

Presented at ETS, November 16, 1989
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CULTIC ORIGINS OF WORD-FAITH THEOLOGY
WITHIN THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

"Idolatry is worshipping anything that was meant to be used,
or using anything that was meant to be worshipped."

St. Augustine

INTRODUCTION

One of the most prevalent teachings within the present-day charismatic movement is a doctrine called "positive confession." This doctrine is accompanied by a basic charismatic presupposition: that all Christians are to be physically healthy and materially rich. The presupposition controls the confession. Thus, if one is in need of physical healing one must find a verse concerning healing, as Mt. 8:17, and then audibly quote this verse in the face of all physical circumstances to the contrary. By believing in one's heart and speaking with one's mouth this verse, the healing will eventually be manifested by faith. The result is always to be positive, hence, "positive" confession.

It is the purpose of this paper to show that this charismatic doctrine originated in the 19th century mind-healing cults, along with the basic presuppositions of health and wealth, and has been incorporated by teachers within the charismatic movement. The methodology employed here is as follows. The teaching will be presented first from one of its leading spokesmen, Kenneth Hagin. Although he is not the originator of these teachings, he represents well the doctrines of this school of thought

and virtually every charismatic teacher today within the health and wealth movement has been influenced by Hagin. As will be shown later, Hagin plagiarized E.W. Kenyon extensively in formulating these and other concepts. Next, the doctrine of "positive confession" and its relationship to health and prosperity will be presented from the teachings of New Thought, Christian Science and the Unity School of Christianity. Various responses will be noted from within the pentecostal and charismatic movements to these teachings and from the wider evangelical circle. Evidence will be presented in those responses which will demonstrate the entrance of these cultic concepts into segments of Christianity.

I. DOCTRINAL ANALYSIS

The Basic Presupposition

This teaching has at its foundation one basic presupposition upon which everything else is built: that every Christian, without exception, should be physically healthy and materially prosperous. Kenneth Hagin expresses this well when he states:

I am fully convinced - I would die saying it is so - that it is the plan of Our Father God, in His great love and in His great mercy, that no believer should ever be sick; that every believer should live his full lifespan down here on this earth; and that every believer should finally just fall asleep in Jesus.¹

He also says that Jesus "became poor materially for us. He was our substitute . . . And the Word of God teaches that Christ has borne poverty for us."²

The Bible is revered almost to the point of its being an object of worship or at least confused with the person of Christ. Hagin states, "We should treat His Word with the same reverence that we would treat Jesus if He were here in the flesh."³ In fact, Christians are sick because they have sinned against the Word of God and have broken its laws.⁴ One is promised that as he sides with God's Word it will "work" for him.⁵ It is upon this basic presupposition, that all Christians should be healthy and wealthy, supported by a careful selection of Scriptures (but omission of others), that the doctrine of positive confession emerges. The presupposition controls Scripture selection and one's confession.

Positive Confession

According to this teaching there are three kinds of confession: confession of the Lordship of Christ by an unbeliever, the believer's confession of his sins and the confessing of our faith in the Word, in Christ and God the Father.⁶ Hagin asserts that the Bible nowhere teaches that all one has to do is believe in his heart to receive an answer to prayer, but one must also say it with his mouth. He refers to salvation itself for support (Rom. 10:9,10).⁷

Using Mk. 11:22-24, he points out that Christ mentions "believing" once but "saying" three times; therefore, what a person says determines what shall happen. If a person is believing correctly then what he says will show it, but if his confession is wrong then his believing is wrong.⁸

Concerning Rom. 10:10, Hagin states that the text says "unto salvation," but asserts it is also true concerning anything else that one receives from God. In fact, it is maintained that everything one receives from God comes by believing and confessing.⁹

Faith grows with one's confession. It is asserted that one cannot realize anything beyond what one says. "If you say you can't then you can't. You get nothing. But if you say you can then you can."¹⁰ God "works through the Word in our lips."¹¹ "The wrong confession defeats us."¹²

The assertion that one is to state or confess that something is there, when in reality it is not, leads Hagin to the inevitable result of his logic: the denial of reality. "Your right confession will become a reality, and then you will get whatever you need from God."¹³ "Faith's confessions create reality."¹⁴ These two statements show that this teaching places within the power of humans a prerogative that only God possesses: the ability to create.

In fact, if a person thinks right, believes right, and confesses right, nothing shall be impossible to him.¹⁵ It is this concept of positive confession and its consequence, the denial of reality, that links this teaching to the mind-healing cults of the 19th century.

Denial of Reality

Hagin sets up a dualism which allows him to deny the physical. He asserts that there are two kinds of truth: truth based on God's Word and truth based on the physical senses. The physical is true only so long as it does not contradict Scripture.¹⁶ He maintains that man has a two-fold nature: the inward man, the spirit, and the outward man, the body. Thus, to believe with the heart means to believe with the inward man, but to base one's faith on physical evidence is to believe with the outward man.¹⁷ Most importantly, Hagin asserts that the body is not the real you but the house you live in.¹⁸ The real man is spirit which operates through the soul (here he adds a third dimension to man) which in turn operates through the body.¹⁹ All of this indicates that the concept of humanity is based upon a Gnostic dualism of spirit versus matter.

Concerning God, this teaching maintains that God is a Spirit who has created all physical things.²⁰ Here is a clear contradiction - for if God has created all physical things then they must be true. A further contradiction is observed in the following statement: "We live in Satan's unreal world."²¹ This implies that the physical world is not trustworthy because it is dominated by Satan but if God created the physical world then it must be reliable. The outcome of this contradiction is to deny God as Creator and implies another Gnostic element: the physical is evil.

