

Who Will Be First in the Kingdom?

By L.L. (Don) & Joy Veinot

As most of our readers know, the mission of MCOI is to look at the teachings and claims of popular movements and individuals *inside* the church as well as the cults, false religions, and false teachers outside of it. This mission arises from Paul’s mandate to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:28-31 to guard the flock from false teachers who would creep into the church from the outside and from false teachers who arise from within. If they utilize Scripture to support their teachings, we try to determine *how* they use it, and whether or not they abuse it. Liberals, such as John Dominic Crossan from the Jesus Seminar, out-of-hand reject any Scripture that claims the miraculous; and they dismiss such passages as supposedly having been added later. To Crossan, biblical claims of the supernatural are part of what he calls the “Jesus myth.” If Crossan likes a certain passage of Scripture, such as the Sermon on the Mount, he rips it from its historical context and claims that it is social commentary. According to this view, Jesus was a Socialist political radical who simply was attempting to introduce Socialism into an evil Capitalist society. Context is not only unimportant in such circles, but it is detrimental to their reconstruction efforts.

Cults and New Religious Movements, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses (JWs) and Mormons (Latter-day Saints, LDS), handle Scripture differently. Although they *claim* to hold a high view of Scripture, the final authority is the organization to which they belong. So for JWs, Jesus is not God, he is a created being—Michael the Archangel. For Mormons, Jesus is God, and so can we be if we align ourselves with the LDS, work really hard, and attain perfection.

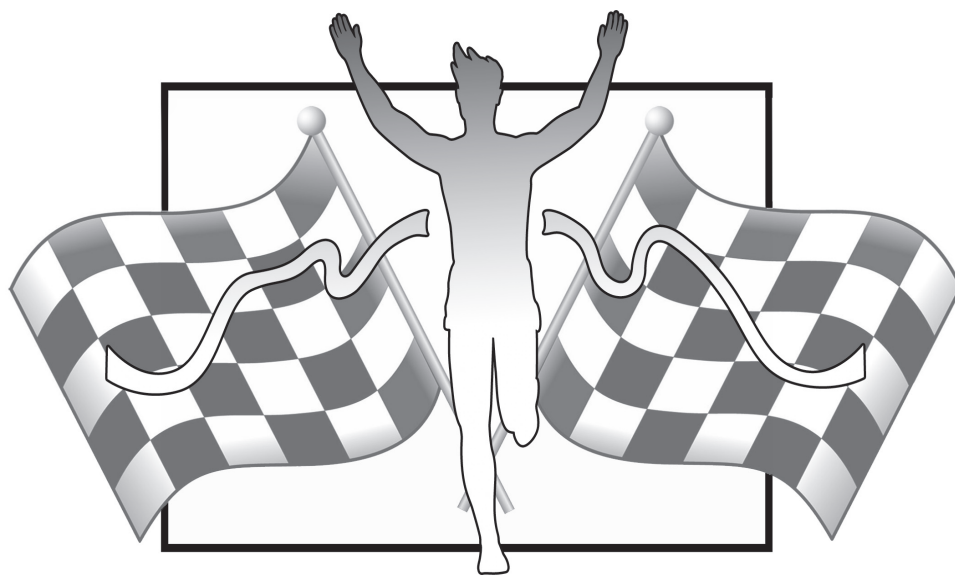
A good many Evangelicals can easily dismiss all of the above teachings as unreliable heresies promoted by recognized

false teachers. After all, it is reasoned, liberal theologians and cultists have long denied the fundamental doctrines of the historic Christian faith, so we feel no obligation to give them credibility in other areas. Evangelicals would be generally opposed to using cultic material containing extra-biblical, unbiblical and, at times, outright heretical teachings in our churches’ services, Bible studies or Sunday school classes. That is a good thing, but

many churches do not have as good a track record when it comes to recognizing false teachers who arise from within. We tend to have a “black-hat” vs. “white-hat” mentality in this area: Cults, false religions, and false teachers *outside* the church are the black hats—the bad guys; and we can just tell our people to stay away from them. Evangelicals, on the other hand, are the good guys with the

white hats; and what we believe is orthodox. As a result, however, many believers are not prepared to challenge and help cultists outside our doors or to evaluate false teachers or teachings within the church. Discernment, along with a good understanding of the essential, basic doctrinal teachings of the faith, generally is not taught in any depth in many churches. Due to this deficit, and because we tend to view Evangelicals as the “white-hat” crowd, there is a great deal of difficulty evaluating the teachings of teachers and groups who have a fairly orthodox statement of faith and are viewed as being on “our team.”

We ran into this problem when we first began looking at the teachings of Bill Gothard and the Institute in Basic Life Principles in the 1990s. It isn’t his Statement of Faith in essential orthodoxy that is problematic; it is his additions, mis-/re-definitions, and other claims that move him into “false teacher” cat-



The
Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.

Journal

is a publication of:

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
P.O. Box 446, Wonder Lake, IL 60097-0446
Phone: (630) 627-9028
Fax: (630) 627-6829
E-mail: info@midwestoutreach.org

Don Veinot President
Joy Veinot Director
D.L. McGehee Editor
S. Todd McGehee Layout/Art

ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Norman L. Geisler
President,
Southern Evangelical Seminary
Charlotte, NC

Janet Brunner
Layman,
Glen Ellyn, IL

G. Richard Fisher
Senior Pastor,
Laurelton Park Baptist Church
Brick, NJ

Dr. Jerry Buckner
Senior Pastor,
Tiburon Christian Fellowship
Tiburon, CA

Jhan Moscowitz
North American Director,
Jews for Jesus
Brooklyn, NY

Ray Kollbocker
Senior Pastor,
Parkview Community Church
Glen Ellyn, IL

Dr. Ron Rhodes
President,
Reasoning From The Scriptures Min.
Frisco, TX

Bill Honsberger
Director,
Haven Ministries
Aurora, CO

Gino Geraci
Senior Pastor,
Calvary Chapel South Denver
Littleton, CO

Phil Ballmaier
Senior Pastor,
Calvary Chapel
Elk Grove, IL

*Your response to this publication
would be greatly appreciated!!!
Please send all correspondence and
subscription inquiries to the above address.
Thank you for reading the Journal.*

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
*is a non-profit organization.
Financial donations are welcomed
and make this ministry possible.*

"First" Continued from page 1

egory. He presents his teachings as "non-optional" truths that should be accepted by all. Many Christians are completely blind to the problem, which continues to result in division within churches and separation of family members. Many of his followers believe his allegations that all true Christians should unquestioningly follow all of his teachings, rules, and principles for living. After all, if his prescriptions are "non-optional," are they not just suggestions, but rather commandments? Why do his followers seem to believe failing to obey his ironclad "spiritual laws" will incur the wrath of God? And who wants that? Those who question his teachings are viewed as spiritually inferior and even their status as Christians can be seriously doubted by Gothard's hard-core followers. The peer pressure on those inside is oppressive, and independent thinking is strongly discouraged which has resulted in the painful devastation of many families and individuals within "Gothardism." It turns out to be a very cult-like situation for many Christians who are just trying to please God and happen to get caught up with a false teacher.

The Courtship of "Edie's" Father

Many times false teachers have a Bible verse, or collection of Bible verses, which makes their view sound not only plausible, but also mandated from the very mouth of God! Let's take courtship, for example. *Courtship*—as defined in these circles—is *winning the heart of the father who will assist the future son-in-law in bringing about the marriage to the young woman in whom a young man is interested*. The idea is strongly conveyed that this sort of courtship or betrothal is found in the pages of Holy Writ and is, therefore, God's mind and will on the matter. Well, is this concept taught in Scripture? It doesn't really matter; for if the inspired teacher makes the assertion, then it must be true. *Even if* an example of this "courtship of 'Edie's' father" was found in Scripture, does that mean it is God's way for it to be done? Isn't it true that not everything found in the Bible represents God's will on a particular matter at all or, perhaps, does not hold true for all time and every situation? A few years ago, Ron Henzel, MCOI's Senior Researcher, came across a satire of this methodology:

Top 10 Biblical Ways to Acquire a Wife

10. Find a prostitute and marry her. (Hosea 1:1-3)

9. Purchase a piece of property, and get a woman as part of the deal. (Ruth 4:5-10)

8. Find an attractive prisoner of war, bring her home, shave her head, trim her nails, and give her new clothes. Then she's yours. (Deuteronomy 21:11-13)

7. Go to a party and hide. When the women come out to dance, grab one and carry her off to be your wife. (Judges 21:19-25)

6. Cut 200 foreskins off of your future father-in-law's enemies and get his daughter for a wife. (1 Samuel 18:27)

5. Become the emperor of a huge nation and hold a beauty contest. (Esther 2:3-4)

4. Find a man with seven daughters, and impress him by watering his flock. (Exodus 2:16-21)

3. When you see someone you like, go home and tell your parents, "I have seen a woman; now get her for me." If your parents question your decision, simply say, "Get her for me. She's the one for me." (Judges 14:1-3)

2. Agree to work seven years in exchange for a woman's hand in marriage. Get tricked into marrying the wrong woman. Then work another seven years for the woman you wanted to marry in the first place. That's right. Fourteen years of toil for a woman. (Genesis 29:15-30)

1. Have God create a wife for you while you sleep. Note: this will cost you a rib. (Genesis 2:19-24)

We can't imagine the 200 foreskins idea will actually fly in Twenty-First-Century America. ☺ Moreover, grabbing a POW doesn't sound very practical either. Of course, this is a satire demonstrating how virtually anything can be made to *sound* right and biblical. First, we start with the false assumption that if something is recorded in the Bible, then it is God's will on the matter. Next, we abandon the context of the passages and/or the overall context of biblical revelation in order to support our contention. Further, if we add the idea, preferably by implication, that true, obedient Christians will embrace and put into practice (without question) what we have set forth, we can impose our idea while effectively squelching any dissent. A good example of this is employed in Bill Gothard's 1990 booklet on circumcision where he writes:

Because this is one subject which is so strongly commanded and reinforced in Scripture, there is no question what the decision of Christian parents should be on the matter.¹

Let's follow the progression of Bill Gothard's teaching about God's will on the supposedly morally-required practice of circumcision. First, the smokescreen of circumcision being an absolute biblical mandate is set forth. Since, according to Gothard, circumcision is **"one subject which is so strongly commanded and reinforced in Scripture,"** one can only assume there can be no question of the biblical validity of his position. This then becomes the basis to coerce obedience to what *Gothard* deems right. It gives one lots of power to speak for God. He writes, **"there is no question what the decision of Christian parents should be on the matter."** *No question?* Wow, that settles it! The implication is that Christians who circumcise their offspring *will* please God; those who don't circumcise *will not* please God—they are being disobedient to Scripture and God's **"strongly commanded and reinforced"** will.

Nevertheless, some brave soul might object and point out that although circumcision was commanded in the Old Testament, it was a sign of the Covenant for the nation of Israel and was not meant to be imposed on the Gentiles in the Church according to Paul in his letter to the Galatians. Anticipating just such an objection, Gothard writes:

It is important to note that circumcision was established before the law was given. Circumcision goes back to the faith of Abraham. Thus, those who would seek to dismiss circumcision with the Law, have no Scriptural basis to do so.²

Now we know Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation, and God made the Covenant with him (Gen. 17:9-11) long before the Law was given through Moses! But none of the history or context enters into Gothard's simplistic equation. And because of woeful ignorance of important biblical truths among too many in the Church, Gothard has successfully foisted upon the flock false criteria that seems to have the air of biblical authority. Ergo, those who obey are deemed spiritual, and those who don't obey are unspiritual, and perhaps, not even Christians! If publicly called to task, Gothard can say he never claimed circumcision is *required*. Is this done so he can feign the appearance of orthodoxy while gathering more and more followers into his legalistic authoritarianism?

