

Should You Believe in the Watchtower?

-or- Is Jesus Christ Truly Almighty God?

By Joy A. Veinot

Should you believe in the Trinity? This is the question raised by the widely circulated, 1989 booklet published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTBTS)*, appropriately titled *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* and subtitled *Is Jesus Christ the Almighty God?*¹ Well, *should* we believe in the Trinity? *Is* Jesus Christ Almighty God? It seems more popular than

ever to deny the closely related doctrines of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ. Cults of various stripes, popular teachers such as Gwen Shamblin or Warren Workman, on fame, Liberal scholars, (of course), Muslims, New well as countless others, the Trinity and the Deity of Christ up one side and another. Are they right? 1000 Fr. men be, they are NOT right; yes, 10,000 men CAN be wrong.

Probably the most important doctrine of Christian faith is the Deity of Christ. Even so, while believing that Jesus Christ is God, cannot adequately defend the teaching from the Scriptures. It is tough, if not impossible, to defend or even explain the Deity of Christ without at least a rudimentary understanding of the Trinity doctrine. This can be even more difficult for the average Christian to defend to anyone who would challenge the truth of the doctrine. Sadly, many Christians themselves are fairly confused in their understanding of the Trinity. Does the doctrine teach there are three Gods in one, or is our God one person Who manifests Himself in three different modes at different times? *Neither* of these is true, but scandalously, many Christians do not know this! Our God is ONE God

Who exists eternally in three persons, not three modes or manifestations. The Father is NOT the Son, and the Son is NOT the Holy Spirit. Even if our finite minds cannot perfectly comprehend how these things can be so, we all need to understand and be able to make the case that it is BIBLICAL and true or we will continue to be

easy prey for Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) and other anti-Trinitarians.

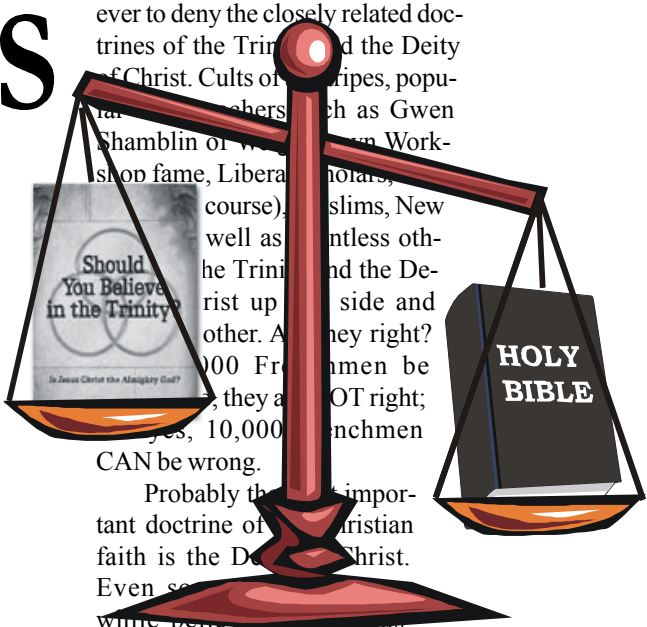
It is beyond the scope of this one article to make an all-encompassing case for the Trinity or even to explore fully all the arguments—pro and con—having to do with the Deity of Christ. But we will explore *some* of the objections given by false teachers by using the specific arguments advanced by the WTBTS—the most polished of all Trinity/Deity-of-Christ deniers—with the hope that the reader will go beyond this modest effort and study this very important doctrine in depth.

The *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* booklet, which I shall hereon refer

to as the Trinity booklet to save typing ☺, purportedly proves the Trinity/Deity-of-Christ doctrines are unreasonable, confusing, God-dishonoring, unbiblical, and heretical. They quote (or rather, misquote) numerous genuine Christian publications and scholars, as well as numerous theological liberals, heretics, Unitarians, and other non-Christians whose anti-Trinitarian, and often, anti-Biblical biases are never divulged in the publication.

The booklet does not include a bibliography, utilize footnotes, give volume and page numbers, or otherwise make it easy or con-

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venient for the reader to check their sources for accuracy or context. After one *does* check out their sources and learns how these sources are either misquoted, taken out of context, heretical, *or all of the above*, one can see WHY they do not make it easy for the reader to track down and check out the source documents for themselves. It is stunning, even to those of us who are well aware of the WTBTs record when it comes to misrepresentation and prevarication, to see how *very* dishonest this little booklet is.

Can I Misquote You On That?

The Trinity booklet starts out this way:

**Do you believe in the Trinity?
Most people in Christendom do.
After all, it has been the central
doctrine of the churches for centu-
ries.**

**In view of this, you would think
that there could be no question
about it. But there is, and lately even
some of its supporters have added
fuel to the controversy.²**

To me this suggests that many of the people and publications quoted in this booklet will be Trinity supporters who are questioning the doctrine's veracity or, at least, its roots in the Bible. But in reality, the Trinity supporters who are quoted in the booklet are not "questioning" or denying that the doctrine is rooted in Scripture, but they are being misquoted or taken out of context to make it *appear* they believe that. One example of a staunch Trinitarian whose words are ripped from their context to make a dubious point is Jesuit Edmund J. Fortman. Fortman, in the introduction to his book, *The Triune God*, describes himself as "a firm believer in the Triune God." Fortman states:

If we take the New Testament writers together they tell us there is only one God, the creator and lord of the universe, who is the Father of Jesus. They call Jesus the Son of God, Messiah, Lord, Savior, Word, Wisdom. They assign Him the divine functions of creation, salvation, judgment. Sometimes they call Him God explicitly. They do not speak as fully and clearly of the Holy Spirit as they do of the Son, but at times they coordinate Him with the Father and the Son and put Him on a level with them as far as divinity and personality are concerned. They give us in their

writings a triadic ground plan and triadic formulas. They do not speak in abstract terms of nature, substance, person, relation, circumincession, mission, but they present in their own ways the ideas that are behind these terms. They give us no formal or formulated doctrine of the Trinity. no explicit teaching that in one God there are three co-equal divine persons. But they do give us an elemental trinitarianism, the data from which such a formal doctrine of the Triune God may be formulated.³

The underlined fraction of the foregoing paragraph is all that is cited in the Trinity booklet. This abbreviated quote is found under the heading, "Testimony of the Greek Scriptures," yet Fortman's "testimony" concerning the Trinity and the New Testament—his firm belief that the doctrine is *indeed* rooted in the New Testament and that the NT writers even explicitly called Jesus God—has been severely abridged so the reader would get the impression that he believed the opposite. The same is true of other Trinitarian sources found in the Trinity booklet—they have all been judiciously "edited" to make it appear as though they support the WTBTs contentions when, in fact, they *do not*.

Heretical Bedfellows

In addition to misrepresenting Bible-believing Trinitarians, as we have already pointed out, many of the people and publications quoted in the Trinity booklet are liberal and deny, to one degree or another, the authority of the Bible, although the WTBTs does not reveal this to their readers.

For example, they quote Hans Küng on page 4 of the booklet:

Catholic theologian Hans Küng observes in his book *Christianity and the World Religions* that the Trinity is one reason why the churches have been unable to make any significant headway with non-Christian peoples. He states: "Even well-informed Muslims simply cannot follow, as the Jews thus far have likewise failed to grasp, the idea of the Trinity... Muslims find it all a word game. . ."⁴

"Catholic Theologian" Hans Küng was censored by the Vatican in 1979—10 years before the WTBTs used him here—for his extreme liberal views. Küng was one of the bigger names behind the Parliament of the

World's Religions that was held here in Chicago in 1993. The intent of the Parliament was to proclaim the unity and essential equality of *all* religions and religious expressions—from Hindus and Muslims, to Liberal New Age “Christians,” and decidedly anti-Christian Wiccans. We referred to it as the Parliament of the World's *False* Religions, as Biblical Christianity was not formally represented there.⁵ They were also united by their absolute denial of absolute truth. ☺ It was a very “colorful” extravaganza with the Dalai Lama himself showing up with many of his orange-robed followers, along with large herds of liberal clergymen—Catholic and Protestant—holding hands and preaching “tolerance” for all religious views, and with the Wiccans holding nightly ceremonies in a nearby park to “draw down the moon.” In fact, the only “religious expression” that was rejected (and openly ridiculed) by all those assembled worthies was Biblical Christianity with its “intolerant” insistence that there is such a thing as truth and that Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father. So while Küng does, in fact, deny the Trinity Doctrine, he also denies the Bible is exclusively the Word of God and that Christianity is the only true religion.

This background explains Küng's remark about the Muslim's and the Jew's failure to “grasp the idea of the Trinity.” To Hans Küng, Islam and Judaism are merely alternate religious “paths” that are every bit as valid as Christianity—*Liberal* Christianity, that is. To Küng, Biblical Christianity is a backward (and even dangerous) religious expression that is a threat to worldwide religious unity. Ecumenism is Küng's god, with “tolerance” his only commandment. Küng's “god” is not THE God of the Bible, nor is his “Christianity” the Christianity of the Bible. We assert that everyone has the right to believe as they choose, but we fervently deny that any and all religious paths lead to the true God! It may, indeed, be politically incorrect to say this, but if Christianity is not the only true and *only* “path” to the true God, then Jesus Christ Himself was nothing but a liar. He is either *the* TRUTH as He claimed to be in John 14:6 when He said, “*I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me,*” or He is just another false prophet—you must take your pick. Judaism rejects the Trinity because it rejects Christ; and when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, the remnant of Jews will recognize their Messiah as their God and, then will have no problem with the Trinity. As for the Muslims, they—like the poor deceived JW's—are following a false prophet, and it is one of their highest religious duties to reject the Trinity.

Adolph Harnack (on page 11) is another highly unreliable source when it comes to commenting on Biblical issues, since he was another theological Liberal. Harnack was skeptical about John's authorship of the Book of John as well as doubting the authorship of other New Testament books. Of course, it is an easy matter to deny the Trinity once you have denied the Word of God.

Arthur Weigall (on page 6), another Liberal, who wrote *The Paganism in Our Christianity*, denies the Virgin Birth of Christ, as well as His Resurrection, and states:

No Biblical scholar of any standing today, whether he be a clergyman, a minister, or a layman, accepts the entire New Testament as authentic; and all admit that many errors, misunderstandings and absurdities have crept into the story of Christ's life and other matters.⁶

Of course Weigall means that no *Liberal* scholar accepts the entire New Testament as authentic while a very large number of Conservative scholars do; but that's another topic for another day.

But why would a religious organization such as the Watchtower Society—that pays lip service to the authority and authenticity of the Bible—bed itself with Liberal scholars who deny the Scriptures? The answer, of course, is that Liberal scholars are the only ones who will agree with the WTBS's positions on so many doctrinal issues. And, cynically, they know that the average JW (and the folks they will meet at the doorstep) will have no idea that many of these quoted scholars deny the Scriptures. Such dishonesty *is not* unusual for the WTBS—it has been their *modus operandi* for many years. However, the JW's Governing Body in Brooklyn must be a bit envious of Liberal scholars; after all, they work very hard twisting the Scriptures to reflect their viewpoint, while the Liberal scholars need only to *declare* as “*inauthentic*” the Scriptures they do not like!

Another Liberal, Levi Leonard Paine, quoted on page 12 of the Trinity booklet, states on page 269 of his book, *A Critical History of the Evolution of Trinitarianism*:

Is the Bible not to be reckoned among the media of divine revelation? Certainly; but not in the way in which the old theology would reckon it. Its presuppositions of a divine miraculous origin and character, differentiating the Bible from all other religious literature, can no longer be admitted.⁷

The very name of Paine's book (not to be found in the Trinity booklet), *A Critical History of the Evolution of Trinitarianism*, should tell us where he is coming from. But here again, we have another example of the WTBS giving credence to the viewpoint of someone who dishonors and rejects the Bible!

Next, we have their use of Unitarians Alvan Lamson (*The Church of the First Three Centuries*) and Andrews Norton (*A Statement of Reasons*) to prove their case that Trinitarianism is not true. Duh! Does anyone think a UNITARIAN would agree that TRINITARIANISM is correct? The WTBS has the right to quote Unitarians in their little booklet, but it certainly would be nice if they identified them as being Unitarians, so we could take that fact into consideration as we read what they have to say. But besides that—and I know I'm beginning to sound like a broken record—Unitarians *deny the authority of the Bible!* Could it be possible that the Society does not *know* Unitarians reject the Word of God? No, they are well aware of what Unitarians believe! In the 1945 WTBS book, *Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers*, they state about Unitarians:

In rightly rejecting the “trinity” fable, they go to an unscripural extreme in the other direction. They believe that not only was Jesus just a man but he was born naturally to Joseph and Mary. They do not recognize Jesus' miraculous birth nor his death as sacrificial. They believe salvation comes through human endeavors along character-developing line...The Bible is held in high esteem, but it is not considered as God's inspired and infallible Word.⁸ (See also *Awake!* 11-08-52).

