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## Do You Want to Know... *The Secret?*

by J. Greg Sheryl

It has been the subject of articles in *Newsweek*<sup>1</sup> and *People*<sup>2</sup> magazines; newspaper articles in *USA Today*,<sup>3</sup> *The Christian Science Monitor*,<sup>4</sup> and television shows, such as *The Oprah Winfrey Show*,<sup>5</sup> *Larry King Live*,<sup>6</sup> and *Nightline*.<sup>7</sup> "It" is a book<sup>8</sup> and DVD<sup>9</sup> called *The Secret* — the work of 55-year-old Australian TV producer Rhonda Byrne, who now lives in California.

Seminary professor and author Donald S. Whitney, in an online review of *The Secret*, wrote:

"In March of 2006 it was released on the Internet, but soon went to DVD. By late autumn, the phenomenal success of the video placed it on two episodes of *Larry King Live*. Shortly after, two of the teachers featured on *The Secret* were guests on Ellen Degeneres' daily TV show. Before Christmas, *The Secret* DVD had spun off a book by the same title which Oprah Winfrey catapulted to the top of the charts in February of 2007."<sup>10</sup>

*The Secret* promises just about everything a person might want:

health, wealth, happiness, success, fulfilling relationships, and peace of mind. And it has been well-received, judging from book and DVD sales and media coverage.

The message of *The Secret* is an attractively packaged form of monistic, pantheistic<sup>11</sup> Hinduism presented as New Thought and New Age concepts.

The terms "New Thought" and "New Age" are difficult to define, and there is some overlap between the two movements. The 19th-century New Thought movement preceded the 20th-century New Age movement. Both movements are eclectic, with deep roots in Hinduism. The worldview of New Thought can also be seen in the "mind science" religions, such as Christian Science, Unity, and Religious Science.

Calling it *The Secret* is clever. Valerie Reiss, Belief.net spirituality editor said of it, "everybody wants to know a secret."<sup>12</sup> A second hint about its

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### Inside this Issue:

- TAMPA NEWSPAPER SPOTLIGHTS WHITES' EXCESSES ..... PAGE 3
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The same principle can be applied to teenagers. They need to be exercised spiritually. Their energy can be harnessed and used for the good of the body.

### Endnotes:

1. The term "teenager" is of recent origin, only having appeared around the mid-20th century.
2. See Madison Trammel, "Axis Denied," *Christianity Today*, October 2006.
3. Youth Specialties claims to serve more than 100,000 youth workers worldwide every year through their training seminars and conventions, resources, and web site.
4. For a more complete understanding of the resurgence of classic mysticism, see G. Richard Fisher, "What a Marriage! Why Did Evangelicalism Marry Catholicism's Stepchild?," *The Quarterly Journal*, April-June 2005, pp. 1, 13-19, and Gary E. Gilley, "The Lure of Mysticism - A Path to Spiritual Growth or Road to Deception?," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 2005, pp. 1, 13-23.
5. Mark Yaconelli, *Contemplative Youth Ministry*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006, pp. 26-27.
6. *Ibid.*, pg. 23.

7. *Ibid.*, pg. 24.
8. *Ibid.*, pg. 45.
9. Mike King, *Presence-Centered Youth Ministry*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006, pg. 25.
10. *Contemplative Youth Ministry*, op. cit., pg. 82.
11. *Ibid.*, pg. 56.
12. *Presence-Centered Youth Ministry*, op. cit., pg. 87.
13. *Contemplative Youth Ministry*, op. cit., pg. 81.
14. *Presence-Centered Youth Ministry*, op. cit., pg. 87.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, pg. 95.
17. *Ibid.*, pg. 97.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-134.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-123.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.
21. *Ibid.*, pg. 123-124.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 129-132.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-136.
24. *Ibid.*, pg. 147.
25. *Ibid.*, pg. 170.
26. *Ibid.*, pg. 171.
27. *Contemplative Youth Ministry*, op. cit., pg. 85.
28. Kenneth Boa, *The Trinity: A Journal*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 2001, pp. 12-23.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 15, italics in original.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 17.
31. *Ibid.*, pg. 19, italic in original.
32. *Ibid.*, pg. 20.
33. *Contemplative Youth Ministry*, op. cit., pg. 86.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *The Trinity: A Journal*, op. cit., pg. 21.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Contemplative Youth Ministry*, op. cit., pg. 88.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89, italics in original.
40. *Presence-Centered Youth Ministry*, op. cit., pg. 122.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *The Trinity: A Journal*, op. cit., pg. 21.
43. *Contemplative Youth Ministry*, op. cit., pg. 87.
44. *The Trinity: A Journal*, op. cit., pp. 20-21.
45. *Contemplative Youth Ministry*, op. cit., pg. 89.
46. Kim Butts, "How Divine!," *PrayKids!*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 2005, "Contemplative Prayer" issue, pg. 3, ellipsis in original.
47. *Ibid.*, no author given, "Welcome, God," *PrayKids!*, "Contemplative Prayer" issue, pg. 2.
48. *Contemplative Youth Ministry*, op. cit., pg. 240. 

## THE SECRET

(continued from page 1)

author's "street smarts" is that neither the book nor the DVD ever uses the phrase "New Age" (although the phrase "New Thought," is correctly used to describe some of its promulgators).

### THE STORY BEHIND THE SECRET

Byrne briefly describes her discovery of what she calls "The Secret" in the Foreword to her book:

"A year ago [October 2004<sup>13</sup>], my life had collapsed around me. I'd worked myself into exhaustion, my father died suddenly, and my relationships with my work colleagues and loved ones were in turmoil. Little did I know at the time, out of my greatest despair was to come the greatest gift. I'd been given a glimpse of a Great Secret — The Secret to life. The glimpse came in a hundred-year-old book, given to me by my daughter Hayley."<sup>14</sup>

## THE SCIENCE OF GETTING RICH

This book goes unnamed by Byrne until page 76 of *The Secret*, where we learn that it was *The Science of Getting Rich*, written by Wallace Wattles in 1910.<sup>15</sup>

In a chapter she wrote for a different book, Byrne says that when her daughter gave her Wattles' book:

"I began reading. With each sentence I read, my eyes widened. I had never read anything like this before. The book, as it turns out, is about getting rich — not only in terms of money, but in every possible way, including relationships and health. As I read, it became clear to me that what Wattles was presenting was actually the science of life. ... I was barely breathing as I turned the pages. Deep within, I knew that every single thing he said was true: This was the Truth, with a capital T. ... I began doing research on Wallace Wattles. I read about his life and every

single thing he had ever written. Then I wanted to find out who his mentor was. My research led me back through history, century after century, reading book after book after book."<sup>16</sup>

In *The Secret*, Byrne writes:

"I began tracing The Secret back through history. I couldn't believe all the people who knew this. They were the greatest people in history: Plato, Shakespeare, Newton, Hugo, Beethoven, Lincoln, Emerson, Edison, Einstein."<sup>17</sup>