Catching the Vision ... Forum

Several years ago, we noticed Doug Phillips of Vision Forum was a speaker at one of Bill Gothard's conferences. Of course, not everyone who speaks there is aware of Gothard's false teaching on authority, circumcision, etc. Since then, however, we have received requests for info about Vision Forum via e-mail, regular mail, and phone calls. Suddenly, churches are having divisions and splits erupting as Vision Forum advocates insist that Sunday schools and youth groups be disbanded, and all church functions become all-family events. Anything else is being called unbiblical. Christian parents who do not home school their children are leaving some churches, because the Vision Forum home-schoolers are looking down on them and referring to them as **"Canaanites."** We are well aware that followers can distort the teachings of a leader or organization, and they can do and say things that were never intended to be promoted. However, Vision Forum is growing in influence; and with so many requests for information about them, we decided we should probably look at their material that is available to the public. I started with their web site.

At first glance, Vision Forum's web site looks more like a web site about American patriotism than anything about Christianity. As I read through the opening page, I came across this statement: **"Vision Forum Calls for American Christians to Remember the Mighty Deeds of God at the Quadricentennial of Our Founding as Nation."** Well, I am an American patriot, and I do believe God has done some great works in this nation. However, is there a theme here? Is Christianity supposed to be evaluated mostly through the grid of patriotic Americanism? Certainly, this is not stated and may not be intended, but isn't that how it comes across?

There didn't seem to be a readily accessible Statement of Faith on the site, so I e-mailed Doug Phillips to request one. I received a response from Doug's personal assistant, Bob Renaud, with a link to the Statement of Faith. After looking over this portion of the web site, I e-mailed Bob with several questions:

- Does one have to affirm Calvinism in order to be viewed as a believer?

—Continued on page 4

MCOI Branches

MAIN OFFICE:

Wonder Lake, Illinois

P.O. Box 446

Wonder Lake, IL 60097-0446

Phone: (630) 627-9028

E-mail: Info@midwestoutreach.org

President: L.L. (Don) Veinot, Jr.

Director: Joy A. Veinot

Spring Hill, Florida

3338 Landover Blvd.

Spring Hill, FL 34609-2619

Phone: (352) 684-4448

E-mail: dgholson@atlantic.net

Director: Diane Gholson

Wayne, Ohio

171 Church Street

Wayne, OH 43466

Phone: (419) 288-2780

E-mail: jkmiles@bgnat.bgsu.edu

Director: Jonathon Miles

Lohrville, Iowa

408 Main Street

Lohrville, IA 51453-1004

Phone: (712) 465-3010

E-mail: cultwatch@juno.com

Director: Jeff Hauser

Scranton, Kansas

P.O. Box 201

Scranton, KS 66537

Phone: (785)-793-2309

E-mail: mcoscranton@usa.net

Co-Directors: Randall Birtell

Randal Ming

Cape Coral, Florida

P.O. Box 150743

Cape Coral, FL

Phone: (239) 542-1914

E-mail: ronhenzel@msn.com

Director: Ron Henzel

Cortez, Colorado

12828 Road 21

Cortez, CO, 81321

Phone: (970) 565-7285

E-mail:

danichaffin@midwestoutreach.org

Director: Dani Chaffin

“First” Continued from page 3

- If a church holds to dispensational theology rather than reformed theology, would you consider it a Christian church or a false church?

- As you talk about a church teaching the “whole revelation of God,” would that mean that to be considered a Christian Church they would have to agree with your view of patriarchy?

- There are several forms of church government practiced, all claiming to be the biblical form. Are there any that you would regard as not biblical and if a church uses that form of government are they considered to be not a Christian church?

I have sent these questions via e-mail on January 6 and January 25, 2007; and so far, I have not received a response. This increases our concerns rather than lessening them. Is it intentional or do they realize that the language in this section of the web site comes across as implying that if one doesn't agree with Vision Forum's position, they are at the very least in rebellion to God's revealed will?

Who's the Boss?

On the web site, there is a tab for “**The All American Boys Adventure Catalog**” and “**The Beautiful Girlhood Collection.**” Do boys have adventures, and girls don't; but rather, girls are simply beautiful? Now, of course, we recognize there are differences between the sexes; and by itself, these tab titles may not mean much. However, as one looks deeper into their teachings, why do they reflect this very impression of their views on female worth—which is: Not much? In the section of their web site on doctrine is the link to “**The Tenets of Biblical Patriarchy.**” This is, by their own claim, core to their teaching:

Central to the crisis of this era is the systematic attack on the timeless truths of biblical patriarchy. This attack includes the movement to subvert the biblical model of the family, and redefine the very meaning of fatherhood and motherhood, masculinity, femininity, and the parent and child relationship. We emphasize the importance of biblical patriarchy, not because it is greater than other doctrines, but because it is being actively attacked by unbelievers and professing Christians alike. Egalitarian feminism is a false ideology that has bred false doctrine in the church and seduced many believers. In conscious opposition to feminism, egalitarianism, and the humanistic philosophies of the present time, the church should proclaim the Gospel centered doctrine of biblical patriarchy as an essential element of God's ordained pattern for human relationships and institutions.³

They also clearly state that they affirm the historic creeds of the Church, their faith is centered on Christ, and is founded on the Word of God. They then go on to state:

Biblical patriarchy is just one theme in the Bible's grand sweep of revelation, but it is a scriptural doctrine, and faithfulness to Christ requires that it be believed, taught, and lived.⁴

So, is their fundamental view that God created the male as the boss and the female and children as the male's servants? To begin at the beginning, they write:

WE DENY that the first man and first woman were created simultaneously or with equal authority with respect to each other.⁵ [caps in original]

Although there is nothing in their text which supports the assertion, why is it implied throughout their material that disagreement on these issues is only done by rebellious Christians or those who are not Christians at all? As we look at the text, we see in Genesis 1:26 that the word “man” was applied equally to both as it referred to “them”:

Then God said, “Let us make man in Our image; according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27, NASB, underline ours)

The theme of authority and all the attendant power struggles developed subsequent to the Fall.

But according to the Vision Forum, women really cannot be trusted as decision makers but are at their best when micro-managed by their fathers or husbands:

The lies which tell us we should be independent from our parents and out from under their authority, training for a career or looking for our ministry outside of the context of our home and family. [sic] But Proverbs 14:12 says: “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death...” There is liberty in submitting to your father. Don't let your heart be taken captive by the independent spirit of feminism. We as daughters are not sufficient to guard our hearts—God has placed us under the authority of our fathers to protect our hearts... So I encourage you—give your heart fully to the Lord Jesus Christ and to your father (or if you are married, to your husband) and be under his authority.⁶

Unless a daughter marries, she functionally remains pretty much the *property* of the father until he dies:

Until she is given in marriage, a daughter continues under her father's authority and protection.⁷

Women should not go to college. Such a pursuit is a waste of time and money:

And does it really make economic sense to invest tens of thousands of dollars for a woman to get an advanced education (often having to go into debt to finance that education) that she will NOT use if she accepts that her highest calling is to be a wife and mother?⁸

Can a wife entertain a political opinion separate and different from that of her husband?

In regards to a woman's right to vote; if husband and wife are truly “one flesh” and the husband is doing his duty to represent the family to the wider community, then what PRACTICAL benefit does allowing women to vote provide? If husband and wife agree on an issue, then one has simply doubled the number of votes; but the result is the same. Women's voting only makes a difference when the husband and wife disagree; a wife, who does not trust the judgment of her husband, can nullify his vote. Thus, the immediate consequence is to enshrine the will of the individual OVER the good of the family thus creating division WITHIN the family.⁹

While we do not foresee a mad stampede of Christian women burning their voting cards anytime soon, can you imagine the implications for our world if they did? It would effectively halve the *Christian* vote, because non-Christian women seem extremely unlikely to follow suit! But we digress. As we look

at the Vision Forum statement itself, we learn that the husband's opinion is for the good of the family. A good wife is entitled to hold his opinion. Holding an opposite opinion is enshrining her will **"OVER the good of the family."** This is sounding remarkably like the town of Stepford.*

There are many things within the writings of Vision Forum which are good and biblical. They, like MCOI and many others, see the Church has not been strong in Christo-centric (Christ-centered) teaching for several hundred years, and false world views have captured the imaginations and minds of Western culture and even many in the Church. But as is so often the case, the more reasonable positions they take serve to draw in concerned Christians, and the very problematic teachings are added on top. Although there are constant assurances that women are equal before *God*, there are also constant reminders that her mind is the least important aspect of who she is and something which must daily be set aside. This is demeaning, and it is an absolute tragedy if a woman becomes truly convinced of this! Does this view ultimately accuse God of making a mistake? Why would He create women with a mind they constantly have to work at not using?

A Patriarchal Gospel

Is *patriarchy*, as defined by Vision Forum, part of the **"grand sweep of revelation"** which Scripture requires to be believed, lived and taught in order to be faithful to Christ? Does Vision Forum practice patriarchy as it was practiced in Old Testament times, for we find no instruction on it in the New Testament? Are those who disagree with Vision Forum truly rebellious believers? These answers have to be "no." Vision Forum asserts that patriarchy is **"Gospel-centered doctrine."** If Vision Forum's claim about the practice of patriarchy being **"Gospel-centered doctrine"** is true; then according to this thinking, if one rejects the Vision Forum view, one is rejecting the very Gospel!

It is true the patriarchs were rulers. Not all males were patriarchs, nor did they have the opportunity to become patriarchs. Patriarchs were tribal chieftains. The patriarchal father would typically pass his position of patriarch to his firstborn son. We have instances in Scripture where the family headship was passed to the second born, but the effect was the same. All of the relatives became, in effect, *his* servants and property. We see an example of this in Genesis 27 when Jacob deceived Isaac into giving him the patriarchal blessing that naturally would have been passed on to his firstborn brother, Esau. The result and full import of what this meant is spelled out by Isaac in Genesis 27:37:

But Isaac replied to Esau, "Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?" (NASB)

Sorrowfully, Isaac let Esau know that his hands were tied. The mantle of rulership had been passed on and now all of Jacob's relatives, aunts, uncles, brother's sisters, cousins, etc., including Esau, are to be Jacob's slaves, Jacob's property. The point is Vision Forum isn't going far enough if their objective is to embrace Old Testament patriarchy! If they want patriarchy, they cannot simply pick and choose which elements they wish to leave out. Are tribal fiefdoms really supposed to be the pattern for the Church? Forget about wives submitting to husbands—all our relatives have to submit to Uncle Ned!