Based upon the dualism of spirit versus matter, Hagin is able to deny

physical sickness, claiming that man's natural senses are not reliable perceivers of reality. He states that the greatest things will happen to a person when he moves into the spiritual realm, although one's intellect and physical senses will fight against this because the mind has not been renewed by the Word.²² Further, one may not always understand what the Bible says but it will still work if one's confession is right (Mk. 11:22-24).²³ The problem here is that one does not have to understand the plain meaning of the Bible to use it. Hagin's disdain for the intellect leads him to the peculiar notion of God responding to man's ignorance.

Therefore, in regard to healing, one is to accept the testimony of God's Word instead of one's physical senses.²⁴ Hagin asserts, "It is a mistake to start looking at your body to see if you are healed."²⁵ "Physical senses build life fences. They fence God out and fence a person, his sickness, and the devil in."²⁶ Once I say that God has heard my prayer, I never go back to it. I do not care what I see, what I feel, or what my senses tell me. I stay with it, take hold of it with the tenacity of a bulldog, and I do not turn loose of it."²⁷

How does Hagin get around the fact that he is denying reality? By maintaining that the sickness is not there - that what seems to be sickness is only a symptom. Here is a definite link to the mind-healing cults. Hagin claims to have been healed of a heart condition and paralysis as a teenager. A few years later he was troubled with "alarming symptoms" but through a positive confession the symptoms left.²⁸ Hagin maintains that one is to "confess" that the sickness is not there. He states, "By believing what your physical senses tell you, you would say, 'I don't have healing - I am sick.' But by believing the truth of God's Word you can say, 'I am healed. By His stripes I have healing.'"²⁹ A person should look to God's Word, not to his symptoms."³⁰ "If I walk by sight, by what

my physical senses tell me, I would have to say, 'I'm not well. I'm not healed.' But walking by faith, I know I am healed in Jesus' Name."³¹

"Start saying, 'According to His Word, I am healed.' If someone asks you how you are feeling, instead of getting in the natural with them and answering according to the natural, answer according to the Word."³² "I haven't had a headache, and I'm not expecting to have one. But if I had a headache, I wouldn't tell any body. And if somebody asked me how I was feeling I would say, 'I'm fine, thank you.'"³³ "We know that the pain, sickness, or disease that seems to be in our bodies was laid on Jesus."³⁴

These statements are in error when compared with the totality of Scripture and their plain meaning. Nowhere does Jesus Christ or anyone else call sickness a symptom nor is anyone called upon to deny that the sickness is actually present.

Attention will now be turned to the background of the mind-healing cults.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE MIND-HEALING CULTS

Historical Factors

Gail T. Parker has suggested that there were three historical factors characteristic of the late-nineteenth century times which favored the growth of these cults: (1) Protestant churches were deeply involved in an aristocratic Arminianism. This caused many to either turn to the Social Gospel or anti-revivalistic mental-healing cults to restore the connection between faith and works. (2) Americans began to have psychosomatic illnesses due possibly to urbanization, industrialization, the growing impersonality of economic life, underworking, overworking and the success ethic. This caused many to turn to mind-cure. (3) A distrust of the medical profession.³⁵

Basic Characteristics

The mind-healing cults are part of the metaphysical movement of the 19th century, a movement concerned with the "practical application of that absolute Truth of Being in all the affairs of our daily and hourly living."³⁶ J. S. Judah has listed several characteristics of this movement which may have contributed to its growth.³⁷ Some of the more prominent ones are as follows: (1) The inner self of man is real and divine. (2) They seek to be united with God as Principle or Law. By the use of spiritual laws, one may gain health, prosperity, peace of mind or anything else one desires.³⁸ It should be stated here that although the concept of God held by Hagin is different, the principle of receiving is the same - "do" this and you will "get" that. Hagin maintains that "God has certain laws He works by"³⁹ He also offers

a formula of faith to be used to receive things.⁴⁰ Although Hagin professes that God is personal, in practice he treats God as an impersonal force or power. (3) In the metaphysical movement, God is seen as the all in all. This leads them to conclude that the world of so-called matter is an error of our minds. This attracts many because it makes God immanent and readily available to people. It also asserts a humanism that allows humanity to create its own conditions. (4) All metaphysical philosophies are pragmatic.⁴¹ The basic belief is if it works it must be right and the proof is seen in the results. Hagin also works on a pragmatic foundation by stating that "His Word will work for us."⁴² But there is no evidence to show that the teaching works, for when one is sick, one simply denies it until it passes (if it passes). It should also be noted that a "Biblical" miracle is externally verifiable on the spot by believers and non-believers alike. This is not true of the charismatic ministries. If pragmatism equals truth, then New Thought, Christian Science and the Unity School of Christianity would all be true since their founders and followers all claim to have received healings. Therefore, the basic notion that pragmatism equals orthodoxy is false. (5) Most of the metaphysical groups have placed great emphasis upon prosperity, believing that God gives freely to all who realize their unity with him by using laws.⁴³ (6) These groups believe in the inner meaning of words that are revealed intuitively.⁴⁴ As far as Hagin's interpretive method, his authority is not only the Bible but whatever God may say to us in the Spirit.⁴⁵ Thus he opens the way to read whatever meaning he wants the Scripture to say to fit in with his basic presuppositions. (7) All of these groups make healing through the mind or spirit a part of their message and work.⁴⁶ Hagin is aware of the metaphysical teachings: "Many people because of the metaphysical, mind-science religions, will get mixed up with them, because they think that man is just a mental and physical being. But man is more than

this. He is also a spiritual being."⁴⁷ It is hard to believe that Hagin does not believe that healing is mental when he makes such statements as: "The reason they are not getting healed is that they are thinking wrong"⁴⁸ and that " . . . nothing shall be impossible to you if you think right, believe right and confess right."⁴⁹

New Thought, Christian Science and the Unity School of Christianity will now be examined to demonstrate some of these characteristics and to show parallels with Hagin's teaching.

