

# THE PRAYER CIRCLE: WHAT IS ITS UNBIBLICAL ORIGIN?

This idea is largely accepted in Adventism today; most don't even question it—but how did it get there? Seems friendly; seems to promote togetherness; BUT what is this child of witchcraft and spiritualism doing among us?

## **Part One: The Extent of Prayer Circles In Today's World** **By Ed Tarkowski**

[All footnotes listing a URL in this series are listed as of 7-31-98 and may have changed since then.]

PRAYER CIRCLES: Tools of Empowering Intimacy/Accountability Groups

Have you ever been in a circle of prayer in a Christian meeting and something bothered you about it? Your agitation in spirit is well-justified, and you should have felt bothered. A while ago, I started digging into what it is that energizes these prayer circles, and what it is about them that leads people into the bondage of Shepherding/Intimacy/Accountability/Community situations. As I dug, I asked myself, "Where did prayer circles start? Who uses them? What do they all have in common?" What I came to see shocked me, and it will shock you, because what I realized is that prayer circles are related to witches' circles.

I have real experience with prayer circles. We used them as a Christian practice in the old days of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, when we, and most other Charismatic groups, were gathered into communities. In our community, we had it all - prayer circles, intimacy, accountability, the unity of the parts of the body based on 1 Corinthians 12 - all of it, and we believed that these things were of God. We were even called the Light of the World Community. Eventually, we were "led" into buying land for ministry buildings and group housing, but before they could be built, the community fell.

What was the source of the power that led our whole community off in the wrong direction? It wasn't until long after that I realized it was the prayer circles. Prayer circles look spiritual, they sound spiritual, and they feel good, but their use is an inspiration of spirits not of God. I am not saying this through discernment alone. Like I said, I've been through it, and in fact, helped people get out of our community when God finally judged it. It was sort of like the angels leading Lot out before God's judgement fell on Sodom. In this case, there wasn't any visible fire and brimstone, but in the end, hundreds of people's spiritual lives were greatly harmed.

The prayer circle, and what it leads to, has spread like wild fire since the early "outpouring of the Spirit" in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. It's become very popular in most denominations and groups, but it's also the one common ritual used by spirits to initiate and nurture the apostasy in today's church, through a sense of love, joy, peace, intimacy, compassion and the need for accountability.

Prayer circles are everywhere, but we need to take a serious look at exactly where and how they are being used. For instance, in the manipulative Promise Keepers Washington gathering, which had a strong flavor of unity and accountability, prayer circles were center-circle (no pun intended), and I believe they were used to energize the unity-consciousness of all present. Look at the following quote:

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"Stand in the Gap: A Sacred Assembly of Men' wasn't scheduled to start until noon. But when I arrived on the Washington Mall a little after midnight on the morning of October 4th, the first prayer circles had already started. Early arrivers were camped by the center stage that had been erected in front of the U.S. Capitol Building. The participants huddled close together, bowing their heads forward and raising their palms in the air. As with everything else in Promise Keepers, this circle was composed entirely of men. 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,' they sang in unison over and over again. 'I've decided to give my life to Jesus.'"(1)

Sound Christian? Look Christian? Absolutely, but really following the same Catholic pattern from the 1960's and 70's Catholic/Protestant ecumenical prayer meetings held in the early days of "God's" outpouring of love "for the sake of a manifested unity." Here is another innocent-sounding quote from a promise-keeping group:

"Another thing we have done every week is to pray for one another; for our families; for specific needs of the men, especially in areas of personal integrity; for the church and its leaders; and for the leaders of our country. Our prayer time has been powerful. We have stood holding hands in a circle on the front porch of the host's home, praying together boldly and unashamedly."(2)

Sound good? Absolutely. Accountability - Intimacy - Between men, families, and denominations - Based on Jesus! Well, wait a minute on that last one. As it was back in the old Charismatic, ecumenical prayer meeting days, so it is now: spirits not of God are energizing these prayer circles to bring people into a Shepherding/Intimacy/Accountability/Community situation. What will this eventually lead to in the end? I believe it will be a fallen church ripe for control by the world system.

I say this because prayer circles are not relegated to small accountability groups. There is a current move to link all of these small groups into a Global Prayer Circle for the sake of demonstrating unity in "Jesus" throughout the world. Christians may think that this unity would concern Christianity alone, but it does not. What is in view is all the religions of the world participating in a unified prayer circle formed around the globe. Because prayer circles are where the demon of power is based, they will be one of the energizing tools used to maintain control and bring in the final evolution of this beast, a world church. The intimate sharing of small prayer groups will turn into Big Brother knowing all about each member. Groups will be shepherded into a global community living under a system of controlled accountability to man. The New Age consciousness of unity in diversity, as well as peace based not on God's word, but on a universal set of values, will finally be realized by this global entity.

If you doubt that prayer circles are so widespread, or such a powerful tool, read the list below of just a few of the examples of prayer circles that I found on the World Wide Web. Besides these sites, there are numerous New Age and Christian Chat Sessions (used by Internet users to discuss various topics) that include prayer circles or discussions about them. As you will see, the circles are prevalent in the apostate church, the New Age, and even in the secular world. The whole world is being prepared to welcome the arrival of the Beast of Revelation 13, and to follow after him.

### Prayer Circles Abound In All Areas Of Life

You'll notice the first examples are of prayer circles being used for whole communities, where illumination is brought to participating individuals in order to release healing power TAPPED from the supernatural realm. Also, notice these other points: (1) many of those involved in these circles of prayer go on to spread them from a local level to the global. (2) many of the quotes refer to the desirability of Shepherding, Intimacy, Accountability, and Community. The evident fact: prayer circles are escalating in today's world.

### Some Examples Of Prayer Circles In Today's World

## Prayer Circles

### #1 PRAYER CIRCLE: New Age/Christian mix(3) COMMUNITY PRAYER AND ILLUMINATION CIRCLES [Linking PRAYER CIRCLES worldwide]

"Share the Power of Prayer. . . Everywhere. "The Prayer Ministry

"Welcome to our [Web]site of love, vision, healing, wholeness, peace and compassion. We are a virtual spiritual community of people who intend to "make prayer the first resort . . . not the last". "We intend to take prayer practice through and beyond church walls into all aspects of community life. "We create worldwide awareness that the practice of prayer in all its sacred expressions is the very fabric of our everyday lives. "We are a wholly inclusive organization; Interfaith, no faith, scientific, philosophical, and beyond denominational. We simply 'Share the Power of Prayer. . . Everywhere' . . . ."

[On this ministry's PRAYER CIRCLE Page is the following invitation:]

"Community PRAYER And Illumination CIRCLES . . .

"Join an amazing circle of people who LOVE to pray for ourselves, our families, our world. Pray your own way--word, song, movement, silence. Tap the healing power of prayer: the peace that passes understanding. . . .

"PRAYER CIRCLE Schedule. . . .

### #2 PRAYER CIRCLE: Christian(4) Heaven Wonders Prayer Warrior Network [Linking Prayer Circles worldwide]

"Be A Prayer Warrior!

"Here at Heavenly Wonders, we know that just living day to day is difficult. . . Many people are lonely, filled with despair, and don't know which way to turn or who to turn to. . . Well... WE CARE ! We have faith in God and trust in His WORD. Most importantly,...

"We believe in the power of Prayer!

"That is why we have banded together and formed the 'Prayer Warriors Network .' God has said,'there is strength in numbers' and 'to pray one for another.' We want you to know the [sic] we care about you and we will pray for you. If you have a need, share it with us. . . . These requests will be gathered together and passed on to others in the LINKING CIRCLE of the Prayer Warriors network. . . As we update this page, we want to encourage you to pass these needs along, combine them in your own PRAYER CIRCLES, to form a world wide network of Prayer Warriors! . . . "

### #3 PRAYER CIRCLE: Marian(5) Mary information diverse, widespread By Michelle Bearden of The Tampa Tribune 5/12/97 -- 9:18 PM

". . . . [Rev. Tom Thompson, Univ. of Dayton Marian Library] has another theory that could explain why Mary is taking center stage: "'She is a person who is related to all members of the church,' Thompson says. 'She never stands in isolation; she never stands alone. In this fragmented decade of the '90s, we're looking to form communities again.' "Amen, says Carol Marquardt of Bellair. She's the founder of Mantle of Mary, a Tampa Bay area association that encourages a strong prayer life in small-group settings. "The association's philosophy is shared around the world by similar organizations, commonly known as MARIAN PRAYER CIRCLES. . . . "'Because we pray to Mary, people think we're worshiping her,' Marquardt says. 'That's not true. We admire her in the most holy and high way. She's the one who is leading us to Christ.' . . ."

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### #4 PRAYER CIRCLE: New Age(6)

Guest Channeler: Rev. Mary's Channeled Earth Changes Report

"Preparing, Surviving and Sustaining The Coming Earth Changes:

"The earth changes that are coming to this world also have a corresponding link with internal changes that will be taking place in each and every person. . . . "We are going to address how to prepare, sustain, and survive these internal changes that are and will be going on simultaneously with the external changes.

"Preparation: . . . .

"There will be times when people will just have to stay inside in the shelter of their homes. Then, they can help each other and their families and their neighbors, plus the people walking through the hard times, through the disaster times, by forming PRAYER CIRCLES OF LIGHT AND LOVE, sending energies, and prayers and Light and Love out of the group to the affected areas. "People can begin to organize now; this is part of the survival. They can begin to organize these groups and if they live in a close proximity to each other, that is good. They can do it that way, or they can have a telephone prayer line, but groups in person are the best. They can begin discussions on how to set up THESE PRAYER GROUPS now. These Light Workers, these prayer and meditation workers can send out the Light and the Love to the troubled areas. This is how they can organize. Then, when a disaster strikes, the people can come together and pray and send Light and Love as a group, to pray from the heart, to pray with High and Holy Intentions to help."

### #5 PRAYER CIRCLE: Methodist(7)

Thursday, August 7, 1997

Saved: Heart stops, but not the prayers

By Tim Bonfield The Cincinnati Enquirer (AP)

"Richard Thomas, pastor of the Milford First United Methodist Church, where Mr. and Mrs. Downs have been members for years, recently told their story as part of a sermon about the mysteries of faith and the power of prayer. "'We believe that God works through doctors and nurses. We also believe that the power of prayer and faith is a real tool in healing,' the Rev. Mr. Thomas said. "The PRAYER CIRCLES working for Mrs. Downs were extensive. . . . "Away from the hospital, other church members prayed for Mrs. Downs. In Northside, five neighbors joined Mr. Downs' brother-in-law in a PRAYER CIRCLE. . . ."

### #6 PRAYER CIRCLE: University Of Notre Dame(8)

Notre Dame News: Taize Community

University of Notre Dame Public Relations and Information

"The 1996 Notre Dame Award for international humanitarian service will be given to Brother Roger, the founder and prior of the ecumenical Taizé Community in eastern France. . . . "The earliest ministry of the Taizé community was hospitality, . . . Following the war, the growing Taizé community sent several members into Eastern Europe to establish surreptitious PRAYER CIRCLES among young Catholics in Poland and young Protestants in East Germany. In 1949 several of the community's members formally committed themselves to a rigorously monastic life of vowed celibacy and communal stability, and three years later, Brother Roger wrote a rule for the community. "The life of the community centers around prayer work and hospitality. Its white-robed monks never preach to their guests, insisting that their role is to live together as a 'parable of community,' a sign of the Gospel's call to reconciliation at the heart of the world. The liturgies at Taizé combine elements of the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant traditions, and the community's distinctive sacred music, mostly meditative chants of scriptural verses, has become popular in Christian churches all over the world. "Since 1978 the Taizé community has annually

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sponsored large international gatherings of young people for ecumenical discussion and prayer. One such meeting in 1994 attracted more than 100,000 people to Paris, where participants were offered hospitality by churches and families in the city and the surrounding area. Similar Taizé meetings have been held in London, Prague, Budapest, Vienna, Rome, Munich, Johannesburg, Manila, Madras and Dayton, Ohio. "The numerous church leaders who have come to Taizé include Pope John Paul II, who addressed a 1986 Taizé gathering. 'Like yourselves,' he said to the assembly, 'the Pope is just passing through. But you pass through Taizé as you pass close to a spring of water.' . . ."

[Taize worship is done without leadership, letting the "Spirit" run the meeting.]

### #7 PRAYER CIRCLE: Ojibwau Catholic Indian Community(9)

Listen To The Elders - Ojibwau Indians

By Father Larry Kroker, S.J. (Sacred Heart of Jesus)

". . . . The Kateri Centre is home for Native Catholics whose sense of who they are as a First Nation people and whose traditional spirituality have experienced a resurgence both within and beyond Kateri's Catholic community. Sacramental celebrations and preparation programs are the heart of the faith experience the center shares with Native Catholics, whose language, symbols, and HEALING AND PRAYER CIRCLES are incorporated into liturgies and gatherings. "At the center, one room is for Native ceremonies, and another is a Legion of Mary chapel. In the center of the building is a chapel for celebrating the Eucharist, a place where Native and Catholic traditions are mingled, bringing together the best of both. . . ."

### Elder Leonard Bananish: HEALING CIRCLE

". . . [Bananish'] father, Joe, had been the community prayer man for years when the people first came in from the bush, leading the Sunday prayers for the people in the absence of a priest. "Back in the early '70s, Leonard had joined our diaconate training program but left for a period of soul-searching. This changed when he came to grips with spiritual realities that were part of his ancestral past. In his dreams he was given a way to help his people toward healing: THE GATHERING CIRCLE. His idea was to encourage Natives and non-Natives alike to share their life journeys. Participants gather around Leonard's blanket and medicine bundle and begin with a prayer to the creator and smudging ceremony. An eagle feather is then passed around, and whoever is holding it tells his or her story without interruption; it is a way of promoting healing by sharing unresolved grief and abuse issues in a supporting and confidential environment. Often, participants' stories are charged with pain and remorse, but with the trust and respect of the group, many experience journeys toward inner healing. . . ."

### #8 PRAYER CIRCLE: UFOlogy(10)

The Aetherius Society

"The Society is a metaphysical, channeling organization whose founder/president, Sir George King, is a Western Master of Yoga and who has been in contact with Extraterrestrial Intelligences for over 35 years. He acts as a channel for the dissemination of Higher Wisdom from These Sources. "The Society's objective is to explain the presence of UFOs around the Earth and to make known knowledge given to their president by Advanced Beings who reside in this Solar System. This information is disseminated through books, pamphlets, cassettes and albums and two newsletters, "The Aetherius Society Journal" and "Cosmic Voice". "Also, study courses in: "Metaphysical and Occult Sciences" and "Cosmic Revelations" to further spread the word and to explain the cosmic significance of messages received from the Advanced Beings. Regular meetings at the U.S. and England headquarters as well as by associated branches throughout the world. "PRAYER CIRCLES are organized during a Spiritual Push (or Magnetization Period) at different holy mountain sites, when the giant Interplanetary Spacecraft is

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brought into Earth's orbit by a Cosmic Master. Helpers who attend these POWER CIRCLES send out the Spiritual energies from this Cosmic Master to help mankind. . . ." [One of King's contacts is supposedly Jesus Christ, who now, King says, resides on Venus].

### #9 PRAYER CIRCLE: Sports(11)

SPORTS: "Friends -- but not on the field"

Faith unites the Cards' Aeneas Williams and the Birds' Irving Fryar By Bob Cohn for the Philadelphia Inquirer

"[Aeneas] Williams, the Arizona Cardinals' all-pro cornerback, and [Irving] Fryar, the Eagles' most productive wide receiver, are adversaries on the field. . . ."But that was before Fryar's religious conversion, before he became a minister. Suddenly, his common ground with Williams extended beyond the turf they fight to control. Williams . . . organizes the Cardinals' Tuesday night prayer sessions and PRAYER CIRCLES after practices. He seems, by all accounts, to be one of the good guys in sports. 'We've gotten to know each other, talking and sharing the fellowship,' said Williams, who first got together with Fryar last season at the Pro Bowl. 'We're kindred. We're Christians. It's a joy to play against him. . . .'"

### #10 PRAYER CIRCLE: Gnosticism(12)

Forty Day Ministry of Christ

by John Gee

"These accounts report the following: Jesus teaches the apostles the gospel they should preach to the world. He tells of a premortal life and the creation of the world, adding that this life is a probationary state of choosing between good and evil, and that those who choose good might return to the glory of God. He foretells events of the last days, including the return of Elijah. He also tells the disciples that the primitive church will be perverted after one generation, and teaches them to prepare for tribulation. These apocryphal accounts state that Christ's resurrection gives his followers hope for their own resurrection in glory. Besides salvation for the living, salvation of the dead is a major theme, as are the ordinances: "baptism, the Sacrament or Eucharist, ordination of the apostles to authority, their being blessed one by one, and an initiation or Endowment (cf. Luke 24:49; usually called 'mysteries'), with an emphasis on garments, marriage, and PRAYER CIRCLES. These accounts, usually called secret (Greek, apokryphon; Coptic, hep), are often connected somehow to the temple, or compared to the Mount of Transfiguration. Sometimes the apostles are said to ascend to heaven where they see marvelous things. Whether everything in such accounts is true or not, the actions of the apostles after the post-resurrection visits of Jesus contrast sharply with those before. . . ."