We find nothing in the Old or New Testament setting up any system of "Christian patriarchy," nor making patriarchy "Gospel-centered." If in order to be faithful to Christ we are required to believe, teach and live patriarchy as it was practiced *in Scripture*; then all brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc., would have to submit themselves to the rulership of whomever son the patriarchal father designated as the new patriarch! Simply because a concept can be found in Scripture, does not mean it is ordained by God. And even if something was ordained by God for a certain place or time, that fact does not mandate the same for all eras and times. We have to discern and rightly divide (2 Tim.2:15) when we read Scripture. Just because Noah was commanded to build an Ark and gather up the animals, that does not mean we need to do that today, even though God is going to send terrible woes upon the earth. The Israelites were commanded by God to drive out certain enemies by killing every person in the town—men, women, and children. We are not under that command today, although there still exist enemies of God. The Israelites were allowed to practice polygamy and own slaves. Even though God did not command Israel to practice polygamy or own slaves, He allowed and regulated both. Are these practices mandated or even encouraged today?

Only One True Master

Where does God's leadership come into all of this? Is not God our Master? Remember the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew:

But you are not to be called "Rabbi," for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth "father," for you have one Father, and He is in Heaven. (Matthew 23:8-9, NIV)

God is our Father! God is our Patriarch! We have no need of tribal chieftains. Jesus goes on to say:

The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:11-12, NIV)

"Submit to One Another"

Most often at the core of these distorted authoritarian teachings is an unbiblical view of leadership. The Scriptures are clear that we are to submit to authority in such passages as Romans 13:1; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13 and Ephesians 5. But what does that mean?

The biblical patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—had been called out of paganism, and so they continued practicing certain pagan customs. God didn't change everything all at once. Their view of authority was a rather harsh top down structure. The one at the top was the boss, and all the rest were underlings—basically his servants. The disciples still harbored a similar view, and on several occasions were arguing over who would end up at the top of the authority structure. Who would sit at the right or left hand of Jesus? Jesus set them straight, however, and turned the authority structure on its head:

Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be

—Continued on page 6

“First” Continued from page 5

your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. (Mark 10:42-44, NASB)

Not only is this what Jesus taught, but He exemplified it! In fact, He went on to say:

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45, NASB)

Christian authority is not merely a circumstance of birth order or gender, which bestows a position of power in the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus Christ, who as God, is the only rightful heir of all “authority” (Matt.28:18) demonstrated by His sacrificial life on how Christian authority is to be attained and wielded. Authority is earned by sacrificial living. All of us are to focus on serving those around us. It also means that the higher one ascends to a position of leadership in the church, the more accountable they become to a larger number of people. Those who are truly leaders in a biblical sense live in glass houses, and everyone around them has Windex! It also means that those who follow do so because they are able to observe and trust those who lead (1 Thess. 1:5).

Hebrews 13:17 says:

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. (NASB)

The word rendered *obey* literally means *to be persuaded*. It does not mean to hear and unquestioningly comply. The word *submit* literally means *yield*. All of this is preceded by something said 10 verses earlier:

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. (Hebrews 13:7, NASB)

All of this flows perfectly from what Jesus said in Mark 10:45. Remember or call to mind those servants who are leading you. Think about how they live and the way they “wear” their faith. You will know they are trustworthy when you observe the selfless lives they live. They have earned and continue earning that trust daily as they *serve*. Moreover, because of that, we are “persuaded” as persons who also are serving as we yield to their wisdom and not throwing unnecessary roadblocks in their path. This is admittedly a difficult concept. The world around us is still mostly ordered in a top-down structure. We in the Western world enjoy more political equality and freedom than most, but authoritarian leadership as a concept is not dead. Our political leaders may claim it is their desire to “serve the people,” but we mostly see them jockeying for positions of good-old-fashioned power. The Church has some of these same problems. Many people seem to desire to be freed from responsibility by being simply “told what to do.” It eliminates the need to have a personal relationship with God and to diligently practice biblical discernment. And although we are aware of the many true servant/leaders in the Church, there seems also to be no shortage of “leaders” who are more than happy to rule like little kings. This type of leader becomes the mediator for his followers, and the followers simply have to hear and obey. God becomes merely the “big stick” the leader uses to keep everyone in line.

Head of the Wife

Even aside from Vision Forum and the patriarchal issue they raise, a great deal of time is spent in certain Christian circles to-

day debating the egalitarian vs. complementarian views of gender roles. Who is the boss? Are men to be the supreme rulers of the Church? How are women’s gifts to be utilized? Strangely, very little focus or weight seems to be put on Jesus’ assertion that the leader should be the servant of all! Often this conflict centers on the question of women’s leadership—particularly in the local church. Ephesians 5 certainly talks about wives submitting to their husbands, but again, there is a progression in Paul’s teaching on the subject. Ephesians 5:21 asserts that believers ought to be subject *to one another* in the fear of Christ. There is no gender qualification here; rather, it is a general mandate. Paul then moves from the general to the specific as concerning marital headship.

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:22-24, NASB)

Part of the problem is that *subjection* is often equated with *inferiority* in our minds, but that certainly is not the case. Christ, Himself, is subject to the Father, but He is not inferior to the Father in nature. Cultists even reject the Trinity on their false assumption that Jesus could not be God if He was in subjection to His Father. Nonsense! The persons of the Godhead seem to delight in bringing honor to the other persons. There is no power struggle going on there, no question of inferiority or superiority of one to another. Christ was even *subject* to His human parents on earth, but He certainly was not inferior to them (Luke 2:51)! Yet, we confuse these issues with regularity. It seems very hard, in our age, to separate the two, because we are so bent toward seeing everything as a power struggle.

Christian leadership is about serving others—it is about servanthood. Jesus “***did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life***” for all of us. Why don’t we get this? His headship over us *is not* overbearing or abusive—that is how the pagans understand authority! He loves us and wants what is best for us. He is gentle and humble in heart; His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matt. 11:29-30). In the same way, as husbands are as the head in order to serve their wives, the wives willingly serve and follow their husbands. In good marriages, the husband is not threatened by his wife; and he builds into what she is doing. He would thank God for her mind, not only for her own development, but also as a great asset to him and to the family! In turn, there is not much she would not willingly do for him. Marriage is not meant to be a power struggle.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. (Ephesians 5:25-31, NASB)

This passage places a higher burden of responsibility on the husband to love and serve his wife. However, with such a husband, why should she not trust him enough to follow his lead? Husbands are to love and serve their wives in the same sacrificial way Christ loved the church. Husbands are not to demand to be served, nor are they to micro-manage their wives' lives. They are to be the ultimate servants in the family by following Christ's lead. Wives and husbands *both* need to follow the example of humility set by Christ,

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant ... (Philippians 2:6-7, NIV)

We are all encouraged to emulate Christ, by taking on this attitude of humility. We are to:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility, consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should not only look to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-5, NIV)

If all of us were busy considering others better than ourselves and serving each other in love, then the power struggles would end not only in gender issues but also in all personal relationships within the Body.

Why is the pagan top-down view of authority promoted by Vision Forum so pervasive that it is present in most paragraphs of their "Tenets of Biblical Patriarchy?" Even in Old Testament times, a man was wise who did not oppress his wife, but partnered with her for the good of the family.

The Proverbs 31 Man

The woman who puts her husband's and children's welfare above her own is following Christ's example of loving servanthood. It is a wonderful thing. However, the biblical model does not preclude a woman from using her mind and/or having pursuits outside the home. The excellent wife of Proverbs 31 is a biblically inspired example of that. She is a shopper and crafter (Proverbs 31:13-16). She is a business woman (Proverbs 31:16). She is strong, dignified and speaks with wisdom (Prov. 31:25-26). She is involved in social programs (Proverbs 31:20) and more. We all have heard messages, sermons and articles about this godly woman, but what of her husband? From the passage, we can learn some things about him as well. He is not intimidated by his accomplished wife. He trusts her (Proverbs 31:11). She makes business decisions on her own (Proverbs 31:16). He praises her (Proverbs 31:28) for the fine things she does. She is not viewed as an inferior—both seem to serve in their respective areas unencumbered by power struggles.

We do not see in Scripture where women are to be subject to every man in any general way outside of the marriage bond. All women and men are to be subject to one another (Eph. 5:21). Women, like men, should develop and use their minds and their gifts in service and for the betterment of the Body of Christ. Again, if we stay busy serving one another in love and putting others above ourselves, then perhaps we can lay the power struggles aside.

There probably are many things Vision Forum does well. However, why would they allow this unbiblical and harmful authoritarian core or foundation, which as a result, eclipses whatever good things they may do? Don't they realize that as they

thrust their pagan and unblibcal view of authority on their followers, it will create stress and schisms on family relationships, relationships with friends, and splits in churches? A refocus on biblical leadership and serving as Jesus Christ served is what is needed. [Q]

*Stepford is the town in which the wives are strangely submissive and bland in the 1975 fictional film *Stepford Wives*.



Don and Joy Veinot are co-founders of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc., which is a national apologetics ministry and mission to new religious movements based in Wonder Lake, IL. He and Joy, his wife of 37 years, have been involved in discernment ministry as missionaries to New Religious Movements since 1987. Don is on the Board of Directors for Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR), a consortium of discernment ministries. In addition to being staff researchers and writers for the *Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Journal* and co-authors of *A Matter of Basic Principles: Bill Gothard and the Christian Life*, they have been published in the *CRJ Journal*, *PFO Quarterly Journal*, *Campus Life Magazine* and other periodicals. Don was ordained to the ministry by West Suburban Community Church of Lombard, IL at the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, Israel in March of 1997. They have two adult children and three grandchildren.

- [MTIA], *How to Make a Wise Medical Decision on Circumcision*, (1990; Oak Brook, IL: Medical Training Institute of America [IBLP], rev. 1992) 2
- [MTIA], *How to Make a Wise Medical Decision on Circumcision*, (1990; Oak Brook, IL: Medical Training Institute of America [IBLP], rev. 1992) 2
- Vision Forum; The Tenets of Biblical Patriarchy; http://www.visionforumministries.org/home/about/biblical_patriarchy.aspx
- Vision Forum; The Tenets of Biblical Patriarchy; http://www.visionforumministries.org/home/about/biblical_patriarchy.aspx
- Vision Forum; A Biblical Confession on Creation; http://www.visionforumministries.org/home/about/a_biblical_confession_on_creat.aspx
- From The Feminism of the Mothers is the Destruction of the Daughters http://www.visionforumministries.org/issues/family/the_feminism_of_the_mothers_is.aspx
- Vision Forum; The Tenets of Biblical Patriarchy; http://www.visionforumministries.org/home/about/biblical_patriarchy.aspx
- Biblical Patriarchy and the Doctrine of Federal Representation http://www.visionforumministries.org/issues/family/biblical_patriarchy_and_the_do.aspx

On The Calendar

Sunday, June 17

**Calvary Chapel Elk Grove
1000 Wellington Ave.
Elk Grove Village, IL 60193
(847)-895-3545
8:30 & 10:30 AM**

Thursday & Friday, July 26-27

**Grace: The Foundation of Our Faith
3rd Annual Leadership Conference
Quentin Road Bible Baptist Church
60 Quentin Rd.
Lake Zurich, IL 60047
(847) 438-4494 x1040
www.graceconference.com**

ENCOUNTERING G12

Analyzing the “cellular vision” of César Castellanos

PART-1

By Ricardo Becerra

(Translated and adapted by Paul Carden)

At first glance, the G12 story both amazes and inspires: The disheartened former pastor of a tiny congregation in South America receives a miraculous call from God to evangelize and disciple the world. In the years that follow, ministries based on his model sprout on five continents as churches large and small adopt the “cellular vision” of multiplication through the “government of 12.” To the masses being swept up in its momentum, the movement appears divinely ordained — and virtually unstoppable.