During this time, Byrne says she "read dozens of books,"<sup>18</sup> and "In a few short weeks I had traced The Secret back through the centuries, and I had discovered the modern-day practitioners of the Secret."<sup>19</sup> She reveals further:

"What I discovered in my search was the secret to having everything I wanted in life: money, health, love, success. When I applied this knowledge that I now call 'The Secret' to every

single aspect of my life, my life was completely transformed."<sup>20</sup>

Byrne continues:

"Incredulous, I asked, 'Why doesn't *everyone* know this?' A burning desire to share The Secret with the world consumed me, and I began searching for people alive today who knew The Secret. One by one they began to emerge. I became a magnet: as I began to search, one great living master after another was drawn to me. When I discovered one teacher, that one would link to the next, in a perfect chain. If I was on the wrong track, something else would catch my attention, and through the diversion the next great teacher would appear. ... The vision of taking The Secret to the world in a film had become fixed in my mind."<sup>21</sup>

Byrne next explains:

"We [Byrne and her television production crew] did not have a single teacher secured to film, but we knew The Secret, and so with utter faith I flew from Australia to the United States where the majority of the teachers were based. Seven weeks later The Secret team had filmed fifty-five of the greatest teachers across the United States, with over 120 hours of film. With every step, with every breath, we used The Secret to create *The Secret*. We literally magnetized everything and everyone to us. Eight months later *The Secret* [DVD] was released."<sup>22</sup>

Byrne also states:

"Today, my whole life is so magnificent. The happiness I felt before has been multiplied many times over: I am surrounded by people I love, I have more than enough money, and my work is fascinating and fulfilling. The joy I have in just being alive and being able to be on this marvelous planet one day after another is incredible. Feeling this way —

and knowing how simple it is to create the life you want — how could I not share 'The Secret' with everyone?"<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, in *The Secret*, Byrne writes, "My intention in creating *The Secret* was — and still is — that it will bring joy to billions around the world."<sup>24</sup> Likewise, Byrne's mother, Irene Izon, offered this assessment to *Newsweek*:

"The thing is that Rhonda just wants to bring happiness to everybody. That's the reason it all began. She just wants everybody to be happy."<sup>25</sup>

### TEACHING OF THE SECRET IN THE WORDS OF ITS TEACHER

The book and the DVD present identical material in different fashions. The DVD consists of sometimes dramatized audio and video snippets of 24 contemporary American "teachers of The Secret," including *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series co-creator Jack Canfield; author Denis Waitley; John Gray, author of *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*; and lesser-known attractive and charismatic speakers, both men and women, including two quantum physicists, metaphysicians, a Feng Shui expert, and so on. Interspersed are quotations from various figures from the past who, it is presumed, are being quoted because they supposedly knew "The Secret." The book is essentially an edited transcript of the DVD with additional commentary on the concepts supplied by Byrne.

### THE ESSENCE OF THE SECRET

The Secret revealed is a New Thought concept called "the law of attraction." According to this teaching, our thoughts are powerful forces that create corresponding realities. Those who think about something with intent and desire cause that very thing to come into being. "Thoughts become things," teacher Mike Dooley says.<sup>26</sup> Byrne explains:

"You are the most powerful magnet in the Universe! You contain a magnetic power within

you that is more powerful than anything in this world, and this unfathomable magnetic power is emitted through your thoughts."<sup>27</sup>

*The Secret* teacher John Assaraf writes, "You become what you think about most, but you also attract what you think about most."<sup>28</sup> And Byrne promises, "If you can think about what you want in your mind, and make that your dominant thought, you *will* bring it into your life."<sup>29</sup>

Byrne then sums up:

"Thoughts are magnetic, and thoughts have a frequency. As you think, those thoughts are sent out into the Universe, and they magnetically attract all *like* things that are on the same frequency. Everything sent out returns to the source. And that source is You."<sup>30</sup>

After stating that our thoughts are magnetic, Byrne says:

"You are a *human* transmission tower, and you are more powerful than any television tower created on earth. You are the most powerful transmission tower in the Universe. Your transmission creates your life and it creates the world. The frequency you transmit reaches beyond cities, beyond countries, beyond the world. It reverberates throughout the entire Universe. And you are transmitting that frequency *with your thoughts!*"<sup>31</sup>

### IF IT FEELS GOOD...

Marci Shimoff, another of *The Secret* teachers, explains how one controls what one thinks:

"It's impossible to monitor every thought we have. Researchers tell us that we have about sixty thousand thoughts a day. Can you imagine how exhausted you'd feel trying to control all sixty thousand of those thoughts? Fortunately there's an easier way, and it's our feelings. Our feelings let us know what we're thinking."<sup>32</sup>

Byrne writes, "The importance of feelings cannot be overstated. Your feelings are your greatest tool to help you create your life."<sup>33</sup> A little further in the book, she writes:

"When you are feeling good feelings, it is communication back from the Universe saying, 'You are thinking good thoughts.' Likewise, when you are feeling bad, you are receiving communication back from the Universe saying, 'You are thinking bad thoughts.'"<sup>34</sup>

So important is this aspect of "The Secret" that, at the end of the book, Byrne writes, "*The only thing you need to do is feel good now.*"<sup>35</sup> And again, she writes:

"Be happy *now*. Feel good *now*. That's the only thing you have to do. If that's the only thing you get from reading this book, then you have received the greatest part of The Secret."<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, Byrne confides:

"I want to let you in on a secret to The Secret. The shortcut to anything you want in your life is to BE and FEEL happy now! It is the fastest way to bring money and anything else you want into your life. Focus on radiating out into the Universe those feelings of joy and happiness. When you do that, you will attract back to you all things that bring you joy and happiness, which will not only include an abundance of money, but everything else you are wanting. You must radiate out the signal to bring back what you want."<sup>37</sup>

In fact, the last scene on the DVD presentation of *The Secret* is that of a woman — presumably Byrne — writing the words "FEEL GOOD" in the sand on a beach with a stick, and then hurling the stick into the air.

Jack Canfield, co-creator of the *Chicken Soup* series of books and a teacher of *The Secret*, similarly states:

"When I really understood that my primary aim was to feel and experi-

*ence joy, then I began to do only those things which brought me joy. I have a saying: 'If it ain't fun, don't do it!' ... I want to constantly put myself in that state, and when I do, then all I have to do is have the intention of what I want, and what I want manifests.*"<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps someone with Canfield's money can afford to live this way. However, it's unrealistic for the vast majority of humanity.