### #11 PRAYER CIRCLE: Messianic Jews(13)

CHOSEN PEOPLE MINISTRIES

Newsletter May 1997

"Son of David Congregation [-] Many exciting reports have come from Son of David Congregation, led by Scott Brown in the Washington, D.C. area. Prayer is getting priority! A women's 'urgent prayer' chain, a bi-monthly corporate prayer convocation, a weekly Shabbat morning intercessory prayer group, and havurah (home group) PRAYER CIRCLES have all been established. In addition, a men's PRAYER CHAIN is in the planning stages. . . ."

### #12 PRAYER CIRCLE: Marian Contemplative(14)

PASTORAL MARIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

Summaries: Bellwether, Contemplative Formation Center:

Intercessors of the Lamb

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"The Intercessors of the Lamb are an Association of the Christian Faithful with branches for priests (servant), religious (hermit), and laity (companion) founded in 1984 by Sr. Nadine Brown. Their mission focuses on living and teaching contemplative spirituality, intercessory prayer and spiritual warfare. All members are consecrated to Mary with the de Montfort consecration. The center offers a contemplative and intercessory prayer formation program. It promotes a National Intercessory Prayer Network, and sponsors the weekly Our Lady Queen of Peace Prayer Service, days of intercession, all night vigils, weekends of Renewal in the Holy Spirit, intercessory prayer leadership weekends, spiritual warfare leadership seminars, an annual National Conference on Intercessory Prayer, parish missions, and establishes INTERCESSORY PRAYER CIRCLES for parishes, homes [and] offices. . . ."

### #13 PRAYER CIRCLE: Christian Discipleship(15) FrontLine Discipleship

"PRAYING CIRCLE - Select 5 or more of your friends, form a small prayer group and plan to have prayer time in your home.

"A good time to have a PRAYER CIRCLE is on Sunday afternoon after worship service. We normally start with a potluck fellowship. Each family brings a dish. This is a great way to start because most friends enjoy getting together to eat. In our experiences with the Prayer Circle, after the first meeting, everyone will look forward to the next one. We suggest that you have the Prayer Circle a minimum of once per month. . . . NEVER SKIP A MONTH! If everyone in your PRAYER CIRCLE can't find a convenient time to meet, pray anyway. It is important to hold the monthly meeting.

"Tips for Your PRAYER CIRCLE

"The first meeting should not last more than 2 hours. . . . The PRAYER CIRCLE leader also organizes the devotional and gets volunteers to lead prayers. We pass a pen and a spiritual planner around for individuals to write their prayer requests. We date and record all of the prayer requests in the spiritual planner. At subsequent meetings, we use this journal as a testimony of the answers to our prayers."

"The Fellowship

"The meal usually takes 30 minutes to an hour. When most people are finished eating, we announce that the prayer time will be starting in a few minutes. We also make sure that everyone has had the opportunity to write their prayer requests in the spiritual planner. At this point, the host family is assisted with the dishes and putting the food away.

"Prayer Time

"The prayer time begins with acapella singing. This is followed by scripture reading. Normally someone gives a short talk (3 minutes or less) regarding some aspect of prayer. In our meetings, ministers that are present allow others to give the short talks. This helps to develop other spiritual leaders in the small group. "After one or two short songs the actual prayer time begins. Someone in the group reads approximately four of the prayer requests. . . . The PRAYER CIRCLE stands, holds hands and the prayer leader prays. This process is repeated until all the prayer requests have been presented before God. The PRAYER CIRCLE leader checks to make sure all the prayers have been covered. . . ."

### #14 PRAYER CIRCLE: Metaphysical Group(16) ELSAJOY

"This garden of spiritual inspiration is devoted to metaphysics, mysticism and spiritual healing. And whatever you click on [referring to choosing a page on this Website] is Divine Guidance for this moment.

"Prayer Partners in Spiritual Healing

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"Prayer counseling, prayer healing, PRAYER CIRCLE, prayer, prayer guidance, prayer healing

"Do you have a problem? Prayer is a vital, living, dynamic spiritual force. It has been shown to impact the course of illness and suffering in an incredible way. So if you are facing a challenge, let prayer work for you. Our prayer circle will go into Silence and pray to resolve your need. For prayer counseling, click here: [Prayer Request](#). . ."

### #15 PRAYER CIRCLE: New Age/Metaphysical(17) Urantia Book's Fellowship Prayer Circle

"Welcome to The Fellowship's PRAYER CIRCLE. Submit prayer requests by clicking here. Someone from the Circle will respond. Prayer works! "If you would engage in effective praying, you should bear in mind the laws of prevailing petitions outlined in The Urantia Book:

"1. You must qualify as a potent prayer by sincerely and courageously facing the problems of universe reality. You must possess cosmic stamina. "2. You must have honestly exhausted the human capacity for human adjustment. You must have been industrious. "3. You must surrender every wish of mind and every craving of soul to the transforming embrace of spiritual growth. You must have experienced an enhancement of meanings and an elevation of values. "4. You must make a wholehearted choice of the divine will. You must obliterate the dead center of indecision. "5. You not only recognize the Father's will and choose to do it, but you have effected an unqualified consecration, and a dynamic dedication, to the actual doing of the Father's will. "6. Your prayer will be directed exclusively for divine wisdom to solve the specific human problems encountered in the Paradise ascension--the attainment of divine perfection. "7. And you must have faith--living faith.

### #16 PRAYER CIRCLE: Christian Health organization(18) A Different Point of View [World-Wide Prayer Circle] The Alternative News Center

". . . . In addition to our morning reading [A Quiet Place] we have added this page for those that are wanting a place to share there [sic] prayer request with believers. "There is Power in prayer. I have seen it. I have experienced it. While others observe the 'worlds' news and despair, we believe that by grabbing hold of the Arm of the Almighty by faith, we can make 'news' and affect the outcome of personal and worldly events. "Join with me and let's pray about your concerns, fears and problems. Send your prayer requests here and we will post them. If you would like to be a part of a WORLD-WIDE PRAYER CIRCLE just put the words 'Prayer List' . . . in the . . . Email form. Your prayer request will be shared with others, and you will receive their prayer requests in turn. "And so dear Father, we ask You to bless this endeavor to provide your people with the opportunity to share the burdens of others in prayer. May we become more like You through this experience, and glorify Your Name. Amen. . ."

### #17 PRAYER CIRCLE: Sufi Healing Order(19) Sufi Healing Order Ministry

"Welcome to The Sufi Healing Order web site! There are a number of services we offer. The primary activity of the Healing Order is spiritual healing. We offer 'The Healing Service' which is a group PRAYER CIRCLE asking the Divine One to heal those who ask this of us. Through ritual, prayer, and attunement to the Divine Spirit The Healing Service offers the possibility of healing to those who request it. If you need to contact someone to request a healing press Contacts. "Members of The Sufi Healing Order also visit the ill, those in distress, and the infirm, bringing them the Divine Presence as a balm and a healing, as well as offering personal care and support. Members receive training in spiritual healing and integrate this into their personal and professional wellness counseling. If you are interested in contacting someone local regarding Sufi Healing Order classes press Contacts. . ."



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### #18 PRAYER CIRCLE: New Age Member Of World Parliament Of Religions(20) Circle Sanctuary's Purpose and Work

- "Promote dialogue, cooperation, and mutually beneficial networking among individuals, groups, and organizations of a wide range of Pagan denominations and paths through Circle Network. . . . - "Maintain Circle Sanctuary land, a Pagan religious center and Nature preserve. . . . - "Promote the creation and sharing of Pagan rituals, meditations, music, images, and other sacred art forms. - "Provide Pagan ministerial services including counseling, SPIRITUAL HEALING PRAYER CIRCLES, and psychotherapy, plus conduct worship services as well as weddings, child blessings, funerals, house blessings, and other rites of passages. - "Participate in interfaith dialogue and collaboration, including helping to sponsor conferences such as the Parliament of the World's Religions and serve as a consultant for Harvard's religious Pluralism Project. - "Engage in international and multicultural exchange and cooperation for greater planetary peace and wellness.

### #19 PRAYER CIRCLE: Planetary Transformation(21) Unity North Atlanta Church Transforming the Planet through Love, One Heart at a Time

"Conscious Living Circles  
"A Safe Haven to Grow and Make Friends

"CONSCIOUS LIVING CIRCLES are fun and safe places to grow. The Circles consist of approximately 12 people who discuss various subjects which the group chooses as a collective whole. The subjects give you answers to your questions as well as questions to your answers. Truth principles apply in a relaxed atmosphere of love, listening and sharing. The groups meet weekly for eight weeks at various homes and times. "Everyone that has participated in these Circles has grown, made new friends and achieved a higher awareness. The energy is wonderful and you receive prayer support from all the members. The CIRCLES are led with the Principles of Tao by a Facilitator and Assistant Facilitator. "A CIRCLE is a place of powerful prayer support, meditation and discussion where people meet in a relaxed atmosphere of a host home where one can experience growth and fun. The energy of the CIRCLE is one of love and the honoring of one another through the practice of active listening. CONSCIOUS LIVING CIRCLES provide a place where friendships are made and a sense of spiritual community and belonging to the family a [sic] Unity North can begin for you. . . . "

### #20 PRAYER CIRCLE: One World's People/Community(22) A Prayer Vigil For The Earth

"Calling A CIRCLE Of All People To Join Us  
"Sunrise, September 27, 1997

"In this time of prophecy we are all asked to join together--black, red, white, yellow and brown--to pray as One People for the Earth. "We are hoping everyone will join us at sunrise, September 27, 1997. We'd like to create a CONTINUOUS PRAYER CIRCLE AROUND THE EARTH as the sun rises that morning.

#### "BRIEF HISTORY

"In 1993 The Circle, The Wittenberg Center, and David Berry, a government official organized the first annual prayer vigil entitled, "One Mind, One Voice, One Heart, One Prayer". This thirty-hour continuous prayer vigil is now held every Fall in a field next to the Washington Monument in Washington, DC, USA. Surrounded by a circle of tipis [teepees] and gathered around the flames of a sacred fire, each year Wisdom Keepers and others share their ceremonies and teachings with all who attend. The Vigil has been expanding each year and in 1997 the circle of tipis is opening to include structures and dwellings from other cultures and religious traditions. . . .

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- \* International Peace Village
- \* Thirty Hours of Continuous Prayer
- \* Prayers and Ceremonies by Indigenous Elders and Leaders of All Faiths
- \* Blessing the Trees of Peace, Memorial Gardens
- \* The World Peace Prayer Ceremony
- \* Youth Lodge and Program
- \* Talking Circles for All Participants
- \* International Music Offerings
- \* Round Dances for Racial Unity
- \* The Earth Charter . . . .

"Washington, D.C. -- At sunrise on Saturday, September 27, 1997, . . . Native American spiritual elders will hold a sacred Pipe Ceremony inaugurating a 30-hour Prayer Vigil for the Earth. In addition to continuous silent prayer offered by volunteers-- each in their own faith tradition--the Vigil's rich presentations scattered within and around a circle of 14 teepees will include a World Peace Prayer Ceremony, healing music in the Sufi Tradition, round dances for racial unity, drumming, chanting, TALKING CIRCLES, and a vigil fire throughout the night. " . . . this year's annual Vigil welcomes all peoples from the greater Washington, D.C. area to join in the prayers, dances, and ceremonies, . . . not as tourists or curiosity seekers, said Sharon Franquement, Director, The Circle, but as people seeking to heal the Earth and honor its sacredness. Other assisting organizations for this year are Unity By the Bay, The Washington DC Intertribal Cultural Association, Four Worlds International, Airline Ambassadors, the North American Coalition of Religion and Ecology, The Washington Area United Religions Initiative, and The Nathaniel Center for Spiritual Growth. "Indigenous leaders for the Vigil will include William Commanda of the Algonquin Nation from Manawaki, Quebec, Canada; Phil Lane of Four Worlds International, and Harry S. Byrd of the Lakota Nation. . . ."

These are some of the various groups which use prayer circles today. In addition, I found prayer circles being used in every major denomination, as well as by groups seeking to influence public policy, such as those of all faiths who formed a prayer circle around the negotiating site in Dayton, when an agreement about Bosnia was being hammered out. Throughout all the mentions of prayer circles, there's a variety of combinations of these themes: accountability, intimacy, fellowship, unity in diversity, community, and reconciliation. So often we think of the demonic realm as fire-breathing spirits, but the antichrist spirit is one who comes speaking flatteries to entice people to himself. If anything, one could say this is the "nice side" of the devil, but he still uses it to steal, kill and destroy. Prayer circles are basically white magic, which is what is prevalent in the Catholic Marian manifestations and other phenomena.

Promise Keepers and John Wimber, who was noted for calling up demons in his meetings to show that he could control them, are tied to the Catholic movement through the Word of God Community in Ann Arbor. (The Charismatic community I belonged was also tied to Ann Arbor through its leadership.) From David Cho, Wimber brought in the idea of "kinship groups" or what are now known as "house churches" or "cell groups." In those cell groups, or what our community called "households," prayer circles and ideas of intimacy with God AND ONE ANOTHER were introduced to participants. Out of these also came the tie-in to the Shepherding movement, which brought in the concept of accountability now evident in Promise Keepers. PK's co-founder James Ryle, of course, came from Wimber's organization and is Bill McCartney's pastor, which accounts for Promise Keepers' use of the prayer circle as an energizing practice of unity among all men.

As I mentioned, the Charismatic Renewal brought prayer circles into widespread use through the ecumenical prayer meetings begun after Vatican II, and they were part of the early empowering of those people used to get this whole thing headed in the "right" direction. The Shepherding Movement was

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then introduced by Bob Mumford, Charles Simpson, Derek Prince, Joe Garlington, Larry Tomczak and others. In the 1970's, many of these men travelled to our town and across the country to hold huge meetings to instill the idea of accountability within the small groups. What all this led to, of course, was demon-energized groups being brought into accountability to men while the word of God was twisted, laid down, compromised, and changed. Meanwhile, what took center stage in prayer groups was each person's "testimony" of what God had done. People's lives and minds and spirits were now being controlled, and that is what we have today: a Zombie-like, controlled global Church who "just love one another", brought about through the tactics of spiritual manipulators and mind control agents. Today they are just that, and that's why many can't hear the truth when you give it to them. \_\_\_\_\_

Footnotes:

- (1) The Promise Keepers Rally: An American Spectacle by John Tarleton October 1997, <http://myhouse.com/pub/bigjohn/Promise.html>).
- (2) Keeping Our Promises Together by Michael C. Mack [Pres. Of The Small Group Network] with Kevin Mitchell, <http://www.smallgroups.com/promises.htm>.
- (3) <http://we.got.net/~prayer/index.htm>; <http://we.got.net/~prayer/praycircles.html>
- (4) <http://www.genisis.com/HeavenlyWonders/prayerrq.htm>  
<http://www.genisis.com/HeavenlyWonders/thneed.htm>
- (5) <http://tampatrib.com/reports/medjug/medjug3.htm>
- (6) <http://www.flinet.com/~jmp/jmp12.html>
- (7) [http://enquirer.com/editions/1997/08/07/loc\\_heart.html](http://enquirer.com/editions/1997/08/07/loc_heart.html)
- (8) <http://www.nd.edu:81/~prinfor/news/1997/2-4.html>
- (9) <http://www.companysj.com/v133/listen.html>
- (10) <http://www.tje.net/para/organizations/aetheriu.htm>
- (11) <http://www.phillynews.com/inquirer/97/Nov/02/sports/OPP02.htm>
- (12) [http://www.mormons.org/basic/christ/forty\\_day\\_ministry\\_eom.htm](http://www.mormons.org/basic/christ/forty_day_ministry_eom.htm)
- (13) <http://www.chosen-people.com/cpmmay.html>
- (14) <http://www.udayton.edu/mary/pastoral.html>
- (15) <http://pages.prodigy.com/VJMW81A/ssteps.htm>
- (16) <http://www.elsajoy.com/index2.html>;  
<http://www.elsajoy.com/pray.html>
- (17) [http://www.ubfellowship.org/prayer\\_circle.htm](http://www.ubfellowship.org/prayer_circle.htm)
- (18) <http://www.intrepid.net/~klynch/prayer.html>
- (19) <http://sufihealingorder.org/html/healing.html>
- (20) <http://www.circlesanctuary.org/aboutcircle/Activities.html>
- (21) <http://www.unitynorth.org/consciouscircles.htm>
- (22) <http://www.enhancing.com/oneprayer/>

## **Part Two: Prayer Circles: Their Unbiblical Source By Ed Tarkowski**

"The God of the Bible locked in mortal combat for the souls of men with the goddess of revived paganism---...Few in the church and the popular culture realize the enormity of the revolution going on around us"(1).