But to fully appreciate the impact of G12, consider this: For over six years we have received cries for help from pastors and Christian laypeople across Latin America who have paid dearly for their churches’ adoption of the G12 model. Some have had their faith ruined or thrown into confusion; others have suffered psychological damage. Churches and families have been torn asunder, and entire denominations have been thrown into upheaval.

Lest there be any doubt, we must begin by stating clearly that evangelism, discipleship, and personal sanctification are given tremendous importance in Scripture and are too often (and easily) neglected by evangelical churches. But when any of these is taken to unbiblical extremes, it can provide a pretext for manipulation and abuse.

The following overview and analysis are based on the writings of the movement’s founder, César Castellanos Domínguez, and on interviews with people from a variety of churches and denominations who have taken part in G12 “Encounters” in Colombia and six other countries of North, Central, and South America. It is not meant to be exhaustive.

In Part 1, we offer a simple description of how G12 operates. In Part 2, we will analyze some of the movement’s problematic doctrines and practices in the light of Scripture.

The “Vision” Begins

The father of G12, César Castellanos, claims that the movement sprang from a series of amazing revelations he received directly from God. As he explains it, in 1982, he resigned as pastor of a small, struggling church in his native Colombia after he grew weary of losing his members and having to “chase after the people begging them, ‘Don’t leave, you are needed and you are important to us.’ ... I said, ‘Lord is this what you called me for, to beg people to come back to You? I don’t want this! If this is what shepherding is then this is not what I want.’” He resolved not to return to the pastorate until God “confirmed the more specific purpose of my call.”¹

Four months later, while vacationing on the Atlantic coast,

Castellanos heard the Lord command him to “*Dream of a very big church because dreams are the language of My spirit!*” That day, God promised that “*The church that you will shepherd will be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. It will be so big that it will be countless.*”² (According to Castellanos, “*The Bible says that we were created in His image and likeness,*” thus “*we are capable of dreaming and planning our future just as God does.*”³) The official G12 web site claims that “*This revelation cut Church History in Colombia in half and also in the rest of the world.*”⁴

Emboldened by his seaside revelation, on March 19, 1983 Castellanos founded a new church — the Misión Carismática Internacional (MCI) — with just eight people in his living room. In time, Castellanos saw the congregation mushroom to 3,000 members — yet he still longed to see it grow.

In 1986, Castellanos traveled to the megachurch of pastor David Yonggi Cho in Seoul, Korea in hopes of implementing a successful cell-church strategy in Bogotá. But even using Cho’s techniques, after five years the Misión Carismática had only 70 cell groups — far fewer than Castellanos desired. So he resolved to call upon God again to learn how to accelerate his church’s growth. In 1991, his prayer was answered when he received “*the extraordinary revelation of the Principle of Twelve.*” He explains that “*God removed the veil from my mind and I received the model that is now revolutionizing church growth. God validated the model by reminding me [of] the way Jesus had worked with His twelve disciples.*”⁵

There’s no question the methods Castellanos uses produce results. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the membership of his Bogotá-based congregation has “*increased exponentially and has now reached around 300,000 meeting at various satellite churches*” throughout Colombia.⁶ In fact, the Misión Carismática claims “*50,000 cell groups in Bogotá alone*”⁷ and is considered one of the ten largest churches in the world.⁸ Together with his wife, “Pastora” Claudia, Castellanos vigorously promotes his G12 vision across the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia in a dozen or more languages. (As of July 2006, more than 380 churches in North America had registered to use the G12 system.)⁹

A “Vision” for the 21st Century

César Castellanos guarantees his cell vision will revolutionize the church in our time:

We have entered a new millennium and the Church must continue fulfilling the Great Commission with greater zeal. The harvest in this century will be so great that only those churches that adopt the cellular vision will reap its benefits. There is no alternative. The cellular church is the *Twenty-first Century Church*.¹⁰

Castellanos also warns that pastors who do not accept his “cellular vision” are not fulfilling the Great Commission:

Every leader must know that there is a window of grace in which we must carry out the Great Commission. This task is possible through the cellular vision.¹¹

It can be said that a pastor who does not embrace cellular growth is stunting the spread of the gospel.¹²

To be able to move according to the demands of the 21st century, every pastor must change his traditional way of thinking ... and enter into the cellular vision; if a pastor changes, the miracle is already done, because this way he can influence his entire community.¹³

Implementing G12 can bring drastic changes, virtually wiping out existing church structures and programs. Still, Castellanos virtually guarantees that any church that abandons its traditional approach and fully adopts the G12 vision will grow, declaring: **“The model of twelve is a very jealous one; either you take it in its entirety, or you don’t; there is no middle ground.”**¹⁴ God, he says, has revealed that only his “cellular structure” can accommodate the multitudes who will be saved:

We have received the Word in the sense that in the coming years there will be people hungry to receive the message of salvation; millions and millions will run through the streets demonstrating their desire to know of Christ, and the only structure that can permit [us] to be prepared for this is the cellular structure.¹⁵

Castellanos underscores the special role he plays in the history of Christianity. For example, in his book *Dream and You Will Win the World*, he reproduces portions of a 1997 prophecy given to him through latter-day “apostles” Bill Hamon and Cindy Jacobs:

And the Lord says, ‘Son, I have sent you for the healing of the United States. My son, I could have found someone else, but I am asking you to do this. Only you! ... I anoint you as I did Joseph when I sent him to Egypt to heal the nation.’¹⁶

From now on you will talk with apostolic authority and fresh anointing. Nations will rise and collapse with the prophetic word that will come out of your mouth.¹⁷

Spiritualizing the Number Twelve

Castellanos attempts to justify his distinctive “government of twelve” biblically by stating that **“The number twelve always appears in the Bible as a symbol of administrative plenitude and spiritual authority relative to organizing people.”**¹⁸ Castellanos notes God established twelve patriarchs (Genesis 35:22–26), there were twelve stones in the high priest’s breastplate (Exodus 28:29), and **“With twelve disciples Jesus fed the multitudes, (Mark 6:35–44) and with those twelve God established His kingdom on earth.”**¹⁹ Perhaps most significantly, he adds, **“Jesus selected twelve men in whom He reproduced His character, and they became His representatives in the world.”**²⁰

Taking G12 to the Church

G12 training materials are saturated with language reminiscent of sales motivation, in which the faithful are repeatedly exhorted to become “winners” and “leaders” and strive to achieve “victory” and “success.” Pastors who travel to Bogotá to learn the G12 strategy at the source are offered a comprehen-

sive training package, and they are encouraged to purchase all of Castellanos’s books so they can fully implement his strategy in their churches. Churches are also encouraged to join the official “G12Net” in order to work with MCI and use its approved methods and materials. As one official G12 web site explains:

... Pastors Cesar and Claudia Castellanos are regularly receiving fresh revelation to bless and equip churches. This refreshing, rhema word needs to be available to pastors and leaders in the vision. The Castellanos are, in reality operating in an apostolic role. They are the Apostles of the vision, like John Wesley was the Apostle of the Methodist Holiness movement. The G12 Network is the apostolic platform for the Castellanos to pastor the vision worldwide. The G12 vision runs on the fuel of Holy Spirit revelation. The more revelation a Pastor or leader has about the vision, the more success he or she will achieve in the vision.²¹

Upon returning to his church, a pastor is to train twelve people from his congregation in the G12 strategy; this group will be **“the pastor’s twelve.”** Next, each one of these twelve must go and do likewise by choosing twelve disciples of their own who will, in turn, seek twelve more disciples via home cell groups, giving preference to **“those who are most successful in producing fruit ...”**²² Some observers note that the resulting pyramid structure resembles well-known multi-level marketing models (or worse, classic Ponzi* schemes).

G12 Cells

Broadly speaking, the G12 strategy employs a four-step method called the **“Ladder of Success:”** winning, consolidating, discipling, and sending. At its most basic level, the initial twelve chosen by the pastor should seek a host who will open his house or office to start a cell group. A leader coordinates the group, assisted by a **“Timothy”** who is responsible for opening new cells once the initial group exceeds twelve participants.²³ A cell may begin with six people. At each gathering, the strategy of the “vacant chair” is used, in which participants commit to inviting someone so the seat will be occupied by a new person at the next meeting. Castellanos advises: **“The cell should aim to win at least one new believer every week.”**²⁴

Unlike traditional cell-church models, the G12 system demands each cell leader and his or her assistants set ambitious **“growth goals.”** For example, the target might be set on a weekly basis (in which a new believer must be won every week), or a monthly basis (in which the cell leader is expected to open one new group per month). Thus, after twelve months, each leader would have at least 12 cells; and after 24 months, there would be an average of 144 cell groups.

In the G12 **“cellular vision,”** discipleship is the key to church development. In this system, before a Christian can be considered a **“disciple,”** he or she should be directing at least one cell group. Otherwise, he cannot be part of someone else’s **“twelve,”** and should submit himself to the authority of the leader who chose him. When this disciple has his own twelve, these will also submit themselves to him.

Not surprisingly, Christians across Latin America have testified that the G12 multiplication process is characterized by relentless pressure to proselytize — and submit. (As the sign outside one G12 church in El Salvador warns, **“The cell that doesn’t evangelize [will] fossilize.”**)

—Continued on page 10

Responsibilities of a Cell Leader

Each leader has three main responsibilities. The first is to meet once a week with his or her own leader (to whose group of twelve he or she belongs); second, to direct his or her own weekly cell group; and third, to meet with his or her own twelve disciples once a week. Once a leader has his or her twelve, he or she will have to help his or her twelve to each select their own twelve, until the number of people under him or her reach 144 subordinates (with the leader at the top of the pyramid). At that point, the leader no longer directs his or her own cell group, but continues to supervise his or her own twelve to assure that all is running correctly.

Consolidation

The following steps can vary from country to country and from church to church. Typically, the nonbeliever who begins to attend a cell group and receives Christ as Savior will attend church on Sunday and respond again to the altar call. The three steps that follow — "Pre-Encounter," "Encounter," and "Post-Encounter" — are called the "Consolidation Process" and should begin "immediately after the new believer has made his decision for Christ."²⁵ To prepare for the Encounter, the new convert should participate in a series of four weekly, one-hour studies:

- 1) The new birth
- 2) Principles of deliverance
- 3) Assurance of salvation
- 4) The power of the Scriptures

Next the convert is strongly encouraged to participate in a weekend Encounter — and little wonder. Castellanos declares, "We have proved that an Encounter is equivalent to a full year of church attendance."²⁶

The Encounter

The G12 Encounter appears to be intentionally patterned after the Cursillos de Cristiandad — the three-day spiritual retreats for lay Catholics which began in Spain in 1944 and gained popularity around the world. A number of Protestant programs — such as Walk to Emmaus, Tres Dias, and other so-called "fourth-day groups" — have been developed along similar lines.

For many, the Encounter is the most controversial component of the entire G12 system. One of the chief objectives of G12's centerpiece retreat is to facilitate a powerful, life-changing personal encounter between each participant and God. (Castellanos has called this the "Peniel" experience, a reference to Genesis 32:30 in which Jacob "saw God face to face.") The effectiveness of the process depends, in part, on the element of mystery — even secrecy; thus, in many cases, churches forbid those who have taken part in an Encounter weekend from telling others exactly what takes place. In Latin America, if someone asks a graduate how the Encounter was, he or she is instructed to simply say: "It was tremendous." Given the number of disturbing reports we have received, it's not difficult to see why.