If thoughts alter or create reality, as *The Secret* teaches, and good thoughts are more desirable as they create better things for the thinker, the next step is to learn how to think good thoughts. *The Secret* teaches a formula for getting what you want which sounds biblical enough: "Ask," "Believe," and "Receive."<sup>39</sup> Byrne explains:

"The Creative Process used in The Secret, which was taken from the New Testament in the Bible, is an easy guideline for you to create what you want in three simple steps [Ask, Believe, and Receive]."<sup>40</sup>

However, as biblical as these three steps sound, the exposition of the "Ask" step shows it to be unbiblical. Teacher Lisa Nichols explains: "*The first step is to ask. Make a command to the Universe. Let the Universe know what you want. The Universe responds to your thoughts.*"<sup>41</sup> Byrne echoes: "Step One is simply your step to get clear about what you want. As you get clear in your mind, you have asked."<sup>42</sup>

Some of what *The Secret* teaches about believing appears to have merit. However in describing Step 3, "Receive," Byrne writes, "Ask once, believe you have received, and all you have to do to receive is feel good."<sup>43</sup>

She adds:

"When you are feeling good, you are on the frequency of receiving. You are on the frequency of all good things coming to you, and you will receive what you have asked for. You wouldn't ask for anything unless it was going to make you feel good in the receiv-

ing of it, would you? So get yourself on the feel-good frequency, and you will receive."<sup>44</sup>

In reading what Byrne says above, the reader might think that she is using the word "frequency" in a metaphorical sense. However, Byrne and the other *The Secret* teachers propound that everything in the universe is energy, including us.<sup>45</sup> As support for the claims of *The Secret*, appeals are made to "science," especially to the branch of science known as quantum physics.

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE SECRET

No part of *The Secret* is more opposed to the Gospel than the last two chapters of the book: "The Secret to You," and "The Secret to Life." Here the core of *The Secret* philosophy is unveiled:

- "We are One. We are all connected, and we are all part of the One Energy Field, or the One Supreme Mind, or the One Consciousness, or the One Creative Source. Call it whatever you want, but we are all One. If you think about the law of attraction now, in terms of us all being One, you will see its absolute perfection ... We are One!"<sup>46</sup>
- "We often get distracted with this thing called our body and our physical being. That just holds your spirit. And your spirit is so big it fills a room. You are eternal life. You are God manifested in human form, made to perfection."<sup>47</sup>
- "You are God in a physical body. You are Spirit in the flesh. You are Eternal Life expressing itself as You. You are a cosmic being. You are all power. You are all wisdom. You are all intelligence. You are perfection. You are magnificence. You are the creator, and you are creating the creation of You on this planet."<sup>48</sup>
- "Well, now you know you are the Supreme Mind and that you can draw anything you want from that One Supreme Mind.

Any invention, any inspiration, any answer, anything. You can do anything you want. You are a genius beyond description, so start telling yourself that and become aware of who you really are."<sup>49</sup>

- "Are there any limits to this? Absolutely not. We are unlimited beings. We have no ceiling. The capabilities and the talents and the gifts and the power that is within every single individual that is on the planet, is unlimited."<sup>50</sup>

- "Whether you want to regain perfect eyesight, dissolve disease and restore well-being, turn poverty into abundance, reverse aging and degeneration, or eradicate any negativity, focus on and love the presence within you and perfection will manifest."<sup>51</sup>

- "The Universe emerges from thought. We are the creators not only of our own destiny but also of the Universe."<sup>52</sup>

- "An unlimited supply of ideas is available to you. All knowledge, discoveries, and inventions are in the Universal Mind as possibilities, waiting for the human mind to draw them forth. You hold everything in your consciousness."<sup>53</sup>

- "The Secret is within you. The more you use the power within you, the more you will draw it to you. You will reach a point where you won't need to practice anymore, because you will Be the power, you will Be the perfection, you will Be the wisdom, you will Be the intelligence, you will Be the love, you will Be the joy."<sup>54</sup>

- "The earth turns on its orbit for You. The oceans ebb and flow for You. The birds sing for You. The sun rises and it sets for You. The stars come out for You. Every beautiful thing you see, every wondrous thing you experience, is all there, for You. Take a look around. None of it can exist, without You. No matter who you thought you were, now

you know the Truth of Who You Really Are. You are the master of the Universe. You are the heir to the kingdom. You are the perfection of Life. And now you know The Secret."<sup>55</sup>

## AN EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

Because it is not possible in an article of this length to thoroughly critique *The Secret*, we will take a few aspects of its teachings and examine them.

The appeal of *The Secret* is obvious, in that everyone wants to achieve the desires of their heart, and we can be vulnerable to something that promises to give these things to us. In addition, we all like to feel important — although *The Secret* takes this to an extreme. What D.R. McConnell wrote in *A Different Gospel* regarding the appeal of the teachings of the Word-Faith movement<sup>56</sup> also applies to *The Secret*:

"Seldom if ever, has there been a gospel that has promised so much, and demanded so little. ... In an age in America characterized by complexity, the Faith gospel gives simple, if not revelational, answers. In an economy fueled by materialism and fired by the ambitions of the 'upwardly mobile,' the Faith gospel preaches wealth and prosperity. The Faith gospel promises health and long life to a world in which death can come a myriad of different ways. Finally, in an international environment characterized by anarchy, in which terrorists strike at will and nuclear holocaust can come screaming from the sky at any moment, the Faith gospel confers an authority with which the believer can supposedly exercise complete control over his or her own environment."<sup>57</sup>

*The Secret* makes sweeping assertions without supporting them:

"The greatest teachers who have ever lived have told us that the law of attraction is the most

powerful law in the Universe. Poets such as William Shakespeare, Robert Browning, and William Blake delivered it in their poetry. Musicians such as Ludwig van Beethoven expressed it through their music. Artists such as Leonardo da Vinci depicted it in their paintings. Great thinkers including Socrates, Plato, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Pythagoras, Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Victor Hugo shared it in their writings and teachings. Their names have been immortalized, and their legendary existence has survived centuries. Religions, such as Hinduism, Hermetic traditions,<sup>58</sup> Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and civilizations, such as the ancient Babylonians and Egyptians, delivered it through their writings and stories. Recorded throughout the ages in all its forms, the law can be found in ancient writings through all the centuries. It was recorded in stone in 3000 BC. Even though some coveted this knowledge, and indeed they did, it has always been there for anyone to discover. The law began at the beginning of time. It has always been and will always be."<sup>59</sup>

The following are typical examples of the book's extravagant, unsupported claims:

- "The leaders in the past who had *The Secret* wanted to keep the power and not share the power. They kept people ignorant of *The Secret*. People went to work, they did their job, they came home. They were on a treadmill with no power, because *The Secret* was kept in the few."<sup>60</sup>

- "There isn't a single thing that you cannot do with this knowledge. It doesn't matter who you are or where you are, *The Secret* can give you whatever you want."<sup>61</sup>

- "People who have drawn wealth into their lives used *The Secret*, whether consciously or

unconsciously. ... Whether they are aware of it or not, their predominant thoughts of wealth are what brought wealth to them. It is the law of attraction in action."<sup>62</sup>

And recall that Bryne has told us:

- "You are the most powerful magnet in the Universe! You contain a magnetic power within you that is more powerful than anything in this world, and this unfathomable magnetic power is emitted through your thoughts."<sup>63</sup>

At one point in the book, *The Secret* teacher Neale Donald Walsch contradicts basic scriptural teaching about every man standing before God for judgment (e.g., Genesis 18:25; Acts 10:42; 17:30-31; 24:15-16, 25; Romans 2:16; 3:6). Walsch asserts:

"So your purpose is what you say it is. Your mission is the mission you give yourself. Your life will be what you create it as, and no one will stand in judgment of it, now or ever."<sup>64</sup>

### THE SECRET GETS SPOOKY

Byrne recommends a technique that amounts to divination, which is condemned by God in Scripture (Deuteronomy 18:9-14):

"As you become aware of the power of *The Secret*, and begin to use it, all of your questions will be answered. As you begin to have a deeper understanding of the law of attraction you can start to make asking questions a habit, and as you do, you will receive the answer to each one. You can begin by using this book for that very purpose. If you are seeking an answer or guidance on something in your life, ask the question, believe you will receive, and then open this book randomly. At the exact place where the pages fall open will be the guidance and answer you are seeking."<sup>65</sup>

Bryne's method is not as unbelievable as one may think. Regretfully,

there are Christians who employ just such a practice using not *The Secret*, but rather their Bibles.