Again, WHY would a supposedly Bible-based religion give credence to the doctrinal views of people whom they *know* reject God's Word? If you are writing a booklet on quilt making, it does not matter at all if you quote Unitarians, Liberals and others who reject the Bible. But if your subject matter is *Bible doctrine*, it then becomes rather essential to quote people who believe that the Bible, in its entirety, is the Word of God at the very least!

The Trinity Doctrine Is Confusing And Beyond Reason

On page 4 the booklet states:

Many sincere believers have found it [the Trinity] to be

(Continued on next page)

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confusing, contrary to normal reason, unlike anything in their experience. How, they ask, could the Father be God, Jesus be God, and the holy spirit be God, yet there be not three Gods but only one God?⁹

They then quote 1 Corinthians 14:33 (on page 5)—**"God is not a God of confusion,"** and say,

In view of that statement, would God be responsible for a doctrine about himself that is so confusing that even Hebrew, Greek, and Latin scholars cannot really explain it?¹⁰

One pleasant aspect of leading a cult is the ability to create a god who "makes sense" and confuses no one. Of course, such a god would have to be very small and uncomplicated—eternality, omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence would have to go, which is exactly why the cults throw out those confusing "inconveniences" along with God's tri-personal nature. But if reason is our sole guide, is it *reasonable* to insist that the Creator of the Universe must, of necessity, be like anything within man's experience and fully understandable and explainable by our finite minds? Of course not, God is a different life-form. ☺

Cultic doctrines are born of Bible "difficulties"—things taught in the Bible that are beyond the capacity of human yardsticks or scales to measure and weigh. One stumbling block to understanding the full Deity of Christ is the fact that the Father generated the Son, and yet, Father and Son are co-eternal. There was never a time when the Son did not exist. Is that impossible or just beyond our finite understanding?

It's funny that we are all perfectly willing to accept the fact fire possesses properties unlike the properties of human nature, even though the average person has no idea of how it "works." Here's an experiment you can try at home: You'll need two candles—one to represent the Father and one the Son. You can add a third to represent the Holy Spirit if you like. Ignore the candles—it is the flames we are examining—the candles are just the holders. Light the first candle, and then see how the original flame can generate another upon the second candle. One flame so easily becomes two, *yet the first is not diminished*. Also, the fire making up the original flame is no "older" than the fire on the generated one. *They are the same exact age*. Now put the flames together again. Impossible! How can the two be one? Yet, we all believe it. We do not insist that fire *cannot exist as it does*—that it must fit within the framework of what is possible for human beings. Fire does not possess human nature, which explains why it acts more like fire than like a man! I am not saying that God *is* fire; only that fire is a well-known entity that does not conform to our nature, yet it is not rejected for that reason. Fire is widely accepted just as it is, but imagine how difficult it would be to try to explain fire to someone who was unfamiliar with it. God is what He is. We do not have the luxury of making up a god that must operate within the bounds of our limited nature. We are finite, God is infinite. Just as a finite human parent begets a finite human child, an infinite Eternal Father begets an infinite Eternal Son. The true God does not possess the nature of man and so does not have to conform to our "way of being." We must just accept God as He has revealed Himself in the Bible—and the Bible teaches that there is only *one* God yet, without flinching, asserts there are *three divine persons* within that Godhead.

But what about 1 Corinthians 14:33? Does it really teach the nature of God must be easy for us to understand? No. As is normal with their twisting of Scripture, the WTBS's misuse of 1 Corinthians 14:33 becomes apparent when we look at the context. The chapter

is addressing the Corinthian problem of *chaos* in the church services—people speaking in tongues that no one there could interpret, or rudely speaking out of turn or when others were speaking. Paul is reprimanding this behavior, saying that God does not approve of confusion in the service that should be sober and worshipful. As we read in the New International Version:

For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace.

(1 Corinthians 14:33, NIV)

Chapter 14 ends with Paul exhorting the Corinthians to conduct themselves in a ***"...fitting and orderly way."*** God likes order—not chaos.

As far as *doctrine* goes, however, Peter outright states in 2 Peter 3:16 that some of Paul's teachings are ***"hard to understand which ignorant and unstable people distort...to their own destruction."*** So, just because some doctrines may be hard to understand, even to the point where false teachers can distort them, does not make them untrue.

Finally, the WTBS states on page 148 of *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (Reasoning AWAY the Scriptures would be a better title), concerning the eternality of God, that just because our mind *cannot fully comprehend the doctrine* and finds it *unreasonable* is no reason to reject the eternal nature of God. How true!

Then on page 149 they ask rhetorically:

Should we really expect to understand everything about a Person who is so great that he could bring into existence the universe, with all its intricate design and stupendous size?¹¹

I find there is very little about which I can agree with the Watchtower Society, but in the interest of fairness, I have to say: When they're right, they're right! ☺

Is The Trinity Clearly A Bible Teaching?

If the Trinity were true, it should be clearly and consistently presented in the Bible.¹²

Even though it is true, as the Trinity booklet points out, that the word *Trinity* is not to be found in the pages of Scripture, the doctrine certainly *is* **"clearly and consistently presented"** there, as was Edmund Fortman's point. The Bible asserts there is but ONE God, and yet also claims that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—all three—that ONE God! Hard to understand? Perhaps. Unbiblical, no! What people need to understand is that the Bible is not a theology book with a chapter explaining the nature of God, the nature of man, and so on. We might wish it to be so, but it is not that way. Bible scholars throughout the centuries who read the Scriptures carefully and systematically—comparing Scripture with Scripture, armed with a cultural understanding of the times in which it was written, and a knowledge of the language and grammar—have arrived at theological systems and put this information down in theology books. The Bible itself just makes certain assertions—human beings have to figure out how it fits together! *Theology* is the study of God or things divine. *Christology* is the study of Christ.

Incidentally, the WTBS has a Christology of its own, but you would never know it by reading the Trinity booklet. They believe and teach that Jesus Christ is Michael the Archangel—both before he was born as a man and again now after his resurrection. Can we find *that* doctrine **"clearly and consistently presented"** in the Bible—that Jesus is Michael? No, Michael is only mentioned a few times in the Bible, and it *never* claims that Michael and Jesus are the same person. In order to arrive at *that* conclusion, you must read the *WATCHTOWER* ** magazine or the WTBS's own theology book,

Insight on the Scriptures. So ineffectual and weak is their argument that you will be hard pressed to find a JW who is willing to even make an attempt to prove that Jesus is Michael using the Scriptures. When discussing this subject of the Deity of Christ with a JW, we always insist that they also defend the WTBS's teaching about Jesus being Michael from the Bible. One JW elder, who only wanted to "play offense," told me that the Watchtower Society does not teach that Jesus is Michael! Incredible! He stuck to his story until I produced the documentation (a photocopy of the Feb. 1, 1994 *WATCHTOWER*, pg. 6) proving that they do, in fact, teach that! How can JWs demand that we prove the Deity of Christ from the Scriptures, and yet, be unable and unwilling to prove their own Christology from the Bible?

Moreover, as I have already said, the Trinity booklet informs us of all the reasons why Jesus cannot be God without even *mentioning*, let alone making their case, that Jesus is Michael. Why is that, do you suppose?

Do The Ante-Nicene Fathers Agree With The Watchtower Society?

The Watchtower Society dances the "two-story two-step" when it comes to the Ante-Nicene Fathers. Story #1 is employed when it seems convenient to infer that the early Fathers were the "early Christians"¹³ who would drastically disagree *doctrinally* with the Church of today. They need this connection to the early days—some connection, as it were, with Jesus and his Apostles—so they do not appear as just another Johnny-come-lately, nineteenth-century, anti-Christian, religious cult, which, in fact, they are. ☺ The Trinity booklet contains a fine example of Story #1 on page 7 which presents a list of Ante-Nicene Fathers and makes it appear—through linguistic sleight-of-hand—that these men, who were closer in time to Jesus and His teachings, believed pretty much as the WTBS does today.

Story #2 comes into play when it becomes necessary to explain why the WTBS—calling itself a Christian organization—rejects all essential Christian doctrine as understood and taught for 1900+ years. This is when the WTBS claims that the people who came on the scene soon after the death of the Apostles (the Ante-Nicene Fathers!) apostatized from the true Christian faith—which the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society thankfully "restored" when they came on the scene in the late-nineteenth century. These Ante-Nicene apostates are to blame for the infusion of Pagan philosophy into the Church, at which point the Christian Church became "Christendom." More on Story #2 later, right now we'll look at their portrayal of Story #1—that the Ante-Nicene Fathers believed similarly to the WTBS when it comes to the nature of God and Christ.

The ante-Nicene Fathers were acknowledged to have been leading religious teachers in the early centuries after Christ's birth. What they taught is of interest.

Justin Martyr, who died about 165 C.E., called the pre-human Jesus a created angel who is "other than the God who made all things."¹⁴

Really? Justin Martyr called Jesus a *created angel*? Justin identifies Jesus, the Son of God, with "the Angel of the LORD" Who appeared to men in the OT times, but *never* refers to Him as a created being. Let's look at Justin Martyr's own words.

...the Father of the universe has a Son; who also, being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God. And of old He appeared in the shape of fire and in the likeness of an

angel to Moses and to the other prophets; but now in the times of your reign, having, as we before said, become Man by a virgin. . . .¹⁵

...but now you will permit me first to recount the prophecies, which I wish to do in order to prove that Christ is called both God and Lord of hosts. . . .¹⁶

Like Justin Martyr, we believe Christ appeared as the Angel of the LORD to Moses and other Old Testament saints, but also like Justin, we *believe Him* to be WHO He said He is—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! In fact, the "Angel of the LORD" is the person who identifies Himself *by the name of YHWH* in Exodus 3:1-14!

What about Irenaeus? According to the Trinity booklet:

Irenaeus...showed that Jesus is not equal to the "One true and only God," who is "supreme over all, and besides whom there is no other."¹⁷

Irenaeus believed that the Father is the *head* of Christ just as the Bible teaches, and as we also believe. But keep in mind headship does not imply superiority of *nature*. Women are under the headship of their husbands, but they are not inferior to them. Men and women share the *nature* of humanity. But as to Christ's *nature*, Irenaeus believed, as we do, that Jesus Christ is God.

3. Therefore, by remitting sins, He did indeed heal man, while He also manifested Himself who He was. For if no one can forgive sins but God alone, while the Lord remitted them and healed men, it is plain that He was Himself the Word of God made the Son of man, receiving from the Father the power of remission of sins; since He was man, and since He was God, in order that since as man He suffered for us, so as God He might have compassion on

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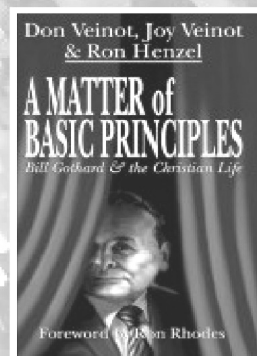
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us, and forgive us our debts, in which we were made debtors to God, our Creator.¹⁸

Next, we have Clement of Alexandria as portrayed in the Trinity booklet:

Clement of Alexandria, who died about 215 C.E. called Jesus in his pre-human existence "a creature" but called God "the uncreated and imperishable and only true God." He said that the Son "is next to the only omnipotent Father" but not equal to him.¹⁹

Did Clement consider Jesus to be unequal to the Father—a mere creature? It doesn't seem so from what he said here:

What therefore he says, "from the beginning," the Presbyter explained to this effect, that the beginning of generation is not separated from the beginning of the Creator. For when he says, "That which was from the beginning," he touches upon the generation without beginning of the Son, who is co-existent with the Father. There was, then, a Word importing an unbeginning eternity; as also the Word itself, that is, the Son of God, who being, by equality of substance, one with the Father, is eternal and uncreate.²⁰

Clement was making the point that Jesus—although "generated" or begotten of the Father—was generated "without beginning" and is, therefore, as eternal as the Father and *not* created. After misrepresenting Clement's views, the Trinity booklet goes on to deliver the bombshell that:

Tertullian, who died about 230 C.E., taught the supremacy of God. He observed: "The Father is different from the Son (another), as he is greater; as he who begets is different from him who is begotten; he who sends, different from him who is sent."²²

Oh, NO! Tertullian believed the Father and the Son are different persons? Well, duh! Trinitarians—like Tertullian and like us—believe there are different *persons* within the nature of the Godhead—three of them, in fact! That's why Trinitarians happily sing the *Holy, Holy, Holy* hymn that concludes with "God in three persons, blessed Trinity." Remember that old song? The Father is the First *Person*, the Son is the Second *Person*, and the Holy Spirit is the Third *Person* all of whom have the same *nature*. It's hard to believe the WTBS thinks this is such a big secret! Well, besides the shocking news that Tertullian seems to believe there is more than one person in the Godhead, what else did he have to say about the nature of God?