### **The Demise and Resurgence of Witchcraft**

An article discussing the historical roots of "The Craft" describes the ritual space marked by a circle:

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"The roots of the religion called Wicca, or Witchcraft, are very old, coming down to us through a variety of channels worldwide. Although any general statement about our practices will have exceptions, the following will attempt to present a basic foundation for understanding. Some of the old practices were lost when indigenous religions encountered militant Christianity and were forced to go underground for survival. The ancient mystery religions were lost when the practice of the rites was stopped and the old oral traditions were no longer available. Parents transmitted their traditions to their children, with parts being lost and new parts created in succeeding generations. These survivals, along with research into the old ways, provide a rich foundation for modern practice. Other factors contributing to the revival of the Craft are archaeological and anthropological studies of the religious practices of non-Christian cultures, the works of the Golden Dawn and other metaphysical orders, and the liberalization of anti-Witchcraft laws. Modern Witches hold rituals according to the turning of the seasons, the tides of the moon, and personal needs. Most rituals are performed in a ritual space marked by a circle. We do not build church buildings to create this sacred, ritual space -- all Earth is sacred and in touch with the Goddess and so any place, indoors or out, may be consecrated for ritual use. . . ."(2)

Paganism and Witchcraft probably give the best basic description of the circle as a spiritual ritual tool, and these groups are using circles today in our modern world. Linda Harvey of Mission America writes,

"In *Feminism and Religion*, Rita Gross explains how it is more possible to openly practice witchcraft in the twentieth century than in previous times(3). She also outlines a little bit about how it is done. A small group, working in a circle, draws power together, which is called raising energy. Chanting, drumming and dancing can be part of the event. Then when the energy is high enough, the power is 'sent' to a destination. While Gross doesn't say it, obviously this can be used for 'good' (as perceived by the group) or evil.(4)

Harvey says feminist spirituality does indeed know how to raise and project such power by changing the consciousness of the participants:

"Where does the power come from? Gross is firm about the fact that it does exist. 'The feminist spirituality movement, more than mainstream religions, understands both that ritual works, and how it works.' And how does Gross think it works? 'By changing the consciousness of its performer [the Wiccan ritualist]'"(5).

Peter Jones, author of *Spirit Wars*, says that "The Craft" is experiencing an unprecedented rejuvenation:

"'Witchcraft is the wave of the future,' states Peter Jones firmly in *Spirit Wars*. He notes that at the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, witches were given official status(6). In Salem, Massachusetts, the local ecumenical group includes representatives of Protestant churches, Catholicism, a Jewish rabbi, and the high priest of the Rosarian Order of Wicca.(7) The famous witch Starhawk maintains that it is through women that salvation will come to the world, presumably using witchcraft as needed(8).

If then, there is a new rise of what adherents call the "oldest religion," one would expect a resurgence of its rituals and ceremonies as well. I want to begin the second part of this series by looking at the circle as the one essential ritual in Witchcraft, and its use as a form to bring to fallen man healing and integrated wholeness of the body, soul and spirit. But there is more to this than just healing at a personal level. The goal is that the resulting whole person is then united with all other "whole people" to form a unified humanity, in tune with itself as well as with the powers above and the planet earth below. What then? The one humanity, now in balance with Mother Earth and Father Sky, will take its place in the universe which is also healing itself through the powers that be. But how can the simple circle of the "Old Religion" have such a vast vision and seemingly impossible dream? Because the circle of Witchcraft is

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basically the same as the circle in all other cultures and traditions, and the other traditions share the same vision and dream.

No one can deny that there is a current religious awakening throughout all traditions, and they are all coming together for the very purpose that I described above. As we look at the powers of the circle in ritual, it is important to keep in mind that this is not a report on Witchcraft, but a report on prayer circles. The circle is necessary to both. Without a circle there could naturally be no prayer circle, and the same is true for Witchcraft. Of all the literature that I have found concerning the Circle as Form, the writings of Witchcraft stand out as the best source to describe the expectations of a person using the circle and its accompaniments. These rituals and their expected results are basically the same in all religious cultures and traditions. The question we need to eventually ask is, "Have these circles penetrated modern Christianity?" This question was raised for me when I read how one of the prominent leaders of the Welsh Revival used the circle as a tool for revival. In some teaching materials from the Catholic Charismatic Renewal's National Service Committee in Malta, I read:

"Answering the question, 'how do you have a revival?' Gipsy Smith, a man used by God during the Welsh Revival at the beginning of this century, replied, 'Kneel down and with a piece of chalk draw a complete circle all around you - and pray to God to send revival on everything inside the circle. Stay there until he answers, and you will have revival!'"(9)

Does being enclosed in a circle release the power of revival in an individual? More importantly, are such practices being carried out in today's global "revival?" I will give my answer to that in Part Three, but for now, I want to establish some criteria for examining such practices by explaining the powers behind the circle, and how they are tapped, in the realm of Witchcraft.

### The Circle

In Part One, we saw that prayer circles are widespread and accepted as a way of prayer in almost all religious and spiritual traditions. In Witchcraft, the circle is the very foundation of all ritual, so we want to begin by defining the circle as used in religious practice.

### Defining a Circle as a Spiritual Tool

"Circle - a primary symbol representing the first level of the atmosphere. . . . Syn. VAYU . . . . 4. used in psychic ritual ceremonies of all kinds as a cut off place between good and evil vibrations; the evil is on the outside and all inside are safe; 5. term meaning 'psychic development circle' for both physical psychism and mental psychism; each person sits facing the center of the circle to lock out negative energies. . . ."(10)

In the following, Donning more fully describes the "Psychic Development Circle:"

"Psychic Development Circle - (current: mental mediumship circle) a chosen group of people who meet regularly once a week to develop themselves in MENTAL MEDIUMSHIP skills under the guidance of a trained MEDIUM; they sit in chairs in a circle; . . . the circle holds good vibrations and closes out all negative vibrations; persons must be compatible; each one develops his own mental mediumship. . . ."(11)

### The Circle As A Form

In the spiritual world, circles are considered Forms. This definition spans the simple shape drawn on a piece of paper to the ritualized drum-beating, chanting, hand-clapping Circle Dances of the New Age.

In a paper on ritual dance written by Laura Shannon, she stated,

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"This experiential workshop is based on simple folk dances, the living descendants of the primitive healing dance which is also the ancestor of dance/movement therapy. Along with creative improvisation and meditation on ancient images of woman, they provide a structure for a 'living ritual'. This helps us journey to the roots of healing dance and to the source of our empowerment as women. We are enabled to find a new context for our present-day questioning, and new hope for the future we imagine. . . . "The simplest village folk dances are the ones which have survived the longest, . . . Through them we can touch the source of dance as healing, communal expression, and receive new inspiration for our inner journey as well as our work in the modern world. "Dance therapy is said to have its roots in primitive healing dance as it has been practiced throughout history. . . . The early dance forms themselves have, for the most part, disappeared, but their influence is apparent in the ethnic and folk dance traditions descended from them: Lange tells us that 'there is a visible connection between the art of the vanished "primitive" cultures and those still existing' and that 'these connections have lasted into contemporary times. . . . ' The circular dance pattern can be seen as a mandala, where the personal circle is aligned with the circle of the universe, and so the universal symbol of unity and totality becomes a personal symbol as well. The mandala enables each dancer to centre herself and harmonizes the different energies of the individual dancers into a balanced whole. . . . "These images are increasingly available to us and lend themselves beautifully to movement work. Gadon believes that 'The Goddess once again is becoming a symbol of empowerment for women; a catalyst for an emerging spirituality that is earth-centered; a metaphor for the earth as a living organism; an archetype for feminine consciousness; a mentor for healers; the emblem of a new political movement; an inspiration for artists; and a model for resacralizing woman's body and the mystery of human sexuality.'"(12)

What is a Form? Donning explains,

"Forms - 1. (esoteric) shapes that have a hollow within their boundaries and therein produce a captured, concentrated special energy within that hollow that can be utilized for meaningful purposes, i.e., the pyramid, circle, cone, sphere, square and other geometric forms; . . . (Tai Chi) specific patterns of movements in the dance have meaning which bring a feeling of oneness. . . ."



### The Circle As A "Form-With-Power"

These Forms, regardless of their material or color, exude an energy to the occultist and New Ager. In the following definition of "Forms-With-Power," we again find the circle mentioned as a Form of protection:

"Forms-With-Power - shapes that are used as psychic tools because of the potential within their areas or because of their character or their metamorphic value, due to their peculiar structure; 'form' is the external appearance of a clearly defined area as distinguished from color or material; a particular way of being that gives something its nature or character; since antiquity, there have been forms, shapes and formations that people have found to be useful for their information, guidance, or protection when working psychically; shapes that exude energy include the cross, the swastika, sword, circle, cone and pyramid; shapes known for protection are the circle and the hexagram"(13)

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All of the above basically describes where the circle as a "Form-With-Power" gets its power. The simple idea behind what is called "the raising of power" within the circle is that the energy in the area surrounded by the circle is compressed within that space until it peaks and is released. This release, either to the inward parts of the person or outwardly, is effected (1) by the spoken word of the person once the power is received, (2) through one person to another, e.g., through Therapeutic Touch (transference of power) or, (3) in the group to bring about healing and a consciousness of unity with all things and people.

### The Scope of Circles in Ritual as Forms

Circles of power are not necessarily visible:

"Magic Circle - 1. an imaginary circle drawn with a pointed finger or a real circle made with substance (e.g., string, rock-salt, chalk [see Gipsy Smith quote above]) around the person, persons, or objects that desire protection; performed with or without ritual or ceremony; belief: NO evil forces can penetrate the circle line; 2. mandala-mudra combination used around an area where something spiritual is to take place; builds energy and isolates the activity in the center of the circle so the individual or group can more easily control the energy generated, e.g., Sufi twirling; . . ."(14)

The form and context of a group practicing Witchcraft may vary from other groups. One such form is the "Circle Dance" mentioned earlier: "The circular dance pattern can be seen as a mandala, where the personal circle is aligned with the circle of the universe, and so the universal symbol of unity and totality becomes a personal symbol as well." Besides dance, some use elaborate ceremonies, and others just simple meditation, holding to the old witchcraft adage, "And It Harm None, Do What You Will." In many cases, the people themselves form the circle and are the circle. What appears to be common to all, though, are the acts of consecrating a sacred place, casting a circle around it, calling quarters, the invocation of a spirit (usually believed to be "God"), raising and directing energy, grounding and centering, and closing the circle. It is in the center of the circle that energy is raised, to be released by the person at his or her own discretion. It should be noted that Pagans warn that once a circle or other form is used to initiate a ceremony, it is dangerous not to carry out that ritual very precisely.

### Sweeping And Clearing Away Obstructions

When Pagans cast a circle, the area within the circle must be cleansed. This process is called "sweeping." A Pagan named Daphne speaks of sweeping in "The Elements of Pagan Ritual" on her home page:

"Sweeping the circle is a way to clear unwanted emotional baggage, 'vibes' and to prepare the circle space for casting. The handmaiden literally sweeps the ritual area with a broom, often called a besom"(15).

Here is what Wiccan Selena Fox says about "clearing away obstructions" in relation to the waning of the moon during the ritual:

"I am Pagan. I work magic by the Moon to help and to heal others, myself, and the Planet. The Triple Goddess of the Moon guides me. I activate beginnings in the Waxing, energize manifestations at the Full, and CLEAR AWAY OBSTRUCTIONS with the Waning and Dark. I take part in rituals at the New and Full Moons, and I know that my Circles are part of a great web of Circles that meet at these times around Planet Earth"(16).

### Casting The Circle

Once the place to be consecrated is chosen and swept, the circle is cast for the ritual. Daphne states that,

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"Ritual space is defined by walls in churches, [or] by casting a circle in Pagan rituals. Circles are cast using the sword, the athame, or in some traditions, the wand. Usually the Priestess casts the circle. Holding her tool, the Priestess walks about the ritual space, defining the sacred area with that tool"(17).

Selena Fox notes that there are a variety of ways to chart a "map of consciousness" for the ritual:

"While the map of consciousness with its seven directions and Sacred Sphere form works well for me and for others, it is important to note that it is but one of many maps within Paganism today. Traditions vary not only in the number of directions honored, but the correspondences associated with each direction and the order in which the directions are worked within ritual. It is important that practitioners chart their own maps according to their own traditions, preferences, and experiences. The map I use and present here has evolved over time and continues to evolve. Feel free to adapt it for your own needs"(18).

After describing her own ritual, Pagan Daphne comments,

"This is a *\*very\** rough outline of a ritual. Rituals vary from tradition to tradition and often from group to group within any particular tradition. Some groups work in robes, others work skyclad, which means nude (clothed in the sky). Some rituals are outdoors, others inside. Sabbat rituals may be more involved and complex than esbat rituals"(19).

### The Map Of Consciousness: The Geographical Directions

The wide scope of freedom to create one's own methods within Witchcraft ritual even extends to the number of directions used in the Ritual. All use the compass directions, which extend from the center of the circle to the North, South, East and West. Pagan Selena Fox uses seven directions for her ceremonies, and describes the various choices of other traditions:



"The Sacred Circle with its directions is called by some, the 'Magic Circle,' and by others, the 'Medicine Wheel.' Some traditions emphasize the four compass directions of the Circle. Others work with the four compass points plus a central point representing unity. Some also include two additional directions in the center, up and down, to create a Sacred Sphere as well as the Sacred Circle. Qualities, images, colors, and other symbolic associations with the directions vary from path to path, but the idea of Sacred Circle as a place of balancing, healing, and wholeness extends across traditions. "I work with seven directions in my personal spiritual practice, in doing healing and counseling, and in guiding group rituals at Circle Sanctuary and elsewhere. The seven directions are an integral part of my Pagan worldview and provide a framework for understanding and for action. My correspondences of the compass directions and central point with the five Elements of Nature have developed from my work with Wiccan spirituality and contemporary psychology over the past twenty years. My use of the up and



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down directions emerged from my studies of multicultural Shamanism and my practice of spiritual environmentalism"(20).

In the words of Selena herself, we can easily see that the use of the circle touches all Wiccan and Pagan traditions across the board.



### Calling Quarters

Again, we find a sense of ambiguity in the feature of the ritual called "calling quarters." According to a Wiccan named Randi,

"Calling quarters is when you call to and invite the Ancient Ones of each direction and invite them to you. There are tons of ways to call quarters. No one way is right. You can take different ones from books, or make your own. They can be memorized, read, or spontaneously said. . . . Remember these words DO NOT have to read exactly, or even at all. Feel free to change the words to suit your purpose"(21).

### The Five Elements and the Magic Circle

The "Ancient Ones" are summoned as the elements associated with the four directions: fire, air, earth and water. A fifth, spirit, is associated with the center of the circle, and invoked either as a living entity or an energized power that can be experienced, used, or transmitted to accomplish the will of the user. Since the Five Directions are available to everyone no matter where they are, Selena Fox, one of the most noted witches in the country, explains that, no matter where she is at the time, she can raise power in order to project it for good:

"When I do magic in rituals, before I raise and direct energy, I seek always to look at the larger picture of which my needs are just a part. I endeavor to work for the best for all as well as to help myself . . . . I also do rituals elsewhere on the land and at other places, outdoors and indoors. My worship and rituals can be anywhere since my sacred circle is portable. Wherever I am, I can set up a circle around a sacred sphere with seven invocations: to the four compass point directions, to the Cosmos above, to the Planet below, and to Spiritual Integration in the center"(22).

The invocation of these five directions is not confined to Witchcraft alone, as this entry from Donnings, "Tattwas":

"Tattwas - (Eastern) plain, simple, unornamented geometric symbols used to stir the primordial part of the MIND, INSTINCT, and SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM to psychically learn information regarding CREATION and antiquity; these symbols are the SQUARE, CIRCLE, CRESCENT, TRIANGLE, and OVAL; represent the magical elements for FIRE, AIR, EARTH, WATER, and SPIRIT; meant to stimulate information before the archetypes had formed in racial consciousness"(23).

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Transformation comes to the person performing the ritual by invoking these directions. As in the circles described above, Selena Fox invokes the four directions and their elements for a change in personal consciousness, though she says that change is meant to be for the good of all things as well as herself:

"I am Pagan. I attune myself to the four elements of Nature -- Earth, Air, Fire, Water -- and to the fifth element, Spirit, which is the spiritual force that connects all. I see these Elements in Nature -- the Earth in the soil and rocks; the Air in the winds and atmosphere; the Fire as the lightning, fires, and electricity; the Water in the springs, rivers, oceans, rain, and other waters on the planet; and the Spirit as Divine Unity. I also see these Elements as aspects of Self -- my physical body and physiology is my Earth; my intellect and thoughts my Air; my will and actions my Fire; my emotions and feelings my Water; and my Inner Self, my Soul, is my Spirit. I endeavor to keep myself healthy and in balance in all these parts of Self. I work toward a restoring of balance of the Elements in the environment"(24).



### The Three Optional Directions: Spirit, Up and Down

Of the fifth direction, the center of the circle, Fox says,

"Center

"This is the direction of Spirit. Its Nature form is the Divine Soul stuff that links all life together. It is the synthesis of the Elements and the directions. In human life, this is the spiritual realm and the dimension of the Divine in its many forms. In connecting with this direction, pay attention to the core of your being --your inner Self. Honor the Divine as you know it -- Goddesses, Gods, Nature Spirits, Ancestors, Spiritual Guides, Love, Unity in Diversity. Connect with balance, harmony, beauty, wholeness, integrity, and bliss. Healing modalities include dreamwork, inner journeys, understanding inner guidance, worship, ecstatic dance, drumming, chanting, invocations, vision quests, and spiritual service. . . . "This map also makes a distinction between the Element Fire and the unifying Element Spirit. While in some systems Fire and Spirit are one, in this map they are separate, since Spirit is viewed as a synthesis of all Four Elements"(25).