III. NEW THOUGHT

Background

New Thought is a development based on the concepts found in Hegel, Emerson, German idealism and New England Transcendentalism.⁵⁰ Phineas P. Quimby (1802-1866) was the originator of the movement and his teachings were expanded by Warren F. Evans. New Thought preceded Christian Science and the Unity School of Christianity and the latter owe their existence to the former.⁵¹

New Thought believes that mind is fundamental and causative which means "that the real cause of every event is an internal, non-material idea."⁵² According to its various teachers, if one holds thoughts of health, wholeness and success, these thoughts will create their corresponding physical realities. By changing one's thoughts one can change the physical world.⁵³

Phineas P. Quimby

In 1938, a Dr. Collyer began to lecture and demonstrate the concept of mesmerism, which had been introduced in America in 1836 by a Frenchman, Charles Poyan. Mesmerism caught the interest of Quimby. He began to experiment on a certain Lucius Burkmar and eventually developed his theory of mental healing from these encounters. When Burkmar was in the state of hypnotism, he had the ability to diagnose disease or perceive the internal condition of the sick and to prescribe a remedy.⁵⁴ When Quimby experienced pain in his back he did not tell Lucius. But one day, while entranced, Lucius described Quimby's pain, placed his hands on his back and confirmed

what Quimby knew from the doctor's report: that one of his kidneys was half gone, being connected to the rest by only a slender thread. In response to Quimby's request for a cure, Lucius placed his hands on Quimby and said, "I can put the piece on so it will grow, and you will get well,"⁵⁵ claiming that the pieces he had joined would grow together. A day or two later Lucius asserted that the healing had occurred and, Quimby says, "from that day I have never experienced the least pain from them."⁵⁶

This caused Quimby to think that the absurdity of the remedy made him doubt the fact that the kidneys were diseased. He also questioned whether it was just a mistaken belief which had caused his condition, and if so, then the trouble was essentially mental, something he had caused. He concluded it was mental and based his teaching on this premise.⁵⁷

He reasoned that he had accepted by faith the doctor's suggestion which resulted in illness. But acting on the suggestion of Lucius, his condition had been changed which resulted in healing. He concluded that by the correction of a wrong belief the cure had been effected.⁵⁸

A comparison of a few doctrinal statements of Quimby and Hagin will show they are teaching parallel concepts.

Phineas Quimby

Kenneth Hagin

" . . . an individual is to himself just what he thinks he is, and he is in his belief sick. If I believe I am sick, I am sick, for my feelings are my sicknesses, and my belief in my mind." Horatio W. Dresser, ed., The Quimby Manuscripts (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1921), 186. (underlining mine).

"When the material mind entertains an idea of dis-ease and communicates it to the spirit, the erroneous thought initiates a disharmony causing the spirit to form disease, after the form the spirit gives the mind." Manuscripts, 812 (underlining mine).

" . . . when people are educated to understand that what they believe they will create, they will cease believing what the medical men say . . ." Manuscripts, 263 (underlining mine).

"The reason they are not getting healed is that they are thinking wrong." Thinking, 19. " . . . nothing shall be impossible to you if you think right, believe right and confess right." Thinking, 23 (underlining mine).

"The real man is spirit which operates through the mind which in turn operates through the body." Redeemed, 24 (underlining mine).

"Your right confession will become a reality, and then you will get whatever you need from God." Thinking, 32. "Faith's confessions create reality." How, 23 (underlining mine).

From these quotations, one can observe the similarity of thought.

It may also be observed that Quimby began the concepts of right thinking and right believing. It was not until Warren F. Evans that affirmations (positive confessions) began to be used.

Warren F. Evans

Warren F. Evans and Mary Baker Glover Patterson (later Mary Baker Eddy) were among several who sought healing from P. P. Quimby. These two people, along with Annetta G. Seabury and Julius A Dresser, were responsible for the spread of Quimby's ideas and methods. All had claimed

to have been healed by his methods. Evans, like Quimby, related correct thinking and believing to healing. In The Divine Law of Cure (1881), he says, ". . . our bodily condition is the result of our thinking." If we desire a better condition, "let us imagine, or think or believe, that the desired change is being effected, and it will do more than all other remedial agencies to bring about the wished for result."⁶⁰

To the concepts of thinking and believing is added a new doctrine: "With Evans begins the New Thought reliance upon affirmative prayer or positive thinking - the affirmation of the condition desired."⁶¹ Evans asserts that the patient must not talk of his trouble and his diseased condition for "to express a feeling in words intensifies it."⁶² His advice for a headache:

Suggest to yourself that it is gone or is leaving you, and it will be instantly relieved . . . whatever you suggest and will and believe is at once done. The body obeys the slightest hint of the sovereign mind . . . If you will any change to be effected, and believe it, it is certain to be so, for the whole system now comes under the law of faith . . . You are not called upon to exercise a blind faith, but an intelligent confidence in the operation of the divine laws of nature.⁶³

So in Evans one observes the concepts of correct thinking, believing and confessing. These writings occurred in 1881.