If the number of the Trinity also offends you, as if it were not connected in the simple Unity, I ask you how it is possible for a Being who is merely and absolutely One and Singular, to speak in the plural phrase, saying, "Let us make man in our image, and after our own likeness;" whereas He ought to have said, "Let me make man in my own image, and after my own likeness;" as being a unique and singular Being?...He is either deceiving or amusing us in speaking plurally, if He is One only and singular. Or was it to the angels that He spoke, as the Jews interpret the passage, because these also acknowledge not the Son?...Nay, it was because He had already His Son close at His side, as a second Person, His own Word, and a third Person also, the Spirit in the Word, that He purposely adopted the plural phrase...²²

We have been taught that He proceeds forth from God, and in that procession He is generated; so that He is the Son of God, and is called God from unity of substance with God. For God, too, is a Spirit. Even when the ray is shot from the sun, it is still part of the parent mass; the sun will still be in the ray, because it is a ray of the sun—there is no division of substance, but merely an extension. Thus Christ

is Spirit of Spirit, and God of God, as light of light is kindled. The material matrix remains entire and unimpaired, though you derive from it any number of shoots possessed of its qualities; so, too, that which as come forth out of God is at once God and the Son of God, and the two are one. In this way also, as He is Spirit of Spirit and God of God, He is made a second in manner of existence—in position, not in nature; and He did not withdraw from the original source, but went forth. This ray of God, then, as it was always foretold in ancient times, descending into a certain virgin, and made flesh in her womb, is in His birth God and man united.²³

This next quote by Hippolytus is the one I most love to show JW's at the kitchen table, along with a photocopy of Hippolytus' actual words, because even the most militantly obtuse JW has no choice but to recognize that Hippolytus believed the opposite of what the WTBS claims he believed. According to the WTBS:

Hippolytus, who died about 235 C.E., said that God is "the one God, the first and the only One, the Maker and Lord of all," who "had nothing co-eval [of equal age] with him...But he was One, alone by himself; who willing it, called into being what had no being before," such as the created pre-human Jesus.²⁴

What Hippolytus actually said is:

God, subsisting alone, and having nothing contemporaneous with Himself, determined to create the world. And conceiving the world in mind, and willing and uttering the word, He made it; and straightway it appeared, formed as it had pleased Him...Beside Him there was nothing; but He, while existing alone, yet existed in plurality.²⁵

God, before the creation of anything, existed in plurality! There can be no doubt that the WTBS *knows* what Hippolytus actually taught and deliberately edited this out of their deceitful "quotation." So when they close this section on the Ante-Nicene Fathers with the statement that "the testimony of the Bible and of history makes clear that the Trinity was unknown throughout Biblical times and for several centuries thereafter,"²⁶ they show themselves to be shameless liars.

Story #2—The Great Apostasy

Gather around, children. We're about to hear the story about how the Christian Church became nasty old "Christendom."

This disreputable history of the Trinity fits in with what Jesus and his apostles foretold would follow their time. They said that there would be an apostasy, a deviation, a falling away from true worship until Christ's return, when true worship would be restored before God's day of destruction of this system of things.²⁷

Throughout the ancient world, as far back as Babylonia, the worship of pagan gods grouped in threes, or triads, was common...And after the death of the apostles, such pagan beliefs began to invade Christianity.²⁸

Let's put on our thinking caps: *Who* was it again that came on the scene right after the death of the Apostles? Yes, the Ante-Nicene Fathers—the very ones we have just been told *did not believe in the Trinity!* Are we confused yet?

Anyway, to prove their assertion that the Trinity doctrine originated from Pagan sources some unspecified amount of time after the death of the Apostles, they quote *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (NSHERK)* which states:

The doctrines of the Logos and the Trinity received their shape from Greek Fathers, who...were much influenced, directly or indirectly, by the Platonic philosophy...²⁹

Now, strangely enough, the *booklet* does not identify the “Greek Fathers” who, according to *NSHERK*, were influenced by Platonic philosophy, but the encyclopedia does identify them by name:

Among the most illustrious of the Fathers who were more or less Platonic, may be named Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen...³⁰

The foregoing follows just *two sentences* after the portion the booklet quotes—so why would they have left out this important information? They omitted it because it would make them look silly, having just portrayed Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Clement, and Origen as their “good guys” who supposedly did not believe in the “Pagan” Trinity.

But wait, there’s more—*NSHERK* has this to say about the WTBS’s premise that the Trinity derived from Pagan sources:

There is no reason to seek for sources or types of the doctrine of the Trinity outside of Christianity or of the Bible, though in the eighteenth century efforts were made to derive the Christian dogma from Plato, and later from Brahmanism and Parseeism, or later still, from a Babylonian triad. Even were the resemblance between the Christian Trinity and the pagan triads far greater than it is, there could be no question of borrowing.³¹

Now we have to wonder what the encyclopedia meant when it asserted that the Logos and the Trinity doctrines “received their shape” from the Greek Fathers. Obviously they did not mean, as the WTBS would have us believe, that the doctrine itself was borrowed or derived from Plato or other sources, because they outright reject that theory as just quoted above. The early Church writers merely used the philosophical language of the day to explain the Biblical concepts about the nature of God and Christ to the Greco-Roman culture to whom they were addressing and ministering.

The Apostle Paul, while trying to explain God’s omnipresence and great superiority over the Pagan gods, cited a Pagan source saying, “...As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’” (Acts 17:28, NIV) Did Paul “borrow” or derive his Doctrine of God from the Athenian Pagans, or merely use a cultural reference with which his hearers were familiar to explain to them a Biblical concept.

We do the same when we write—we use cultural references and the common language, stories, and movies of the American culture of our day to draw analogies to Biblical truth.

These early Church writers were mere men—their writings were not inspired and their words are not “Scripture” by any means—so we do not have to accept everything they write as “Gospel truth.” However, they took very seriously their responsibility to preserve and defend the faith “*once for all entrusted*”—not lost and “restored” in the nineteenth century—“*to the Saints.*” (Jude 3, NIV)

When you read the epistles and other compositions of the early Church fathers, the first thing you will notice is the prodigious amount of Scripture they used in making their case. The second thing you’ll notice is that they were NOT JW’s! ☺ They don’t mention “Jehovah’s Organization,” the Governing Body, time cards, Circuit Overseers, or Special Pioneers; nor do they speak of peddling *WATCHTOWER* magazines from door to door! Plus they exhibit in their writings a pleasing humility, something *not found* in the publications of the WTBS. You will not hear them constantly

extolling their own virtues and greatness as the Watchtower Society shamelessly does. They direct devotion to Christ—not to themselves! Contrast the Ante-Nicene writer’s humility with the outrageous arrogance of the Governing Body in making these statements:

“And while now the witness yet includes the invitation to come to Jehovah’s organization for salvation.”³²

“We need his spirit and we need his word, but we also need the benefits of his organization if we are successfully to gain life in his new order.”³³

“...Jehovah God caused the Bible to be written in such a way that one needs to come in touch with His human channel before one can fully and accurately understand it. True, we need the help of God’s holy spirit, but its help also comes to us primarily by association with the channel Jehovah God sees fit to use.”³⁴

Another quote the WTBS offers in support of their accusation that the Trinity originated from Pagan sources comes from historian Will Durant who claims that:

“Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it.”³⁵

But, as usual, we had better look closely at *what else* Durant may have had to say on the subject. Here is, as Paul Harvey says, the rest of the story...

Durant said it was the *Apostle John*—not big bad Christendom—who originally merged Christianity with Greek mysticism and philosophy! States Durant:

(Continued on next page)

**does your Teen
got
QUESTIONS?
YOUNG
DEFENDERS
BOOT
CAMP**

Our young people are the future leaders of the church.
Training is not an option “it’s a necessity!!!
Will they be trained by the church . . . or the culture?
Contact Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. for information on setting up a
Young Defenders Boot Camp in your area.

**get
Answers!**

It seems incredible that the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel should have come from the same hand. The Apocalypse is Jewish poetry, the Fourth Gospel is Greek philosophy. Perhaps the apostle wrote Revelation in justifiable wrath after Nero's persecution, and the Gospel in the mellow metaphysics of his old age...His memories of the Master may by this time have faded a bit, so far as one could ever forget Jesus; and doubtless in the isles and cities of Ionia he had heard many an echo of Greek mysticism and philosophy.³⁶

The snippet of Durant the WTBS quoted is found on the *very next page* from the one above! Is it reasonable to believe that the WTBS did not have any idea that Durant was claiming the paganism that Christianity supposedly adopted came in through *the Apostle John*? Call me doubting Thomas, but I don't find that credible. I believe they know exactly what Durant was saying, but they didn't care, as long as there was a fragment that they could rip from its context and use to slander the Church and discredit the Trinity. When it comes to the Watchtower Society, we had always better check out the rest of the story unless we are looking to have the wool pulled over our eyes.

It's a similar story concerning Siegfried Morenz, the author of *Egyptian Religion*,³⁷ who is quoted on page 11 of the Trinity booklet. While it is true Morenz speculates that the Trinity doctrine is of Egyptian derivation; he also believes other concepts, phrases, and teachings of the Bible originate in Egyptian religion—like the Biblical chronicle of David and Solomon, the Proverbs of Solomon, the Creation of the world “through the Word of the Creator,” and more. In short, if we are to accept Morenz' conjecture that the Trinity doctrine is of Egyptian derivation, mustn't we accept his other unfortunate suppositions as well?

The Trinity Doctrine Was Not Concocted, But Merely Codified By The Church

...it took centuries from the time of Christ for the Trinity to become accepted in Christendom. And in all of this, what guided the decisions? Was it the Word of God, or was it clerical and political considerations?³⁸

The WTBS (along with most other anti-Trinitarians) argues that since the doctrine was *codified* at the Council of Nicea, the early Church Fathers just grabbed the concept out of either Pagan tradition or thin air. This is simply not true. The Council of Nicea was called to combat Arius, who arose with the heretical idea that Christ was a created being who was brought into existence by the Father at some point in time. At Nicea, the Church merely *formalized* the creed that confirmed what the Church *had been teaching up to that time* in order to expose Arius' false view. For the first three centuries, there was no argument about Jesus' *deity*—*all Christians believed He was God*—so there was no need to formally declare it to be so. It was only when the doctrine was *challenged* by Arius and those with him that it became necessary to codify the teaching and work out the exact language that would best explain precisely what the Bible taught and the Church believed about the relationship between the Father and the Son. They didn't make up the concept, but the language used to identify the concept.³⁹

As to refuting the WTBS's contention that the doctrine was the result of early Christians becoming influenced by Pagan ideas, we need look no further than *The Encyclopedia Americana* that the Society misuses in this very booklet to

make their case that the doctrine is unreasonable and too confusing to be true. They say on page 4:

This confusion is widespread. *The Encyclopedia Americana* notes that the doctrine of the Trinity is considered to be “beyond the grasp of human reason.”⁴⁰

What they *left out* of that quotation is of more interest and speaks more to the point at hand than what they put in, as is usually the case with WTBS “quotations” of scholars and scholarly tomes. Here is the quote in context:

It is held that although the doctrine is beyond the grasp of human reason, it is, like many of the formulations of physical science, not contrary to reason, and may be apprehended (though it may not be comprehended) by the human mind.⁴¹

That puts a little different spin on what the encyclopedia had to say about the unreasonableness of the Trinity. But what *The Encyclopedia Americana* goes on to say in the very next paragraph is that:

It is probably a mistake to assume that the doctrine resulted from the intrusion of Greek metaphysics or philosophy into Christian thought; for the data upon which the doctrine rests, and also its earliest attempts at formulation, are much older than the church's encounter with Greek philosophy. The earliest development of the doctrine may in fact be viewed as an attempt to preserve the balance between the various statements of Scripture, or their implications, without yielding to views which, though logical enough, would have destroyed or abandoned important areas of Christian belief.⁴²

It is also odd that although they cast aspersions on the Trinity because the doctrine was developed over time (as heretical men rose up against the teaching), their supposedly Biblically based doctrines are *still being developed* as we speak! The leadership in Brooklyn New York is constantly receiving “**new light**” that outright *contradicts* what they taught yesterday as truth from God. The poor JWs have to run to keep up with all the changes in the WTBS's “Bible-based” doctrines. In fact, their own Christology—the Jesus=Michael doctrine—is one of the teachings that has developed over time. Their founder, C.T. Russell (president from 1884-1916), taught that Jesus Christ *could not be Michael*, which means that their current Christology is less than one hundred years old! So please do not allow them to condemn your beliefs on the basis that Church doctrine developed over time. It took them 1900 years (if you accept their absurd claim that their organization originated with Jesus Christ in 33AD) to figure out who they *think* Jesus is today!