Later, Fox describes a part of her ritual where she invokes "Spirit" in the center of her ritual circle. This is Divine Unity through which all things realize oneness with the universe:

"Finally, stand and face the center, with your arms outstretched before you. Call to the power of Spirit, of Divine Unity. Call the Divine by the name(s) you know it. Then, bring your hands to your heart and experience oneness, balance, and wholeness. Pay attention to any inner guidance that comes to you. Give thanks"(26).

What we have described thus far is a circular plane, with the four directions extending outward from the center of the circle. It is the same balancing of self (wholeness) with the balance in nature (balanced

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ecology) being sought in the environmental movement, in which people experience oneness with all things on earth. To fully accomplish this oneness, some look also to two other directions, Up and Down, as described in Fox's "Sacred Circle, Sacred Sphere":



"Up

"This is the direction of Sky and Cosmos. Its Nature forms are the sun, moon, planets, stars, meteors, galaxies, and deep space. In human life, this is the realm of cosmic consciousness. In connecting with this direction, pay attention to your being part of the community of life in the universe. As you contemplate the heavens, use your imagination to reach out into mysteries of outer space and other worlds. Experience yourself as an inhabitant of a planet moving through space. Reflect on creation legends and on stories of humans that have ventured forth into space from our planet.

"Down

"This is the direction of Planet and Sacred Place. Its Nature forms are the biosphere of Planet Earth and the community of life-forms (such as creatures and plants as well as other humans) in your own home environment. In human life, this is the realm of planetary consciousness. In connecting with this direction, pay attention to your being part of the tapestry of life in your local area as well as being part of the greater community of life on the Planet. As you contemplate this, use your imagination to feel connected with the web of life that includes trees, herbs, creatures, microbes, and the Elements as well as other humans. Experience yourself as a part of the biosphere, also known as Planet spirit or Mother Earth."

### Invocation of the Deities

Randi, the Wiccan whom I quoted earlier, describes the feature of the ritual called "Invoking the Deities." She leaves a lot of room for choice, according to the need, in which deity one would invoke:

"Now this part varies greatly on what your magickal purpose is and what tradition of Gods you follow. For instance, for a love spell, one might call upon Aphrodite, the Greek Goddess of love. Or you may just call the Triple Goddess and Horned God. Now I've read some beautiful poetic invocations. I've also read ones that take up three pages of typed paper and make absolutely no sense to me. Write your own and see what you come up with. I usually just say what's on my mind. . . . I firmly believe in writing your own, or improvising on the spot. Make it short, sweet, simple, but right to the point. Remember - when calling the deities, you have to use your mind, too. You just can't blab something and not mean it. Imagine the Goddess floating in through the trees or the God coming through your window and taking Their seats inside the circle(27).

### Ending the Ritual

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"After the work of the circle is done, the circle is dismantled in the reverse order. The Gods and Goddesses are thanked, their candles extinguished. The elements are dismissed and the circle is banished.. The circle is often ended with the words 'Merry Meet, Merry Part, Merry Meet Again.' This is a common goodbye phrase in Paganism(28).

### The Unity Of Circles Across Time, Space And History

Earlier, I quoted Selena Fox as saying,

"I am Pagan. I work magic by the Moon to help and to heal others, myself, and the Planet. . . . I take part in rituals at the New and Full Moons, and I know that my Circles are part of a great web of Circles that meet at these times around Planet Earth"(29).

As Selena believes her circles are joined with "a great web of Circles that meet at these times around Planet Earth," so Daphne believes hers are joined to others down through the corridors of time, history and space:

"The Call to Worship is an essential part of worship in many religions all over the world. In Judaism the shofar is blown, in Protestant and Catholic churches the church bells are rung. In Pagan rituals we also begin with some type of Call to Worship, some way to let everyone know that ritual is about to begin. Some traditions sing a song, some read from their Book of Shadows. This is a way to focus everyone's attention on ritual and all that it entails. In doing ritual we are connecting with everyone who has ever done ritual before. Every ritual action connects us with every time that ritual action has been performed"(30).

### First Spiritual Temple

Though not coming under the classification of Witchcraft, a good example of the power of group prayer circles can be found on the web site of The First Spiritual Temple, a nondenominational Christian Spiritualist Church founded on June 28, 1883 by Marcellus Seth Ayer(31):



"The circle above represents a circle of spirits, joined in prayer, standing around a healing light. Half are in body; half are in Spirit. They have joined hands, forming a bridge between the two worlds. Our faith tells us that once you entered this page, a link with Spirit has, indeed, been established."

The page goes on to state some typical reasons for the prayer circle:

"Just follow these simple instructions and know that you have joined this circle of Spirit in your healing request:

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"\* Call on God, and invite your loved ones, in Spirit, and all those who lovingly join you in prayer at this time. Remember that you are Spirit.

"\* In your mind and heart, join into the circle where the hands are illuminated --representing the bridge between those in body and those in Spirit -- and place your prayers into the central Healing Light, bringing meaning, life and action to your healing request.

"\* Pray for those for whom you have requested healing and comfort. Pray for your own needs as well. Feel the wholeness of yourself, as Spirit, and all that you are a part of.

"\* Ask God and Spirit to receive your healing prayers, as you sit for a few moments in silent meditation and prayer.

". . . And always remember: you are Spirit. With God's help, you can step beyond your problems. It is to your SPIRIT -- the eternal you -- that God had made this promise"(32).

At the dedication of First Spiritual Temple on September 27, 1885, the consecration was made by Spirit Star. Here we find one of the main purposes of the prayer circle: global unity in diversity resulting in released power. The unity is brought about, in part, by the use of the described prayer circle:

"I consecrate this Temple to holy living, to universal brotherhood (sisterhood), to the cultivation of that spirit which the Divine Master brought with him, in his life and teachings when on earth, to unity of the spiritual life with that of earth, that there may be but one life, one brotherhood (sisterhood), one God and Father of us all; that from this place may be taught that wisdom which shall recognize more than teachings from the intellect, even the development and wisdom of the heart-life; that here the hearts of people may be awakened to do, as well as their heads to think, for only through the wisdom that comes from both heart and head can God be brought near to help us in all our endeavors. And may all who come to listen have receptive hearts to be taught how to live the divine life. Amen"(33).

### **The Unity School of Christianity Foundation: The "Silent Unity" Prayer Circle**

Charles and Myrtle Fillmore were the founders of The Unity School of Christianity, which was founded on two things: a covenant with "Spirit of Truth" and a prayer circle called "Silent Unity." Though there are differences, the Unity School was and is basically "New Thought." Many of today's heretical Word of Faith teachings stemmed from the "New Thought" teachings of Unity:

"The Filmores never desired to have a church, but they wanted a teaching institution. . . . In December of 1882, they entered into a Declaration and Covenant with what they called the Spirit of Truth. It read:

"'We, Charles Fillmore and Myrtle Fillmore, husband and wife, hereby dedicate ourselves, our time, our money, all we have and expect to have, to the Spirit of Truth, and through it, to the society of Silent Unity. It being understood and agreed that said Spirit of Truth shall render unto us an equivalent for this dedication, in peace of mind, health of body, wisdom, understanding, love, life, and an abundant supply of all things necessary to meet every want, without making any of these things the object of our existence.'

"The basis of the movement was Silent Unity, a 24 hour a day prayer circle available to all. The educational basis came later in the form of a series of 'Lessons in Truth' by Dr. Emily Cady. These lessons became the first Unity textbook. There is some difference between what Fillmore himself believed and what Unity asserts today. He was a product of his times. . . ." (34).

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Today, the Unity School of Christianity is still carrying on with its original foundation, the covenant with the "Spirit of Truth" and "Silent Unity":

"Silent Unity: The Light That Shines for You

"Located at Unity World Headquarters, Silent Unity has come to be known as 'The Prayer Place,' where someone is always praying, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. . . .

"What is Silent Unity?"

"The name Silent Unity refers to the spiritual core at the heart of all people. This spirituality, which transcends all religions, is our link with each other and with God. It represents a oneness -- a unity. And we can best access this spiritual unity through the silence of prayer.

"A Century of Continuous Prayer

"Silent Unity is a worldwide prayer ministry that, for over 100 years, has been in continuous prayer with people of all faiths. Through times of war, peace, depression, and prosperity, the prayer vigil in Silent Unity's chapel and the brightly shining beacon atop its tower have continued uninterrupted. "Through our telephone prayer ministry, ministry of correspondence, and Daily Word magazine, we reach out to millions of people throughout the world each year. . . . "If you wish, you may link your heart with Silent Unity at 11 a.m. (CT) Monday through Thursday for the Silent Unity Prayer Service. We also invite you to take part in this service, held in the Silent Unity Chapel, whenever you visit Unity Village"(35).

Here is a long-standing effort by a non-Christian school of religious thought that has communicated with a "Spirit of Truth" through a covenant, through teaching, and through an unscriptural plan and hope for mankind, and its very foundation is a prayer circle. Notice: A simple reading of the above shows that, although void of most of the ritual of Witchcraft, the philosophy in back of Unity's use of ritual prayer circles is the same as that of the Craft.

What Does All Of This Have To Do With The Church?

I want to look at the answer to this question next month in Part Three. As I wrote earlier, this present part is meant to lay a foundation for discernment, and the information above is essential to that discernment. Why? Because the Bible is silent on the current-day revival's use of prayer circles and accompanying rituals. As I said at the beginning of this article,

These rituals and their expected results are basically the same in all religious cultures and traditions. The question we need to eventually ask is, "Have these circles penetrated modern Christianity?" I do not believe any Christian would knowingly participate in such practices, and next month I want to take a look at God's word and what it does or doesn't say regarding the practice of prayer circles.

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Footnote:

(1) Peter Jones, *Spirit Wars: Pagan Revival in Christian America*, 1997, Main Entry Editions, PO.Box 952, Siloam Springs, AR 72761, p. 251. For information or to order, call Main Entry Editions, 1-800-574-2978.

(2) "Witchcraft - General Practices: Historical Roots to Modern Practice," <http://www.cog.org/general/iprac.html>).

(3) *Mission: America - Spring 1997*, "JUNK THEOLOGY: How Goddesses and Witchcraft Are Invading The Church by Linda P. Harvey," <http://www.atgi.com/missiona/past/junk.html> citing "Feminism & Religion," Rita M. Gross, Beacon Press, Boston, 1996, p. 211.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 213.

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(5) Ibid., p. 211.

(6) Mission: America - Spring 1997, "JUNK THEOLOGY: How Goddesses and Witchcraft Are Invading The Church by Linda P. Harvey," <http://www.atgi.com/missiona/past/junk.html> citing "Spirit Wars," pp 147-148.

(7) Mission: America - Spring 1997, "JUNK THEOLOGY: How Goddesses and Witchcraft Are Invading The Church by Linda P. Harvey," <http://www.atgi.com/missiona/past/junk.html> citing "The Goddess Revival," Aida Besancon Spencer et. al, Baker Books, 1995, p. 45.

(8) Mission: America - Spring 1997 citing "Spirit Wars," p. 148.

(9) Malta Catholic Charismatic Renewal Teaching Material: PRAYER - THE FIRST TASK OF THE LEADER by Nikol Baldacchino, Chair. of the Nat'l Service Comm. of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Malta, <http://user.orbit.net.mt/yosgra/teach1.htm>.

(10) The Donning International Encyclopedic Psychic Dictionary by June G. Bletzer, Ph.D., 1986.

(11) Donning.

(12) "Living Ritual Dance for Women: Journey out of Ancient Times," C:\ALLTHI~1\CURREN~1\DANCE\_~1\LIVING~1.HTM; this paper was published in the American Dance Therapy Association 27th Conference Proceedings, Maryland, October 1992, Laura Shannon, Dip. D.M.T. (U.K.).

(13) Donning.

(14) Ibid.

(15) <http://www.bwis.com/~dklein/ritual.htm>.

(16) Selena Fox, "I Am Pagan," <http://pilot.msu.edu/user/rohdemar/earth/IAmPagan.html>; CAPS mine.

(17) Daphne.

(18) Selena Fox, "Sacred Circle, Sacred Sphere: Mapping Consciousness with Seven Directions," <http://www.circlesanctuary.org/aboutpagan/SacredCircle.html>.

(19) Daphne.

(20) Fox, "Sacred Circle, Sacred Sphere."

(21) Randi's Wiccan Grove, "Ritual Steps," <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Oracle/6223/ritsetps.html>.

(22) Fox, "I Am Pagan."

(23) Donning.

(24) Fox, "I Am Pagan."

(25) Fox, "Sacred Circle, Sacred Sphere."

(26) Ibid.

(27) Randi's Wiccan Grove, "Ritual Steps."

(28) Daphne.

(29) Fox, "I Am Pagan."

(30) Daphne.

(31) <http://www.fst.org/welcome.htm>.

(32) Prayer Circle Link, <http://www.fst.org/healcir.htm>.

(33) <http://www.fst.org/temple.htm>.

(34) "Science of Mind, New Thought, Unity And The New Age Movement," citing excerpts from "Open At The Top, The Life of Ernest Holmes" by Neal Vahle, <http://www.new-thought.org/suggest.html>.

(35) <http://www.unityworldhq.org/silentu.htm>.

## **Part Three: Gnostic Christianity And The Prayer Circle By Ed Tarkowski**

The use of prayer circles by the world's religions is now widespread, and paralleling their rise in popularity is the practice of witchcraft. Since the circle is the very foundation of witchcraft, we need to ask: Is there a blending of the two, a connection? As we discussed in Part Two of this series, the circle is the basic form for performing witches' rituals, and is often vitally connected with some or all of these:

- \* "Sweeping" ceremonies to clear a sacred place for the circle ritual.
- \* The use of tools, such as a sword, athame, or a wand to cast a circle.
- \* Initiation of communication with entities from various directions (N, S, E, W, Up, Down, and Spirit.) "Spirit," which is the center of the circle, contains the elements associated with the four directions: Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Up and Down, which represent the Sky or Cosmos and the Planet, turn the sacred circle into a sacred sphere.
- \* The circle is a cut-off place for evil, thus protecting the ceremonies within from evil while bringing unity to all things good.
- \* The raising of power within the circle to change consciousness, project power, receive guidance, work psychically, bring about healing in spirit, soul and/or body, and pray for own or others' needs.
- \* Invoking the powers of the four (or seven) directions to bring about unity in one's self as well as unity with the human race and the universe.
- \* Drum-beating, chanting, singing, dancing.
- \* Syncretism: a common theme accompanying prayer circles in indigenous ceremonies, the world's religions, and apostate Christianity.

### **SORCERIES AT THE END OF THE AGE**

The above list shows the variations available to those who use circles; some employ simple rituals, while others use more complicated ones. Even the circle itself can be varied by substituting church walls, one's own imagination, or an invisible circle. But the important point is that the use of the circle is now found in almost all traditions of the world's religions and cultures.

I asked above if there is a blending, or a connection, between witchcraft and the religions of the world. This needs to be asked, because Scripture tells us that magic or witchcraft will be one of the major sins rampant in the world at the return of Christ. We appear to be approaching the time when that will happen, though I would say not to expect His return tomorrow or the next day. But the Apostle Paul told us to look for the signs of His coming, the signs of the times, and we could thus be aware when the Day of the Lord was near.



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John the Revelator wrote of the end-time sorceries,

Revelation 9:20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: 21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their SORCERIES, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Sorceries here means witchcraft:

SORCERIES (Strong's) 5331. pharmakeia, far-mak-i'-ah; from G5332; medication ("pharmacy"), i.e. (by extens.) magic (lit. or fig.):--sorcery, witchcraft.

According to Revelation, Babylon will rise again to spread her sorceries throughout the world, and God says of Babylon's future demise, "for by thy SORCERIES were all nations deceived" (Revelation 18:23). It is clear that witchcraft's source is Mystery Babylon of old. If we know witchcraft is to rise again in the last days, is it then reasonable to assume that it will also make its way into the end-time apostate church? I believe it is - in part, through the prayer circle.

### **THE PRAYER CIRCLE: SCRIPTURAL OR NOT?**

When I brought this subject up on my email mailing list, I received a very legitimate question from a woman named Sue: "Are we to NEVER join hands and pray together? It is almost reflex when Christians are standing around and someone asks for prayer. Thank you for any light you can shed on this." What she was referring to was gathering in a circle and holding hands for prayer. I thought her use of the word "reflex" was rather appropriate because, thinking back on my days in the Charismatic Renewal, this is what I remember to be the incentive for the practice. Sue ended her message by writing,

"The messages on prayer circles have been very revealing and a wake-up call. I, too, have seen this as very prevalent. And I, too, have had a number of unsettling experiences in a prayer circle from time to time. However, I never really knew how unbiblical it is to join in any prayer circles."

Now I want to spend some time looking for this practice in Scripture. I would imagine it's possible that those gathered at the first Pentecost may have been seated in somewhat of a circle when the Holy Spirit came as a rushing mighty wind (Acts 2:2-3). And it's most likely that after Paul was stoned and "the disciples stood round about him," that they stood in a circle. But these are pretty flimsy biblical evidences in support of prayer circles (Acts 14:19 20.) The question is, is the deliberate gathering into circles in order to pray found in Scripture, and if not, can a Christian take part in them?