Henry Wood

Henry Wood (1834-1908) spread New Thought by publicity and gave it a rational expression. Wood appealed to common sense and avoided theological terms. He was clear, simple, direct and practical which attracted many people to his writings.⁶⁴ Concerning correct thinking Wood says, "Select thoughts of harmony, love, good-will, health, purity, and beauty, and just in proportion as you hold them they will displace and crowd out their opposites. You thus command the situation if you will . . . Just think of

creating your own world! The chief cause why our bodies give us so much trouble is that they have been dishonored in thought."⁶⁵ Wood further teaches that Mk. 11:24 states the principle that "Demand is the proof of supply already in store but faith is the vital element which makes it consciously ours."⁶⁶ Wood includes twelve suggestive lessons in one of his books which are examples of positive affirmations. A few examples will serve to show the extent to which this doctrine developed under him: "Nothing in the universe can injure me but my own false and mistaken thinking."⁶⁷ "I deny the slavery of sense. I repudiate the bondage of matter . . . We are transformed by the renewing of our mind."⁶⁸ "The Word which is within, I speak to externals . . . I rule my bodily conditions."⁶⁹ "I heal and am healed . . . I affirm peace, healing and love."⁷⁰ "I am building the world in which I must live."⁷¹

Other Writers

Ralph Waldo Trine was one of the most widely read New Thought writers. In his book, In Tune with the Infinite, he states, "The law of correspondence between spiritual and material things is wonderfully exact in its workings. People ruled by the mood of gloom attract to them . . . Rags, tatters, and dirt are always in the mind before being on the body."⁷² Thus, poverty is due to wrong thinking.

Claude M. Bristol, in The Magic of Believing states, "What you exhibit outwardly, you are inwardly. You are the product of your own thought. What you believe yourself to be, you are."⁷³ Bristol also uses affirmations: "If you are unhappy, use the words, I am happy . . . repeat it to yourself twenty or thirty times . . . I am strong . . . I am happy . . . I am convincing, I am friendly . . . Everything is fine . . . are a few simple

affirmations you can use to change your mental point of view for the better."⁷⁴

The examination of New Thought has served to show that the concepts of right thinking, believing and affirming (confessing) are the methods used to create conditions of health and wealth. These concepts originated with P.P. Quimby (about 1838) and gradually developed into a full written doctrine in 1916.⁷⁵

Since Christian Science and the Unity School of Christianity were both results of New Thought, they will now be examined to observe the same concepts of correct thinking, believing and confessing for the desired results of health and wealth. The examination here will be briefer than that of New Thought.

IV. CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Background

Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) suffered from a spinal weakness. This caused her to seek healing from P. P. Quimby who was at that time in Portland, Maine. She did so in 1862 and claimed to be healed. She spent much time with him, discussing his doctrines and methods, after which she would write down her conclusions. P. P. Quimby received praise from Mrs. Eddy until she began to form the teaching which took embodiment in what came to be the "Bible" of Christian Scientists.⁷⁶ Though she first attributed her teaching to Mr. Quimby, she later denounced him as her source and claimed revelation. Walter Martin has shown that Mrs. Eddy plagiarized P. P. Quimby and Francis Lieber, the German-American authority on the philosophy of Hegel.⁷⁷

Doctrine

Mrs. Eddy's teaching show that there are four things that she denies: matter, evil and sin, disease and death. In Miscellaneous Writings she says, "Here also is found the pith of the basal statement, the cardinal point in Christian Science, that matter and evil (including all inharmony, sin, disease, death) are unreal."⁷⁸ Along with New Thought she sees the cause of disease as mental: "The cause of all so-called disease is mental, a mortal fear, a mistaken belief or conviction of the necessity and power of ill-health."⁷⁹ Thus, if one is sick his thinking is incorrect. The denial of reality comes into full expression in regards to sickness: "The sick

unconsciously argue for suffering, instead of against it. They admit its reality, whereas they should deny it."⁸⁰ A comparison between Christian Science and the charismatic teaching will serve to show that both deny the physical.

Mary Baker Eddy

"The evidence of the senses is not to be accepted in the case of sickness" Health, p. 386 (underlining mine).

"Our senses are deceitful and false; they defraud and lie." Health, pp. 395, 489, (underlining mine).

"When what we erroneously term the five physical senses are misdirected, they are simply the manifested beliefs of mortal mind, which affirm that life, substance, and intelligence are material, instead of spiritual. These false beliefs and their products constitute the flesh, and the flesh wars against the Spirit." Health, p. 274 (underlining mine).

"The efficient remedy is to destroy the patient's false belief by both silently and audibly arguing the true facts in regard to harmonious being, representing man as healthy instead of diseased" Quoted in Truth, Snowden, p. 129 (underlining mine).

"When the first symptoms of disease appear, dispute the testimony of the material senses with divine Science." Ibid, (underlining mine).

Kenneth Hagin

"It is a mistake to start looking at your body to see if you are healed." Key, p. 30 (underlining mine).

"The physical is true only so long as it does not contradict the Bible." Real, p. 5 (underlining mine).