### RHONDA BYRNE'S DRAMATIC WRITING STYLE

Minor, but noteworthy, features about Byrne's book include that the book version of *The Secret* is introduced with a piece of pseudo-esoteric drivel, a quotation from *The Emerald Tablet* (c. 3000 B.C.):

"As above, so below. As within, so without."<sup>66</sup>

Presumably, we are supposed to be impressed with a quotation, which has no meaning apart from the greater context — if any — in which the words occur.

Byrne's writing is overly dramatic, even within her Acknowledgements. There she speaks of people who "illuminated me through their presence."<sup>67</sup> Some of these people are "magnificent human beings."<sup>68</sup> She "pay[s] homage" to some for "generously sharing their wisdom, love, and divinity."<sup>69</sup> She further acknowledges her "amazing family,"<sup>70</sup> including her two daughters who "illuminate every breath I take through their very existence."<sup>71</sup>

She also gives artificial-sounding titles of importance to some of the 24 teachers featured in both the book and DVD versions of *The Secret*. More than one receives the title of "philosopher."<sup>72</sup> Another receives the epithet of "moneymaking expert."<sup>73</sup> One of the teachers is a "personal transformation specialist"<sup>74</sup> and another receives the title of "visionary."<sup>75</sup> Still others receive the honorifics "law of attraction specialist,"<sup>76</sup> "personal empowerment advocate,"<sup>77</sup> and "spiritual messenger."<sup>78</sup> Some of *The Secret* teachers are described as "a non-aligned, transreligious progressive,"<sup>79</sup> "a 'life adventurer,'"<sup>80</sup> and "a transformational leader."<sup>81</sup>

One curious feature in the book, *The Secret*, occurs when Byrne is teaching about gratitude. She states, "In the book that changed my life, *The Science of Getting Rich*, written by Wallace

Wattles in 1910, gratitude is its longest chapter."<sup>82</sup> Likewise, in a chapter she wrote for another book, she also cites Wattles' book, and mentions that gratitude is that book's longest chapter.<sup>83</sup> Yet a glance at that book's Table of Contents reveals that the chapter on gratitude is one of the book's *shortest* chapters.

### THE SECRET'S ROOTS IN ANCIENT HINDUISM

The worldview of *The Secret* derives from Hinduism through the New Thought and New Age movements. Among the Hindu doctrines evident in *The Secret* are its belief in an impersonal Higher Power, as opposed to the personal God of Scripture; its monism, the belief that everything in the universe is one; and its pantheism, the belief that everything that is, is God. You are God, I am God, the tree is God, etc., and we are all one. "All there is is one, and all there is is God," would be another way of expressing it.

The impersonality of the "god" of *The Secret* is evident in the frequent references in the book to "the Universe," where the "U" in universe is always capitalized. The "Universe" is likened to the Genie of Aladdin's lamp, who *always* and *only* says to us, "Your wish is my command."<sup>84</sup> This brings up another critical difference between the "god" of *The Secret* and the God of the Bible: The "god" of *The Secret* is the servant of man and his desires. *The Secret's* concept of God is too small: *The Secret's* "god" is one "who must dance to men's attempts to manipulate the spiritual laws of the universe."<sup>85</sup> In contrast, the God of the Bible *cannot* and *will not* be manipulated by man.

Jesus is never mentioned by name in *The Secret* DVD, and His name is mentioned but once in the book — as the final name in a list of biblical personalities, such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, who "were not only prosperity teachers, but also millionaires themselves, with more affluent lifestyles than many present-day millionaires could conceive of."<sup>86</sup>

What a surprise! Who could have guessed that the Son of Man, Who had “nowhere to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20) and Who “though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor” (2 Corinthians 8:9), was *actually* a prosperity teacher and a millionaire!

### THE NEW THOUGHT MOVEMENT

As mentioned earlier, the terms “New Thought” and “New Age” are somewhat difficult to define, and there is some overlap in the two movements. The New Thought movement preceded the New Age movement. Both are eclectic, but have roots in Hinduism. The worldview of New Thought can also be seen in the “mind science” religions, such as Christian Science, Unity, and Religious Science.

A contemporary book on the subject of the New Thought movement states:

“New Thought has evolved as a movement that has no specific dogma to which the member religious movements must adhere. ... Although opinions regarding who actually founded New Thought vary, since the essence of the movement is rooted in the interpretations of the teachings of [19th-century metaphysical healer] Phineas Parkhurst Quimby (known as ‘Park’), he is credited as the overall intellectual father of New Thought.”<sup>87</sup>

Glenn Mosley also notes that fore-runners of the New Thought movement included “Franz Anton Mesmer, Emanuel Swedenborg, [and] Ralph Waldo Emerson.”<sup>88</sup> Regarding Emerson, Mosley says that, “He was influenced by such schools of thought as English Romanticism, Neoplatonism, and Hindu philosophy.”<sup>89</sup>

As just noted, one reason New Thought is hard to define is its lack of specific doctrines or theological creeds which the religious movements embrace. Researchers John Ankerberg and John Weldon give another reason that a precise definition of the movement is not easy:

“New Thought is an umbrella designation covering hundreds, possibly thousands, of independent churches around the world. Broadly speaking, Religious Science (Science of Mind), Divine Science, Unity School of Christianity and scores of smaller independent organizations constitute New Thought.”<sup>90</sup>

Two prominent 20th-century New Thought promulgators were author and New Thought minister Emmet Fox, as well as author and pastor Norman Vincent Peale.<sup>91</sup> Peale was pastor of a Christian church.<sup>92</sup> Della Reese, of the former television series *Touched By An Angel*, is a contemporary New Thought minister.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, Dr. Michael Beckwith, prominently featured in both *The Secret* book and DVD, is another contemporary New Thought leader.<sup>94</sup>

### THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

Philip H. Lochhaas, a Lutheran minister and expert on the New Age, defined it this way:

“The New Age may be defined as a network of otherwise dissimilar people intent on replacing the reality of a personal God with the idea that humanity is the center of all things. Indeed, it is claimed that each person is God, one with a universal energy, and only needs to develop the potential of divinity to the fullest. ... The New Age Movement appears to be a confusing and contradictory mix — until one understands that there are two distinct expressions of the movement: the occult and the humanistic. The *occult* expression involves such ideas and practices as reincarnation, crystal power, channeling spirit guides, UFO phenomenon, and the worship of self. The *humanistic* expression focuses on developing unlimited human potential and an ethical system centered in responsibility only to one’s self.”<sup>95</sup>