I did some searching in Strong's Concordance, and found nothing regarding circles, except for one reference to God as the one "that sitteth upon the circle of the earth" (Isaiah 40:22.) Next, I looked up what it said about "joining hands" in prayer, but that didn't help either. Then I searched through the KJV and Strong's for various combinations of the words "join" and "hand", and "hold" and "hand." What resulted from that search turned out to be very enlightening. I found only two Scriptures regarding "joining hands," but they were not associated with prayer. They were:

Proverbs 11:21 Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

Proverbs 16:5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

Here is Matthew Henry's commentary on these two verses:

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Proverbs 11:21 - "Observe, 1. That confederacies in sin shall certainly be broken, and shall not avail to protect the sinners: Though HAND JOIN IN HAND, though there are many that concur by their practice to keep wickedness in countenance, and engage to stand by one another in defending it against all the attacks of virtue and justice, though they are in league for the support and propagation of it, though wicked children tread in the steps of their wicked parents, and resolve to keep up the trade, in defiance of religion, yet all this will not protect them from the justice of God; they shall not be held guiltless; it will not excuse them to say that they did as the most did and as their company did; they shall not be unpunished; witness the flood that was brought upon a whole world of ungodly men. Their number, and strength, and unanimity in sin will stand them in no stead when the day of vengeance comes. . . (1).

Proverbs 16:5 - "Note, . . . 2. The power of sinners cannot secure them against God, though they strengthen themselves with body hands. Though they may strengthen one another with their confederacies and combinations, joining forces against God, they shall not escape his righteous judgment. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker, [Prov] ch. 11:21; Isa. 45:9" (2)

Isn't it interesting that people in the Church and the world join hands today as a sign of healing, peace and brotherhood, when God says these things will not be until Jesus returns? And isn't it interesting that New Agers plan for all men to hold hands in small circles and then join the circles to form one huge global circle meant to usher in their New Age of healing, peace and community? And isn't it interesting that all of this is a rebellion against God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ? Even beyond interesting are these three stanzas from a poem by New Worder Robert Muller, Chancellor of the University for Peace and Former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations:

"My Dream 2000 by Robert Muller

"I Dream... That on 1 January 2000  
The whole world will stand still  
In prayer, awe and gratitude  
For our beautiful, heavenly Earth  
And for the miracle of human life.

"I Dream... That young and old, rich and poor,  
Black and white, Peoples from North and South,  
>From all beliefs and cultures  
WILL JOIN HANDS, MINDS AND HEARTS  
In an unprecedented, universal  
Bimillennium Celebration of Life.

"I Dream... That the year 2000  
Will be declared World Year of Thanksgiving  
By the United Nations. . . .  
"(3)

Muller's dream is that all people of earth will join hands in the year 2000 to bring in a new earth, or as he calls it elsewhere, "The Planet of God." (4) Is Muller's hand-holding applicable to what was shared above? I believe it is, especially because prayer circles are now a worldwide phenomena meant to usher in a global "peaceable kingdom." Government and religions alike are in rebellion against God (see Psalm 2), working toward the unity of mankind, the very essence of the prayer circle.

There are many ways to praise God and pray according to His word, but after my inquiry, it was apparent to me that these circles did not appear to be biblical. Rather, the Scriptures strongly indicated that "joining hands" is considered a symbolic act of rebellion against God by forming a confederation against Him. An example of such an end-time confederacy is found in Psalm 2, where the nations conspire together and rage against the Lord while He laughs at them.

In the two verses from Proverbs above, "hand join in hand" is defined in Strong's as below. (There is no word for "join" in the Hebrew):

HAND - 3027. yad, yawd; a prim. word; a hand (the open one [indicating power, means, direction, etc.], in distinction from H3709, the closed one); . . .

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So the word means "an open hand" as an indication of "power, means, direction," and as some of the other uses of this word indicate, the joining of hands can mean "consecrate, dominion, fellowship, force, swear, terror, and draw with strength." To sum up, Matthew Henry's comments stand solidly against those who originated the practice of joining hands in a circle to pray, and I can find no such practice in Scripture. However - and this is important - when we step into a prayer circle we step into what is known to be an established occult tool used to communicate with spirits not of God.

CENTURIES AGO . . . .

If we study the documented history of gathering in a circle and holding hands, we find it is a ritual having nothing to do with Christianity. Prayer circles can be traced back from John Wimber's "New Beginnings" and the 1960's Ecumenical/Catholic agenda, through St. Clement of Alexandria (who brought them into the Catholic Church,) through Gnosticism, all the way back to the ancient Egyptian Mystery religion. In fact, in "Mormonism And Early Christianity," Mormon researcher Hugh Nibley states, "Conventional Christianity views the ancient prayer circles a sort of Gnostic aberration."(5)

Nibley's work is a very interesting piece of research material. His "The Early Christian Prayer Circle" first appeared in Brigham Young University Studies (1978), pp. 41-78, and can be found as Chapter 3 of the above-mentioned book. Though Nibley's research on prayer circles is phenomenal, I have to disagree with his assumption that his reference sources are truly Christian. Dr. Nibley uses apocryphal and Gnostic writings, as well as "Christian Gnostic" sources, but they do document and describe the historic aberrant beliefs of the Gnostics who tried to infiltrate the early Christian Church. I would like to share some of his documentation on prayer circles and the Circle Dance, although, obviously, I don't support the Mormon doctrine. Where possible, I use quotes from the documents Nibley mentions, rather than his own explanations. The first quote is taken from the apocryphal Acts of John (the Revelator):

"94 Now before he [the Lord Jesus-Ed.] was taken by the lawless Jews, who also were governed by (had their law from) the lawless serpent, he gathered all of us together and said: Before I am delivered up unto them let us sing an hymn to the Father, and so go forth to that which lieth before us. He bade us therefore make as it were a ring [circle-Ed.], holding one another's hands, and himself standing in the midst he said: Answer Amen unto me. He began, then, to sing an hymn and to say:

"Glory be to thee, Father.

"And we, going about in a ring [circle-Ed.], answered him: Amen. . . ." (6)

This is said to be a hymn sung by Jesus and danced by His disciples as He stood in the midst of the circle they formed at His command. Dr. Nibley continues,

"St. Augustine in his 237th Epistle quotes a slightly different version, 'a hymn . . . commonly found in the apocryphal writings,' which he gets from the Priscillians, who believed it to be 'the hymn of the Lord which he recited in secret to his disciples, the holy Apostles, according as is written in the gospels: After he recited a hymn, he ascended the mountain' (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26)." (7)

Notice the idea of secrecy (a hallmark of Gnosticism) in the above passage. Amazingly, I found this hymn on a Gnostic web site as an Easter meditation, proving it is still in use today. These modern Gnostics wrote that it was "The Hymn of Jesus,' taken from the Acts of John from the early second century (perhaps as early as A.D. 130)." (8)

### THE FOUR GEOGRAPHICAL DIRECTIONS AND THE PRAYER CIRCLE

Nibley quotes from a seventh-century Syriac translation entitled 'The Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ as delivered orally by him to us the Apostles after his Resurrection following his death.' (9) This text describes a 2nd century prayer circle formed by participants placing themselves at the four geographical

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points around a bishop. The description of the ceremony was attributed to Clement of Rome, allegedly one of Rome's first bishops. Notice here that "visiting angels" are witnesses to the rite, and that those participating in the prayer circle desire unity and knowledge:

"In celebrating the sacrificial death of the Lord ([Max] Pulver calls his study 'The Round Dance and the Crucifixion'), the bishop would make the sacrifice, the veil of the gate being drawn aside as a sign of the straying of the former people; he would make the offering within the veil along with priests, deacons, authorized widows, subdeacons, deaconesses, readers and such as were endowed with spiritual gifts. As leader the Bishop stands in the middle . . . [the men and women are assigned their places, north, south, east and west, around him]. Then all give each other the sign of peace. Next, when absolute silence is established, the deacon says: 'Let your hearts be to heaven. If anyone has any ill feeling towards his neighbor, let him be reconciled. If anyone has any hesitation or mental reservations [doubts] let him make it known; if anyone finds any of the teachings uncongenial, let him withdraw [etc.]. For the Father of Lights is our witness with the Son and visiting angels. Take care lest you have aught against your neighbor. . . . Lift up your hearts for the sacrifice of redemption and eternal life. Let us be grateful for the knowledge which God is giving us.' The Bishop . . . says in an awesome voice: 'Our Lord be [or is] with you!' And all the people respond: 'And with thy spirit.'"(10)

Incidentally, the "sign of peace" and the Bishop's and people's last words are those used to end the modern Catholic Mass. But more relevant to this article is the positioning of people in assigned directions, N, S, E, and W, and the call to reconciliation in beliefs and spiritual culture. The use of the four directions is often mentioned in reference to prayer circles. In fact, people placed at the points of the four directions were considered to have formed a circle. In a footnote, Nibley refers to four other apocryphal books:

"Both First and Second Jeu contain sketches showing various arrangements of prayer circles. Other texts, e.g., the Gospel of Bartholomew and Pistis Sophia, p. 358, make it clear that the facing in four directions denotes standing in a circle."(11)

In the next quote, an apocryphal book is referred to as an "early Christian text," but it's obviously a Gnostic writing. Again, the Lord is seen in the center of the circle, leading the apostles through "secret ordinances." Nibley continues,

"In the book of 2nd Jeu, considered by Carl Schmidt to be the most instructive of all early Christian texts, the apostles and their wives all form a circle around the Lord, who says he will lead them through all the secret ordinances that shall give them eternal progression.(12) Then 'all the Apostles, clothed in their garments, . . . placing foot to foot, made a circle facing the four directions of the cosmos,' and Jesus standing at the altar [shoure] proceeded to instruct them in all the signs and ordinances in which the Sons of Light must be perfect.(13)

On a web site titled "Early Christianity and Mormonism: Gnostic Esoteric Rites" (<http://www.vt.edu:10021/B/bbickmor/ECGnTpl.html#Rites,1997>), Barry Bickmore adds to this scene from the NTA 1:258-259:

"Other Coptic gnostic works contain information about the 'mysteries' the gnostics practiced. Two good examples are the Pistis Sophia and the Two Books of Jeu. In these documents the apostles and some female disciples gather together somewhere to receive instruction in the mysteries from the risen Lord. The Pistis Sophia relates that after clothing themselves in linen garments, the participants situated themselves in a circle about Jesus, who stood at the altar. Then Jesus offered a rather strange prayer in behalf of his disciples:

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"... Thomas, Andrew, James and Simon the Canaanite were in the west, with their faces turned towards the east, but Philip and Bartholomew were in the south (with their faces) turned towards the north, but the other disciples and the women disciples stood behind Jesus. But Jesus stood beside the altar. And Jesus cried out, turning towards the four corners of the world with his disciples, who were all clothed in linen garments, and said: iao, iao, iao.... But when Jesus had said this, he said: Thou Father of all Fatherhood of the Infinite hearken unto me for my disciples' sake . . ."

Witchcraft's use of the four directions to form a circle was previously documented in Part Two, as was its use in non-Christian faiths and philosophies throughout the world. Here we see that Gnosticism within the early Church followed the same pattern.

### **THE PRAYER CIRCLE AND THE COSMOS**

The book of 2nd Jeu referred to "the four directions of the cosmos," and Nibley now sheds further light on this aspect. The geographical points of the prayer circle are extended to all of creation, earthly and cosmic, which correlates with the belief in witchcraft that through the use of the circle, one is "connected" to the universe in some mysterious way. Nibley states,

"Philo says that the true initiate during the rites moves 'in the circuit of heaven, and is borne around in a circle with the dances of the planets and stars in accordance with the laws of perfect music'--the music of the spheres.(14)

Later in his book, Dr. Nibley expands on the universality of this cosmic theme:

"According to the Moslem commentators, all creatures form in circles around God to be taught, suggesting the gathering of all the beasts at life-giving water holes in the desert.(15) H. Leisegang finds that throughout the ancient world the prayer circle is for the instruction of initiates.(16) We may even go beyond his range to the medicine circles of Indians all over America. Among the Plains Indians, as described by H. Storm,

"the people all sit quietly together and learn the four harmonies of balance. Each of the people can now perceive the others, and they realize that they are all Teachers. They put their arms around each other and care for each other. Then they begin to dance towards the Flowering Tree together in a Great Circle."(17)

The above ties in with the connections I made (in Part Two) between the past and present history of prayer circles in Gnosticism, Witchcraft and the Indigenous cultures. Rudolph Rysler, of the Center for World Indigenous Studies, wrote how one Native American reached the same conclusion:

"... [Grand Chief George Manuel] had made a profound discovery as a result of his travels to other parts of the world and his visits with other native peoples: "We share the same vision and the same experiences and we are alike in our traditional ways." He learned that the concepts of the "Sacred Four Directions" and the "Sacred Circle" were common to nearly all native peoples he had met. The original nations throughout the world, George reasoned, are the Fourth World."(18)

As in Part One, we find here the statement that prayer circles are commonly found in indigenous cultures, and in most instances, the "Sacred Four Directions" play an important part in the functions of the circle ritual. In his voluminous research, Nibley found many references to the four directions being the starting point for various cultures' cosmological view of prayer circles. For the purposes of our study, we can see clearly in his work their non-biblical origins. According to Nibley, The Plains Indians' "four harmonies"

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" . . . appear throughout the world in the ring dance. The number of those forming the circle is among the pagans almost always sixteen, as Leisegang shows; with the Christian circle it is twelve, combining the three levels and the four cardinal points.(19) In the Jewish 3 Enoch the three levels of the twelve produce rings of thirty-six. In 1 Jeu, 'At every station (or step, topos) there are twelve springs of reason . . . and in each every father has three faces, so that the fathers that encircle Setheus have 36 faces. . . . At every level (taxis) there is a treasure containing 12 heads . . . and in each topos there are always three Watchers to instruct.'(20) As might be expected, the number 360 is constantly mentioned and pedants and mystics had a field day shuffling and rearranging their cosmic circles, as did mathematicians and astronomers--our circles still have 360 degrees. If the Gnostic can tell us in a typical text that "the Nous of the universe has 12 faces and the prayer of each one is directed solely towards Him," while in the midst stands an altar upon which is the Only Begotten Word,(21) that is not so far from the impeccably orthodox Ignatius of Antioch, for whom the dance of twelve 'is in imitation of God.'"(22). . . .

Referring to the power inherent in the circle, Nibley writes,

"It is because each prayer circle is a faithful reproduction of the celestial pattern that impulses can be transmitted from one to the other by all who are in a receptive state; the thoughts of those in the circle are concentrated as in a burning glass, or, since the thing most emphasized as the indispensable requirement of the circle is the absolute purity of mind, concentration of thought devoid of any reservations or distractions, and since the communication is beamed from one Treasury of Light to others, the analogy of the laser is quite striking."(23)

"With the Fall, according to a Hebrew Enoch fragment, Adam tried his best to behold again the glory of the Shekhina, but had to settle in his fallen state for 'the circle of the Sun which all behold in glory as the sign of the Shekhina with 6000 prophets circling around it.'(24) In the various 'ascension' texts we are taken again and again through the various levels of concentric rings, 'the order [taxis] of holy angels in their ring-dances [chorostasian, lit. standing properly in a ring].' Isaiah is instructed in his Ascension not to worship at any of the six central thrones at any of the chorostasias or singing praise-circles, circles he must pass on the way up, since all the others are simply focusing their praise on 'him who sitteth in the Seventh Heaven.'(25) Such a mounting up is described by Philo:

"The soul . . . is borne ever higher to the ether and the circuit of heaven, and is carried around with the dances of the planets and fixed stars in accordance with the laws of perfect music, reaching out after . . . the patterns of the originals of things of the senses which it saw here (on earth, while) longing to see the Great King himself."(26)

## **THE LORD OF REVELATION IN THE CENTER OF THE PRAYER CIRCLE**

Nibley quotes from an ancient text, the Kasr al-Wazz fragment, rescued from the Aswan Dam area in 1966. Again, Jesus supposedly stands in the center of a prayer circle:

"We made a circle and surrounded him [the Lord-Ed] and he said, "I am in your midst in the manner of these little children." When we finished the hymn they all said Amen. Then he said other things and each time they must all answer Amen. "Gather to me, O holy members of my body, and when I recite the hymn, you say Amen!""(27)

Referring again to the book of 2nd Jeu, Nibley further describes the apostles and their wives encircling Jesus "so that he can teach them the ordinances of the treasury of light, they being conducted by him through all the ordinances and thereby learning to progress in the hereafter."(28) Then, writes Nibley,

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"At Mary's request on behalf of the apostles the Lord specifies the progressive order of 'all ordinances (mysteria), all knowledge (instructions --sooun), seals (sphragides), tokens (psephoi), supplications (or forms of address--epikalesthai), degrees (or positions--topoi).'(29) And in the Acts of John he tells those in the circle, 'What you do not know, I myself will teach you.'(30) The whole situation centers around the Last Supper and belongs to the church from the beginning.(31)

Here we have a lord of revelation teaching a chosen few the secret ordinances which will enable them to progress in the hereafter. But these teachings are not contained in God's word as given by Jesus, the Son of God, when He was on earth. Rather, they are "revealed" apart from Scripture. That these passages describe gnostic prayer circles rather than Christian is pretty obvious, and will become more so as I continue.