"The body is not the real you but the house you live in." Ibid, p. 14. "The real man is spirit which operates through the soul which in turn operates through the body." Redeemed, p. 24 (underlining mine).

"Start saying, 'According to His Word, I am healed.' If someone asks you how you are feeling, instead of getting in the natural with them and answering according to the natural, answer according to the Word." Real, p. 26 (underlining mine).

"A person should look to God's Word, not to his symptoms." Ibid, p. 13 (underlining mine).

It can be observed here that both Eddy and Hagin teach the denial of reality, call sickness a symptom and affirm health (which is not actually there). However, Mrs. Eddy was writing in 1875.

When compared with the NT both systems are found deficient. Jesus Christ never told the sick to deny their sickness; neither did he ever call sickness a symptom. Furthermore, to deny the senses is to deny reality. God created the mind and the senses, not to deceive one, but to inform a person of reality. To deny reality then, is to say that what God has created is not trustworthy. To deny sickness and pain is to deny one of the purposes for which the senses were given - to inform one when sickness and pain is present.

The Unity School of Christianity will now be observed. The examination will show its emphasis on prosperity and healing with a well-developed doctrine of positive confession.

V. THE UNITY SCHOOL OF CHRISTIANITY

Background

The Unity School of Christianity is an offspring of Christian Science although it later came closer in doctrine to New Thought. In 1887, J. S. Thatcher founded a School of Christian Science in Kansas City, Missouri. Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, founders of Unity, were members of the first class, taught by Eugene B. Weeks. Since Mrs. Fillmore had tuberculosis they went to hear one of her lectures.⁸¹ Although her husband was not impressed, Myrtle Fillmore saw it as a great turning point in her life. She said that one sentence that Weeks stated came to her as true revelation: "I am a child of God, and therefore I do not inherit sickness."⁸² She went home repeating the statement and she claimed this was the beginning of her healing. She embraced Christian Science in 1887 and her husband was later likewise convinced in 1890.

Mrs. Emma Hopkins a Christian Scientist who had some disagreement with Mrs. Eddy, founded the Christian Science Theological Seminary in which Charles Fillmore was ordained in December, 1890. Mrs. Eddy's attempt at authoritarian control caused the Fillmores to leave Christian Science and begin their own movement.⁸³ On December 7, 1892, the Fillmores dedicated themselves to the Society of Silent Unity, known later as the Unity School of Christianity.⁸⁴

Doctrine

The basic presuppositions of Unity are the same as the charismatic teaching: God is used to get things. Charles Fillmore says, ". . . You cannot use God too often. He loves to be used, and the more you use Him, the more easily you use Him and the more pleasant His help becomes"85

Health is also to be expected. Fillmore maintains that the only reason people are sick is because of their sins or failure to adjust their minds to the Divine Mind.⁸⁶

Prosperity is also held as a basic presupposition. This is observed in Fillmore's rendition of Psalm 23:

The Lord is my banker; my credit is good.
 He maketh me to lie down in the consciousness of omnipresent abundance;
 He giveth me the key to His strong box.
 He restoreth my faith in His riches:
 He guideth me in the paths of prosperity for His name's sake.
 Yea, though I walk in the very shadow of debt,
 I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me;
 Thou preparest a way for me in the presence of the collector;
 Thou fillest my wallet with plenty; my measure runneth over.
 Surely goodness and plenty will follow me all the days of my life,
 And I shall do business in the name of the Lord forever.⁸⁷

Health and wealth are to be obtained by specific affirmations (confessions) and denials: "Do not say that money is scarce; the very statement will scare money away from you. Do not say that times are hard with you; the very words will tighten your purse strings until Omnipotence itself cannot slip a dime into it. Begin now to talk plenty, think plenty, and give thanks for plenty."⁸⁸

The doctrine of correct thinking is also asserted: "Thinking is formative - every thought clothes itself in a life form according to the character given it by the thinker. This being true, it must follow that thoughts of health will produce microbes to build up healthy organisms,

that thoughts of disease will produce microbes of disorder and destruction."⁸⁹

Emilie H. Cady

Emilie Cady, a homeopathic physician, wrote the basic textbook for Unity at the request of the Fillmores. She believes that people think wrong because their five senses have misinformed them and that our troubles and sorrows are results of false thinking.⁹⁰

She maintains, in regards to affirmations, that "To affirm anything is to assert positively that it is so, even in the face of all contrary evidence."⁹¹ She uses Mk. 11:24, as does Hagin, to support her use of affirmations. "Deny evil; affirm good. Deny weakness; affirm strength. Deny any undesirable condition, and affirm the good you desire. This is what Jesus meant when He said, 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe (or claim and affirm) that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.'"⁹² She further maintains that if one practices denials and affirmations it will give him a strange mastery over external things and over one's self.⁹³

Myrtle Fillmore

Myrtle Fillmore describes her healing as a result of correct thinking: "It was a change of mind from the old, carnal mind that believes in sickness to the Christ mind of life and permanent health. Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. As he thinketh within himself, so he is."⁹⁴ Healing comes from the right mental attitude, and "getting right down into the body and telling it the truth."⁹⁵

She also uses denials and affirmations: The "secret or our power to help others lies in our refusing to be moved by the appearances and the apparent lacks that are reported to us, and in our standing steadfastly

holding to the truth of being and declaring the working out of the constructive thoughts and words we have sent forth"96

Concerning affirmations, she says that one is to know that the Word of God is in one's mouth and heart. She says, " . . . speak the words of Truth with joy, and power, and love. Expect your words spoken and sung to bring results. Weed out all the destructive negative thoughts and words and tones."97