The WTBS asserts, on the opening page of this little booklet, that “**there are good reasons why you should want to know the truth about the Trinity.**” It should be obvious by now that you are not going to get the truth about the Trinity from this source. Although they claim to be the only true Christians, the WTBS is not an organization of truth. So far we have looked mainly at the WTBS's misuse of scholars and quotations that appear in this booklet. In the next issue of the *Journal*, we intend to answer the Watchtower Society's supposed *Biblical* objections to the Trinity and the Deity of Christ.

If you would like to have a photocopy of these misquoted sources *in their context* so you can share this information with a JW friend or the JW who comes to your door, please call our Lombard, Illinois Office (630) 627-9028, or e-mail us at info@midwestoutreach.org to request these documents.

Keep in mind, though, before using these documents, that the JW that knocks on your door is not “the enemy.” God loves that person as much as He loves you and me—that is why He sent them to your door. Most of them are totally unaware of the deceitfulness of this widely disseminated booklet. They truly believe they are serving Jehovah God by slavishly serving the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Their eternal destiny, in their minds, depends upon their faithful service to the “anointed brothers” in Brooklyn. Incredibly the WTBS has told them:


Your attitude toward the wheatlike anointed brothers of Christ, and the treatment you accord them will be the determining factor as to whether you go into “everlasting cutting off” or receive “everlasting life.” Prove yourself to be a loyal companion of the anointed “wheat” class, the “faithful and discreet slave,” whom Christ has appointed to provide spiritual “food at the proper time.”⁴³

Think about it—the “attitude” the individual JW accords the *leadership* and how they treat *them* determines their eternal destiny; *and* they also are taught that to even question the WTBS is to be disloyal to God.

If we do not see a point at first we should keep trying to grasp it, rather than opposing and rejecting it and presumptuously taking the position that we are more likely to be right than the discreet slave. We should meekly go along with the Lord’s theocratic organization and wait for further clarification, rather than balk at the first mention of a thought unpalatable to us and proceed to quibble and mouth our criticisms and opinions as though they were worth more than the slave’s provision of spiritual food. Theocratic ones will appreciate the Lord’s visible organization and not be so foolish as to pit against Jehovah’s channel their own human reasoning and sentiment and personal feelings.”⁴⁴

...any among Jehovah’s people who indulge in independent and contrary teaching imitate, not God, but Satan the Devil.”⁴⁵

Can you understand why it can be so hard to share the Gospel or discuss the Bible with a JW? They are wearing *WATCHTOWER* glasses. He (or she) has been persuaded that by merely giving an honest ear to what you have to say, he is indulging in independent and contrary teaching, which could cost him his eternal life!

That is where this documentation comes in—not to enable you to humiliate an adversary, but to perhaps, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and with the care and compassion that you would want to be shown if the situation was reversed—open their blind eyes to the true nature of the ravenous wolf they serve. You want to raise this question in their minds: How can such dishonesty be of God? How can such a dishonest group really be “Jehovah’s Organization?” If you can, through careful exposition of the WTBS’s falsehoods, bring them to the point where they dare to question whether the WTBS really is “Jehovah’s Organization.” Then you can progress to discussing the Scriptures with them, so you can introduce them to the God of Grace and the true Jesus Who is the only Savior. May God bless your efforts to witness to these lost souls who cross your path. 

Love to all,

Kpz

*Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTBS) is the clergy or government of the group known as Jehovah’s Witnesses (JW)

***WATCHTOWER* and *Awake!* are the bimonthly publications of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

ENDNOTES:

¹ [WTBS], *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* (Brooklyn, New York: WATCHTOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC., 1989).

² *Ibid.*, p.3.

³ Edmund J Fortman, *The Triune God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972), pp.xv-xvi.

⁴ *Should You Believe ...*, p.4.

⁵ We were there, along with a handful of other Christian apologists, to interview the attendees and to engage some of them in dialogue.

⁶ Arthur Weigall, *The Paganism in Our Christianity* (London: New York, NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1928), pp.30-31.

⁷ Levi Leonard Paine, *A Critical History of the Evolution of Trinitarianism* by 1900, The Riverside Press, (Cambridge, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, Boston and New York, p.269.

⁸ [WTBS], *Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers* (Brooklyn, New York: WATCHTOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC., 1945), p.354.

⁹ *Should You Believe ...*, p.4.

¹⁰ *Should You Believe ...*, p.5.

¹¹ [WTBS], *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (Brooklyn, New York: WATCHTOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC., 1985), p.149.

¹² *Should You Believe ...*, p.5.

¹³ The booklet refers to the ante-Nicene Fathers as “the early Christians” on the last page of the Trinity booklet. Keep in mind that in order to be considered a Christian, one needs to be a JW. There are no true Christians outside of the WTBS organization. If these men were Christians, though, when and how did the Great Apostasy develop?

¹⁴ *Should You Believe ...*, p.7.

¹⁵ Justin Martyr, “The First Apology of Justin,” in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS*, rev. by A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. I (1884; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), p.184.

¹⁶ Justin Martyr, “Dialogue with Trypho,” in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS*, rev. by A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. I (1884; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), p.212.

¹⁷ *Should You Believe ...*, p.7.

¹⁸ Irenaeus, “Irenaeus Against Heresies,” in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS*, rev. by A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. I (1884; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), p.545.

¹⁹ *Trinity*, p.7.

²⁰ Clement of Alexandria, “Fragments from Cassiodorus,” in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS*, rev. by A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. II (1884; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), p.574.

²¹ *Should You Believe ...*, p.7.

²² Tertullian, “Against Praxeas,” in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS*, rev. by A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. III (1884; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), p.606.

²³ Tertullian, “Apology,” in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS*, rev. by A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. III (1884; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), pp.34-35.

²⁴ *Should You Believe ...*, p.7.

²⁵ Hippolytus, “Against the Heresy of One Noetus,” in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS*, rev. by A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. V (1884; reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), p.227.

²⁶ *Should You Believe ...*, p.7.

²⁷ *Should You Believe ...*, p.9.

²⁸ *Should You Believe ...*, p.11.

²⁹ *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., vol. IX (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1957), p.91.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.91.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.19.

³² [WTBS], “Stay Awake and Keep Your Senses,” *THE WATCHTOWER*, (Nov. 15, 1981), p.21.

³³ [WTBS], “Recognizing the Part Played by Jehovah’s Organization,” *THE WATCHTOWER*, (Sept. 15, 1967), p.560.

³⁴ [WTBS], “Do We Need Help to Understand the Bible?,” *THE WATCHTOWER*, (Feb. 15, 1981), p.17.

³⁵ Will Durant, “The Apostles,” *The Story of Civilization: Part III, Caesar and Christ* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1944), p.595.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.594.

³⁷ Seigfried Morenz, *Egyptian Religion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1973).

³⁸ *Should You Believe ...*, p.9.

³⁹ The earliest battle about the nature of Christ was for Christians to prove that Jesus was also human as well as God. The Gnostics denied His humanity, because they believed all matter was evil, and therefore, God could not touch matter. So they believed God sent out emanations from Himself and one of those emanations was “Christ” who settled on the man Jesus at His baptism and departed from Him (Jesus) at His Crucifixion.

⁴⁰ *Should You Believe ...*, p.4.

⁴¹ *The Encyclopedia Americana*, vol. 27 (New York, NY: Americana Corporation, 1977), p.116.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ [WTBS], “Harvesting in the ‘Time of the End,’” *THE WATCHTOWER*, (Aug. 1, 1981) p.26.

⁴⁴ [WTBS], “Jehovah’s Theocratic Organization Today,” *THE WATCHTOWER*, (Feb. 1, 1952), pp. 79-80.

⁴⁵ [WTBS], “Loyally Submitting to Theocratic Order,” *THE WATCHTOWER*, (June 1, 1982), p.17.

John C. Maxwell



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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

There are certainly many resources available to the Christian community pertaining to the various aspects of building the Kingdom of God. I do not believe it is necessary that we agree one-hundred percent with everything a particular resource has to say. It may very well be that we not only have to pick and choose the individual resources, but also pick and choose the ideas and suggestions within a particular resource. However, several concerns should be kept in mind when Christian leaders or a church utilize a resource. First, they should be concerned whether the particular ideas gleaned from the resource are true and godly. Just because certain ideas contribute to the success of a given initiative does not mean the idea is predicated upon something true or godly. The danger is that a false idea may initially yield seemingly beneficial results, but later it may become ingrained into one's world view and yield unhealthy results.

Second, Christian leaders or the church should take care about what signals they are sending to the church family when they tacitly endorse certain ideas or individuals. While a particular idea may appear benign, that resource may be attended with or be proximate to other ideas that are antithetical to the Christian world view and Christian life.

I decided to look through some material written by John C. Maxwell after I had agreed to be on a "team" to help implement a new initiative at my local church. I was invited to consult a web site to avail myself to leadership and teamwork principles supplied by an internet ministry headed by Maxwell. What I found on the web site gave me pause. With my concern aroused, I decided to look more closely at some materials John Maxwell had written.¹ I was even more dismayed at what I found.

My main concerns about the Maxwell material, broadly speaking, are: First, the manner in which Maxwell handles the Scriptures to "teach" his principles is sometimes egregiously mistaken. It is my contention that the Bible is not necessarily teaching the principles that Maxwell thinks. His handling of the Scripture indicates Maxwell does not know (or at least is not utilizing) the proper methods of Biblical interpretation.² This is not to say I necessarily disagree with the principles themselves. I might agree with some of them and disagree with others. But I believe it is of paramount importance that we let the Bible teach what it does and not try to justify our own ideas (even if those ideas are true) by violating sound principles of Biblical interpretation. I regret that the use of Maxwell's materials sends the wrong signals to the church family as to how to use and interpret the Bible. This is especially of concern regarding the younger Christians in the church family.

Second, Maxwell either implicitly or explicitly endorses some New Age teachers and doctrines. Even if Maxwell himself (or the church leadership) understands the dangers of New Age doctrines, it is a dangerous thing to give such tacit endorsement in front of a church family, especially considering those who are younger in their faith.

Third, in addition to the New Age elements peppered throughout his material, Maxwell also employs questionable theological doctrines—such as a mistaken notion of the miraculous, a conspicuous absence of the cross—and questionable psychological doctrines—including self-esteem psychology and temperaments psychology. It is to each of these concerns I now would like to direct my attention.

SPECIFIC CONCERNS

Maxwell's Misuse of Scripture

Bear in mind that my concern in this section is not whether a particular conclusion is true or false. Rather, my concern here is whether these passages of Scripture teach what Maxwell employs them to teach. I contend that they do not. The danger, therefore, is how Maxwell models an inappropriate way of handling the Scriptures.

Proverbs 29:18 – "Where there is no vision the people perish."^{*}

In *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork* (ILT), Maxwell asserts that **"vision gives team members direction and confidence."** (ILT, p. 96) The context shows that Maxwell is thinking of a vision as the ability of the team to **"look beyond current circumstances and any obvious shortcomings of current teammates to see the potential of the team."** (ILT, p. 95) Maxwell's use of this verse displays a common misunderstanding that is perhaps created by the ambiguity of the English term *vision* used in the King James Version. The word translated *vision* in the King James Version is the Hebrew word *hazon*. According to Hebrew scholar Thomas Howe, it is **"primarily used in the OT to refer to a divine communication, i.e., when a prophet receives a vision."**³ The Hebrew is better translated in more modern versions as (with the complete verse) **"Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law."** (New King James Version) Notice the contrasts in the parallelism of the verse. The **"no revelation"** (*no vision*) is a parallel contrasting **"law"** (Hebrew, *Torah*) and the **"cast off restraint"** is a parallel contrasting **"happy."** One can see this verse is teaching that without the Word of God, God's people become unrestrained; and only with instruction (*Torah*) can God's people be happy or blessed. Thus, the verse has nothing to do with

what Maxwell is discussing. Howe comments, **“There does not seem to be a single instance where this word is used in the OT according to the popular way the word ‘vision’ is used (the ability to think about or plan the future with imagination or wisdom, or a mental image of what the future will or could be like).”**⁴

My criticism here should not be misunderstood. I am not necessarily disagreeing with Maxwell about the importance of the team being able to have such insight and foresight. Rather, my criticism is that, whether Maxwell’s point is true or false, Proverbs 29:18 has nothing to do with it.