### **THE PRAYER CIRCLE AND SLAIN IN THE SPIRIT**

The apocrypha includes many very early writings which offer alleged teachings or instructions given secretly by the risen Christ. They also contain tales concerning the apostles and their supposed desire for secret knowledge. According to the Gospel of Bartholomew, four of the apostles, curious as to how Mary conceived Jesus, tried to decide who would ask Mary the question. In this scene, note the use of the circle, the speaking in an unknown language or glossolalia, and the reference to being slain in the Spirit:

"And Bartholomew said to Peter, "You are the President and my teacher, you go and ask her!" But Peter says Bartholomew himself should ask, and after much hesitation he approaches Mary on behalf of the other apostles, and she agrees to enlighten them.(32)

"They form a prayer circle, 'and Mary, standing before them, raised her hands to heaven' and began to call upon the Father in an unknown language, a number of versions of which are given.

"When she finished the prayer, she said, 'Let us sit on the ground [or stand quietly, kathisomen, at the prepared place, edaphos--since it is plain that they remain standing]; come Peter, you are in charge. Stand at my right hand and place your left hand under my forearm; and you, Andrew, you do the same thing on my left side.'(33)

"John and Bartholomew are instructed to support or catch Mary if she faints, 'lest my bones fail me when I start to speak.' This mutual support in the circle is necessary where some may be caught away in the Spirit and pass out."(34)

### **THE PRAYER CIRCLE AND GLOSSOLALIA**

Later, Nibley expands on the use of "unknown tongues" in conjunction with the prayer circle:

"Almost all accounts mention the introduction of the prayer as being in a strange language, a triple formula of words resembling each other. Thus in 1 Jeu after they form the circle, Jesus begins a hymn which appears to be meaningless, a speaking in tongues, a glossolalia.(35) In the Pistis Sophia also, the Lord, having formed the apostles and their wives in a circle around him and 'taking the place of Adam at the altar, called upon the Father three times in an unknown tongue.'(36) Elsewhere the text explains how while they stood 'all in white, each with the cipher of the name of the Father in his hand,' Jesus prayed in a strange language, beginning with the words lao, aoi, oia! which, we are told, meant 'Hear me Father, the Father of all fatherhood, boundless light!' According to our source, 'This is the interpretation: Iota, because everything came out of (began with) it; Alpha because everything will return to it; Omega because everything is process (lit. the fulfilling of all fulfilling).'"(37)

## **THE "DIPTYCH": PRAYER FOR OTHERS IN THE PRAYER CIRCLE**

"The fullest expression of that altruism by which one saves oneself in saving others is a simple but ingenious device employed in the prayer circle; it was the 'diptych,' a sort of looseleaf notebook or folded parchment placed on the altar during the prayer. It contained the names of persons whom the people in the circle wished to remember. The diptychs are among the oldest treasures preserved in the oldest churches. The name means 'folded double,' though the documents could be folded triple or quadruple as well if the list of names was very long.(38) The prayer for the people on the list was never part of the later mass but was always a litany, a special appeal for certain persons: 'By litanies one intercedes for certain classes of persons.'(39) The original diptychs were the consular diptychs, carried around by top Roman officials--the mark of the busy pagan executive in high office. According to Leclercq, when bishops became important figures in city politics, high government officials would present them with diptychs 'as flattering presents.'(40) As notebooks they were convenient and practical--just the thing for keeping and handling important lists of names, and to such a use the Christians gladly put them.(41) 'In the place of the diptychs properly so designated [those used in government business] there were substituted at an early time notebooks or leaves of parchment which one would place on the altar during the celebration of the Mass. . . . Gradually that practice [the reading of the names (out loud)] was given up, [and] the priest merely referred to all the faithful whose names were written down on the diptychs or the leaves taking the place of diptychs.'(42) The practice of laying names on the altar is of unknown origin though it is very old and, it is agreed, may well go back to the days of the apostles.(43) Confusion with the old Roman pagan custom of reading off the names of donors from such lists caused it to be repeatedly denounced by the early fathers in the West;(44) but the problem never arose in the East, and 'the laying of a small tablet containing the names is to this day the practice in the Western Syrian rite.'(45)

"At first the list of names was read aloud before being placed on the altar, but as that took up too much time (one of the surviving lists has over 350 names) the reading was phased out; 'the list could be placed on the altar without any vocal reading of the names.'(46) The common practice of scratching one's name on the altar to assure inclusion in the prayers forever after may go back to old Jewish practice, for in 3 Enoch when the ministering angels utter the prayer (the Qaddish) 'all the explicit names that are graven with a flaming style on the Throne of Glory fly off. . . . And they surround and compass the Holy One . . . on the four sides of the place of His Shekhina.' . . ."(47)

"As Cyril of Jerusalem explains it, 'In the circle we pray for those who are sick and afflicted; in short, we pray for whoever is in need of help.'(48) Cyril does not mention the list of names on the altar in this account, but he does elsewhere, referring to this very custom and specifying separate lists for the living and the dead.(49) In the Eastern churches 'they prayed mentally for the living,' while the memento for the dead was something else, requiring, of course, the actual speaking of their names at some time. The prayer uttered for those whose names were on the altar was not a fixed formula, to judge by one old rubric giving instructions: 'He (the leader) joins hands and prays for a while (no set limit); then he proceeds with his hands stretched out (extensis, extended): and all those standing in the circle join in.'"(50)

## **ANCIENT ORIGINS**

Dr. Nibley points out a similarity between Egyptian prayer circles and those described in an early apostate writing, which he refers to as "Christian":

"In the Cairo Museum, written on a huge shard of red pottery, is an ancient Coptic liturgical text which provides a remarkable link between ancient Egyptian and early Christian beliefs. It is a Christian 'Book of



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Breathings' with the name of Osiris (representing the initiate) replaced by that of Adam, as if the 'Egyptian Endowment' were organically linked to the Christian. Equally instructive is the predominance of the prayer circle in the text and the cosmic significance given it. As its modern editor, L. Saint-Paul Girard, notes, it has eight main divisions.(51)

"A. Calling upon God . . . "B. Solemn adjurations. Adam as the type of initiate. . . "C. The healing of the man Adam . . . "D. The breathing (Resurrection) motif . . . "E. A type of the Crucifixion . . . "F. The hymn . . . "G. Prayer circle . . . "H. Entering the Presence . . .

Nibley notes that those in some prayer circles began their prayers by raising both hands above their heads, and in the passage below, compares this to a similar Egyptian stance:

"F. Preisigke, studying the same gesture among the Egyptians (it is none other than the famous 'ka' gesture), notes that it represents submission (the 'hands up' position of one surrendering on the battlefield) while at the same time calling the attention of heaven to an offering one has brought in supplication. He also points out that the early Christians used the same gesture in anticipation of a visitation from heaven, to which they added the idea of the upraised arms of the Savior on the cross.(52)

Ancient Egyptians believed that there were eight spheres, or circles, above the earth, and that the soul was taken through these to the Ogdoad, the eighth and highest heaven above the seven spheres of the planets. Quoting Philo's description of such a journey, Nibley remarks that "Philo is attempting to combine Jewish lore with the mysteries of Egypt." Philo wrote,

"The soul . . . is borne ever higher to the ether and the circuit of heaven, and is carried around with the dances of the planets and fixed stars in accordance with the laws of perfect music, reaching out after . . . the patterns of the originals of things of the senses which it saw here (on earth, while) longing to see the Great King himself." (53)

Referencing Max Pulver, Nibley says that the eight-circle model 'occurs also in early Christianity whenever it discloses an Egyptian influence.'(54) The latter part of the following quote shows to what extent the young Church was infiltrated with the mysteries of Egypt by people such as Clement of Alexandria:

"Plutarch explains certain mysteries on the authority of the Egyptians in a combination of earthly and heavenly geography which is typically Egyptian: The worlds are so ordered that 'one always touches the other in a circle, moving as it were in a stately ring-dance,' which takes place surprisingly within a triangle, 'the foundation and common altar of all these worlds, which is called the Plain of Truth, in which lie the designs, moulds, ideas, and permanent examples or samples of all things that ever were or shall be.'(55) Some have suggested that the three-cornered plain in question is the Nile Delta,(56) and it is not surprising that Plutarch's image of things was Christianized by an Egyptian, Clement of Alexandria: 'That which Christ brings forth (is) transformed into an Ogdoad . . . and through three names is liberated as a triad. . . . When you bear the image of the terrestrial world then you also bear the image of the celestial.'(57)

## **A COMMON ASPECT OF PRAYER CIRCLES DOWN THROUGH THE AGES: UNITY**

The purpose of today's prayer circles, in the world's New Age philosophy as well as in the Church, is to promote unity. Participants are "one," "part of a family," or joined in the "brotherhood of man." But this has always been the case with prayer circles. Nibley writes that this goal of unity extended even to unity with the dead:

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"Since the purpose of the prayer circle was to achieve total unity of minds and hearts, 'keeping in mind the absent ones,' it was natural to include the dead as well as the living in remembrance. One prayed for himself 'and also for all my relatives and close associates (consanguinitate vel familiaritate) and for all the Saints of the Church of God, as well as for those who died in the faith, who are recorded in my Book of Remembrance.'" (58)

In a list of some of the common attributes of early prayer circles, Nibley points up a situation that is still true today. The unity in a prayer circle is partially created through inclusiveness (members are ordinary men and women) and exclusiveness (only those in the circle have ears to hear.) As in the witches' circle, the circle itself brings protection from evil while enabling unity through the powers of the four directions. Here are Nibley's conclusions on the characteristics of these prayer circles:

"1. It always appears as a solemn ordinance, a guarded secret and a 'mystery' for initiates only. This does not express a desire to mystify but the complete concentration and unity of the participants that requires the shutting out of the trivial and distractions of the external world.

"2. It always takes place in a special setting--the temple. Even in Christian churches of later time there is a conscious attempt to reproduce as nearly as possible the original temple situation.

"3. The words and gestures do not always make sense to outsiders--only 'he who has ears to hear' may hear, and only 'he who joins in the circle knows what is going on.' This because the prayer circles are integral parts of a longer series of ordinances that proceed and follow them; taken out of that context they necessarily seem puzzling.

"4. Though private prayer circles would seem to be out of the question (quackery, magic, and witchcraft made use of them), the members of the circle are never those of a special social rank, family, guild, or profession--they are ordinary men and women of the church, with a high priest presiding.(59)

Noting that the design of many ancient monuments was "dedicated to harnessing the power of the heavens through the prayer circle," Dr. Nibley concludes,

"There is a definite cosmic connection here. "What is eternal . . . is circular, and what is circular is eternal," write Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, quoting Aristotle with the comment, 'That was the mature conclusion of human thought over millennia. It was . . . an obsession with circularity.'"(60)

\_\_\_\_\_ Footnotes:

(1) Matthew Henry Commentary; (CAPS mine).

(2) Ibid.

(3) Countup 2000-World Peace Day, "1000 Ideas For A Better World" by Dr. Robert Muller, Chancellor, University for Peace, from the book "2000 Ideas For A Better World" (c) 1997; CAPS MINE. <http://www.worldpeace2000.org/ideas/>

(4) Dr. Robert Muller, "New Genesis: Shaping A Global Spirituality" (c) 1982 Image Books edition, Dedication Page.

(5) Hugh Nibley, "Mormonism And Early Christianity," (c) 1987, Deseret Book, p. 86.

(6) Acts of John: From "The Apocryphal New Testament," M.R. James -Translation and Notes, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924. <http://wesley.nnc.edu/noncanon/acts/actjohn.htm> The Gnostic Virtual Library lists this hymn and interjects, "and they moving around in a circle answered him" ("The Hymn of Jesus"). <http://home.sol.no/~noetic/HymnJ.html>

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(7) Nibley, pp 46-47.

(8) The Gnosis Archive, "The Hymn of the Lord Which He Sang in Secret to the Holy Apostles, His Disciples". <http://www.webcom.com/~gnosis/>

(9) Nibley citing Ignatius Ephraem II Rahmani, ed., Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi (Moguntiae: Kirchheim, 1899).

(10) Nibley citing Ibid. 36-37.

(11) Nibley, Footnote 19, p. 87.

(12) Nibley citing 2 Jehu, 54 (40), text in Carl Schmidt, Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache aus dem CodexBrucianus (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1892), 99. Cf. German tr., 193.

(13) Ibid., 66-67 (53g), in Schmidt, Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache, 114-17, quote from p. 114; cf. tr., 204. Both First and Second Jehu contain sketches showing various arrangements of prayer circles. Other texts, e.g., the Gospel of Bartholomew and Pistis Sophia, p. 358, make it clear that the facing in four directions denotes standing in a circle.

(14) Nibley citing Philo, De Opificio Mundi (On The Creation) 70-71, tr. Colson (as cited in Leisegang, "The Mystery of the Serpent," 234), modified.

(15) Nibley citing F. Dieterici, ed., Their und Mensch vor dem Konig der Geniem (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1881), 2-4; cf. Clement, Epistola 1 ad Corinthios (First Epistle to the Corinthians) 20, in PG 1:249.

(16) Nibley citing Leisegang, "The Mystery of the Serpent," 244.

(17) Nibley citing Hyemeyohsts Storm, Seven Arrows (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 20.

(18) "The Legacy of Grand Chief George Manuel," Rudolph C. Ryser, Center for World Indigenous Studies. <http://www.halcyon.com/FWDP/manuel.html>.

(19) Nibley noting that especially instructive on the circles of eight and twelve, etc., is the Coptic Sophia Christi, 95-96, 107-117, 123-24, in Till, Gnostische Schriften, 230-33, 254-75, 286-89.

(20) Nibley citing 1 Jehu 10-11, in Schmidt, Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache, 52-53; cf. tr. 151; cf. second Coptic-Gnostic Work, 10-11, in *ibid.*, 233-34, cf. tr. 284.

(21) Nibley citing Second Coptic Gnostic Work, 8a, in Schmidt, Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache, 231-32.

(22) Nibley citing Pulver, 175-77.

(23) Nibley citing Second Coptic Gnostic Work, 8a, in Schmidt, Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache, 231-32.

(24) Nibley citing Adolf Jellinek, Bet ha-Midresch, 6 vols. (Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1967), 5:172 (Book of Enoch).

(25) Nibley citing Ascension of Isaiah 4:15-17, in OTP 2:162.

(26) Nibley citing Philo, On The Creation, 70-71.

(27) Nibley citing Kasr al-Wazz fragment, p. ii-end, from photographs kindly lent to the author (Nibley) by Professor Hughes at the University of Chicago at the time of their discovery in 1966.

(28) Nibley citing 2 Jehu, 54 (40), in Carl Schmidt, Gnostische Schriften in koptischer Sprache, 99; tr., 193.

(29) Nibley citing Pistis Sophia, pp. 358-360 (363-66),(Mead, 300).

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- (30) Nibley citing Acts of John 1:43, in NTA 2:231.
- (31) Nibley: Even THOSE (originally italicized) Gnostic versions defending the proposition that Jesus did not really suffer on the cross celebrate "a pseudo passion and a pseudo death of Christ," according to Pulver, "Jesus; Round Dance and Crucifixion," 176-78.
- (32) Nibley citing A. Wilmart and E. Tisserant, "Fragments grecs et latins de; 'evangile de Barthelemy,'" *Revue Biblique* 22 (n.s. 10) (1913): 321.
- (33) Nibley citing *Ibid.*, 324.
- (34) Nibley, p. 50.
- (35) Nibley citing Max Pulver, "Jesus' Round Dance And Crucifixion," 175.
- (36) Nibley citing Pistis Sophia, p. 358; tr. Mead, 295.
- (37) Nibley citing *Ibid.*, 375; tr. Mead, 310; 357-358; tr. Mead, 295.
- (38) Nibley citing O. Stegmüller, "Diptychon," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1957) 3:1138.
- (39) Nibley citing F. Cabrol, "Diptyques (Liturgie)," in *DACL* 4:1050.
- (40) Nibley citing *Ibid.*, 1095-96.
- (41) Nibley citing *Ibid.*, 1046-47; Stegmüller, "Diptychon," 1140.
- (42) Nibley citing Cabriol, "Diptyques," 1061.
- (43) Nibley citing Stegmüller, "Diptychon," 1138, 1147; Cabrol, "Diptyques," 1051, citing Bona.
- (44) Nibley citing Stegmüller, "Diptychon," 1143; Cabrol, 1059; noting that the donor lists were unknown in the East until Constantine introduced them from Rome.
- (45) Nibley citing Stegmüller, "Diptychon," 1147; cf. 1144-46.
- (46) Nibley citing *Ibid.*, 3:1147, citing the famous Bobbio Missal.
- (47) Nibley citing Odeberg, 3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch, ch. 39.
- (48) Nibley citing "Dissertatio de Vita Sancti Cyrilli," 1,16, in *PG* 33:116.
- (49) Nibley citing *Ibid.*; Nicephorus Callistus, HE XIV, 26-27, in *PG* 146:1137-4.
- (50) Nibley citing Cabrol, "Diptyques," 1067.
- (51) Nibley citing L. Saint Paul-Girard, "Un Fragment de liturgie magique copte sur ostrakon," *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 27 (1927): 62-68.
- (52) Nibley citing Friedrich Preisigke, *Vom göttlichen Fluidum nach ägyptischer Anschauung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1920), p. 41, note 3; p. 42.
- (53) Nibley citing Philo, "On the Creation" 70-71.
- (54) Pulver, 187.
- (55) Nibley citing Plutarch, *De Defectu Oracularum* 22.
- (56) Nibley: i.e., the so-called Pyramidologists. A hypocephalus like that of Facsimile No. 2 of the Book of Abraham depicts the geography of the earth as a reflection of that of heaven, with the Delta in the center.