Lowell Fillmore

Lowell Fillmore, one of Charles Fillmore's sons, continued to teach Unity doctrine. He also believes in the concept of symptoms and attempts to explain why it is not lying:

You are not telling a falsehood when you say, "I am well," when the facts seem to be that you are sick; for you are speaking of your true spiritual self when you say you are well. By sticking to this spiritual truth you will produce a healing effect in your body, because the Spirit you are dealing with causes, and in the material with effects only.⁹⁸

Faith is used with affirmations to obtain results. Lowell says that faith clothes ideas with substance and that it is like a magic wand - if one has faith he can speak the word and the sick are healed and the poor are prospered.⁹⁹

He maintains the doctrine of affirmations: "An affirmation becomes powerful by repetition. It accumulates power by being said over and over . . . You can effectively use affirmations for health, prosperity, success, inspiration, and everything that is needed."¹⁰⁰ For health, one should say, "God is my health. I can't be sick."¹⁰¹ For prosperity, the affirmation would be, "I am prosperous because my heavenly father is rich."¹⁰²

It is concluded here that Unity uses correct thinking, correct belief and affirmations to obtain health and material prosperity.

VI. POSITIVE CONFESSION - A CULTIC CONCEPT

It has been demonstrated that the doctrine of positive confession originated in the mind-healing cults of the 19th century. Beginning with P. P. Quimby in 1838, the concept of correct thinking for healing began, along with a Gnostic dualism which placed the spiritual against the physical. He also developed the concept that one can create what one believes.¹⁰³

Beginning with Warren F. Evans, the doctrine of affirmation or confession emerges. It was the logical outcome of Quimby's teaching on correct thinking. If one thinks and believes one is not sick, then one should say so. He maintained that a person must not talk negatively but should say that the sickness is gone.¹⁰⁴ This statement occurred in 1881. The concept of affirmation then grew and developed in other New Thought writers as Henry Wood, Julius Dresser, and Charles Ferguson.

Mary Baker Eddy took Quimby's concepts and developed an extensive doctrine of the denial of reality. Along with this she added the concept of seeing disease and sickness as only symptoms and used affirmations as a means of obtaining healing.¹⁰⁵ Science and Health was printed in 1885.

The Unity School of Christianity developed from Christian Science but soon took a form closer to New Thought. It was established in 1892 by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. In it one finds a fully developed doctrine of affirmations and denials which can be observed in the writings of Charles Fillmore, Myrtle Fillmore, Lowell Fillmore and Emilie Cady.

Lowell Fillmore demonstrates this well when he says, "You can effectively use affirmations for health, prosperity, success, inspiration and everything that is needed."¹⁰⁶

A very important point needs to be made here: the doctrines of positive thinking and believing, accompanied by a positive confession, with the result of calling sickness a symptom (denial of reality supported by a Gnostic dualism) are not found in Christian writings until after New Thought and its offspring had begun to develop them.¹⁰⁷

Therefore, it is not unreasonable to state that these doctrines originated and developed in these cults and at some point in time was later absorbed by Christians in their quest to develop a healing ministry.

VII. THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH TO THE HEALTH AND WEALTH GOSPEL

The health and wealth gospel has provoked several responses from those within the pentecostal and charismatic movements as well as from wider evangelical circles. Several have pointed out the cultic origins of these teachings.

James S. Tinney, in an article titled, "The Prosperity Doctrine: An Accretion to Black Pentecostalism," has stated that the prosperity doctrine is (1) imprecise in definition, (2) heretical in origin, (3) unscriptural in exposition, and (4) regressive in terms of political economics.¹⁰⁸ More specifically, he maintains that the health and wealth teaching originated in anti-Christian and heretical surroundings, stemming mostly from Christian Science and Unity. Concerning the incorporation of these teachings into Christian circles, he states:

The entrance of the doctrine of prosperity into Pentecostalism came via the fringe elements and independent 'healing and miracle' and 'deliverance' evangelists who incorporated metaphysicist (and specifically Unity and Christian Science) doctrines into the traditional Pentecostal understanding of healing. This was done at a time when the 'healing and miracle' revivalists were being rejected by the major classical Pentecostal denominations primarily because of alleged internal abuses, growing negative publicity, and moral lapses and defections.¹⁰⁹

As a whole, Tinney presents the prosperity doctrine as a cultural theology, perpetuated by the American capitalist impulse to have more; he is quick to note its degrading effect upon the poor and its misrepresentation of Jesus Christ and Biblical Christianity. He asserts that there is a sinister element to the teaching, for it appeals to the carnal, selfish

nature of humanity.¹¹⁰

Antonio Barbosa da Silva, writing in Themelios, in an article titled, "The 'Theology of Success' Movement: A Comment," states the movement owes its origin to Norman Vincent Peale, Kenneth E. Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Robert H. Schuller, Paul Yonggi Cho, E.W. Kenyon, Jim Casemann, Ulf Epman (from Sweden) and Hans Braterud (from Norway). He maintains that the ideological roots are to be found in the optimistic anthropology preached by the so-called New Age movement and the positive thinking psychology of Carl Rogers and Roberto Assagioli.¹¹¹ He concludes that this movement represents a subtly attractive, but dangerous distortion of Christian truth.¹¹²