Castellanos explains:

Only those who have gone through the Pre-Encounter should take part. The group should be homogenous [sic] — men, women, young men or young women or married couples. Boys and girls can participate in the Children's Encounters.²⁷

The Unforgettable Weekend

So, what *does* happen during an Encounter? Here, again, we must make it clear that some of the aspects we describe can vary from country to country and even church to church. Nevertheless, based on interviews we have conducted with a wide range of men and women who have taken part in the G12 retreats in Latin America, the following elements appear to be common to most Encounters — at least in that part of the world.

Beginning of the Encounter

Encounter participants are not to be told where the retreat will take place. (Castellanos notes that "It is preferable to be away from the city."²⁸) Participants are transported to the event on Friday afternoon and arrive at the retreat site only after sundown. Upon arriving, Encounter participants are instructed by their leaders to surrender their wristwatches, cell phones, cameras, video recorders, etc. with the explanation that those devices could be a distraction. What if one changes one's mind? Castellanos makes it clear that "no one may leave before it ends."²⁹ Even if someone should resolve to go home, they often cannot because they have no idea where they are. (We even have reports of youth Encounters at which the organizers padlocked the doors in order to prevent anyone from leaving.)

The Sin List

Castellanos emphasizes that early during the Encounter each participant must be confronted with his sin, its causes, and its consequences; thus, it is necessary to create a "sin list" (often called a *clinica* in Latin America).³⁰ In some Encounters, this list has been prepared beforehand so that, throughout the three days of the event, each participant can carry it with him and check off every sin he has committed as soon as he remembers it. (In some cases, participants are given a list including sins so grotesque and perverted that they never would have entered the person's mind until then.) Typically, each participant is expected to write his name on his personal sin list and indicate what church he belongs to.

Genuine Repentance

Participants also undergo what Castellanos calls "genuine repentance." The goal is to cause them to feel unclean and miserable for their sins. Castellanos teaches "It is necessary for the new believer to understand that genuine repentance means feeling pain for having done what was wrong ..."³¹ What's more, it has been consistently reported that during the "Breaking of Curses" session, participants — nonbelievers, new converts, and longtime believers alike — are treated as though they are on the very same spiritual level.³²

Castellanos doesn't clearly define what methods local leaders should use to make Encounter participants feel the pain of their sins, but organizers have often gone to extraordinary lengths. For example, participants in Central America have described "repentance" sessions in which an audio recording was used to portray a scene of family abuse. First, the screams of a child were heard as she begged her drunken father not to beat her mother. Then, the terrified mother's screams are heard as her husband attempts to strike her. According to independent witnesses from two separate Encounters, this recording lasted at least ten minutes and was played at a deafening, almost unbearable volume. In this atmosphere of artificial hysteria, the

participants' emotions finally "broke" so they might seek God's forgiveness.

This spiritual shock treatment can take other forms. During one Encounter session, the heart of a large animal was produced by the leader, and each participant was asked to pass by and stab the heart. The leaders taught we wound the heart of Jesus in just the same way when we sin. In another Encounter, participants were presented with a "heart" made of fabric, which was immersed in a container filled with red paint. Next, the heart was thrown to the floor where it was trampled by the session leader, thereby teaching participants this was what they do with the heart and blood of Christ each time they sin. As the leader stomped on the heart, the participants — and the entire room — were splattered with red paint. In yet another Encounter, participants were told to sniff excrement so they would know how badly their sin stinks before God. The goal of these grotesque practices is to persuade the participants that they are terrible sinners and greatly in need of God's forgiveness.

At some Encounters, the participants' "sin lists" are burned in a bonfire on Saturday evening as they make "a firm commitment to live a life completely surrendered to Jesus Christ."³³ In other Encounters, each participant's sin list (still bearing his name) is surrendered to retreat leaders, who then nail it to a wooden cross to symbolize that these sins nailed Jesus to the cross.

Inner Healing

Another Encounter session, "Faith to Heal Our Souls," focuses on the participant's need for "inner healing" (also called "soul healing," "complete healing," or "healing of memories").³⁴ Castellanos says:

The following are examples of bondages that may have to be broken during a person's three-day Encounter retreat: Injuries caused by rejection during childhood, traumatic experiences, past sinful experiences, the influence of occult practices, conflicting love and family relationships, and curses made by one's parents or other superiors.³⁵

Each participant should identify, in each stage of his life, how the traumatic experience took place in order to enter and "heal the wound." An Encounter leader helps participants to identify their inner hurts through the power of suggestion, mentioning traumas of rejection that each individual may have experienced in his life. This regression takes them from the womb all the way to the present, with the guide making troubling suggestions such as:

- You were the result of an unplanned pregnancy
- When you were born your parents expressed disappointment that you weren't the sex they'd hoped for
- Nobody was happy that you were born
- Nobody wanted to take care of you
- Your parents preferred your siblings over you
- You were sexually molested
- Nobody ever helped you
- You never succeeded at anything
- You believed you were worth less than everyone else, giving you low self-esteem

Participants are often asked to make a list of the people who have mistreated or harmed them in one or more of the ways mentioned. The session leader may use regression to return to the

moment when the trauma took place. The participant is asked to recreate the hurtful act through visualization ("the eyes of faith"), then to pray and ask Jesus to take upon Himself the offense or harm inflicted. In this way, the participant is made "free from this oppression." Having asked the visualized "Jesus" to take in His body the rejection or humiliation someone has caused you, one must transmit forgiveness to the offender. This can be done by another participant taking the place of the person who harmed you in order for you to forgive them.

Not Optional

Castellanos teaches that the Christian who desires to be a "committed" believer and "develop a productive Christian life" (i.e., bring growth to his or her church), should undergo inner healing:

[Encounters] are weekend spiritual retreats that allow each new believer to experience a closer relationship with God and to experience the Holy Spirit's influence in their deliverance and inner healings so that they can develop a productive Christian life.³⁶

Leaders and pastors may have ministries of immense proportion and influence but may still harbor unresolved bitter wounds in their souls. If they desire to serve God in a meaningful and lasting way, those wounds must be healed. In order to minister to others one must first be healed.³⁷

Demons and Deliverance

Castellanos teaches that all Christians — including pastors — need to be delivered from demonic bondage in order to be surrendered to the work and bring numerical growth to their congregation. "It is a reality," he explains, "that evil spirits control people's lives and hinder their Christian development."³⁸ Escaping demonic bondage is not limited to an unfortunate few; Castellanos writes that "ALL OF US HAVE NEED OF DELIVERANCE,"³⁹ and even Jesus practiced deliverance on His twelve.⁴⁰

"Generational curses" are believed to be passed down from one's ancestors ("unto the third and fourth generation"). Castellanos teaches that believers need to be delivered from any occult curse or involvement by their forebears by explaining that we must "confess each sin of our ancestors and repent, thus breaking any relation with the occult, forgive others, and renounce every curse."⁴¹ Deliverance from such curses is essential for church growth:

One of the first steps for a new believer to reproduce and be a blessing to the work, for him and for his family, is to be delivered from all curses.⁴²

A ministry will not prosper and live in fullness unless the curses that bind each member are severed.⁴³

Immersed in His Spirit

Once participants have been delivered from their demons, they are prepared to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit with the sign of speaking in tongues. Taking interpretive liberties with the Scriptures, Castellanos says:

It is important to note the original order [of the signs Jesus describes in Mark 16:17]. In order to speak in tongues freely, people must first have curses in their lives broken and rebuke all demonic influences in the name of Jesus. This is exactly what we do in our Encounters.⁴⁴

—Continued on page 12

"G12" Continued from page 9

As a research group of the Assemblies of God in Cuba observed, **"To achieve this objective, the [Encounter] guides hold forth in lengthy prayers, manifestations of ecstasy, and neurolinguistic manipulation — all so that the participants will speak in tongues. The pressure is such that many pretend out of fear that others in the group will look down on them. Prayer with laying on of hands, along with shoves so that people will fall on the floor 'under the power of the Spirit' is a given."**⁴⁵

Purification

During one Encounter in Central America, the leaders sought to illustrate purification by setting up a barbecue grill in front of the participants. They pulled out a container holding the organs of various large animals and first removed a tongue and placed it on the grill. They then instructed participants to literally grab their own tongues and symbolically cast them on the barbecue so that, just as the tongue is burned on the grill, so their tongues would be symbolically burned so they might only be used for edifying words. Next, the leader removed a pair of eyeballs from the container, placed them on the grill, and asked the participants to touch their own eyes and symbolically toss them onto the barbecue so they might be purified by the fire and only look upon good things. After this, a large pair of animal ears were drawn from the container and placed on the barbecue as the participants were told to touch their own ears and cast them into the fire; so they might be used only to hear edifying things. Next,

the testicles of an animal were brandished and thrown on the grill as the participants were told to symbolically grasp and toss their genitals onto the grill so that, in like manner, they would be faithful to their spouses or abstain from illicit relations before marriage.

Prosperity

During the course of many Encounters, a memorable feature of the final day is a series of offerings. First, an offering is taken from whatever money the participants have on hand. Then, the session moves to a new level, in which participants are urged to give any possession of value they can bring forward — even being urged to bring "all that you have." Witnesses from two different Encounters in El Salvador said they were instructed that, **"If you don't give, your finances will be cursed."** To manipulate participants into giving still more, a leader came forth and gave his testimony of how God prospered him after he gave everything he had brought with him to an Encounter. Then other leaders went to the front of the room and started giving all kinds of valuables. In response, participants went forward and surrendered wallets, valuable jewelry — even the shoes on their feet. This session lasted over an hour.

A Vision for Success

As the retreat ends, participants are indoctrinated with the **"cellular vision"** of Castellanos. Specifically, they are taught that every person is a potential leader and should seek out the twelve disciples he or she will lead — just as Jesus did — so each one of them might do likewise with his or her own group of twelve. The twelve should be chosen through the cells each person will open. All should follow and obey the cell vision given through Castellanos and commit themselves to invite another person to participate in an Encounter.

We have heard the testimonies of Encounter participants who were obligated to make a special covenant with God — even signing a contract promising to send at least three people to an Encounter. The person making the invitation is to cover all the expenses of the people he or she invites. In some countries, the pressure to get others to Encounters is so strong that the one required to invite must not only pay each person's expenses, but also compensate each invitee for any lost salary while attending the Encounter.

When participants return to their original meeting place at the end of the Encounter, they are often greeted with a celebration as fellow church members congratulate them, and they share testimonies of how God has changed them, during the weekend.

After the Encounter

Soon after the Encounter, participants are to undergo the Post-Encounter—a series of studies lasting one hour per week over the next three months. The phases are:

- 1) Fundamentals of the Faith
- 2) Growing in Christian Service
- 3) Christian Character

By successfully completing these lessons, the convert is prepared to take part in the School of Leaders, which is held each week for two hours over an entire year. One requirement for graduation is to begin a cell by the third trimester. Next comes the Re-Encounter, a three- or four-day retreat designed to reaffirm the participants' initial Encounter commitments. The Re-

Would you like to host an



Youth Training Event

in your area?

