive ingredient in man's spirituality, it is only logical that they embrace reincarnation as a valid system for spiritual enlightenment. As you can see, then Unity is not based on biblical teaching. To the contrary, it is heavily influenced by Eastern thought and belief. Unity is a classic New Age cult and is not Christian in any aspect of its doctrine or teaching.

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