The fact that da Silva refers to Peale and Schuller should not surprise evangelicals. Peale knowingly uses New Thought concepts. He quotes such New Thought writers as Ralph Waldo Trine who said, "Never affirm or repeat about your health (or circumstances) what you do not wish to be true . . . Stoutly affirm your superiority over bodily ills (or problems).¹¹³ In a telephone conversation with him, Charles Braden confirmed that Peale not only has read New Thought writers but has worked out his own system of thinking and a method based on a variety of religious viewpoints.¹¹⁴ Peale once used visualization and affirmation as methods to receive healing for an earache.¹¹⁵

Robert Schuller endorses Peale's books and also employs similar concepts. He states that, "Positive Affirmations Produce Positive Rhythms" and one is to "never verbalize a negative emotion."¹¹⁶ To receive Christ, Schuller says one should pray: "Jesus Christ, come into my life . . . I believe you are coming into me now in the form of God-filled ideas."¹¹⁷ Schuller also teaches prosperity, maintaining that, "You Can Earn More Money Than You Think You Can. You Will Attract Money When You Fill a Vital

Need. It Always Pays to Serve. You Can Get the Money If You Dare To Ask For It."¹¹⁸

Another significant name given by da Silva is Paul Yonggi Cho, pastor of the largest church in the world in Seoul, Korea, and affiliated with the Assemblies of God. He is a frequent speaker in church growth conferences in America. Cho asserts that if one keeps saying he is poor he will attract poverty, but the opposite will occur if one says one can achieve success. A person is to speak the words of the Bible, the word of faith, to feed the nervous system with constructive words. If one repeats these words they will control the whole body. But he goes even further when he says, "Jesus is bound by what you speak. As you release Jesus' power through your spoken word, you also create the presence of Christ. You create the presence of Jesus with your spoken word."¹¹⁹

The most important name referred to by da Silva is E. W. Kenyon who will be discussed below.

In his book, The Wall Street Gospel, Joe Magliato also notes that the roots of the positive and negative confession teaching are imbedded in the soil of the mind sciences.¹²⁰

The theology of success movement as well as the health and wealth gospel has been addressed by evangelicals. Eternity Magazine responded with articles by Stephen Board, "Is Faith a High Wire Act?" and by Cynthia Schaible, "The Gospel of the Good Life," in which she critiques Zig Ziglar and Richard DeVos.¹²² Kenneth S. Kantzer briefly addresses the issue in an article in Christianity Today, "The Cut-Rate Grace of a Health and Wealth Gospel."¹²³ David Neff, also writing in Christianity Today, briefly addresses the issue of greed in the article "Drunk on Money."¹²⁴

The late Walter Martin addressed the issue in two tapes, "The Errors

of Positive Confession," and "Healing: Does God Always Heal?"¹²⁵ and in his Newsletter in a response titled, "Growing Dangers in the Positive Confession Faith Teachings."¹²⁶

But the most penetrating and exposing evaluations of the theology and origins of this movement have come from within the pentecostal and charismatic circles. A literal explosion of articles, theses and books is probably the result of confronting the teachings and its results upon people firsthand. Some of the more prominent responses will be noted.¹²⁷

Noted scholar, Gordon Fee, has dealt with the exegetical and interpretive errors of the health and wealth teaching in two articles: "The Cult of Prosperity"¹²⁸ and "The Gospel of Perfect Health."¹²⁹ In the 1980 meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies at Oral Roberts University, Charles Farah, ORU professor, delivered a paper titled, "The 'Roots' and 'Fruits' of Faith-Formula Theology." He traced the teaching in Christian circles back to E. W. Kenyon, among others, found Gnostic elements within the movement, states that the movement is an example of the idolization of the American concept of success and concludes that the teaching should be viewed as a burgeoning heresy.¹³⁰ He has also responded in book¹³¹ and article form.¹³²

In spite of deficiencies in other areas, Dave Hunt has well-documented the theology of the health and wealth teachers and the mind-science roots of their teachings in The Seduction of Christianity¹³³ and Beyond Seduction and their linkage to Christianity in the person of E. W. Kenyon.¹³⁴

The Assemblies of God responded in an official position paper on the subject¹³⁵ and in several articles and papers.¹³⁶

Taken together, all this data does demonstrate that these doctrines existed in the 19th century mind-healing cults prior to appearing in

Christian writers. The charge of "guilt by association" might be levelled against these studies if it were not for the work of Daniel R. McConnell and Judith A. Matta.

McConnell has demonstrated, in his MA thesis, "The Kenyon Connection: A Theological and Historical Analysis of the Cultic Origins of the Faith Movement,"¹³⁷ and in his book, A Different Gospel- A Historical and Biblical Analysis of the Faith Movement,¹³⁸ that the cultic teachings entered the Church in the person of E. W. Kenyon.¹³⁹ McConnell refers to this writer's work as the first to demonstrate parallels between the charismatic teaching and the mind-healing cults,¹⁴⁰ and to Judith Matta's work for showing Charles Wesley Emerson's connection to Christian Science.¹⁴¹ But it is McConnell who has demonstrated the specific linkage between these cults and Christianity. The metaphysical environment of Emerson College of Oratory, where Kenyon attended, not only taught oratory but New Thought concepts. According to his friends, E. W. Kenyon freely admitted that he was heavily influenced by metaphysical thought and McConnell provides documentation of the metaphysical cults in Kenyon's writings.¹⁴² Kenyon is aware of these parallels in his writings, disclaims any similarities with the cultic teaching on a particular topic, and then proceeds to teach exactly what the metaphysical cults.¹⁴³ Kenneth Hagin does the same thing.¹⁴⁴ McConnell demonstrates from Kenyon's writings, that Kenyon in fact has incorporated the mind-science teachings into his doctrine of healing. Kenyon's syncretism of the various metaphysical cults, according to McConnell, is precisely what makes him a threat to the Church.¹⁴⁵