**For more info contact us
via phone, e-mail or letter.**

www.xpunderground.com

Encounter emphasizes the believer's position in Christ, victory over sin, personal deliverance, and the vision of the Church.

God revealed to Castellanos that this training is not optional.⁴⁶ Everyone must take part who desires to achieve growth in his or her church. Results are rapid: Castellanos says that with his program, it takes no more than six months to prepare a new convert to bear fruit (i.e., to make converts).⁴⁷

Influence of the Faith Movement

Another emphasis of Castellanos's "cellular vision" is the much-debated "positive confession" or "word of faith" doctrine. Castellanos believes that through the power of one's words things can simply be declared into existence. This can be seen, for example, when Castellanos cites (and misinterprets) Proverbs 6:2-3:


Man entangles himself in what he says because his words attract spiritual forces. Therefore a person can be tied to his words in blessings or curses.⁴⁸

Castellanos further explains:

Everything we desire already exists, is in the spiritual dimension, the dimension of divine blessing. But it is necessary to enter into the supernatural and transport them — that is, take and appropriate them by faith, making them reality in our lives.⁴⁹

A sick person ..., who believes in God's Word, begins to confess his healing because his faith enables him to see the miracle immediately.⁵⁰

Conclusion

Few elements in the G12 program are really new; cell groups, retreats, aggressive discipleship plans, speaking in tongues, inner healing, deliverance, and the "Prosperity Gospel" have long been emphasized by a host of well-known Pentecostal leaders. Evidently, Castellanos and his disciples have elevated this mix of methods to the level of "success" by means of pressure and manipulation. In Part 2, we will examine the teachings and practices of G12 in light of Scripture and consider the testimonies of those who have suffered under this unbiblical system. 

*Ponzi schemes are an investment swindle in which high profits are promised from fictitious sources and early investors are paid off with funds raised from later ones. (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition. 2000.)



<<< Ricardo Becerra directs the Centro de Investigaciones Religiosas (CIR), a counter-cult ministry based in southern California.



Paul Carden >>> is the executive director of the Centers for Apologetics Research (CFAR) in southern California.

ENDNOTES:

1. César Castellanos, *Dream and You Will Win the World* (Hollywood, FL: G12 Editors, 2004), pp. 24, 25
2. *Ibid.*, p. 25
3. *Ibid.*, p. 27
4. see <<http://visiong12.com/eng/biography/>>
5. *Dream*, p. 81
6. Andrea Tunarosa, "Spreading the Word — Fast" in *Wall Street Journal*, July 28, 2006 <www.opinionjournal.com/taste/?id=110008717>
7. see <<http://visiong12.com/eng/biography/>>
8. As cited in "Cities with the world's largest churches," *World* magazine, March 24/31, 2007, p. 62. This list ranks the Misión Carismática Internacional in fourth place, after Yoido Full Gospel Church (Seoul, South Korea), Église Baptiste Oeuvres et Missions (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire), and Iglesia Metodista Pentecostal de Jotabeche (Santiago, Chile).
9. Tunarosa, "Spreading the Word — Fast"
10. *Dream*, p. 197
11. *Dream*, p. 199
12. *Dream*, p. 201
13. César Castellanos, *Sueña e Ganarás el Mundo* (Bogotá: Editorial Vilit Ltda., 1998), p. 169
14. César Castellanos, *Liderazgo de éxito a través de los 12* (Bogotá: Vilit Editorial, 1999), pp. 246-47
15. *Sueña*, p. 169
16. *Dream*, p. 189
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Dream*, p. 111
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Dream*, p. 109
21. Bray Sibley, "The Power of the Net" at <<http://visiong12.com/eng/g12net/?resource=articles/2>>
22. César Castellanos, *The Ladder of Success* (Sunny Isles, FL: G12 Publishers, 2001), p. 46
23. *Dream*, p. 105
24. *Dream*, p. 52
25. *Ladder*, p. 59
26. *Dream*, p. 126
27. *Ladder*, p. 96
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ladder*, p. 97
30. *Ladder*, p. 117
31. *Ladder*, p. 116
32. "Does this mean that the Encounters are only for new believers? No, they are for everybody. Often believers today have never been truly consolidated in their faith as experienced in the Principle of 12 structure. This means many issues dealt with at the Encounter are still unresolved in their lives. Sadly, they carry pain, bondage and demonic curses for many years and still need to be set free in some areas of their lives." In "What Is Encounter?" at http://g12revolution.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=9
33. *Ladder*, p. 112
34. Inner healing (or healing of memories) is a popular and controversial counseling approach based on the belief that many of one's present problems are rooted in harmful experiences that one has suppressed.
35. *Dream*, p. 126
36. *Ibid.*, p. 125
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-23
38. *Ibid.*, p. 125
39. César Castellanos, *Encuentro #2* (Bogotá: Editorial Vilit, 1998), p. 52 (caps in original)
40. *Ibid.*, p. 48
41. *Ibid.*, p. 86
42. *Sueña*, p. 109
43. *Dream*, p. 131
44. *Ibid.*, p. 126
45. Third Theological Forum of the Assemblies of God of Cuba, July 11-13, 2006
46. *Sueña*, pp. 95-96
47. Joel Comiskey, *Grupos de Doce* (Groups of Twelve) (Terrassa, Spain: Editorial CLIE, 2001), p. 76
48. *Successful Leadership*, p. 252
49. *Sueña*, pp. 21-22
50. *Dream*, p. 174



Chicken Bones for the Hungry Soul

By Marcia Montenegro

What do Oprah Winfrey, the Unity School of Christianity, *Chicken Soup for the Soul's* Jack Canfield, Christian Science, and a movement called New Thought all have in common? The answer: *The Secret!*

With 1.75 million copies of *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne sold out, *Publishers Weekly* reported that Simon & Schuster placed the biggest single reorder in its history for this book, “**going back to press for two-million more copies,**”¹ and gaining the number-one spot on Amazon. What is *The Secret* talking about, and should we care?

The Secret Begins

According to the official Secret web site, in 2004 after reading the 1910 book *The Science of Getting Rich* by Wallace D. Wattles, Australian Rhonda Byrne’s life was transformed. Consequently, she wanted to share her discovery with the world.² Following two months of intense research,³ she assembled a team in 2005, traveled to the United States, and filmed “**teachers of the Secret**” for a DVD video. According to the site, this team included “**great writers, leaders, philosophers, doctors, and scientists. These teachers created the foundation for *The Secret.*”**⁴

After the DVD was made, Byrne wrote her book *The Secret*. In February 2007, Rhonda Byrne and some of the DVD’s panel members appeared on the *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. This appearance helped propel *The Secret* to number one on Amazon.

The Law of Attraction

Promoters of *The Secret* declare that it operates on what they call the “**Law of Attraction.**” This alleged “law” is based on their reasoning that because everything and everyone in the universe is energy and our thoughts put out a vibration, then things are attracted to us like a magnet. As Bob Proctor, a *Secret* panel member on the DVD, stated on *Larry King Live*: “**The brain is an electronic instrument. And our body is an electronic instrument. And we put our body into a vibration. ... And whatever vibration it dictates is what we attract.**”⁵ On the DVD, Proctor says this “law” is that “**energy attracts like energy.**” (However, magne-

tism works because *opposites* attract). This is what “the secret” is. The Universe,⁶ like the genie in the children’s tale, responds to whatever we think with “**Your wish is my command.**”

Oddly enough, however, if you are thinking “I don’t want to be in debt” or “I don’t want to lose my job,” you attract what you don’t want; and you will stay in debt and lose your job. The “**Law of Attraction**” is deaf to the “I don’t” words. Michael Beckwith⁷ states on the DVD that it has been “**scientifically proven**” that an affirmative thought is hundreds of times more powerful than

a negative thought. Naturally, no evidence for such a grandiose claim is offered. The book even asserts that we can have “**eternal youth!**”⁸

The incessant theme of the DVD and the book is that this “law” manifests what you are thinking. On the DVD, Lisa Nichols (co-author of *Chicken Soup for the African American Woman’s Soul*) states that a “**time delay**” prevents what we are thinking from happening instantly, which gives us time to choose our thoughts carefully. On the other hand, Joe Vitale tells us that if we are in a car accident, we did attract it.⁹ However, if we recognize and sustain good feelings along with good thoughts, we can avoid negative thoughts and draw the objects of desire to us.

Although the book and DVD offer the message that our thoughts and feelings are powerful enough to attract what we desire, when an ABC *Nightline* interviewer pressed *The Secret’s* Bob Proctor on the issue, Proctor replied that one must also act.¹⁰ The need to act in the book, however, involves feeling grateful, visualizing what you want, and acting as if what you desire is true.¹¹ In fact, the book asserts we are simply to have “**trust and faith in the Universe**” by focusing on what we want, “**without giving any attention whatsoever to ‘how’ it will come about.**”¹² The formula, “**Ask, Believe, and Receive**” is given many times on the DVD and in the book.

Efforts are made to link this to quantum physics, but quantum physics does not support these teachings.¹³ Although there are two quantum physicists associated with the book and DVD, one of them is John Hagelin, a follower of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Maharishi’s Transcendental Meditation teachings.

The “Law of Attraction” is deaf to the “I don’t” words. Michael Beckwith states on the DVD that it has been “**scientifically proven**” that an affirmative thought is hundreds of times more powerful than a negative thought. Naturally, no evidence for such a grandiose claim is offered. The book even asserts that we can have “**eternal youth!**”

The Universe and New Thought

If a dollar were given every time the term “**The Universe**” shows up in the book, you would easily have enough money for an elegant dinner for two. On one page, it appears five times;¹⁴ and on other pages, it often appears two or three times.

When I was following New Age beliefs, the term “the Universe” was referred to all the time.¹⁵ It was not defined but was treated as some kind of force or intelligence “out there” that knew everything and was a bestower of both positive and negative experiences. Negative experiences were to teach lessons.

What lies behind *The Secret* is a movement called New Thought—a modern forerunner of the New Age Movement. Byrne, bless her heart, thought she was uncovering a long-buried belief, and the DVD forcefully dramatizes this as something kept underground for centuries with only handfuls of people aware of it. Byrne must never before have been exposed to motivational teachers, New Thought churches, or the New Age to believe this.

New Thought (also referred to as “Mental Science,” “Mind Science,” “Divine Science,” or “Science of Mind,”) has roots in the ideas of Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772)¹⁶ who taught that God is impersonal, Jesus was a way-shower, sickness is caused by evil thoughts and desires, and Heaven and Hell are states of mind. These teachings continued with hypnotist Anton Mesmer and later with Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (1802-1866). Quimby believed he had discovered the healing power of Jesus, which he called “**Christ Science.**”¹⁷ Quimby, known as “**the father of New Thought,**” influenced many people, including Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910)—the founder of the Christian Science Church—whose ideology is God is “Divine Mind,” and illness results from being out of tune with “Divine Mind.”

The Unity School of Christianity (known as Unity),¹⁸—another New Thought church—was founded in 1889 by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. Charles Fillmore is quoted in *The Secret* as are several other New Thought teachers.¹⁹ One of Fillmore’s quotes in the book is quite telling: “**Divine Mind is the one and only reality.**”²⁰ “The Universe” is a concept that comes from and can be equated with “Divine Mind” and “One Mind.”