Lochhaas gives and expounds on the following six defining concepts of the New Age movement:

“1. *All is one; therefore all is God.* This principle expresses the twin concepts of *monism* and *pantheism*, ... 2. *Humanity, like all creation, is divine and has unlimited potential.* ... 3. *Humanity’s basic flaw is its ignorance of divinity and oneness with all things.* ... 4. *Humanity’s only need, therefore, is transformation — the awareness of divinity.* ... 5. *Transformation can be produced by a wide variety of techniques.* ... 6. *Personal transformation is the springboard to global transformation.*”<sup>96</sup>

Concerning the origins of the New Age movement, Dr. Walter Martin wrote:

“For all practical purposes, the New Age Cult can be equated with the transplantation of Hindu philosophy through the Theosophical Society founded by Helena Blavatsky in the latter part of the nineteenth century in the United States. Madame Blavatsky, as she was known, promoted spiritism, seances, and basic Hindu philosophy while manifesting a distinct antagonism to biblical Christianity.”<sup>97</sup>

Lochhaas adds:

“[Helena Blavatsky’s] prize pupil, Alice Bailey, developed Blavatsky’s teachings into an organized system and coined the term *New Age*. Bailey taught that humanity must achieve enlightenment by realizing its divinity. ... Another block in the New Age foundation is the New Thought Movement. Its origins generally are traced to the mental healing practice of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby in the mid-19th century. The Church of Christ, Scientist, founded by Mary Baker Eddy, is one of the better known developments of New Thought teachings.”<sup>98</sup>

While there are also differences between Hinduism and the New Age movement, “Hindus and New Agers hold quite similar views about God, the world, humanity, and salvation.”<sup>99</sup>

That *The Secret* relies on a Hindu worldview is made clear in the book that inspired it: Wattles' *The Science of Getting Rich*. In that book's Preface, Wattles wrote:

"For the benefit, however, of those who wish to investigate philosophical theories and so secure a logical basis for faith, I will here cite certain authorities. The monistic theory of the universe — the theory that One is All, and that All is One; that one Substance manifests itself as the seeming many elements of the material world — is of Hindu origin, and has been gradually winning its way into the thought of the western world for two hundred years. It is the foundation of all the Oriental philosophies, and of those of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Schopenhauer, Hegel, and Emerson. The reader who would dig to the philosophical foundations of this is advised to read Hegel and Emerson for himself."<sup>100</sup>

The source that inspired Byrne's book and DVD himself wrote that its philosophical underpinnings are that of Hinduism. As well, in *The Secret* book, the unusual term "avatar" is used several times.<sup>101</sup>

The edition of *The Science of Getting Rich* from which the quotation above is taken, is published by Jeremy P. Tarcher, "a New Age book publisher," according to Christian researcher Ron Rhodes.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, Wattles was a New Thought author,<sup>103</sup> and an article on *The Secret* in *Newsweek* noted that Beyond Words Publishing, the arm of Simon & Schuster which published Byrne's book, is a "New Age-oriented publishing house."<sup>104</sup> Thus, we clearly see the Hindu, New Thought, and New Age connections of *The Secret*.

As well, Rhodes notes that "the law of attraction," around which Byrne's teachings revolve, is a New Thought concept. Rhodes explains:

"New Thought proponents subscribe to the 'law of attraction.' This law says that just as like

attracts like, so our thoughts can attract the things they want or expect. Negative thoughts attract dismal circumstances; positive thoughts attract more desirable circumstances. Our thoughts can be either creative or destructive. New Thought sets out to teach people how to use their thoughts creatively."<sup>105</sup>

In his book on the New Age movement, Martin wrote:

"The great English apologist and writer C.S. Lewis saw the battle lines clearly drawn. He noted that in the final conflict between religions, Hinduism and Christianity would offer the only viable options because Hinduism absorbs all religious systems, and Christianity excludes all others, maintaining the supremacy of the claims of Jesus Christ."<sup>106</sup>

Thus, Hinduism, as expressed through both New Thought and the New Age movements, is the foundation for the teachings of *The Secret*.

### BLAMING THE VICTIMS OF TRAGEDY

When someone has suffered a genuine misfortune, there is probably nothing as insensitive or so cruel as telling such a person, "This is your own fault," even if such a charge is true. Job's friends sought to comfort him with just such "wisdom." And there is the blind man in John 9, of whom Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2).

While Rabbi Harold S. Kushner fails to grasp a biblical understanding of pain and suffering, he nonetheless graphically illustrates the insensitivity and cruelty of blaming victims of tragedy when he writes:

"I once read of an Iranian folk proverb, 'If you see a blind man, kick him; why should you be kinder than God?' In other words, if you see someone who is suffering, you must believe that he deserves his fate and that God wants him to suffer. There-

fore, put yourself on God's side by shunning him or humiliating him further. If you try to help him, you will be going against God's justice."<sup>107</sup>

Yet *The Secret*, with its "you-are-the-creator-of-your-own-life" teaching, *does* blame victims of tragedy for their own plight, even though in media settings, some of *The Secret* teachers have sought to distance themselves from this aspect of the teaching.<sup>108</sup> Yet, to be logically consistent, someone who believes in Byrne's teachings would *have* to believe that they bring misfortune and tragedy upon themselves. After all, if your thoughts are what create your life — as *The Secret* teaches — then how else would tragedy ever befall you, unless you created it for yourself by persistently thinking about it? And that is exactly what *The Secret* teaches. Joe Vitale, a metaphysician and *The Secret* teacher says:

"Everything that surrounds you right now in your life, including the things you're complaining about, you've attracted. Now I know that at first blush that's going to be something that you hate to hear. You're going to immediately say, 'I didn't attract the car accident. I didn't attract this particular client who gives me a hard time. I didn't particularly attract the debt.' And I'm here to be a little bit in your face and to say, yes you did attract it. This is one of the hardest concepts to get, but once you've accepted it, it's life transforming."<sup>109</sup>

Byrne amplifies Vitale's words:

"Often when people first hear this part of the Secret they recall events in history where masses of lives were lost, and they find it incomprehensible that so many people could have attracted themselves to the event. By the law of attraction, they had to be on the same frequency as the event. It doesn't necessarily mean they thought of that exact event, but the frequency of their thoughts matched the frequency of the event. ... Nothing can

come into your experience unless you summon it through persistent thoughts."<sup>110</sup>

Here we see a "dark side" to *The Secret*. At least Vitale and Byrne demonstrate consistency in stating the clear implications of their teaching. Indeed, these implications were not lost on former occultist and professional astrologer Marcia Montenegro, who, in response to this part of the teaching of *The Secret*, wrote:

"This has hideous implications if you apply this theory to horrific events like the Holocaust and 9/11. But I can tell you that this is how people who believe you create your own reality really think. People who have suffered must have attracted it into their lives. This is the kind of callous thinking that inevitably results from the belief in the 'law of attraction.' So if you get cancer, break an arm, are raped, are robbed, etc., then you have brought this on yourself."<sup>111</sup>

### THE SECRET'S "SCIENTIFIC" CLAIMS

*The Secret* uses scientific jargon and makes scientific claims, but without any documentation. Assertions are made and the public is asked to accept them as fact:

- "The law [of attraction] began at the beginning of time. It has always been and will always be. It is the law that determines the complete order in the Universe, every moment of your life, and every single thing you experience in your life."<sup>112</sup>
- "What most people don't understand is that a thought has a frequency. We can measure a thought."<sup>113</sup>
- "Thoughts are magnetic, and thoughts have a frequency. As you think, those thoughts are sent out into the Universe, and they magnetically attract all like things that are on the same frequency. Everything sent out

returns to the source. And that source is You."<sup>114</sup>

• "The law of attraction is the law of creation. Quantum physicists tell us that the entire Universe emerged from thought! You create your life through your thoughts and the law of attraction, and every single person does the same."<sup>115</sup>

• "The amazing work and discoveries of the quantum physicists over the last eighty years has brought us to a greater understanding of the unfathomable power of the human mind to create. Their work parallels the words of the world's great minds, including Carnegie, Emerson, Shakespeare, Bacon, Krishnamurti, and Buddha."<sup>116</sup>

• "... it has been scientifically proven that an affirmative thought is hundreds of times more powerful than a negative thought."<sup>117</sup>

• "The study of quantum physics helped me to have a deeper understanding of *The Secret*, on an energetic level. For many people, their belief is strengthened when they see the perfect correlation between the knowledge of *The Secret* and the theories of new science. Let me explain how you are the most powerful transmission tower in the Universe. In simple terms, all energy vibrates at a frequency. Being energy, you also vibrate at a frequency, and what determines your frequency at any time is whatever you are thinking and feeling. All the things you want are made of energy, and they are vibrating too. *Everything* is energy. Here is the 'wow' factor. When you think about what you want, and you emit that frequency, you cause the energy of what you want to vibrate at that frequency and you bring it to You! As you focus on what you want, you are changing the vibration of the atoms of that thing, and

you are causing it to vibrate to You."<sup>118</sup>

• "You are an energy magnet, so you electrically energize everything to you and electrically energize yourself to everything you want. Human beings manage their own magnetizing energy, because no one outside of them can think or feel for them, and it is thoughts and feelings that create our frequencies."<sup>119</sup>

• "I don't care what city you're living in, you've got enough power in your body, potential power, to illuminate the whole city for nearly a week."<sup>120</sup>

Before we attempt to look at the "science" of *The Secret*, we should remember Paul's admonition:

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:8-10).

We would suggest that these words of Scripture are relevant to the teachings of *The Secret* in relation to science. Jerry Adler, writing for *Newsweek*, says:

"On a scientific level, the law of attraction is preposterous. Two of the 'teachers' in the film are identified as quantum physicists, which they are, although on the fringes of mainstream science. One, Fred Alan Wolf, is mostly an author of science books with a quasi-mystical bent, and the other, John Hagelin (who has run for president on the Natural Law ticket), is affiliated with Maharishi University of Management, in Fairfield, Iowa, which does research on Transcendental Meditation.<sup>121</sup> Both of them, contacted by *Newsweek*, distanced themselves from the idea of a physical law that attracts neck-

laces to people who wish for them. 'I don't think it works that way,' says Wolf dryly. 'It hasn't worked that way in my life.' Hagelin acknowledges the larger point, that 'the coherence and effectiveness of our thinking is crucial to our success in life.' But, he adds, 'this is not, principally, the result of magic.' Wolf said he used his time in front of the camera to talk about the relationship between quantum mechanics and consciousness, but all that evidently wound up on the cutting-room floor. What he might have said is something like this: modern physics says that atomic particles influence one another in ways that violate our ordinary understanding of space and time, a phenomenon called 'quantum entanglement.' The question is whether quantum signals can be perceived on the scale of something like a neuron, a brain or a human being. Overwhelmingly, physicists dismiss this idea. A minority, very much out of the mainstream, think it's worth investigating, and a few claim to have experimental evidence that thoughts can influence physical objects, such as the circuitry in a random-number generator. But the effects are tiny, on the order of a few hundredths of 1 percent. And there's no evidence you can use it to move a BMW into your driveway."<sup>122</sup>

Likewise, on a *Nightline* broadcast examining some of the claims of *The Secret*, Dr. Brian Greene, a leading physicist at Columbia University, interviewed by the show's anchor Cynthia McFadden, denied that our thoughts produced any significant gravitational or electro-magnetic "pull" that directly drew things to us.<sup>123</sup> The moral of this story is: Don't take science lessons from *The Secret*!

### HEALTH, WEALTH, AND MORE

Cathy Goodman, featured in both the book and the DVD of *The Secret*, gives the following testimonial:

*"I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I truly believed in my heart, with my strong faith, that I was already healed. ... I believed in my heart I was healed. I saw myself as if cancer was never in my body. ... From the time I was diagnosed to the time I was healed was approximately three months. And that's without any radiation or chemotherapy."*<sup>124</sup>

To include this in *The Secret*, as if this were the way to proceed in dealing with sickness and disease, is dangerous and irresponsible. Cancers sometimes go into partial or complete remission. In a complete remission, the person has no symptoms. Such remissions can last for years, but may not indicate permanent healing;<sup>125</sup> although, for her sake, it is hoped that she is permanently healed. If she is healed, however, it is only due to God having had mercy on her, and not because of her healing herself, as she believes (Philippians 2:27).

Byrne also directs:

*"Think thoughts of perfection. Illness cannot exist in a body that has harmonious thoughts. Know there is only perfection, and as you observe perfection you must summon that to you. Imperfect thoughts are the cause of all humanity's ills, including disease, poverty, and unhappiness. When we think negative thoughts we are cutting ourselves off from our rightful heritage. Declare and intend, 'I think perfect thoughts. I see only perfection. I am perfection.'"*<sup>126</sup>

As for wealth, on the *Nightline* program that examined some of *The Secret's* claims, Cynthia McFadden interviewed former Secretary of Commerce Pete Peterson, co-founder of The Blackstone Group, which manages billions of dollars, concerning *The Secret's* teaching that one can have wealth by thinking about it with intent. In part, Peterson responded by saying, "It's psychotic, really, to believe that people are going to give you money simply because you wish it."<sup>127</sup>

The sad, but logically consistent, results of believing *The Secret's* teachings about money may be seen in a story in a recent *People* magazine article devoted to *The Secret*. There it was reported that one of the believers in the teachings of *The Secret* "recently signed a contract to pay \$15,000 to have her house painted this summer. 'I have no idea where the money is going to come from, but there is no question in my mind it will work out,' she says. 'I know it like I know my name.'"<sup>128</sup>

### MORE ABSURDITIES

Time and space don't permit a complete listing of absurd thoughts and statements in *The Secret*. But below are a few examples:

- "... the condition of being overweight was created through your thought to it. To put it in the most basic terms, if someone is overweight, it came from thinking 'fat thoughts,' whether that person was aware of it or not. A person cannot think 'thin thoughts' and be fat. It completely defies the law of attraction."<sup>129</sup>
- "The most common thought that people hold, and I held it too, is that food was responsible for my weight gain. ... Food is not responsible for putting on weight. It is your *thought* that food is responsible for putting on weight that actually has food put on weight. Remember, thoughts are [the] primary cause of everything, and the rest is effects from those thoughts. Think perfect thoughts and the result must be perfect weight. Let go of all those limiting thoughts. Food cannot cause you to put on weight, unless you *think* it can."<sup>130</sup>
- "So now you start to have different beliefs, like, 'There is more than enough in the Universe.' Or you have the belief that, 'I'm not getting older, I'm getting younger.' We can create it the way we want it, by using the law of attraction."<sup>131</sup>

We might add, “Yes, and there are people in asylums who really believe that they are George Washington or the Queen of England!” Contrary to the teaching of *The Secret*, thinking things are so doesn’t make them so, unless they really are so. In fact, there is a phrase that pretty well sums up the teaching of *The Secret*: “wishful thinking.”

Christian apologist and author Robert Bowman wrote something about the Word-Faith movement that can easily be applied with equal ease to the teachings of *The Secret*:

“Perhaps the most serious danger of the Word-Faith position is that, since it is unbiblical and unrealistic, those who believe it are in for serious disappointment. The result can be — and often has been — disillusionment. ... The Word-Faith teachers set people up for a fall when they tell them that God promises them that they can have what they say.”<sup>132</sup>

Basically, the same things as were said above for the Word-Faith position and the Word-Faith teachers could be said for *The Secret* and its teachers: *The Secret* teachers set people up for a fall when they tell them that they can have whatever they desire and think about with intent. The results of believing in such wishful thinking can be disastrous.

Donald Whitney concludes his insightful review of *The Secret* with these words:

“‘The Secret to everything’ (to use Byrne’s term) is God Himself. And God, the ‘Great Secret,’ has been revealed in Jesus Christ, ‘in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ (Colossians 2:3). God has freely told us in the Bible everything we need to know about discovering the unlimited ‘treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ found in Christ. And He remains an unknown Secret only to those who will not look for Him there.”<sup>133</sup>

The most tragic effect of all concerning *The Secret* is that it turns people away from the Savior as their source of hope and eternal salvation, and places the focus on themselves as savior. The words of Jesus are apropos:

“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36-37; see also Luke 12:15-21).

### Endnotes:

1. Jerry Adler, “Decoding ‘The Secret,’” *Newsweek*, March 5, 2007, pp. 52-55, 57-58.
2. Maria Eftimiades, “*The Secret*: Salvation or Hype?,” *People*, March 19, 2007, pp. 125-126.
3. Carol Memmott, “‘Secret’ attracts plenty of attention,” *USA Today*, Feb. 15, 2007, pg. 1D; and Marco R. della Cava, “Secret history of ‘The Secret’: An old-time self-help religion gets new face,” *USA Today*, March 29, 2007, pg. 1D.
4. Peter Jones, “This ‘Secret’ isn’t worth keeping,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 10, 2007.
5. *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, Feb. 8, 2007, and Feb. 16, 2007.
6. *Larry King Live*, March 8, 2007.
7. *Nightline*, March 23, 2007.
8. Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret*. New York: Atria Books, 2006.
9. *The Secret*, Extended edition DVD, TS Production LLC, 2006.
10. Donald S. Whitney, “A Review of *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne.” Review posted on Whitney’s Biblical Spirituality ministry web site ([www.biblicalspirituality.org](http://www.biblicalspirituality.org)).
11. “Pantheism” is the belief that “everything is God.” The implications of these two beliefs are a worldview that is diametrically opposed to the Christian worldview.
12. *Nightline*, op. cit.
13. The October 2004 date is derived from Byrne’s chapter in Jack Canfield and Gay Hendricks with Carol Kline, *You’ve Got To Read This Book!: 55 People Tell the Story of the Book That Changed Their Life*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2006, pg. 95.
14. *The Secret*, op. cit., pg. ix.
15. *Ibid.*, pg. 76. See also the short biographical information that Byrne gives on Wallace Wattles on pg. 197. This book by Wattles was published in 1910. Wattles died the following year.
16. *You’ve Got To Read This Book!*, op. cit., pg. 96, italics in original.
17. *The Secret*, op. cit., pg. ix.

18. *You’ve Got To Read This Book!*, op. cit., pg. 96.
19. *The Secret*, op. cit., pg. x.
20. *You’ve Got To Read This Book!*, op. cit., pg. 96.
21. *The Secret*, op. cit., pp. ix-x, italic in original. On the DVD, Byrne mentions that she knew that she wanted to create a television show; but says nothing about making a film.
22. *Ibid.*, pg. x.
23. *You’ve Got To Read This Book!*, op. cit., pg. 99.
24. *The Secret*, op. cit., pg. xi.
25. “Decoding ‘The Secret,’” op. cit., pg. 58.
26. *The Secret*, op. cit., pg. 9.
27. *Ibid.*, pg. 7.
28. *Ibid.*, pg. 8, italics in original.
29. *Ibid.*, pg. 9, italic in original.
30. *Ibid.*, pg. 10, italic in original.
31. *Ibid.*, pg. 11, italics in original.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30, italics in original.
33. *Ibid.*, pg. 30.
34. *Ibid.*, pg. 33.
35. *Ibid.*, pg. 184, italics in original.
36. *Ibid.*, pg. 179, italics in original.
37. *Ibid.*, pg. 100, capitalization in original.
38. *Ibid.*, pg. 178, italics in original.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-54, which both lists and discusses these three steps.
40. *Ibid.*, pg. 47.
41. *Ibid.*, italics in original.
42. *Ibid.*, pg. 48.
43. *Ibid.*, pg. 53.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-159, 162, 175.
46. *Ibid.*, pg. 162.
47. *Ibid.*, pg. 164, italics in original. Stated by *The Secret* teacher Lisa Nichols. This quote is also on the DVD.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170.
50. *Ibid.*, pg. 170, italics in original. Stated by *The Secret* teacher and contemporary New Thought personality Michael Bernard Beckwith.
51. *Ibid.*, pg. 173.
52. *Ibid.*, pg. 175, italics in original.
53. *Ibid.*, italics in original.
54. *Ibid.*, pg. 182.
55. *Ibid.*, pg. 183.
56. In saying that the two share certain similarities, I certainly do not mean that the teachings of the Word-Faith movement and *The Secret* are identical. Far from it! For one thing, the God of the Word-Faith movement is the personal God of the Bible, in contrast to the pantheistic, impersonal “god” of *The Secret*. Additionally, there are sincere, born-again Christians who embrace the teachings of the Word-Faith movement. By contrast, to embrace *The Secret* is to

depart from biblical Christianity and the Christian worldview altogether. This is so, because the foundation of *The Secret* is anti-Christian at its very core.