One further question needs to be answered, "How did Kenyon's writings find their way into the health and wealth movement?" McConnell has shown that Kenneth Hagin has plagiarized E. W. Kenyon, not only in concepts, but

in words. Abundant evidence is provided for this word-for-word plagiarism.¹⁴⁶ Hagin's theology has largely influenced the charismatic and pentecostal movements. Hagin's Bible Training Institute has graduated about 6,600 students since 1974. His 126 books and pamphlets have sold 33 million copies.¹⁴⁷ This does not take into account the daily and weekly television broadcasts via satellite and the tapes available by mail. The influence of the health and wealth movement is international in scope. McConnell's work remains the definitive statement on this movement.

Judith Matta has also traced the health and wealth theology to the mind-healing cults via Kenyon to Hagin.¹⁴⁸ But she has gone a step further. Matta has investigated the Christology of the Word-Faith teaching and concludes with the following summary of their doctrine: That Jesus was obedient to death and to the creator of death, Satan, thereby creating a new satanic nature in Jesus' soul and spirit.¹⁴⁹ In their concept of atonement, the health and wealth teachers contend that redemption was not finished on the cross, that Jesus became literal "sin," suffered three days and nights in hell, died physically and spiritually, and became a born-again man, just as those since him have become born-again men.¹⁵⁰ Not only that, they also teach that Jesus came to earth as a man, not taking the nature of God in his divine power, not operating in divine power, but by the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit available to Christians.¹⁵¹ This recurrence of the ancient Ebionite view of Christ goes further when it asserts that Christians are now God-like, having the nature of God and the ability of God, the believer is described as much as an incarnation as was Jesus.¹⁵² The source of this teaching is traced to E. W. Kenyon. Matta's entire book is devoted to demonstrating the cultic origins of the health and wealth gospel and its doctrinal parallels to ancient Gnosticism.

CONCLUSION

In view of the fact of the cultic origins of the health and wealth gospel, its heretical Christology, its devastating effects on human lives and the false portrayal of Christianity it presents to the world, this paper is a call to the wider evangelical community to also engage in an apologetic that will distinguish the gospel of Jesus Christ from those who indeed propagate a "different gospel." 153

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3. Idem, How to Turn Your Faith Loose (Tulsa: Faith Library Publications, 1979), 17.
4. Idem, Seven, 24.
5. Idem, What Faith Is (Tulsa: Faith Library Publications, 1976), 3.
6. Idem, How, 3.
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8. Ibid., 12, 17.
9. Ibid., 12.
10. Ibid., 23.
11. Idem, Right and Wrong Thinking (Tulsa: Faith Library Publications, 1979), 9.
12. Ibid., 21.
13. Ibid., 32.
14. Idem, How, 23.
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16. Idem, The Real Faith (Tulsa: publisher not given, n.d.), 5.
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18. Ibid., 14.
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22. Idem, How, 24.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., 29.
25. Idem, Key, 30.
26. Idem, Seven, 71.
27. Idem, Thinking, 20.
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41. Judah, Metaphysical, 14.
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52. Ellwood, Religious, 79.
53. Ibid., 79,80.
54. Charles S. Braden, Spirits in Rebellion - The Rise and Development of New Thought (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1963), 44 ff.
55. Ibid., 51.
56. Ibid., 52.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid., 54.
59. Ibid., 89.
60. Ibid., 101,174.
61. Judah, Metaphysical, 167.
62. Quoted in Braden, Spirits, 121.
63. Ibid., 119.
64. Ibid., 154-156.
65. Henry Wood, The New Thought Simplified (Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1903), 21,22.
66. Ibid., 108.
67. Ibid., 175.
68. Ibid., 178-179.
69. Ibid., 180-181.

70. Ibid., 186-187.
71. Ibid., 189.
72. Quoted in Martin, Cults, 146.
73. Braden, Spirits, 369,370.
74. Ibid., 371.
75. Quoted in Charles S. Braden, These Also Believe (New York: MacMillan Co., 1949), 136,137.
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99. Ibid., 24.
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101. Ibid., 31.
102. Ibid., 123.
103. Horatio W. Dresser, ed., The Quimby Manuscripts (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1921), 263.
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120. Joe Magliato, The Wall Street Gospel (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1981), 107.
121. Stephen Board, "Is Faith a High Wire Act?" Eternity, July-August 1981, 12-16.
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141. McConnell, "Kenyon Connection," v.

142. Idem, Different, 42,43 ff. but especially Chapter Two, "The Cultic Origins of the Faith Movement" and Chapter Three, "The Kenyon Connection."

143. Ibid., 45.

144. Ibid., 15.

145. Ibid., 50. Reference should be made here to Bruce Barron, The Health and Wealth Gospel (Downers Grove: IVP, 1987), who does not perceive the real danger of this movement. Any valid criticisms Barron makes is negated by his out of context quote of "Let him who is without sin cast the forst stone" (170). McConnell demonstrates that Barron's historical analysis of the health and wealth movement fails at several major points, especially that it has multiple sources within Pentecostalism; see Different, 22-24.

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