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(57) Nibley citing Clement of Alexandria (dubia), *Excerpta ex Scriptis Theodoti* (The Teachings of Theodotus) 80, in PG 9:696.

(58) Nibley: Quote is from Cabrol, "Diptyques," 1061; cf. Stegmuller, "Diptychon," 1140. The names in the diptych show "by this meeting of individuals the close bond of communion and love which united all the members of the church." Cabrol, "Diptyques," 1049.

(59) Nibley, pp. 82-83.

(60) Nibley citing Giorgio de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill* (Boston: Godine, 1977), 48-49.

Part Four: The "Revival's" Prayer Circles Of Power  
By Ed Tarkowski

"I was horrified when Terry Virgo encouraged us to get together in a circle and hold hands as a sign of 'unity' and to let the power flow through us."(1)

Matt D. from Sussex in the UK wrote the above as part of his testimony of realizing the error of the Toronto Experience. His description of the prayer circle contains the very elements that we have been discussing: a small group in a circle, holding hands as a sign of unity, and a releasing of power through those in the circle. While there is no hint of approval for this practice in the Scriptures, these elements are common in Witchcraft, Gnosticism, Native American cultures and the current "revival," as documented in the first three parts of this series. You may want to remind yourself of a few facts from these by reading the sidebar accompanying this article, entitled SUMMARY: Parts One Through Three.

### **A VERY IMPORTANT REMINDER**

Now I'd like to make a very important point: Pagan Daphne said, "Ritual space is defined by walls in churches, [or] by casting a circle in Pagan rituals,"(2) and Wiccan Selena Fox informed us that the use of the circle and its rituals can be designed according to one's own traditions, preferences, and experiences. What these statements do is open up a way of flexibility for Witchcraft and Gnosticism to be introduced into the church in an acceptable form. In other words, the form, if bent enough here and there, would still be Witchcraft and Gnosticism, but LOOK acceptable as Christian worship and fellowship with a wonder-working God. Keeping that in mind, let's now look at the revival in the light of all I have shared thus far.

### **"SWEEPING" THE CIRCLE'S SACRED SPACE**

In Part Two, I quoted Wiccan Daphne as saying,

"Sweeping the circle is a way to clear unwanted emotional baggage, 'vibes' and to prepare the circle space for casting. The handmaiden literally sweeps the ritual area with a broom, often called a besom"(3).

Remembering that Wiccans believe that the walls of a church form a sacred space, we can ask, "Is there a form of 'sweeping' or 'cleansing the house' going on in the revival?" Yes, there is, and at Brownsville, it is done before the service begins, as seen in the following testimonies. Under the heading "Sweeping The House," the following testimony describes "200 people who were preparing their hearts for intercession."

"The first part of the service is dedicated to 'sweeping' the house. We were instructed to grab the hands of two or three others and move through the auditorium and cleanse the house. (During the revival

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services the lost come in by the hundreds and demonic spirits who have oppressed many are driven out by the power of God.) These prayer warriors go into action and little groups of three or four move throughout the auditorium, cleansing every area of the house. They pray over every seat, imploring God to touch the hearts of those who will come from many places to attend the revival services. They anoint the seats of those in the choir and the leaders on the platform. Deep intercession takes place everywhere (parenthesis in original).

"The 'sweeping' is done. Throughout the auditorium are prayer banners. In the second part of the service Pastor Robertson reminds those present that these are not to be seen as idols. They are focus points for us as we intercede for revival in our world. These banners are intricately handcrafted and reflect the areas of prayer the Lord gave Pastor Kilpatrick: family, national leaders, healing, pastors, ministries, children, souls, catastrophic events, spiritual warfare, schools, the Lord's return, revival, peace in Jerusalem, and Brownsville Assembly. Pastor Robertson encourages each individual to spend about ten minutes in intercession and then move on to the next banner.

"Interceding for Pastors

"I have just finished the 'sweeping' and am standing before the 'pastors' banner. As soon as the intercession begins, I am overwhelmed with grief and sorrow and tears flow down my cheeks. I am heavily engaged in prayer for those pastors I have known over the years who have fallen and are not serving the Lord. I find myself intreating (sic) God on their behalf, praying with deep groaning for their restoration. I find that I cannot move to the next banner. I have never experienced anything of this magnitude in my whole life. . . . They have broken through into the heavens and God has come down."(4)

Here is another such testimony of purifying and cleansing "the grounds of the sanctuary," immediately followed by the Holy Spirit's arrival:

"The day was destined to be anointed of God from the start. I arrived at the sanctuary at 11:45am expecting a normal intercessors meeting to be going on. What I found was far from normal. Dr. Josh Peters was praying with the other students for some needs of other students and for the student body as a whole. He then asked us all to take hands in one continuous loop covering the entire sanctuary up stairs and downstairs. We then began to bind the devil in Jesus name and purify and clean the grounds of the sanctuary. It was so fantastic. Right away the Holy Spirit came down and made himself known to us. His presence was so breathtaking."(5)

I don't know where the idea of calling down the Holy Spirit originally came from. Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been here and we don't have to "break through" to bring Him down, or get Him to "show up" at Christian meetings. He is ever present where the Church gathers, but so often lately we hear about the Lord "showing up" at meetings. As for prayer circles as described in the previous quote, it's apparent that the leaders actually form people into these circles. They are becoming a ritual of the Church, becoming more and more common, and all without Biblical sanction.

### CASTING THE CIRCLE

Although I won't deal much with this, I did want to mention that just as circles are "cast" by the people themselves by forming their circle for prayer, there are innumerable testimonies of swords, armor, oil and such "given" to people in the spiritual realm. These objects are for the most part "seen" or "felt" spiritually, but then are taken and used physically by the person without having an actual, visible object in his hands.

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Casting the circle is taking on some strange forms in Christianity, such as in a new thing called "stakeouts." For example, here is an email I received concerning the "staking out" of the San Francisco area:

"San Francisco All-Night Prayer Vigil . . .

". . . and Stakeout!!

"\* WHEN? This Friday, May 22nd, from 7 pm - 7 am

"\* WHERE? Voice of Pentecost Church 1970 Ocean Avenue at Victoria (betw. Fairfield & Lakewood) San Francisco, California . . .

"Ed Silvos will be speaking at this Prayer Watch Night of the Lord at 9:30 pm.

"Prayer leaders from all around the San Francisco Bay Area will be coming into the City to bless San Francisco at this prayer gathering. All are most lovingly invited to join us in prayer for Revival in the San Francisco Bay Area.

"At 4 am, we will carpool to strategic locations and prayerfully stake out San Francisco, securing the perimeter, as has been done in Baltimore (cf. David Jehl 2/26/98 [NEW-WINE] Baltimore Stake-out').

"We will anoint with holy oil the 4-sided wooden stakes bearing the inscriptions Repentance, Revival, Reconciliation, and Renewal, and partake of Holy Communion together as we intercede in Christ's authority over San Francisco."(6)

### GLOSSOLALIA (SPEAKING IN TONGUES)

Again, this is a common phenomena that is associated with the Gnosticism we discussed in Part Three, as well as in the renewal itself since it started in the 1960s.

## THE CIRCLE DANCE RELEASES POWER

In a report on a gathering called "Catch The Fire II" in Moscow, Bill Cassada reports that power was released through dancing in a circle at Rosa Church, the largest charismatic church in that city:

"We were absolutely connected with the Holy Spirit during this glorious time of adoration to our Lord. There were approximately 1000 people in attendance, and everyone was gloriously entered in. Over towards one side near the front, Kathleen Balassi danced in a circle of praise with several of the youth from the St Louis team and Russian children as well. Near the end of the worship time, the worship team played a tune well-known to us, 'The River is here.' It was not difficult to sing along with that one! Soon the place was really hoppin' as a dance chain quickly formed (not hard to do here, Russians love to dance!) and 50-60 people were leapin' and dancin' to the music around the sanctuary. Also, all during worship, Russian women from the church danced before the Lord in their folk costumes. One of their team members is currently studying with the Bolshoi Ballet Troupe, so you know the quality of this dance group is excellent! They joined in the festivities with the other dancers, the end result being several of the troupe lying on the floor, blasted by the Holy Ghost! To say the worship was robust and meaningful would be somewhat of an understatement. You shoulda been there!"(7)

In an "Update from Tula [Russia]: May 10th, 1996," we find another testimony of dancing in a circle "before the Lord":

"We had been so involved in the prayer with Lana that neither of realized what had begun around us. An exuberant flow of worship had spread throughout the theatre. Everywhere people were dancing to the Lord in victorious praise. The prayer time had erupted into a party of thanksgiving and joy. Even my own

## Prayer Circles

two left feet seemed to be screaming at me, "Dance, you fool...Dance!" Just then a line of people swept past me. They had come dancing down the aisle from the back to the front of the theatre and were making the turn back when one of them grabbed my arm and pulled me along. I resisted initially (sic), as I flashed back to a church I'd visited once in the States who regularly broke into this kind of line-dance. I remember how I'd ridiculed them and written it off as the kind of unbridled emotionalism I would never stoop to. Lately I'm learning, with God to be careful what I say I'll never do, because I'll probably end up doing it. I threw the thought out of my [mind] and joined in, at least for a couple of laps. Within moments the chain of dancers spanned, unbroken, all the way down one aisle, across the front, up the other aisle and across the back to create a full circle."(8)

### THE PRAYER CIRCLE CAN BE USED ANYWHERE

I would imagine that Cassada's being "blasted" by the Holy Ghost is the same as being "whammed" in a regular prayer circle by the same spirit. John Spencer reported this event which occurred in the lobby of a Toronto hotel as a group prayed in a circle for the "Have Another Drink" Conference:

"Darrel Stott is coming to Owensboro, Kentucky from July 5th to the 10th this year! He is still ministering in Australia as most of you probably know. I heard that he has been having a powerful ministry with healing, signs, and wonders in Australia for at least eighteen weeks . He will be ministering at my church, New Life Worship Center, pastored by Crawford Huff. I met Darrel Stott in Toronto at the lobby of Best Western Carlton Place Hotel last July. About ten of us prayed in a circle for the Have Another Drink' conference. Wham! The power of God hit me and I fell down to the floor along with Darrel and two other guys. We started to laugh out loud right there in the front of the hotel! We really became "intoxicated" in the Holy Spirit that evening! I did not know that was Darrel until he introduced himself as the speaker the following day at the conference. He had trouble talking coherently and kept saying, "Hula, hula, hula!" frequently. He is from the Assembly of God background. You can read Darrel's article in the January edition of "Spread The Fire" magazine published by the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship. The title of the article is, "It's My Party And I'll Laugh If I Want To" . . . (9)

## THE FOUR DIRECTIONS

My question may have been unclear, as Greg's reply indicated that he was not familiar with such a practice, but then he described exactly what I was asking about:

"Greetings! I must confess I'm not aware of such "prayer circles" therefore I can't comment. However I can share with you one particular instance at my church where we were all encouraged to stand around the walls inside the auditorium and facing the wall, then we prayed for the city. Most times however we're encouraged to just turn around and face the city, which is behind us. Such actions are purely faith statements - like, 'laying on of hands' is a faith statement - you don't actually NEED to lay hands for there to be healing, but that laying on of hands serves to demonstrate our faith that God will heal. I suspect the same applies where it comes to praying for the city."(9)

During the period I was investigating this matter, I was sent many emails concerning the use of the four directions, many of which were associated with prayer circles. Here is one report from Diana W:

"About this Tuesday intercessory prayer meeting, [my friend] Betty said: There were banners hung with a variety of "needs" written on them, and folks were to use these banners to specifically pray for the needs. About an hour into the meeting, the intercessors were told to stand and call to the North, the South, the East and the West to call forth the "souls in captivity." By this time, Betty could stand no more of the meeting and left. Her comment was that it just sickened her spiritually, and she had to leave."



## Prayer Circles

In a report entitled, "Pensacola: Preparing For The Meeting," Cathy Wood describes "sweeping" to begin the meeting, followed by prayer over the four directions:

"Tonight I went to Intercession at Brownsville. No less than a thousand people were there tonight, it could have been much more. At intercession, we pray and settle ourselves when we first get inside the building, making sure we have cleaned our hearts and minds from the cares of the world and regular living. We get focused on what we are here for in the initial 20 minutes or so. Next we begin to walk through the entire building praying in the Spirit building our faith and just loving on Jesus. After that we join hands with others (2's and 3's) and we sweep the building with prayers, asking God to clean up anything left behind last week as thousands were set free at the altars and we ask him to save the lost and bring home backsliders this coming week. We ask him to heal the sick. We pray over every pew, asking that distractions be held down and that the wooing of the Holy Spirit will be felt even in the back row of the balcony and in overflow. When we have done that a while we split up and gather around the topic banners and pray for what is on our hearts. Some banners represent, family, healing, pastors, warfare, revival, schools, country, children, etc. Around the banners tonight I was gripped with a wave of love for the people praying around them. It is hard to open your eyes and look at them. My knees would buckle as I stood near some Japanese men. They were absolutely desperate to touch the Lord. Their cries in their own language did not need an interpreter for me to know how badly they wanted revival. Koreans were here also tonight, and for some reason I am drawn to the Oriental people. I love all the visitors but these have a special place in my heart. You can see that if you go look at the photos I took in Toronto. I guess when you feel pulled toward a certain area, that's where God wants to use you. We took the Souls Banner, the Warfare Banner and REVIVAL Banner to the east side of the room and prayed for the Holy Spirit to bring in souls this week from there. We prayed over each the North, South, East and West. Then we turned our eyes to the ceiling and asked God for Open heavens over Brownsville this week before leaving. . . ."(11)

## INVOKING THE FOUR DIRECTIONS

Sandy Simpson, a missionary in Guam who also has a ministry of exposing the falsities of the revival, sent me this email when I inquired about praying in the four directions:

"The following is what the Brownsville group did the first night they came to Guam. They held a prayer meeting that went into the wee hours of the morning. I joined them, because at that time I was still trying to assess where they were at. Many spent most of the prayer meeting on the floor, trying to cast a demon out of a Christian lady I have known for a long time. They then formed a circle facing each compass direction and prayed that the people of Guam would receive the anointing and that Satan would be bound.' I was dismayed at this prayer meeting and my spirit began from that moment on to be stirred up within me. I was angry with them for the way they treated this lady and tried to cast a demon out of a person I knew to have a solid relationship with Jesus. When she did not respond they became ever more fervent, trying to give her the anointing' by pressing her forehead for the period of at least an hour. Her husband had been to Brownsville and had received the anointing' but she hadn't. I told her a day later that I just wanted her to know that we cared about her and that these people were just over-zealous (not knowing yet, at that point, of their heretical teachings and false anointing). I have seen other groups do this praying into each compass direction' and thought little of it. I figured it was just symbolic. I have later learned that many who do this actually think they are releasing the Spirit' or freeing the Spirit' or plowing spiritual ground' or whatever. I now see this as a very New Age concept and do not approve of it anymore. We do not practice magic as Christians. What we do is obey Christ by example and witness to the community. The Great Commission does not say "go into all nations and pray", it says to go into all nations and preach the gospel. Prayer is important but it needs to be in

## Prayer Circles

connection with the preaching and witness of the gospel message. The power is in the message, not some group of people holding hands in a circle and hurling prayers as if their words contain some kind of universal force, commanding the Holy Spirit or angels to do our bidding. We are not here to cast spells, to throw the Holy Spirit at people. The Holy Spirit is a person. He cannot be thrown. We are here as witnesses to the grace of Jesus Christ at work within us, just as the Holy Spirit is a witness to and points us to Jesus Christ.

Sandy Simpson"

In the above eyewitness account, we have the circle, the four directions, the coming of the "Spirit" and the projecting of the Holy Spirit as power, all very typical of what we have described in other parts of this series.

## **WATER, EARTH, AIR, FIRE AND SPIRIT**

Connected to the four directions of witchcraft and Gnosticism are the Sacred Elements - water, earth, air and fire - and their associated spirits, which are invoked while facing each direction. But there is a noticeable similarity to these things in the "revival." We are all familiar with the "mighty river" in which the revivalists immerse themselves (water,) Rodney Howard-Browne's "Spirit" coming in "like a rushing, mighty wind" (air,) and references to "fire falling," as well as the revival's "Catch the Fire Conferences" (fire.) Although I haven't looked into it, the "earth" element could be connected to the "birthing by the Spirit" or with the healing of bodies within the "revival."