John 2 – Jesus at the Cana wedding

On pages 12-13 in *The Winning Attitude* (TWA), Maxwell uses the story of Jesus at the Cana wedding to illustrate several principles. Whether these principles are true or not is not my concern at this point. (Later in this article, I criticize Maxwell’s view of miracles from this context.) His discussion here is illustrative of how many Christians misuse their Bible, especially if the passage in question is historical narrative. Rather than taking the narrative at face value and trying to understand what it is saying, Christians often “allegorize” or “moralize” the text. This means taking the elements of the story and trying to make each element symbolize some aspect of the Christian life. Here, for example, Maxwell takes the overall “lesson” of the story to be obedience. This lesson of obedience, according to Maxwell, tells us that we are to obey Jesus even if **“you are not in the right place”** (TWA, p. 12) and takes the fact that Jesus performed His miracle at a wedding instead of a church to mean we can expect **“some of God’s greatest blessings will be at ‘other places’ if we are obedient to Him.”** Maxwell goes on to point out how other elements of the narrative illustrate obedience in our Christian lives. One should be obedient (1) when **“you have lots of problems,”** (2) when **“you are not encouraged,”** (3) when **“you have not walked with Him very long,”** (4) when **“you have not seen Him work miracles in your life,”** and (5) when **“you don’t understand the entire process.”** (TWA, p. 13) These principles supposedly are taught in the narrative when the characters (1) run out of wine, (2) when Jesus says, **“My hour has not yet come,”** (3) because the disciples had just met Jesus, (4) because this was Jesus’ first miracle, and (5) because the characters did what Jesus commanded even in light of not knowing what Jesus was up to. While these might be useful points in some sense, it is my contention that these have nothing to do with Jesus at the Cana Wedding.⁵

1 Samuel 17 – David and Goliath

In *The Winning Attitude* Maxwell says, **“When Goliath came up against the Israelites, the soldiers all thought, He’s so big we can never kill him. David looked at the same giant and thought, He’s so big I can’t miss.”** (TWA, p. 31, emphasis in original) This again is an example of missing the real reason why the narrative tells us a story. To take Goliath as if he is illustrative of problems or obstacles in our lives, the Israelite’s reaction as negative thinking, and David’s reaction as positive thinking, is again to completely violate sound principles of Biblical interpretation regarding historical narrative. It is my contention that Maxwell’s use of this passage has nothing to do with why God’s Word tells us this story.⁶

Romans 10:7 – **“Faith comes by hearing ...”**

Maxwell discusses how the negative and positive words we hear can either encourage or discourage us. (TWA, pp. 56-57) What he thinks Romans 10:7 has to do with this is not clear in his discussion. I can only assume he thinks it is relevant since he quotes part

of the verse as a heading introducing this discussion. I take issue later on with the categories of “positive” and “negative” in these discussions. Let it suffice to say here that Paul’s point in Romans 10 has nothing to do with positive or negative words and the impact they might have on us being encouraged or discouraged. Rather, Paul is concerned with the truths contained in the Word of God and how the hearing of God’s truths can give rise to faith in God. Taking Romans 10:7 the way Maxwell does ignores the context, reduces Paul’s words to a mere platitude, and misses Paul’s meaning altogether.

Proverbs 23:7 – **“For as he thinks within himself, so he is.”**

Here is another example of a verse that is commonly taken out of context to say something it clearly does not mean. As Maxwell discusses one’s self-image, he comments, **“It is impossible to perform consistently in a manner inconsistent with the way we see ourselves. In other words, we usually act in direct response to our self-image.”** (TWA, p. 61-62) Whether this is true or not, I contend that this passage from Proverbs has nothing to do with one’s self-image. When one reads this verse, a question he should ask is “Who is the **‘he’** referring to?” In answering the question about what is the antecedent of the pronoun, we have to look to the context. Consider the fuller citation: **“Do not eat the bread of a miser, Nor desire his delicacies; For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. ‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, But his heart is not with you.”** (vv. 6-7) It should be clear that this passage has nothing to do with self-image. Rather, the writer is warning that though the miser outwardly seems to be hospitable, inwardly he resents the fact you are eating his food. So, the counsel goes, do not be deceived by his hypocritical outward actions, but be aware that how he is inwardly toward you (as he thinks in his heart) is his true disposition.

Further, Maxwell recounts a testimony where one uses this passage as a commentary on how one sees the world around him; how one’s attitude can make a difference. (TWA, pp. 132-134) Again, it should be clear this has nothing to do with the passage. At the risk of being too redundant, my criticism here is not whether Maxwell’s point is true or false. Rather, I am saying that the passage in question has nothing to do with his point.

Numbers 13 & 14 – Israel’s Failure to Enter the Promised Land

Maxwell uses the story of Israel’s failure to enter the Promised Land in Numbers 13 and 14 as illustrative of how **“negative thinking limits God and our potential.”** (TWA, p. 122) I do not want to anticipate my criticisms of the notions of “positive thinking” and “negative thinking.” At this point, I simply want to reason that Maxwell’s use of this passage misses the real reason why Israel failed to reap God’s promises. It had nothing to do with being “positive” or “negative.” Rather, Israel’s failure was due to unbelief. There was no question that God repeatedly had promised Israel that He was going to give them this land. This promise constituted God’s inauguration through Abraham of His relationship with His chosen people. (Genesis 12:1-3) The difference between the two reactions of the spies and the nation was that Caleb and Joshua believed God’s promise, and the others did not. It is as simple as that. The lesson is profound. The issue of believing God resounds throughout the entire Bible. In fact, our very salvation is a function of believing God. **“For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as**
(Continued on next page)

"Maxwell" (Continued from page 11)

grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness." (Romans 4:3-5) To reduce the Numbers passage to the categories of positive and negative thinking rather than belief and unbelief in God is to tragically miss the whole point of the passage and neglect a perfect opportunity to teach one of the most important doctrines of the entire Bible.

Matthew 21:21 – *"If you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall ... say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and it shall happen."*

Maxwell employs this passage to teach that **"the only thing that will guarantee the success of a doubtful undertaking is the faith from the beginning that you can do it."** (TWA, p. 139) There are several things wrong with taking the passage this way. First, one's faith is not to be in one's self. I need not have faith that I can do it. Rather, faith should be directed toward God. He is the one that can do it. But what is it He can, or will, do? This is the second problem with Maxwell's use of Scripture here. Faith is believing what God has said. If the mountain is to be cast into the sea, it will only be because that is God's will. We do not bring it about simply because we believe it. First John 5:14 says, *"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."* If something is not God's will, then no amount of my believing it or having "faith" in my ability to do something will be able to bring it about. But, how are we to know whether God has willed it? A full discussion of God's will is not possible here. I contend that God's will is fully revealed in His Word—the Bible. If we pray and ask according to the Bible, we can know God will grant our petitions. This is not to say that we cannot pray for things about which the Bible is silent. We are invited to *"cast our cares upon Him"* (1 Peter 5:7). However, we must be willing to accept God's will even if it conflicts with ours. We cannot presume that God would give us anything we ask if He has not promised it in His word.

Maxwell's Use of New Age Teachers And Philosophies

The following is a sampling of Maxwell's use of New Age teachers and philosophies; the use of which may cause some believers not only to embrace the material Maxwell presents, but also view these teachers and doctrines as harmless.

Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking*: On several occasions, Maxwell seems to favorably quote or refer to Norman Vincent Peale. (TWA, p. 47, 172) In fact in *The Winning Attitude*, Maxwell recounts an episode that, to my mind, illustrates one of the dangers of endorsing writers such as Peale. He says, *"My father has always been a positive influence in my life. Once, while visiting my parents back east, I noticed he was reading Norman Vincent Peale's book *The Power of Positive Thinking*. When I noted that he had read this book previously, he replied enthusiastically, 'Of course! I must keep building my attitude.'"* (TWA, p. 47) It is regrettable how much of the Christian community has considered Peale's doctrine to be consistent with the Christian world view. Space will not allow a thorough examination of Peale's teachings. A few references, however, should suffice to show the doctrines of *The Power of Positive Thinking* are not Christian.

Many mistakenly think Peale's "positive thinking" is merely an encouragement to be optimistic in one's outlook on life. Many

mistakenly think all Peale is saying is that one should try to look for the good in every situation. This is not "positive thinking." But even if it were, I maintain it still is not a Christian attitude for several reasons. First, the Bible encourages us to think *truly*—not *optimistically*. Philippians 4:8 ff says, *"Finally brethren, whatever things are true ... meditate on these things."* In the Bible, sometimes God was very "negative." *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"* (Genesis 2:16-17) In the Bible, sometimes Satan was very "positive." *"Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die.'"* (Genesis 3:4) As I will argue later, the categories of "positive" and "negative" do not necessarily track the categories of "good" and "evil."

The second problem with Peale's position, even if he were talking about being optimistic (which I contend he was not), is that we have no right to encourage anyone to be optimistic unless and until that person has believed on Christ for eternal life. If we help the lost person to gain an optimistic attitude, we may be keeping him from ever seeing his need for a Savior. The lost person should not be optimistic because he is doomed without Christ.

However, there is a conspicuous lack of the cross in Peale's "positive thinking." He does not necessarily link the fruits of "positive thinking" to an acknowledgement of one's own sin and the provision that God has made through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. So, even if Peale's point were that one should have an optimistic attitude toward life, this still would be misguided because of the greater need that one have a realistic, or true, attitude and recognize that one is entitled to genuine optimism only if one has believed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As I have pointed out, however, an optimistic attitude toward life is not what Norman Vincent Peale's *Power of Positive Thinking* is all about. Rather, this "power" is something by which one can **"rise above obstacles which ordinarily might defeat you"**⁷⁷ by **"channeling spiritual power through your thoughts."**⁷⁸ For Peale, this power is not merely an attitude, but is a real power that resides in us. Peale encourages his readers to **"believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you cannot be successful or happy."**⁷⁹ Peale likens this power in other places as a **"Higher Power"** that **"is constantly available. If you open to it, it will rush in like a mighty tide. It is there for anybody under any circumstances or in any conditions."** (Even in the condition of unbelief?) Tragically, Peale wants to relate this power to God. He credits a friend of his for making him realize that he should **"practice resting ... in God [for] His support and power. Believe that He is giving it to you now and don't get out touch with that power. Yield yourself to it—let it flow through you."**¹⁰

One more quote should suffice to illustrate that the ideas of Norman Vincent Peale depart from an orthodox Christian world view. In relating this power to God, Peale comments, **"Contact with God establishes within us a flow of the same type of energy that re-creates the world and that renews springtime every year. When in spiritual contact with God through our thought processes, the Divine energy flows through the personality, automatically renewing the original creative act."**¹¹ This type of thinking should sound familiar to anyone who has studied New Thought, New Age, or Occult Philosophy.¹² For Maxwell to favor-

ably mention Peale in his material is misleading at best and potentially heretical at worst.

The Categories of “Positive” and “Negative:” In both *The Winning Attitude* and *Becoming a Person of Influence*, Maxwell uses the categories of “positive” and “negative.” He talks about the positive and negative influences on us (TWA, p. 44), our positive and negative influence on others (BPI, p. 8-11), positive and negative words and attitudes (TWA, pp. 57-58), and positive and negative thoughts (TWA, pp. 119 ff.). To put it as directly as I can: the categories of “positive” and “negative” are impotent to capture a proper understanding of reality vis-à-vis our personal and spiritual lives. Rather, “positive” and “negative” are better suited to a discussion of an energy like electricity. In terms of a discussion of spiritual matters, “positive” and “negative” bespeak more of New Age and Occult philosophy. Because New Thought, New Age, and Occult philosophies hold that the spiritual realm is an “energy” of sorts, one finds the categories of “positive” and “negative” used extensively in such literature.¹³ Instead of “positive” and “negative,” the Bible speaks in terms of “true” and “false,” “good” and “evil,” “righteous” and “unrighteous,” and “godly” and “ungodly.” I assert that in a discussion of things like influences and attitudes, these Biblical categories serve us much better than the categories of “positive” and “negative.”

Positive Mental Attitude Pioneer Napoleon Hill: My concerns about Maxwell quoting Napoleon Hill (IQL, p. 69) are similar to my concerns about him quoting Norman Vincent Peale, except Napoleon Hill is much more overtly Occult. Admittedly, here Maxwell does not give an overall endorsement of Napoleon Hill, but my concern is how a young or undiscerning Christian might read this reference and mistakenly conclude Napoleon Hill is a safe resource from which a Christian might draw safe advice. Hill is the author of *Think and Grow Rich* which is probably one of the most widely read “positive mental attitude” and success-motivational books around. The thrust of the book is that success is a function of one’s attitude. Specifically, Hill teaches there is a “**Supreme Secret**” that is the key to life. The secret is: “**Anything the human mind can believe, the human mind can achieve.**”¹⁴ In other words, the power of mind is the key to bring what is needed in life. This is classic Occult philosophy. But what is worse is Hill’s testimony as to how he learned this secret. An extended quote should suffice to show that this book is anti-Christian.