Ernest Holmes founded the Church of Religious Science in 1917, which emphasizes affirmations—the technique of using thoughts or words to bring about what is desired.²¹ Norman Vincent Peale, a student of Holmes, based his positive-thinking principles on New Thought.²² A biography of Peale on a site endorsing him says:

Peale said, “through prayer you ... make use of the great factor within yourself, the deep subconscious mind ... [which Jesus called] the kingdom of God within you ... Positive thinking is just another term for faith.” He also wrote, “Your unconscious mind ... [has a] power that turns wishes into realities when the wishes are strong enough.”²³ (brackets in original)

For a short while, I attended services at a Unity Church. A guest minister showed the congregation a one hundred dollar bill he always carried in his wallet because “**money attracts money.**” I had been hearing for several years that positive thoughts attract positive things, and negative thoughts draw negative ones, so this was familiar. A New Thought site sums up its impact on the culture:

Ideas such as the power of positive thinking, faith healing, self-healing, spiritual-based recovery programs, the spirit/mind/body connection, affirmative prayer, visualization, higher consciousness, Christ consciousness, and success through a positive mental attitude all find their genesis in the basic tenets of New

Thought. Names such as Robert Schuller and Norman Vincent Peale, come to mind ... Familiar authors and television personalities are Gary Zukav, Wayne Dyer, Neale Donald Walsh, Phil McGraw, Mark Victor Hansen, and Oprah. Seldom flamboyant nor evangelical, New Thought is a “quiet” movement rarely recognized by the many who know and believe in these ideals.²⁴

The Subtle Serpent

Many people are misled into thinking that New Thought is a part of authentic Christianity. New Thought and New Age teachers frequently refer to Jesus, and Unity bills itself as “**practical Christianity.**” Unity teaches the Bible has hidden spiritual meaning that is discovered through a

“higher” understanding of reality and man’s divine nature. The New Age incorporates many New Thought beliefs, and the two beliefs are so intertwined—it is now almost impossible to distinguish between them. It is crucial to keep in mind that people who adopt these beliefs do not use these labels, and they often are not even aware what these terms mean. It is more likely they will call themselves Christians.

The god of New Thought is impersonal. One site states: “**God is an intelligence and a presence: not a person, but a principle.**”²⁵ New Thought elevates man and brings down Jesus to being only a man who recognized His inner divinity (an attribute of all men) and knew how to use the hidden powers of the mind. This awareness of one’s divinity is the “spirit” of Christ or “**Christ Consciousness,**” something all people can achieve like the “**way shower,**” Jesus. New Thought rejects belief in sin, evil, and Satan.²⁶

These ideas are reflected in *The Secret*. Jesus is quoted out of context, and He is grouped with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses as being a prosperity teacher and a millionaire with a lifestyle even more affluent than some millionaires today.²⁷ This certainly does not fit with Jesus’ own words that “*foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.*”²⁸ Jesus taught against seeking wealth,²⁹ He said that “*it is hard for a rich*

—Continued on page 16

“Secret” Continued from page 15

man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven,³⁰ and instructed His listeners to “seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness.”³¹

The “Universe” and the “universal mind” in *The Secret* are equated with energy and with God. The “One Mind” or “One Energy Field” is everywhere, and we are all “One.”³² Supply for our needs comes from “the invisible field, whether you call that the Universe, the Supreme Mind, God, Infinite Intelligence, or whatever else.”³³

There is no personal Holy God in *The Secret*, and there is not even an indication that right and wrong exist. Indeed, New Age author Neale Donald Walsch³⁴ states it is not God who decides your life, but rather *you decide* your purpose “and no one will stand in judgment of it, now or ever.”³⁵

Man is presented as being god-like—with an uncreated nature and the ability to call things into existence. Since man is energy, and energy “cannot be created or destroyed;” then “The true essence of You, the pure energy of You, has always been and always will be ... You are eternal energy.”³⁶ No doubt is left with the following comments which have been contrasted with what God says in His Word:

- You are God in a physical body.[vs. John 4:24 “God is spirit ...”]
- You are a cosmic being. You are all power.[vs. Jude 1:4 “Godless men ... deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”]
- You are all wisdom.[vs. Job 42:3 “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.”]
- You are all perfection.[vs. Romans 3:23 “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”]
- You are magnificence. You are the creator and you are creating the creation of You on this planet.[vs. Isaiah 44:24 “... I am the LORD Who has made all things ... by Myself.”]
- You are the master of the Universe.³⁷[vs. Phil. 2:10-11 “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”]

This also brings to mind a certain serpent in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3 who tempted Eve to believe him instead of God by saying she would be just like God if she ate the fruit of the forbidden tree because it would bring her wisdom and life instead of death.

A Company of New Agers

Acknowledgements include Jungian* Joseph Campbell, several New Thought pioneers, Jerry and Esther Hicks and the teachings of Abraham,³⁸ Mormon motivational teacher Stephen Covey, and New Age writer Eckhart Tolle.

A sampling of the people on the DVD panel and those quoted in the book³⁹ include: Jack Canfield of the famed *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series;⁴⁰ Feng Shui expert Marie Diamond;⁴¹ New Age writer John Gray, author of *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*; TM (Transcendental Meditation) practitioner John Hagelin; Lisa Nichols, co-author of *Chicken Soup for the African American Soul*; Bob Proctor, whose teacher was a student of New Thought proponent Napoleon Hill (who wrote *Think and Grow Rich*); and New Age bestselling author Neale Donald Walsch.

Michael Beckwith, major contributor to the DVD and the book, endorses a New Age book that presents teachings supposedly channeled from God. The book offers this alleged statement from God: “Christ Consciousness is the awareness of the Oneness of your nature with me.”⁴² [vs.. Isaiah 46:9 “... I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.”] This alleged “God” goes on to say Jesus is not a Savior, but only a “representative of my nature” [vs. Heb 1:3 “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His

being ...”], and that Jesus and Christ are not synonymous. The “conscious awareness” of a person’s oneness with God “is the definition of the word ‘Christ.’”⁴³ This view that Jesus and “the Christ” are not the same [vs. Matthew 16:16 “Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’”], and that Jesus is not unique [vs. John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”] is fundamental to both New Thought and New Age.

Motivational teachings also draw from New Thought and New Age. For example, motivational leader Anthony Rob-

bins states: “What we believe to be true, what we believe is possible, becomes what’s true, becomes what’s possible.”⁴⁴ New Age “healer” Louise Hay declares, “Each one of us creates our experiences by our thoughts and our feelings.”⁴⁵

The act of bringing something into material reality by using a paranormal method is found not only in New Thought; but it is the ideology of sorcery—also known as magick.⁴⁶ Joe Vitale contends that the “plane” (level of reality) where you visualize what you want “is the field where everything is created, and the physical is just the result of the real field of all creation.”⁴⁷ These words are quite similar to words from an occult practitioner of magick: “The underlying premise of magical ritual is that if you represent a circumstance, or act out an event in your mind, it will come to pass in the world.”⁴⁸

The Secret vs. the Bible

Lisa Nichols said on *Larry King Live*: “And what I do know is that in Proverbs it talks about ‘so a man thinketh, he is.’ In

Motivational teachings also draw from New Thought and New Age. For example, motivational leader Anthony Robbins states: “What we believe to be true, what we believe is possible, becomes what’s true, becomes what’s possible.” New Age “healer” Louise Hay declares, “Each one of us creates our experiences by our thoughts and our feelings.”

Matthew, it says 'if you ask and you believe in your prayers, then you will receive it.'"⁴⁹

On the *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, Michael Beckwith quotes: "The Kingdom of God is within you" to mean that Heaven is a state within. By examining these quotes, however, it is easy to see they are taken out of context.

The Proverbs verse (Prov. 23:7) is about outwardly acting one way but inwardly thinking another. Starting at verse 6, it says: "Do not eat the bread of a selfish man, Or desire his delicacies; For as he thinks within himself, so he is. He says to you, 'Eat and drink!' But his heart is not with you." Rather than supporting New Thought principles, these words actually are condemning the actions of a selfish, hypocritical man!

The complete Matthew 21:22 statement is: "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." In the Bible, prayer involves submission to God's will; prayer keeps us humble and dependent on God. It is not a technique! When Jesus was teaching how to pray, he included the words to God the Father, "Your will be done."⁵⁰


Jesus modeled the teaching "Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4). This Psalm directs us to "trust in the LORD" and to "commit your way to the LORD" (vv. 3, 5). It teaches that a good person "delights" in God's way, and it urges man to "Turn from evil and do good ..." (v. 27). Prayer changes those who pray; it is not a method to control our universe, but rather it is a petition before the one true God—Who created the universe—seeking to do His will. "The Universe" is part of God's creation and is part of "all things" sustained "by His powerful Word" (Heb. 1:3); it cannot respond to thoughts or requests.

The verse from Luke 17:20-21 is more correctly translated: "... The kingdom of heaven is among you" (NLT, Holman Christian Standard) or "... in your midst" (NASB, ESV), and it appears this way in modern translations. Jesus was rebuking the Pharisees in this passage, telling them that they were missing the Kingdom because they refused to recognize Jesus as their Messiah.

Any teaching that claims to reveal "secret" or hidden laws is the hallmark of Occult philosophies. Proponents of *The Secret* ignore the words of Jesus in John 18:20: "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret."

Compared to the Bible's teachings, which offer the incomparable richness of knowing God through faith in Jesus Christ, *The Secret* comes up empty, because there is no personal, loving God; there is just a Universe responding mechanically to techniques. The beauty of the true Jesus of the Bible is that He gave a simple proclamation—believe in Him to gain eternal life (John 3:18 "Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."). There are no complex philosophies, hidden messages, or secret techniques involved. Christianity is the very antithesis of what *The Secret* advocates.

For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away (James 1:11b).

"I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). 

*Carl Jung believed mankind shared a collective unconscious.



Before trusting Christ in late 1990, Marcia Montenegro was a professional astrologer and taught astrology for several years, as well as having been involved in Eastern and New Age practices. Through her ministry, Christian Answers for the New Age, Marcia speaks around the country and writes on New Age and occult topics.

Based in Arlington, VA, she is the author of *Spell-Bound: The Paranormal Seduction of Today's Kids*, (Life Journey/Cook, 2006).