57. D.R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995, pg. xix.

58. "Traditions deriving from an [ancient] Egyptian ... mystical philosophical text, it honours the Egyptian God Thoth who is identified with the Greek Hermes under the name of Trismegistus (Thrice-Greatest)." Rosemary Goring, editor, *Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*. Ware, Herefordshire: Wordsworth Editions, Ltd., 1995, pg. 215, s.v., "Hermetica, Hermetism." (Originally published as *Chambers Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions*. Edinburgh: W&R Chambers, Ltd., 1992.)

59. *The Secret*, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

60. *Ibid.*, pg. 2, italics in original. These assertions stated by *The Secret* teacher Denis Waitley.

61. *Ibid.*, pg. xi.

62. *Ibid.*, pg. 6.

63. *Ibid.*, pg. 7.

64. *Ibid.*, pg. 177, italics in original.

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172.

66. *Ibid.*, pg. v.

67. *Ibid.*, pg. xiii.

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

70. *Ibid.*, pg. xv.

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2. On pg. 1, used of *The Secret* teacher Bob Proctor. On pg. 2, used of *The Secret* teacher Dr. John DeMartini.

73. *Ibid.*, pg. 1, used of *The Secret* teacher John Assaraf.

74. *Ibid.*, pg. 2, used of *The Secret* teacher Dr. John DeMartini.

75. *Ibid.*, used of *The Secret* teacher Michael Bernard Beckwith.

76. *Ibid.*, pg. 7, used of *The Secret* teacher Bob Doyle.

77. *Ibid.*, pg. 13, used of *The Secret* teacher Lisa Nichols.

78. *Ibid.*, pg. 177, used of *The Secret* teacher Neale Donald Walsch.

79. *Ibid.*, pg. 185, used of *The Secret* teacher Michael Bernard Beckwith.

80. *Ibid.*, pg. 189, used of *The Secret* teacher Mike Dooley.

81. *Ibid.*, pg. 195, used of *The Secret* teacher Marci Shimoff.

82. *Ibid.*, pg. 76.

83. *You've Got To Read This Book!*, op. cit., pg. 96.

84. *The Secret*, op. cit., e.g., pp. 45, 46, 59, 89, 102, 168. Although, at one point, Byrne states, "The Genie is the law of attraction" (pg. 46), it appears that, in certain places, "the Genie" refers to "the Universe" or *The Secret's* "god" (e.g., see pg. 59, 89).

85. *A Different Gospel*, op. cit., pg. 185. McConnell was using this phrase to describe the God of the Word-Faith movement. Whether or not such a description accurately describes the conception of God held by that movement, it is *definitely* an accurate description of the impersonal "god" of *The Secret*.

86. *The Secret*, op. cit., pg. 109.

87. Glenn R. Mosley, *New Thought, Ancient Wisdom: The History and Future of the New Thought Movement*. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2006, pg. 44.

88. *Ibid.*

89. *Ibid.*, pg. 45.

90. John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1999, pg. 342.

91. *New Thought, Ancient Wisdom*, op. cit., pp. 70-71, 136.

92. For more regrettable inconsistencies in Peale, see G. Richard Fisher, "The Father of Positive Thinking: Negative Reflections on Norman Vincent Peale," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 1992, pp. 4-6; and M. Kurt Goedelman, "Peale Charged With Occultic Plagiarisms," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1996, pp. 3, 17.

93. *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, op. cit., pg. 343.

94. *New Thought, Ancient Wisdom*, op. cit., pp. 54-61.

95. Philip H. Lochhaas, *How To Respond: The New Age Movement*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995, pg. 8, italics in original.

96. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-13, italics in original.

97. Walter Martin, *The New Age Cult*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1989, pg. 15.

98. *How To Respond: The New Age Movement*, op. cit., pg. 16, italics in original.

99. Ron Rhodes, *New Age Movement*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995, pg. 28.

100. Wallace D. Wattles, *The Science of Getting Rich*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2007, pg. viii. On the page containing the book's publication information, it is noted that "*The Science of Getting Rich* [was] first published in 1910."

101. *The Secret*, op. cit., pp. xiv, 76, 81, 160, 181. *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 3rd edition, defines "avatar" as "The descent to earth of a Hindu deity, esp. Vishnu, in human or animal form." It is true that "avatar" need not be used in a Hindu sense; however, given the Hindu roots of *The Secret*, a Hindu use of this word in the book seems probable.

102. *New Age Movement*, op. cit., pg. 8.

103. *The Secret*, op. cit., pg. 197.

104. "Decoding 'The Secret,'" op. cit., pg. 58.

105. Ron Rhodes, *Find It Quick Handbook on Cults and New Religions*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 2005, pg. 134.

106. *The New Age Cult*, op. cit., pg. 13.

107. Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. New York: Avon Books, 1981, pg. 87.

108. For instance, on the *Larry King Live*, March 8, 2007, program, *The Secret* teachers John Assaraf and Lisa Nichols sought to distance themselves from this aspect of *The Secret* teaching. *The Secret* teacher Bob Proctor did the same in the *Nightline*, March 23, 2007, broadcast.

109. *The Secret*, op. cit., pp. 27-28, italics in original.

110. *Ibid.*, pg. 28. Byrne repeats the final sentence of the paragraph above in her chapter summary on pg. 43.

111. Marcia Montenegro, "The Secret: A Cosmic Dream Machine." Article posted on Montenegro's Christian Answers for the New Age ministry web site (<http://cana.userworld.com/cana>).

112. *The Secret*, op. cit., pg. 5.

113. *Ibid.*, pg. 9, italics in original. Stated by *The Secret* teacher John Assaraf.

114. *Ibid.*, pg. 10, italic in original.

115. *Ibid.*, pg. 15.

116. *Ibid.*, pg. 21.

117. *Ibid.*, pg. 22, italics in original. Stated by contemporary New Thought leader Michael Bernard Beckwith.

118. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-157, italics in original.

119. *Ibid.*, pg. 157.

120. *Ibid.*, pg. 158, italics in original. Stated by *The Secret* teacher Bob Proctor.

121. Transcendental meditation is a form of Hindu practice; so, here again, we see evidence of *The Secret's* deep roots in Hinduism.

122. "Decoding 'The Secret,'" op. cit., pg. 57.

123. *Nightline*, op. cit.

124. *The Secret*, op. cit., pp. 128, 129, italics in original.

125. See The American Cancer Society's article on remission posted on its web site ([www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)).

126. *The Secret*, op. cit., pg. 130.

127. *Nightline*, op. cit.

128. "The Secret: Salvation or Hype?," op. cit., pg. 126.

129. *The Secret*, op. cit., pg. 58.

130. *Ibid.*, pg. 59, italics in original.

131. *Ibid.*, pg. 167, italics in original. Stated by *The Secret* teacher Joe Vitale.

132. Robert M. Bowman, Jr., *The Word-Faith Controversy: Understanding the Health and Wealth Gospel*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2001, pg. 203.

133. "A Review of *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne," op. cit.