Now and again I have had evidence that unseen friends hover about me, unknowable to ordinary senses. In my studies I discovered there is a group of strange beings who maintain a school of wisdom which must be ten thousand years old ... I was alone in my study and all was very still. A voice spoke. I saw nobody. I cannot tell you whence the voice came. ... “I have come,” said the voice, “to give you one more section to include in your book. ...” I whispered: “Who are you?” In a softened voice ... the unseen speaker replied: “I come from the Great School of the Masters. I am one of the Council of Thirty-Three who serve the Great School and its initiates on the physical plane.” ... The School has Masters who can disembody themselves and travel instantly to any place they choose in order to acquire essential knowledge, or to give knowledge directly, by voice, to anyone else. Now I knew that one of these Masters had come across thousands of miles, through the night, into my study. “You have earned the right to reveal a Supreme Secret to others,” said the vibrant voice. ... Now you must give to the world a blue print¹⁵

Clearly, Hill is in contact with something that is not holy. No Christian leader should reference such material without clearly indicating the dangers contained in it. But, tragically, Maxwell, to my knowledge, never warns his readers of these Occult teachings when he references Napoleon Hill.

Mystical Christian Writer Richard Foster: In *The Winning Attitude*, Maxwell quotes Christian writer Richard Foster. (TWA, pp. 174-175) One of Foster’s works is *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*.¹⁶ Again, while Maxwell does not necessarily give a wholehearted endorsement of Foster’s writings, because of the troublesome doctrines in Foster’s material, one should be careful not to quote an author without disclaiming an endorsement of that writer’s other ideas. A few comments should adequately show that some of Foster’s doctrines are problematic.

First, Foster teaches techniques of meditation by saying, “**the imagination is stronger than conceptual thought and stronger than the will. In the West, our tendency to deify the merits of rationalism—and it does have merit—has caused us to ignore the value of the imagination.**”¹⁷ He goes on to advocate listening to our dreams. “**For fifteen centuries Christians overwhelmingly considered dreams as a natural way in which the spiritual world broke into our lives.**”¹⁸ He suggests that “**we can specifically pray, inviting God to inform us through our dreams. We should tell Him of our willingness to allow Him to speak to us in this way.**” But then Foster adds, “**At the same time, it is wise to pray a prayer of protection, since to open ourselves to spiritual influence can be dangerous as well as profitable.**”¹⁹ Foster appeals to the fact that many of the Church Fathers looked to dreams to encourage the reader to give dreams a try. Conspicuously, he makes little appeal to the Bible to justify these teachings. Further, Foster thinks if one practices at meditation, he can develop his skills in order to internalize and personalize the Scriptures. For example, He claims that in meditating on a parable of Jesus, one enters “**not as a passive observer but as an active participant, remember that since Jesus lives in the Eternal Now and is not bound by time, this event in the past is a living presentment experience for Him. Hence, you can actually encounter the living Christ in the event, be addressed by His voice and be touched by His healing power.**”²⁰

Second, Foster advocates what looks to me like out-of-body experiences. He teaches: “**In your imagination allow your spiritual body, shining with light, to rise out of your physical body. Look back so that you can see yourself lying in the grass and reassure your body that you will return momentarily. Imagine your spiritual self, alive and vibrant, rising up through the clouds and into the stratosphere. Observe your physical body, the knoll, and the forest shrink as you leave the earth. Go deeper and deeper into outer space until there is nothing except the warm presence of the eternal Creator.**”²¹

Third, Foster also endorses the New Age writer Agnes Sanford,²² author of the book *Healing Gifts of the Spirit*.²³ He says, “**This advice, and much more, was given to me by Agnes Sanford. I have discovered her to be an extremely wise and skillful counselor in these matters. Her book *The Healing Gifts of the Spirit* is an excellent resource.**”²⁴ To my mind, this is an extremely careless statement for a Christian to make. Agnes Sanford is a Pantheist. She says, regarding the earth, the sea, the clouds, the birds and the sun, “**all these God made and He made them out of Himself.**”²⁵ Further, Sanford teaches: “**You see, God is actually in the flowers and the growing grass and all the little chirping, singing things. He made everything out of Himself and somehow He put**

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"Maxwell" (Continued from page 13)

a part of Himself into everything."²⁶ Regarding the baptism of the Holy Spirit, she says, **"But no experience ever equaled in bliss this baptism of pure light and power that came to me from God, not through the medium of man counseling and praying with me, but through the sun and the waters of the lake and the wind in the pine trees."**²⁷ Sanford appeals to the New Age writer Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's works *The Phenomena of Man* and *The Divine Milieu* as an authority for her own teachings.²⁸ The fact Foster likes her as much as he does says something to me about his own discernment and world view.

Last, Foster seems to include himself in the New Age Movement. He says, **"We of the New Age can risk going against the tide. Let us with abandon relish the fantasy games of children. Let's see visions and dream dreams."**²⁹ Now, perhaps I cannot be sure what Foster means by the term "New Age," but it is important to note that his book came out at the time the New Age Movement was propagating similar views. Thus, the fact Maxwell quotes Foster without any disclaimer is troubling.

New Age Psychologist James Allen: On page 13 of *The Winning Attitude*, Maxwell quotes James Allen. Among author Allen's works is *As a Man Thinketh*.³⁰ Allen is another installment of those positive-thinking, New-Age writers who carelessly weaves verses from the Bible with New Age Occult philosophy. In the grand tradition of the New Thought Movement,³¹ Allen claims: **"all that a man achieves and all that he fails to achieve is the direct result of his own thoughts."**³² Further, Allen maintains that **"as a being of Power, Intelligence, and Love, and the lord of his own thought, man holds the key to every situation, and contains within himself that transforming and regenerative agency by which he may make himself what he will."**³³ The contrast between this and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ should be obvious. Again, while Maxwell nowhere indicates that he wholeheartedly embraces the teaching of James Allen, I contend that it is dangerous for him to have an unqualified quote from such a resource without disclaiming the Occult world view that informs Allen's material.

Maxwell's Use of Questionable Doctrines

QUESTIONABLE THEOLOGY:

I have already dealt with some theological problems, such as Maxwell's confusion about faith in his use of Matthew 21:21. (See section on page 12.) A few other theological problems need mentioning.

Maxwell's Notion of the Miraculous: In *The Winning Attitude*, Maxwell gives a **"four-step formula to handle fear"** from Acts 4:29-30. (TWA, pp. 139-142) While this could also serve as another example of Maxwell taking verses out of context, the application here is more serious since not only does he take these verses out of context, but he also uses these verses to teach a troublesome doctrine. Maxwell takes v. 30 to say that just as the First-Century Apostles had their ministries attended with miracles, **"This must happen in your life."** (TWA, p. 141) But the Christian should not expect his life and ministry to be attended with the miraculous the way the Apostles' lives and ministries were attended with the miraculous. This is not to say God cannot perform a miracle in someone's life as God sees fit, but it is to say that here Maxwell is missing the significance of the presence of miracles in the ministries of the Apostles. It is beyond the scope of this work to explore fully the doctrine of miracles.³⁴ Let me state my position as succinctly and directly

as I can. Primarily, miracles are God's supernatural intervention in the affairs of humans in order to vindicate His special revelation and messenger. Throughout the Bible, God used miracles to prove that a given prophet or apostle was speaking in God's name. God used miracles to vindicate the ministries of Moses, the Prophets, the Apostles of Jesus, and most significantly, of Jesus Himself. To teach that any Christian should expect the miraculous in his life is to dilute the significance of the miracles in the Bible.

A Conspicuous Absence of the Cross: In Chapter 14 of *The Winning Attitude* titled "The God Above You," (TWA pp. 169-179) Maxwell ostensibly turns to a discussion about how, with one's security in Christ, **"I can afford to take a risk in my life. Only the insecure cannot afford to risk failure. The secure can be honest about themselves. They can admit failure. They are able to seek help and try again. They can change."** (TWA, p. 169) Maxwell discusses how one can draw strength from God's Word, prayer, and the Holy Spirit. What is disturbing about his discussion is that nowhere does Maxwell clearly link these prerogatives to having eternal life through trust in what Christ did for us on the cross. Though he mentions a number of verses, including Paul's discussion of our security in Romans 8, he says little that could not have been said by a liberal Christian or someone speaking from a generic religious perspective. Maxwell summarizes the change wrought in the disciples' lives by the Holy Spirit as **"changing an attitude."** (TWA, p. 178) Maxwell remarks:

They were filled [with the Holy Spirit]. The early Church was launched! The theme of this growing group of believers was "forward through storm." Seven difficult problems confronted this New Testament Church of the book of Acts. After each obstacle, we read that the Church was enlarged and the Word of God was multiplied. Setbacks became springboards. Obstacles were turned into opportunities. Barriers turned out to be blessings. Cowards became courageous. Why? Those within the Church were filled with the Holy Spirit. That same power can be given to you. (TWA, p. 178)

But how, according to Maxwell, is this power made available? One might think that because Maxwell uses terms such as **"conversion to Christ"** and **"experience of salvation"** he is discussing the empowerment that comes from the Gospel. But a closer look shows that for Maxwell, the key to living life is a change in attitude. In recounting a story about a man named Jim, Maxwell tells us how Jim had a early conversion to Christ, later fell away, returned to God, and had a genuine experience of salvation. But, according to Jim, something was missing. Jim comments **"However, it was more than two years before I began to see a light at the end of the tunnel for my rotten attitude. It was during class at Bible college when the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart. I raised my hand and was recognized. I said 'Professor, would you pray for me? My attitude stinks.'"** (TWA, pp. 178-179) Throughout Maxwell's discussion of the power the Holy Spirit gives, Maxwell characterizes that power as a power to be successful rather than a power to live a righteous life and witness for Christ. Perhaps someone may say I am being too harsh on Maxwell here. But I claim that when the power of the Gospel is relegated to merely a change in attitude, rather than to a saving relationship with God through the Cross of Christ and being conformed to the image of Christ through the exigencies of life (cf. Proverbs 15:31, Phil. 3:7-15, James 1:2-4), then something is missing.


QUESTIONABLE PSYCHOLOGY:

The following addresses some of the problems with the particular psychological applications Maxwell advocates.

Self-esteem Psychology: In *The Winning Attitude*, Maxwell assumes a self-image psychology. (TWA, p. 61 ff.) Self-image and self-esteem are ideas that are widespread throughout the evangelical church. I am, perhaps, in a minority in my criticisms. Suffice it to say that I believe such an encroachment of psychology is unhealthy for a growing Christian life. Rather, the Gospel of Christ admonishes us to deny ourselves (Matt. 16:24). It is telling us that Paul's "self-image" seems to deteriorate as he grew closer to Christ. In 1 Cor. 15:9, Paul describes himself as the *"least of the apostles."* Later in his life he says that he is the *"least of all the saints"* (Eph. 3:8). Near the end of his life, Paul's self-assessment was that he was *"chief of sinners"* (1 Tim. 1:15). Paul understood the key to his relationship with God was an increasing love for Christ and an increasing disregard for himself.³⁵

Four Temperaments Psychology: Maxwell also endorses Tim LaHaye's Four Temperaments teachings. (TWA, p. 54) What is disturbing about such an approach is that not only is the four temperaments psychology not taught in the Bible, but one would be hard pressed to find such teaching in any academic textbook on psychology. Educational Psychologist Martin Bobgan and his wife and co-writer Deidre comment: **"Christian authors promoting the four temperaments and similar typologies base their ideas on unproven psychological theories and subjective observations which are based on neither the rigors of scientific investigation nor the rigors of exegetical Bible study."**³⁶

CONCLUSION

This work has been an attempt to alert the reader to the explicit and implicit dangers in the writing of John C. Maxwell. As I understand it, I have no problems with the initiative at my local church that prompted the leaders to seek Maxwell's material. I have no reason to doubt that Mr. Maxwell is a sincere Christian who cares deeply for the Church. But his misuse of Scripture, his tacit endorsements of New Age writers and doctrines, and his questionable doctrines of theology and psychology should give any Christian concern in the use of his material in otherwise legitimate local church initiatives. It is with that concern that this article is offered. 

*All Scripture quotations are from the New King James version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

We thank our friend Richard Howe for his contribution to this issue. Richard G. Howe has a B.A. in Bible from Mississippi College, an M.A. in Philosophy from the University of Mississippi, and is currently finishing his Ph.D. in Philosophy at the University of Arkansas. Richard has traveled the eastern United States and Canada lecturing, leading workshops, and debating on university campuses, at conferences, churches and on radio and television on such topics as the Existence of God, World Views, Theology, Creation/Evolution, Cults, the Occult, the New Age Movement, and Christian Apologetics. He has taught Philosophy courses at the University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, Marquette University, and Philosophy and Apologetics courses at Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. He and his wife Rebekah reside in Springdale, Arkansas and are members of University Baptist Church, Fayetteville. [All institutions listed are for identification purposes only and are not responsible for the content of this article. The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the opinions of these institutions.]