ENDNOTES:

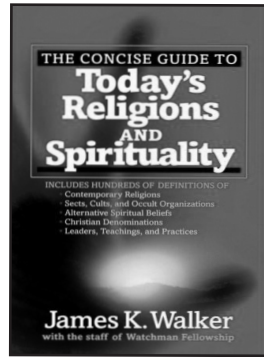
1. Rachel Deahl, "Atria's 'Secret' Is Way Out of the Bag," *Publishers Weekly Daily*, 3/1/07; www.publishersweekly.com/article/CA6420578.html?nid=3D2286
2. "Making the Secret – A Brief History," <http://thesecret.tv/behind-the-secret-making-of.html>
3. Ibid. "In two short months she had studied the great leaders from the past, read hundreds of books, and amassed countless hours of research."
4. <http://thesecret.tv/behind-the-secret.html>
5. *Larry King Live* aired 3.8.07; <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0703/08/lk1.01.html>
6. *The Secret* spells this word with a capital "U."
7. On the DVD, Beckwith is termed a "visionary." He is the founder of the Agape International Spiritual Center.
8. Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret* (NY,NY: Atria Books, 2006; Hillsboro, OR: Beyond Words Publishing) 131, 168, 173.
9. Byrne, 27-28.
10. *Nightline* aired March 23, 2007. *Nightline* did not mention the New Thought Movement origins of *The Secret*.
11. Byrne, 74-78, 84, 86, 89-92, 134-35. Gratitude is presented as a technique to aid one in bringing desires into reality.
12. Ibid., 85.
13. Space does not permit a discussion of this, but an Internet search reveals that most physicists reject this notion. For example, see comments in Jerry Adler, "Decoding 'The Secret,'" *Newsweek*, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17314883/site/newsweek/page/4/>
14. Byrne, 40.
15. The writer of this article was in the New Age for close to 20 yrs.
16. Information from "A Brief Timeline of the New Age Movement," from Watchman Fellowship at <http://www.watchman.org/na/natimeline.htm>. Interestingly, there is a very long entry on Swedenborg in Lewis Spence, *An Encyclopedia of Occultism* (NY: Citadel Press/Carol Publishing Group, 1988), 392.
17. For more on New Thought and Quimby from a New Thought viewpoint, see "New Thought: What It Is and How It Can Help You," <http://website.lineone.net/~cornerstone/history2.htm>. Note how Quimby's term "Christ Science" was used by Mary Baker Eddy when she founded the Church of Christ Scientist (usually referred to as Christian Science). Christian Science is not connected to the Church of Scientology.
18. The Unity Church is not connected to the Unitarian-Universalist Church. The Unitarian Church was founded in the 16th century in reaction against the Trinity; in 1961, the Unitarians joined forces with the Universalist Church, becoming the Unitarian-Universalist Church. Although it is not uncommon to find people with New Age beliefs in both churches, there are marked differences between them in their outlooks and spiritual underpinnings. For more information on Unitarian-Universalists, see the FAQ page on their official site at <http://www.uua.org/aboutuu/new-comerfaq.html>. Neither Unity nor the Unitarian-Universalist churches are connected to Rev. Moon's Unification Church.
19. Genevieve Behrend (1881-c. 1960), Robert Collier (1885-1950), Charles Haanel (1866-1949), Prentice Mulford (1834-1891), and Wallace Wattles (1860-1911) are given brief biographies on pp. 186-197. Mulford is even acknowledged in the book as being one of the early founders of the New Thought movement, 193. Fillmore is not listed here, but is quoted in the book.
20. Byrne, 161.

—Continued on page 19

BOOK REVIEW BONUS

The Concise Guide to Today's Religions and Spirituality

Review by L.L. "Don" Veinot



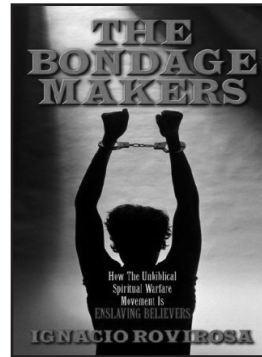
What does the Pagan Spiritual Alliance, Salena Fox; Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.; The Local Church, Witness Lee and Norman L. Geisler have in common? They all are listed in *The Concise Guide to Today's Religions and Spirituality*. It is a new, quick-reference guide by James K. Walker (President of Watchman Fellowship) and the staff of Watchman Fellowship and is an excellent resource. The volume contains over 1600 entries on a variety of groups and individuals—Christian, non-Christian, cults, and New Religions. Under each heading is a short paragraph which gives a brief description of the individual or group including origins, doctrines, and beliefs. You will be somewhat or very familiar with some of those listed such as Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Joseph Smith, Jr. Others will be completely new to most. One example is:

Cosmerism: A mixture of CHRISTIANITY and BUDDHISM that emphasizes love, empathy, compassion and the activation of good and nonviolent knowledge. The central scripture is the *Book of Cosmer*.

The Concise Guide to Today's Religions and Spirituality is not an in-depth study into any of the groups, but rather it is a "Cliff-note" description and quick-reference guide, which includes many groups who are nearly always overlooked in such works. Like MCOI, Watchman Fellowship is a request-driven ministry, and the information in this volume is the result of constant research in order to have current and accurate information to answer the many questions received on a daily basis. It is another helpful resource in keeping up with the religious eclecticism that is so pervasive today.

The Concise Guide to Today's Religions and Spirituality

James K. Walker with the staff of Watchman Fellowship
Harvest House Publishers, 350 pages, April 2007
\$14.99



The Bondage Makers: How the Unbiblical Spiritual Warfare Movement is Enslaving Believers

Review by L.L. "Don" Veinot

False teaching can often lead to bad behavior or something more destructive. Speaking out against false teaching is neither popular nor welcomed in many segments of the church today. This problem is exaggerated if the one critiquing does not overtly support a particular theological persuasion from which the false teaching is emanating. Also, in this age of victimization, many are looking for something or someone to blame for their troubles or struggles—particularly their sinful tendencies. The popularization of books and "deliverance" ministries has created havoc in many lives.

Author Ignacio Rovirosa shares just such an outcome from November 2, 2000 when the wife of his Senior pastor killed her daughter and herself out of desperation over demons. This launched him on the road of research and Bible study which led to his book, *The Bondage Makers: How the Unbiblical Spiritual Warfare Movement is Enslaving Believers*. In its short 80 pages, it is a worthwhile read as he addresses a bit of the history of this movement and applies biblical questions and answers in an understandable and readable form. Of particular help to some will be his dealing with exegetical fallacies. For example, as he addresses the term *warfare* in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 he points out about the passage:

There is no mention here of casting out demons but imagination. The emphasis is on the believer acting as a believer should. This behavior, if followed, automatically opposes the devil. It does not speak of taking demons captive or binding them, but taking thoughts captive and binding them.

It is encouraging to see this young missionary to the people of Cuba share from personal experience and address—from a biblical perspective—errors and harm that has and will continue to result from the false teachings within the deliverance movement. It is worth the \$9.99 price.

The Bondage Makers: How the Unbiblical Spiritual Warfare Movement is Enslaving Believers

Ignacio Rovirosa
Xulon Press, 80 pages, July 2006
\$9.99

“Secret” Continued from page 17

21. The overall message of *The Secret* is an affirmation teaching, but affirmations are specifically mentioned on p. 168.
22. “Dr. Peale himself credits his theology of positive thinking to Ernest Holmes, founder of New Age/Occultic Church of Religious Science,” quote from a very insightful article on Norman Vincent Peale from Watchman Fellowship, <http://www.watchman.org/reitop/peale.htm>
23. “Norman Vincent Peale, Champion of Positive Thinking,” <http://normanvincentpeale.wwwhubs.com/>
24. <http://www.life-enrichment.ca/aboutnewthought.html>
25. “New Thought: What It Is and How It Can Help You,” <http://website.lineone.net/~cornerstone/history2.htm>; also see http://www.beliefnet.com/index/index_10290.html
26. For a detailed look at New Thought and New Age views of sin and evil, see author’s article, “God In The Mirror,” http://cana.userworld.com/cana_GodMirror1.html
27. Byrne, 109.
28. Matt. 8.20; Luke 9.58
29. Matt. 6.19-21; Luke 12.15-34, 16.14
30. Matt. 19.23-24; Mark 10.25; Luke 18.25.
31. Matt. 6.33.
32. Byrne, 160, 162.
33. Ibid., 163. Also, see 159.
34. Walsch is the author of the bestselling *Conversations with God* books, *Conversations with God For Teens*, and other books in which God supposedly answers Walsch’s questions. For a Christian critique of some of Walsch’s books, see Articles at this link http://cana.userworld.com/cana_contents.html
35. Byrne, 177.
36. Ibid., 159.
37. Ibid., 164, 183. Also, see 146, 148, 169, 175, 184.
38. Esther Hicks wrote *The Law of Attraction*, which contains teachings channeled from Abraham—the name for a group of “evolved teachers.” http://www.abraham-hicks.com/about_us.php
39. These people also appear on the DVD.
40. Canfield’s co-editor in the *Chicken Soup* series, Mark Victor Hansen, is a New Thought proponent. See interview of Hansen by Mike Litman, <http://www.newsun.com/litmancolumn.html>. For a Christian critique of the *Chicken Soup* books, see article by Craig Branch, <http://www.watchman.org/na/chiksoup.htm>
41. Byrne writes that “Feng Shui reflects the teachings of The Secret,” 114. For a Christian evaluation of Feng Shui, see author’s article at http://cana.userworld.com/cana_fengShui1.html
42. Rev. Deborah L. Johnson, *The Sacred Yes* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, Inc., 2006), 207.
43. Ibid., 207-08.
44. Anthony Robbins, “Unlimited Power,” in *The Fireside Treasury of Light*, ed. Mary Olsen Kelly (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 102.
45. Louise Hay, “You Can Heal Your Life,” in *The Fireside Treasury*, 111.
46. Some occultists spell “magic” with a “k” to distinguish it from stage magic. For a Christian evaluation of magical practices, see Chapters 9 and 10 in author’s book, *SpellBound: The Paranormal Seduction of Today’s Kids* (Colorado Springs: Life Journey/Cook Communications Ministries, 2006).
47. Byrne, 83.
48. Donald Tyson, *The Truth About Ritual Magick*, 2 ed. (St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1994), 29. This is just one quote in one occult book among many such books with similar definitions of occult magic.
49. Aired 3/8/07; transcript at <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0703/08/kl.01.html>. This verse and Mark 11.24 are also quoted in the book on p. 54.
50. Matt. 6.10. Also see Matt. 26:39, 42, 44; Lk 6.28, 18.13, 21.36, 22.40; Jn 17.

Subscribe by visiting our web site

Back Issues of the JOURNAL
in Adobe Reader .pdf format

Available at: www.midwestoutreach.org

The
A.I.D.S
EPIDEMIC
(Aquired Ignorance of the Doctrines of Scripture)

is reaching alarming proportions within the Church. Sound doctrine is the medicine that strengthens the immune system in the Body of Christ.

“Doctor” Don Veinot makes House Calls. Call today to make an appointment for him to minister at your church or event.

630-627-9028

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.

Journal

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.
P.O. Box 446
Wonder Lake, IL 60097-0446

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LOMBARD, IL
PERMIT NO. 1

Address Service Requested.

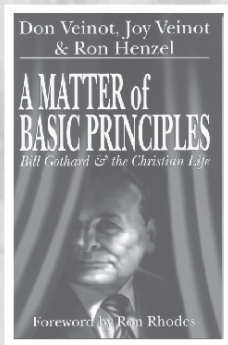
"A Matter of Basic Principles deserves a hearing . . . Those who have experienced abusive spiritual authority in any context will be more inclined to find this book refreshing for its thoroughness."

—Christianity Today

A MATTER of BASIC PRINCIPLES

Bill Gothard & the Christian Life

Don Veinot, Joy Veinot and Ron Henzel



"A must read for all thinking believers who wish to protect their churches.."

—Dr. Jay Adams
Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, PA

ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY!

Call, write, or visit our web site:

www.midwestoutreach.org

In This Issue!

Who Will Be First in the Kingdom.....Page 1

By L.L. (Don) and Joy A. Veinot

Encountering G12 Part -1.....Page 8

By Ricardo Becerra

The Secret:Page 14

By Marcia Montenegro

Bonus Book Reviews.....Page 18

By L.L. Don Veinot

Midwest
Christian
Outreach
Inc.