In the witch's circle, the "Spirit" is the carrier of all these elements. In her article, "Sacred Circle, Sacred Sphere: Mapping Consciousness with Seven Directions," Selena Fox writes,

"This is the direction of Spirit. Its Nature form is the Divine Soul stuff that links all life together. It is the synthesis of the Elements and the directions. In human life, this is the spiritual realm and the dimension of the Divine in its many forms. In connecting with this direction, pay attention to the core of your being --your inner Self. Honor the Divine as you know it -- Goddesses, Gods, Nature Spirits, Ancestors, Spiritual Guides, Love, Unity in Diversity. Connect with balance, harmony, beauty, wholeness, integrity, and bliss. Healing modalities include dreamwork, inner journeys, understanding inner guidance, worship, ecstatic dance, drumming, chanting, invocations, vision quests, and spiritual service. . . . "This map also makes a distinction between the Element Fire and the unifying Element Spirit. While in some systems Fire and Spirit are one, in this map they are separate, since Spirit is viewed as a synthesis of all Four Elements."(12)

Later, Fox describes a part of her ritual where she invokes "Spirit" in the center of her circle, calling to the Divine Unity through which all things realize oneness with the universe. In the excerpt below, notice the similarity between Fox's call and what is now the main goal of the "revival" - the unity of the churches through the breaking down of denominational walls.

"Finally, stand and face the center, with your arms outstretched before you. Call to the power of Spirit, of Divine Unity. Call the Divine by the name(s) you know it. Then, bring your hands to your heart and experience oneness, balance, and wholeness. Pay attention to any inner guidance that comes to you. Give thanks"(13).

## **REVELATIONS**

Another commonly reported occurrence in the "revival" is the "Lord" being present to such a degree that people have a hard time standing. Such was the case in our next example, where the "Holy Spirit" publicized students' sins and brought "new" revelations to the body:

## Prayer Circles

"The Holy Spirit came in stronger and stronger as we prayed and interceded. As I looked around nearly all the students were on the floor in the presence of the King of Glory. God then began to give prophetic revelation to many of the student body. So profound were many that we were sure we were in the middle of something gigantic. The anointing was so strong on the stage that Mr. Cava was even having trouble standing up several times as student after student came up to give the word the Lord had given them and they too were having trouble standing erect while speaking to the student body. The Holy Spirit told some students to tell of someone that needed to repent of certain secret sins and others that needed to get serious and to be sure we got the message, Holy Spirit made many students then begin to intercede for those needs. So much crying and wailing going on that no one dare not pay full attention. God wanted our attention and he had it. Mr. Cava never did get to lecture us in those two hours and 45 minutes. The Holy Spirit of God was speaking and he was not playing anymore games. What a day...but then there was the Revival service....."(14)

### **POWER OF THE CIRCLE**

Power is another typical aspect of the prayer circle. We've already touched on this, but here is an example of power being released at Brownsville "in all directions at once." I think it unlike God to lead a pastor to direct people to receive what God has for them, resulting in their being "electrified," with no one having any idea of what God is doing. All of this happened as a result of a circle being formed "around the sanctuary":

"The Lord was just loving on us and enjoying our praise and worship to him. Suddenly we could feel the anointing so strong and so fresh. Pastor Kilpatrick came to the podium and said he felt the prayer teams should circle around the sanctuary and begin to pray. It was at that time that the Holy Spirit began to move rapidly it seemed in all directions at once. The pastoral (sic) staff then began to go out praying for people with Pastor Kilpatrick leading the way. The prayer team then followed as Steve Hill told people to receive what God had for them. Steve said that this had never happened before on a Wednesday night. The staff as well as prayer team had to do little more than wave a hand in front of people and they began counting carpet fibres as the anointing was so strong. Pastor Kilpatrick and then Steve Hill came up into the balcony. They both prayed for me as they moved through the congregation and I can tell you that they barely put a finger to my forehead when I felt I had put my whole body in a wall socket for a moment. The prayer team members had the same affect. It didn't matter who prayed for you, it was the same anointing everywhere. The worship went on and on and I am not even sure at times if Lyndell Cooley even knew that there was anyone else was even in the sanctuary with him. He leaped, twirled, and danced as if it were just he and Jesus in that mighty fortress of God. Most of the worship team by now were out cold on the stage and yet the choir (those still standing) sang song after song. . . . There was no preaching, no offering, or even an altar (sic) call tonight at all. God was just moving in a way he wanted to move and not how we wanted to move him. I then looked down on to the main floor and I and a friend next to me saw a fine white mist like cloud on the floor around people. it seemed to move with the praise and worship. It was on the stage, up in the choir loft and moving around the main floor area around the stage and engulfing worshippers ever so gently. I saw this once before during intercessors night last year but even then it was up in the lights but tonight the lights looked clear and the cloud was on the floor. 'God is up to something' Steve Hill says. No one seemed to know what God is doing but he is definitely moving us to another level. At one time Steve Hill and Pastor Kilpatrick met on the stage touched and both hit the floor as the ushers had to pick both men up and set them in their chairs for a few minutes. GOD IS SO AWESOME ! What is going to happen next Jesus? I can't wait to see what your (sic) up to next Lord!"(15)

## Prayer Circles

My friend Annie forwarded the following email to me from the New Wine Archives. As before, no one at this meeting was sure what "God" was up to, but "the anointing" was so strong that many showed the typical drunkenness. The writer describes the "Holy Spirit" as being "all over" one woman. Again, these events were vitally connected to a prayer circle:

"The Pastor came forward to speak to us and he couldn't, he just started to weep, you could sense the Holy-Spirit was doing something..Rick asked for the ones who belonged to The Rock to come forward and to start praying for their Pastor and his wife, and to put some of the banners over them.. The banners were beautiful!!! such a time in the spirit.. Rick asked for any visitors to come forward and to pray on the congregation, as a circle was formed.. Some of us went forward and the anointing was so strong, I was getting drunk and could hardly stand up!!! I prayed for one particular lady, and asked that the Gifts of the Holy-Spirit would be stirred up in her life and asked the Lord to fill her up.. Down she went the Holy-Spirit all over her. . ."(16)

### SOME QUESTIONS

These are but a taste of prayer circle testimonies coming out of the "revival." Is a prayer circle Biblical? No; we've shown that in Part Two. Do we have any clues concerning the true source of these prayer circles? I believe I've shown the origins in the first three parts of this series. Should a Christian participate in them? I don't think that's advisable. There are centuries of evidence that a prayer circle is unscriptural and a pagan practice. They are not merely an innovation of the modern church, and they are absolutely not described in God's word. They are occult tools, and if used, will sooner or later bring about demonic manifestations. SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT PRAYER CIRCLES ARE AN OCCULT TOOL ESTABLISHED BY THEIR HISTORY TO BE UNBIBLICAL.

When I used to pray in these circles, I would quiet my mind, concentrate on experiencing God, and be open to Him moving on me to give me goose bumps. These circles are so loving, so comforting, so unifying, and seem so innocent, that many Christians have thoughts similar to what I had when they hold hands to pray with someone. People do need comfort, but they need to be pointed to the Father of all comfort, and receive comfort through the truth of God's word. There is a natural physical comforting that is appropriate and innocent, but stepping into a ritual, no matter how innocent it seems, is another matter. Prayer circles are a ritual, and they should be scary to us because of the very possible spiritual dangers connected with them.

One last thing: it's not only prayer circles which are unscriptural. There is also no biblical precedent for holding hands to pray, whether or not a circle is formed. I believe we should look into our own hearts to find answers to some questions when we reflexively reach for others' hands. For instance, in holding hands, do we experience a sense of oneness with others and with the spiritual realm? Do we find an expectation rise in us that someone will communicate with us when we perform this act? According to God's word, can we say with assurance that that "someone" will be God? Looking at the history of the use of prayer circles and the absence in God's word of these circles and of holding hands to pray, can we take part in these practices believing there is no appearance of evil in them? Can we say we have proved it to be a good thing in the eyes of God? His word says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess 5:21-22.) I honestly don't believe we can say these things are proven to be good.

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### Footnotes:

(1) "The Testimony of Matt D. (Sussex, UK)," 'PROPHETIC/REVIVAL' Discussion List:-  
prophetic@revival.gen.nz, WEBSITES - 'New Zealand Revival Bulletin':-<http://crash.ihug.co.nz/~revival>,

## Prayer Circles

'DREAMS & VISIONS' SUPERSITE:-<http://crash.ihug.co.nz/~revival/index2.html> EDITOR - Andrew Strom:-  
astrom@revival.gen.nz.

(2) Daphne, <http://www.bwis.com/~dklein/ritual.htm>.

(3) Daphne, <http://www.bwis.com/~dklein/ritual.htm>.

(4) Don Milam, " Intercessory Prayer: The Heat Behind the Fire in Pensacola,"  
[http://harvest.reaper.net.com/di/did/winter97\\_intercessory.html](http://harvest.reaper.net.com/di/did/winter97_intercessory.html).

(5) Richard M Riss, New Wine Messages, Fri, 3 Apr 1998, "April 1, 1998 Brownsville Revival School of  
Ministry," <http://www.grmi.org/renewal/new-wine/list/archives/0055.html>.

(6) New Wine Messages, <http://www.grmi.org/renewal/new-wine/list/archives/0123.html>.

(7) Bill Cassada, Catch The Fire II, Moscow, Russia,  
<http://www.globalawakening.com/russia/update2.html>.

(8) Stiver's Homepage, [http://www.grmi.org/cgi-  
bin/goto/renewal/stivers/may10.96.html?semi+circle#first\\_hit](http://www.grmi.org/cgi-bin/goto/renewal/stivers/may10.96.html?semi+circle#first_hit).

(9) New Wine Messages, John Spencer's report on Darrel Stott's Ministry, 17 Feb 1998,  
[http://www.grmi.org/cgi-bin/goto/renewal/new-  
wine/list/archives/previous/0235.html?semi+circle#first\\_hit](http://www.grmi.org/cgi-bin/goto/renewal/new-wine/list/archives/previous/0235.html?semi+circle#first_hit).

(10) Greg Makeham, personal email.

(11) <http://listserver.charis.net/archives/global-newswire/38> EXCERPT: GLOBAL REVIVAL NEWS,  
Archives: <http://www.grm-uk.org/sund>; Cathy Wood, <http://www.victorious.com/revived>

(12) Selena Fox, "Sacred Circle, Sacred Sphere: Mapping Consciousness with Seven Directions,"  
<http://www.circlesanctuary.org/aboutpagan/SacredCircle.html>.

(13) Ibid.

(14) Richard M Riss, New Wine Messages, Fri, 3 Apr 1998, "April 1, 1998 Brownsville Revival School of  
Ministry," <http://www.grmi.org/renewal/new-wine/list/archives/0055.html>.

(15) Ibid.

(16) <http://www.grmi.org/renewal/new-wine/list/archives/0422.html>.

SIDEBAR A TO PART FOUR SUMMARY: Parts One Through Three

By Ed Tarkowski

Part One

\* Prayer Circles became prominent in Christianity through catholic Charismatic Renewal started in the  
mid-1960s through ecumenical Prayer Groups

\* Prayer Circles are now a global phenomena and possibly the main means of bring people together in  
unity for the purpose of healing and reconciliation

Part Two

\* "Sweeping" ceremonies to clear a sacred place for the circle ritual.

\* The use of tools, such as a sword, athame, or a wand to cast a circle.

## Prayer Circles

- \* Initiation of communication with entities from various directions (N, S, E, W, Up, Down, and Spirit.) "Spirit," which is the center of the circle, contains the elements associated with the four directions: Earth, Air, Fire and Water. Up and Down, which represent the Sky or Cosmos and the Planet, turn the sacred circle into a sacred sphere.
- \* The circle is a cut-off place for evil, thus protecting the ceremonies within from evil while bringing unity to all things good.
- \* The raising of power within the circle to change consciousness, project power, receive guidance, work psychically, bring about healing in spirit, soul and/or body, and pray for own or others' needs.
- \* Invoking the powers of the four (or seven) directions to bring about unity in one's self as well as unity with the human race and the universe.
- \* Connected to the four directions are the four elements: Earth, Air, Water, and Fire, all contained in "Spirit" in the center of the circle.
- \* Drum-beating, chanting, singing, dancing.
- \* Syncretism: a common theme accompanying prayer circles in indigenous ceremonies, the world's religions, and apostate Christianity.

### Part Three

- \* Where today "Spirit" or the "Holy Spirit" is said to be the power released in the center of the circle, the Gnostics documented many instances where Jesus appeared and stood in the center of their circles to instruct them in the "mysteries."
- \* Glossalalia and being "slain in the Spirit" were associated with these circles.
- \* Those in the circles were described as always standing toward the four directions, the four directions being considered the formation of a circle.
- \* The prayer circles was used to pray for others, originally by means of the "diptych," and which was later forsaken as people themselves prayed in silence for those they wanted to remember.
- \* Much of the Gnostic literature depicted an "ascension" through the circulatory realm to the very presence of God (the Gnostic Ogdoad with Egyptian origins). I liken this to the talk of those in the revival reaching a "new level" through what God is supposedly doing in the revival.
- \* As in Parts 1 and 2, the culmination of the prayer circle is that all these circles come to a point where they all form a series of circles connected around the earth.

### SIDEBAR B FOR PART FOUR

By Ed Tarkowski

The following excerpts shows again the increasing reliance on the prayer circle to bring power, healing and unity to this world and the universe in 2000 as it is hoped that 1,000,000 people will meet to join the world's largest prayer circle on New year's Eve 2000.

<http://www.WhisperedPrayers.com/Millennium/PTM1.html>

(Link no longer active)

IT IS COMING . . . PRELUDE TO THE MILLENNIUM

DESTINED TO BE THE LARGEST CIRCLE IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND

## Prayer Circles

As the turn of the century nears, we ask that all Earth Spiritualists and free-thinking individuals join us in an event so large that mere words fail to describe its importance.

On Dec. 30th, 1999 we will all gather and enjoy multiple free concerts, free workshops, rituals, and more. The gathering will climax at the turn of the century with the joining of all present in a circle on sacred ground blessed by Tibetan Monks. From this circle we will heal the Earth, project a positive future of caring between all of the Earth's inhabitants, connect with nature, heal ourselves, and ask for reversal of past wrongs. (plus your personal wishes)

This event has been created by and caters to Earth Spiritualists (Pagan, Wiccan, Shaman, Celtic, tibetian ... ) and Free - Thinkers. We ask EVERYONE who has an interest in creating a possitive future to please attend.

Our goal ? One million voices chanting in the night !!!! Help spread the word !!

This is one of the most important Pagan events in the history of humankind.

YOU WILL NOT WANT TO MISS IT!

[In an update on February 10, 1998, we read the following:]

### EVENT UPDATE

Updated: 2/10/98

This is going to be one INCREDIBLE event !!!

The details for the event are just starting to work themselves out, but we have some real great information to pass along as of this time.

At the turn of the century, attendees will gather to form the largest human circle in history. While in this circle we shall chant and make vocal our own personal desires for the future. The gathering will climax with the blessing and healing of the Earth and the attendees will then empty their "Prelude to the Millenium" pouches onto the ground. This will help to heal the Earth, and will also release the owners "desires" and "wishes" into the greater consciousness in order for them to be granted. Attendees will then take a pinch of the now sacred Earth and place it within their pouches in remembrance of the occasion. (It is highly suggested that attendees purchase the "Prelude to the Millennium" pouches, located in the "products" section.)

Please Note: People who cannot physically attend the event can still take part at home through use of the Millennium pouches .... instructions for this will be added soon.

### Panel of Directors:

Click [HERE](#). Why: To usher in a new era of planetary "caring", freedom, and Spirituality. (We also intend on having a lot of fun and making many new friends.) Among other things we hope to facilitate subtle unity among Earth Spiritualists, acceptance among and between all religions, Earth Healing, networking opportunities, and education of the general public toward the positive belief structure of modern Paganism, Wicca, and Earth Spirituality. . . .

Who: 1,000,000 + people are asked to attend. The event will cater to Earth Spirituality Practitioners (Pagans, Wiccans, Shamans, Native Americans, and the like), but people of any religious affiliation are encouraged to attend. This is for unity within religions and between religions, the healing of Mother Earth, and the movement toward a positive future.

When: The Prelude to the Millenium event will take place over three spiritual, fun filled days. December 30, 31 1999 and January 1, 2000

## Prayer Circles

Where: At the current time we are attempting to make the choice between two different locations. One is in California and the other is in Arizona. By about the second week in February we should have the paperwork filled out for the location, and should be able to make the official announcement at that time.

Cost: Undetermined. We are attempting to bring this event to you FREE of charge, as this event is in sponsorship of charities.

Events: For a listing of scheduled events at the gathering, please click on the desired hyperlink:

Musical Performers Spiritual Leaders Dance Troops Authors Actors

For a listing of covens/churches/organizations that are planning to attend, please click [HERE](#).

The "Prelude to Millenium" event was created and is managed by Thor Francis.

WebSpace donated by Whispered Prayers Merchandise.

Web site design and maintenance is handled by DragonHawk of "DragonHawk Designs"

Member AvatarSearch OccultLink Exchange