ENDNOTES:

¹The works by Maxwell that I mention in this paper are *The Winning Attitude: Your Pathway to Personal Success* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993) (TWA); *The 17 Indisputable Laws of Teamwork: Embrace Them and Empower Your Team* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001) (ILT); *Becoming a Person of Influence: How to Positively Impact the Lives of Others* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers,

1997) (BPI); and *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999) (IQL).

²For a synopsis of principles of Biblical interpretation, known as hermeneutics, see Thomas A. Howe "How to Interpret Your Bible Correctly, Part 1" *Christian Research Journal* 25 No. 4 (2003): 42-50 and part 2 forthcoming. Howe discusses principles such as "Meaning and Use of Words in Context," "Grammar and Syntax of Biblical Languages," and "The Historical-Cultural Settings of the Bible." See also Robert A. Traina *Methodical Bible Study* (Wilmore, KY: Asbury Theological Seminary, 1980) and J. Robertson McQuilkin *Understanding and Applying the Bible: An Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983).

³Personal correspondence, 10/25/01.

⁴Personal correspondence, 10/25/01.

⁵One may ask what this passage of Scripture does teach. It is beyond the scope of this treatment to give a thorough examination of the text. Suffice it to say that the focus of this passage is on Jesus, not on us. His performing this miracle is telling us something about who He is. But even if one was not sure what the passage was teaching, it should be clear to anyone who understands the principles of Biblical interpretation that the way Maxwell takes the passage is not the proper way to treat historical narrative.

⁶Again, the question might present itself "What is this story about?" In each case, my response is designed to point out that Maxwell ignores sound principles of Biblical interpretation. As a matter of principle, I would suggest that most of the Bible's stories are to tell us something about God. What they are telling us about God will be discovered only by treating the text according to sound principles of interpretation. These principles will vary according to whether the text is an historical narrative, a parable, a poem, or a teaching passage. Then, the proper application to us as God's children will be easier to see once we have learned what the text is telling us about God. But throughout all this, I contend it is improper to treat historical narratives as if they were allegories.

⁷Norman Vincent Peale, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1952): ix.

⁸Peale, *Power*, ix.

⁹Peale, *Power*, 13.

¹⁰Peale, *Power*, 213.

¹¹Peale, *Power*, 41.

¹²There are a number of good Christian books that critique New Age Occult philosophy. See Douglas Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986); Dave Hunt, *Occult Invasion: The Subtle Seduction of the World and Church* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998); and Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon, *The Seduction of Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1985).

¹³See reference to Ernest Holmes in footnote 31.

¹⁴Napoleon Hill, *Think and Grow Rich* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1967): 176.

¹⁵Hill, *Think*, pp. 158-160.

¹⁶Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978).

¹⁷Foster, *Celebration*, p. 22.

¹⁸Foster, *Celebration*, p. 23.

¹⁹Foster, *Celebration*, p. 23.

²⁰Foster, *Celebration*, p. 26, emphasis in original.

²¹Foster, *Celebration*, p. 27.

²²Foster, *Celebration*, p. 36.

²³Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Gifts of the Spirit* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1966).

²⁴Foster, *Celebration*, p. 136.

²⁵Sanford, *Healing*, p. 24.

²⁶Sanford, *Healing*, p. 31, emphasis in original.

²⁷Sanford, *Healing*, p. 26.

²⁸Sanford, *Healing*, p. 29.

²⁹Foster, *Celebration*, p. 170.

³⁰James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.).

³¹The New Thought Movement was the nineteenth century prototype of the twentieth century's New Age Movement. Its principle thinker was Earnest Holmes. His seminal work was *The Science of Mind* (New York: R. M. McBride, 1938), republished (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1997).

³²Allen, *Thinketh*, p. 47.

³³Allen, *Thinketh*, p. 12.

³⁴For a discussion about the nature, function, and reality of miracles see: Norman L. Geisler, *Sign and Wonders: Healings, Miracles, and Unusual Events — Which Are Real? Which Are Supernormal? Which Are Counterfeit?* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988); *Miracles and the Modern Mind: A Defense of Biblical Miracles* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992); and R. Douglas Geivett and Gary R. Habermas, eds., *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God's Action in History* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

³⁵For a discussion of these matters see Jay E. Adams, *The Biblical View of Self-esteem, Self-love, Self-image* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1986); Martin Bobgan and Deidre Bobgan, *Psychoheresy* (Santa Barbara: Eastgate Publishers, 1987); Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology as Religion - The Cult of Self Worship*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprint, 1994); and, perhaps, the best treatment, Paul Brownback, *The Danger of Self Love* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1982).

³⁶Martin Bobgan and Deidre Bobgan, *Four Temperaments, Astrology, and Personality Testing* (Santa Barbara: Eastgate Publishers, 1992), 15.



The The Limit!

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HUMAN POTENTIAL MOVEMENT AND MOTIVATIONAL SEMINARS

By Marcia Montenegro

You have unlimited potential.” “Success comes from within.” “Empower yourself.” These and other similar phrases are used to publicize and market seminars originating from what is best known as the Human Potential Movement. This movement arose in the 1970’s and 1980’s finding fertile soil in the ambitious and success-oriented ’80’s. The seminars promote personal power, improved self-worth, and team cooperation through books, lectures, and workshops produced by each of the particular groups. There is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with marketing seminars or materials. If someone truly believes something, it seems natural they would want to share it with others. However, it is also natural to ask questions such as: “Where does it come from?” “What are its basic teachings?” “Is it true?”

One of the archetypes of the human potential business was est founded by Werner Erhard (not his real name), who based his concepts on Eastern beliefs and on teachings from the Church of Scientology. The est program later came to be known as the Forum, and now it goes by the name Landmark. Other groups similar to est, such as Lifespring, came along and multiplied. Lifespring states that one of its goals is to **“redesign the underlying assumptions out of which you live your life...”** and also warns that this experience may involve a **“high degree of personal challenge or stress.”** In other words, their goal is to change your world view and this may be emotionally traumatizing for you.

Motivational and human potential seminars (sometimes referred to as Large Group Awareness Training or LGAT) are usually offered on weekends and by employers in the workplace. Lifespring, for example, runs their seminars from Thursday evening until Sunday. The introductory program is offered for \$395.00 and the advanced for \$995.00. The teachings may include views based on human-centered psychology—beliefs that one is in complete control of one’s destiny and that one deserves worldly success—as well as Eastern/New Age/Occult teachings about the self and the world. The unadvertised function of most of these seminars is to change the participants’ world view by breaking down the identity of each of the participants, and replacing it with a new paradigm for reality and self-identity based on the philosophies of the founders of these programs. In effect, it is a form of mind re-programming.

Right to Believe, Right to Question

In the process of comparative religious research and writing on groups such as this, there are some who might ask, “Don’t they have a right to believe what they want to believe?” The answer is, absolutely! However, someone having the right to believe what they want to believe and whether or not a particular belief is true or not are two different issues. For example, an individual has a right to believe the earth is flat, but that doesn’t mean the earth is, in fact, flat. We all have a right to believe false things if we so choose. But we also need to keep in mind that beliefs can have consequences. Heaven’s Gate believed a UFO was following the Hale Bopp Comet, and 39 people took their lives in order to get on the mother ship.

There are those in movements being studied by comparative religious researchers who define such examination and exposure as taking away their right to free speech. This is an invalid objection as well as a redefinition of free speech. Their assumption is that any questioning, criticism, or exposure is an infringement of their right to believe what they want. Free speech really does work in both directions. They can freely say, teach, and write on what they believe to be true; and those who disagree can freely say, teach, and write on how they view it and why. That is how free speech and comparative religious research work.

Spirituality by Another Name

Motivational training may be less rigorous than models based on est, but these usually include spiritual views belonging to the founder or head of the program. One popular teacher and author in the motivational area is Stephen Covey, a Mormon whose book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People*, was a best seller; and his son, Franklin Covey, offers speakers and seminars through his (Franklin’s) company largely based on Stephen Covey’s book. Another popular teacher is Anthony Robbins who promotes a training called “Unleash the Power Within.” Robbins, author of *Awaken the Giant Within*, popularized fire walking as a self-empowerment technique.² Both Covey and Robbins include elements of their own spiritual world views in their training.

Other speakers who bill themselves as motivational speakers are actually religious or spiritual teachers, though they deny they are teaching anything religious. An example of this is seen in the

weekend seminars led by Prem Rawat, once the child guru who founded the Divine Light Mission in the late 1960's/early 70's. Now leading an organization he calls Elan Vital, Rawat has promoted his talks in England as motivational lectures and did not disclose his past. Rawat, whose talks were on finding a path to inner happiness, was once called the Lord of the Universe by his followers.³

Another example is observed in the Art of Living Foundation by the famed Indian musician Ravi Shankar. His web site states that **"Our programs eliminate stress, create a sense of belonging, restore human values, and encourage people from all backgrounds, religions, and cultural traditions to come together in celebration and service."**⁴ Promoted as educational information based on **"ancient knowledge,"** Shankar's courses include instruction in special breathing techniques, Sahaj Samadhi Meditation ("samadhi" means enlightenment), and knowledge of "Self." His web site states that in **"ancient times people went deep into the understanding of the Self and brought out spiritual practices which help you to remain centered in the Self."**⁵ Shankar offers seminars on stress-management for executives and business professionals, courses for college students taught on campus, and classes for children and teens.⁶

Methods of Operation

Many human potential and motivational groups are secretive about their teachings and methods. They often use humiliation and mind manipulation on attendees and require attendees to recruit others. Spin-offs of the original seminars such as est and Lifespring now operate across the United States often through the workplace. Even those groups that are not secretive or manipulative usually include the New Age and Humanistic teachings that one is responsible for everything that may happen to them (including being robbed, raped, getting sick, etc.), and that one has an innate wisdom and unlimited potential.

One finds in most of these seminars—even the less abusive ones—mind-altering techniques such as deep relaxation, guided imagery, and visualization. The teachings in these seminars are often subtle—mixed in with helpful advice—and are advertised as methods to improve self-motivation, workplace performance, leadership skills, and cooperation with co-workers. Graduating participants are usually pressured to recruit others into the program or training.

Secrecy and bonding through intense emotional confrontations and confessions are hallmarks of cultic and abusive groups. Leaders will urge participants to openly confess faults, failings, and fears. The result is that the confessor is put in a vulnerable position and at the mercy of what the leader will do with such information. Such cathartic experiences are powerful, however, and these seminars offer them in abundance. The experiences—even negative ones—bind the participants together and form a bond (albeit a coerced one) between the leaders and attendees. However, this is not a level playing field. The leaders of the seminar, by virtue of their position and ability to initiate whatever they desire, have power over the participants, and in many of these seminars they are using time-proven techniques to manipulate thinking. Although spontaneity is often given as the reason to keep the contents secret from prospective attendees, the leaders' actions and timing have been carefully orchestrated and choreographed.

Mind Conditioning

People tend to imagine that the mind conditioning of cults and abusive groups is supernatural or esoteric; in fact, it boils down to

powerful psychological and emotional techniques such as isolation, secrecy, bonding through confrontation and confession, shaming or humiliation before others, disparaging detractors, forbidding or discouraging questioning or criticism of the leaders or teachings, discouraging thinking for one's self, verbal abuse, and techniques such as guided visualizations.

Guided imagery or visualization, ostensibly used for relaxation, is actually a method that increases the suggestibility of the participants. In such a state, a person's critical thinking skills are on hold, and they are more receptive to what is being said or taught. It is similar to a mild trance or hypnotic state. Some groups also require attendees to sign an oath promising they will not disclose the teachings. This creates not only a bond of secrecy, but also a separation between the "insiders" who are attending and the "outsiders" who have not had the training, which leads to an elitist attitude toward the "outsiders."

A combination of confession, guided imagery, New Age meditation, cathartic exercises, and radically different teachings can subtly alter one's thinking and world view. This process can make the participant feel there has been a "breakthrough" to new understanding, when actually what has happened has been an emotional experience, and the leader has successfully planted his/her own views into the minds of the participants.

Christian Groups

There also are groups using these same Humanistic and New Age teachings and methods from this movement that are, with a slight modification of the terminology, offered to Christians. One of these is Momentus, now operating under the name of Breakthrough, its parent company having changed its name from Mashiyach Ministries to The Association for Christian Character Development (ACCD). Momentus was founded by Daniel Tocchini, a former trainer with Lifespring. Secrecy and aversion to criticism also mark this group. The recommended reading list for ACCD is a bit of a mixed bag, recommending books by several sound authors like Tozer, Oswald Chambers, and J. I. Packer, but also including books by those whose views are problematic or founded on false world views, such as Stephen Covey, Rick Joyner, and M. Scott Peck.⁷ Steven Covey, as mentioned earlier, is a Mormon. Rick Joyner is a false prophet and teacher, and M. Scott Peck's spiritual road bears more of a resemblance to the paths of Eastern religions than it does to Christianity.

Another motivational teacher within the Christian community is John C. Maxwell who teaches principles of success, leadership, and teamwork. Maxwell favorably quotes and promotes New Thought teachers like Napoleon Hill (who also practiced Occult techniques), Norman Vincent Peale, and endorses the principles of positive thinking which, at their core, are derived from the New Thought Movement.

Response

Concepts that promote "humans having unlimited potential" or "depending totally on themselves for success" go against God's teachings of a fallen world of sin and dependency on Him through Jesus Christ.

Christians should recall that Jesus taught in the open (**"I have said nothing in secret,"** John 18:20), and that God tells us to use our reason and minds to think things through.⁸ No one should accept teachings uncritically; and secrecy is not a hallmark of anything connected to authentic Christianity.

(Continued on page 19)



Dani Does Church

A Testimony by Dani Chaffin

When I was young, there was a time the Russians occupied Cuba and threatened the United States. I learned of this in school, and asked my mother what to do if a bomb went off while she was at work and I was at school. She was a single mother, I was an only child. We lived in Farmington, New Mexico, and there is a town named Cuba about 90 miles away. I thought the Russians were *very* close. She wasn't so concerned, and I was sure it was because she wasn't in school and didn't appreciate the gravity of the situation!

The more serious the situation got, the more concerned I became. While neighbors were digging fallout shelters, she'd say "Don't worry, Cuba is a long way from here."

Finally, when I stated, "90 miles!" she understood my concern and showed me the coast of Florida on a map.

When Dad died, Mom told me God needed Dad for something nobody else could do; and because He had taken him, He would take care of us. Who was God? Where was Dad?

When I was young, everybody seemed to be a Christian. The Baptists didn't dance, the Catholics ate fish on Friday, the Church of Christ didn't believe in music, and the Mormons didn't drink Coke until they bought stock in the company. The Methodists didn't care about anything as long as you paid tithes. The Assembly of God danced in the aisles and spoke in tongues. Jehovah's Witnesses didn't salute the flag, and frankly, I was confused.

Throughout all this, Mom and I would read the Bible (I remember being VERY angry at Eve). At Easter sunrise and Christmas Eve services it seemed like everybody told the same story. Vacation Bible school and Sunday school gave me a concept of Jesus—His story and His life, His resurrection, and maybe a little bit of my salvation based on His substitutionary death. I took the classes at our Methodist church and was baptized by sprinkling during my fourth grade year. I didn't feel very saved, very set apart, very special, and I certainly didn't feel like I had a relationship with Jesus. Maybe I needed to be baptized by immersion? So our pastor borrowed a baptistry, and I was "dunked" when I was a teenager.

During high school, I was very defensive of Jesus. I knew that one didn't fly any flag higher than the American flag, and that extrapolated to no one being elevated to the level of Jesus. But who was this Jesus?

When I read the Bible (having a covenant understanding of Jesus speaking to us as "spiritual Israel") I tried to let Paul, rather than Jesus teach me "Religion 101." However, none of the translations or versions of the Bible that I read allowed that to happen. Most of the pastors I approached (usually asking about this Melchizedek guy who seemed to be elevated to the level of Jesus), rarely had time or energy to challenge my confusion. So I became one of the many Christians "doing church" with no real understanding of my faith and not really believing that anyone could know for sure what was real and what was true.

I was married in 1974; and as a family, we joined the Presbyterian Church mostly for the business connections. I started teaching Sunday school—with all my clarity and understanding—but, they needed teachers, so I bravely stepped up to the plate. My husband was a deacon—voted in by the majority, no need for testimony, or a statement of faith. And for several years, we *did* church. In 1980, I was *divorced*. And became permanently scarred for useful service in the church ever again—you know, the "D" word.

I now fast forward to 1995. I am remarried, and raising a family. I have visited multiple churches looking for substance. I have left some churches by invitation and some by choice. I have decided that the Bible was written by people who thought the world was flat, and I have decided that the translations were not trustworthy. I set off to believe in God, to worship Christ, but to discount the Bible because it "didn't fall from the sky in book form." I had questions: Who decided what to put in the Bible? Who decided what to leave out? What about those Dead Sea scrolls or the gospel of Thomas? Who did Cain marry, and how can you make those genealogies match?

I was introduced to the Urantia book. It's not for a lazy searcher and, like all cult materials, it has truth mixed with error. I loved the book. Like all of the people who read it, I commented, "If this isn't the way it is, it's the way it should be." I prayed as I read it, "Lord, I'm looking for the truth. If this book is a lie, show me the falsehood." And, as I read, I found three errors.

- 1) The book teaches Jesus IS the son of God, but not the *eternal* Son of the Trinity.
- 2) The book teaches that the crucifixion was not required for God to love us.
- 3) The book teaches we all go on a Universe journey, that Jesus is the way to Heaven, but that if we don't learn that truth in this life, eventually we will.

I, however, could not find a Christian to dispute these errors when I questioned them. Over the next two years, God worked in His mysterious ways. In April of 1997, I was traveling to Israel on a plane and randomly seated next to Don Veinot who is the president of Midwest Christian Outreach. For ten hours on the plane and ten days in Israel, I stalked Don for information and took notes on placemats! He introduced me to apologetics, the concept of world views, and provided me with an outline that put belief systems into categories—a way to nail down the TRUTH! He never flinched.

(Continued on facing page)


"Sky" (Continued from page 17)

"Positive thinking" as taught by Peale and others is not about adopting a positive attitude. Rather, it is a philosophy and technique based on the belief that one can manipulate hidden spiritual laws to bring about desired results. It is more akin to the Occult than to Christianity. These teachings are partly derived from Ernest and Fenwicke Holmes—founders of the Church of Religious Science (a New Thought church established in 1917). Peale studied these principles and incorporated them into his popular teachings and books on positive thinking. These beliefs do not align with and, in many cases, are in opposition to Biblical Scripture.⁹

Warning

There are hundreds of such groups and seminars, both secular and Christian, throughout the country. Be aware that some groups may change their names; therefore, it is important to recognize them by the way they present themselves, the secrecy they employ, and their teachings—which may have to be investigated on the internet or elsewhere if the group conceals the specifics.

The following traits connected to seminars, classes, programs, or workshops should raise warning flags. Nobody needs to go through verbal abuse, mind-conditioning techniques, or radical "breakthrough" experiences under the manipulation and coercion of others in order to be a better person, leader, Christian, or team player.

- An organization, its leaders, or past participants refuse to share the contents of the seminars beforehand.
- You are required to sign a "hold harmless" agreement, letting the organization and its leaders off the hook if harm or distress should result from the "training."
- The organization/seminar has hyper language offering self-transformation.
- Strong, high-pressure-type techniques are used to get you to participate.
- The organization portrays its critics as ignorant, evil, anti-free speech, or influenced by Satan.
- The organization dissuades you from evaluating the teachings and methods yourself.
- The organization discourages or discounts criticism from participants or others.
- Promises are made to redesign your view of your "self" and reality.
- Techniques such as guided imagery or guided visualization are used.
- Past participants exhibit an elitist attitude toward those who have not participated.
- Past participants are pressured to recruit. 

RESOURCES:

For further information on the concepts, methods, teachings, and problems of LGAT, see:

<http://perso.wanadoo.fr/eldon.braun/awareness/>

<http://www.watchman.org/na/nawork.htm>

<http://tinyurl.com/ee93>

<http://skepdic.com/lgsap.html>

For information on Momentus/ACCD/Breakthrough see:

<http://www.cephasministry.com/momentus.html>, <http://www.factnet.org/cults/Momentus/>

http://www.empirenet.com/~messiah7/brk_holdharmless1.htm

<http://www.equip.org/free/DM494.htm>

For information on thought reform and the way to recognize cultic and abusive groups or teachings, see:

http://www.csj.org/infoserv_cult101/cult101.htm

<http://www.cultclinic.org/qa5.html>

<http://www.cultwatch.com/hcwinde.html>

ENDNOTES:

¹ <http://www.lifespringusa.com/thecourses.htm>, accessed 6/14/03.

² For information on fire walking and why it generally does not injure people, and does not require special preparation, see <http://skepdic.com/firewalk.html> and <http://www.pitt.edu/~dwilley/fire.html>

³ "Don't Waste Your Lives" in *This Is Bristol*, June 16, 2003, at <http://tinyurl.com/el34>, accessed 6/18/03.

⁴ www.artofliving.org

⁵ <http://www.artofliving.org/knowledge.html>

⁶ <http://www.artofliving.org/courses.html>

⁷ <http://www.accd.org/store.html>; for information on Covey, see <http://tinyurl.com/ejlc>; for information on Rick Joyner, see <http://www.pfo.org/r-joyner.htm>; for information on M. Scott Peck, see <http://www.watchman.org/na/peckbook.htm> and *The Less Traveled Road and the Bible* by H. Wayne House and Richard Abanes.

⁸ Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 119:59; Matthew 22:37; Romans 12:3; I Corinthians 14; Philipians 4:8.

⁹ See Watchman Fellowship article on Peale at <http://www.watchman.org/rektop/peale.htm>

"Dani" (Continued from page 18)

I came home a changed and confident person. I was so excited to know about Christ and His work! I could not wait to share this new-found information, resources, and books, about the LIVING GOD we serve. The God who seeks us, who loves us, who died for us who is omnipotent, omnipresent and Who can arrange seating on planes and answers our prayers for wisdom. WOW!

I currently am searching for the church of Philadelphia (as mentioned in the Book of Revelation), the church that has not left her first love. I wonder where the church is in lives like mine—where people who are searching are not able to find many people with time to help them understand. I wonder where the church is in a culture where only one percent of the population is homosexual and, yet, can have such a huge impact. Where is the church in a culture where some consider pedophilia an "alternative lifestyle," a culture where the churched are seeking the world's approval instead of God's and are silenced by fear of ridicule.

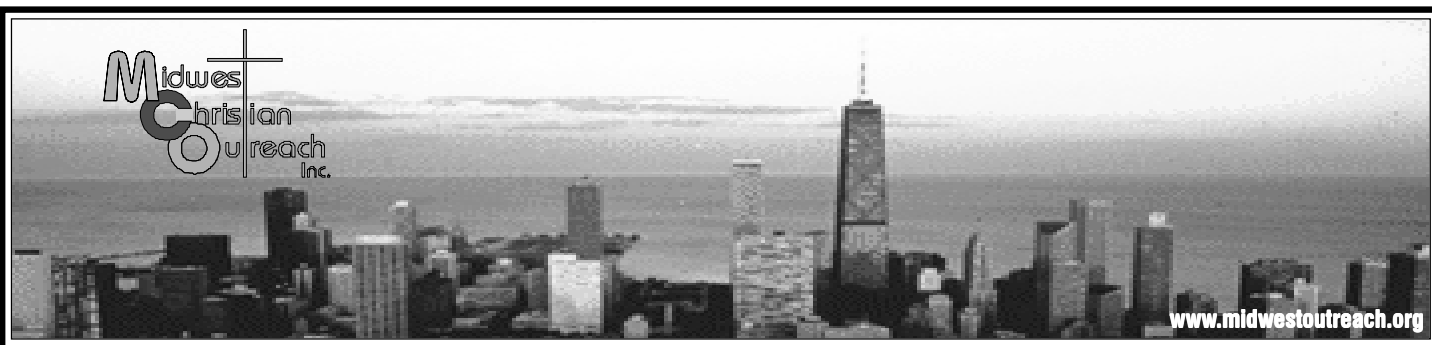
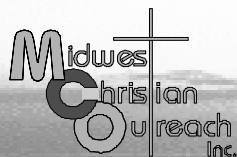
I thank God for His faithfulness—for walking with me through the confusion. I thank Him for the soldiers like Don whom He has raised up to speak the truth in love, to confront error, and give a reason for the hope we have. I thank Him for the privilege of understanding confusion, and I pray that I never forget the experience. I pray that I am never too busy or too important—too busy "doing" church to recognize confusion in a fellow traveler. I pray that I can be a tool in His hand that by my having the experience of being loved, I will, in that love, reach out and serve others. I desire to be His ambassador, and that I will be kind to His reputation through my life.

Because now I know where Cuba is, and I hope to know where the enemy is.

A note from MCOI:

We praise God for our friend, Dani Chaffin, and others like her whom God touches and uses to reach those outside the church as well as to challenge the church to see them as ones for whom Jesus died for. We also thank her for sharing her testimony on the printed page.





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"Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?"

- Galatians 4:16 -

24-7 HELP LINES 24-7

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