

Secrets in the Church

A **practice posing** problems for church congregations is secrecy which may include secret meetings or secret, esoteric teachings. The enemy's favorite currency is secrecy which may lead to his next favorite currency, domination. Domination will also be discussed in this article under the leaven of the Pharisee and the leaven of Herod. Both of these leavens grow well in the dark.

Let us examine meetings held in secret. Is it Scriptural? Sometimes the idea behind the meeting seems sensible enough. One motive is to protect the body from behind the scenes strife that the board deals with. But when church splits result and secrecy has prevented the issues from surfacing, confusion results and the subsequent hurt not easily healed. Better to make public the issues in contention and allow the body to make educated decisions. When tempted to secrecy, think US government.

Other secret meetings may have for their lofty goal, instruction. The teachings usually are directed to a "special" group of people perhaps called "leadership" or "elders or board members." It is taught by someone who is purported to have the requisite credentials, hence more spiritual.

But are secret teachings scriptural?

The implication of teachings for a select few, to the exclusion of others, invites "respect of persons," esotericism, and even mind control. Esotericism is ideas **preserved for** or **understood by** a **small** group or by those especially initiated. Christianity never involves secret wisdom or wisdom understood only by the few, taught to the few, and then purportedly reached by a series of steps or practices. That notion is New Age. Christianity is for all men of all times.

How does the Bible view secret meetings for the initiates? What was Jesus' relationship with his disciples? The Pharisees suspected Jesus of just such mystical exclusiveness. But Jesus did not choose the disciples to keep them exclusive but rather to multiply them from the twelve to the seventy, to the entire world (Matt. 28) to be sent where He himself would go (Lk.10.1).

When the high priest asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine, Jesus answered:

"I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in the synagogues and in the temple where the Jews meet, and in secret I have said nothing" (Matt. 18.22), (John 18.20),

So you may argue that He had His group of special men about Him or leadership. However, he did not have separate, secret teachings for them. He shared his life with them, what he must suffer, and anointed them to do his work. His instructions to disciples were immortalized in His Word, especially Matthew and Luke chapters ten. He wants us to minister in like manner (Mark 16). Jesus was the model of transparency. The only thing he did in private was pray.

Often the twelve were as mystified as the multitude regarding his teachings. He sometimes needed to clarify for them. Some truths in Christianity may be grasped by a child but be inscrutable to others. Jesus referred to the ability to understand Him, the Word, as "having ears to hear."

Paul said:

Those things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches . . . for the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to him [the natural man]" (1st Cor. 2.14). The natural man or the natural mind does not *have ears to hear*.

Jesus' principle of transparency is reinforced in Matt.10:

"Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.

Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light and what you have **spoken in the ear in inner rooms** will be proclaimed on the housetops” (Matt.10.27).

There are several layers of meaning here. First, the Pharisees were the religious elite who had great knowledge of the Tanach from years of study. In fact, they were the only sect to hang on to the Truth, while others like the Essene and Sadducee veered away. However, they took Moses and the prophets and boxed them in man-made traditions, rules, regulations.

Paul warns of such legalism in Galatians. Legalism is the fleshly attempt by man to please God by external rules; it results in sin and carnality. The Pharisee had an outward form of Godliness without spiritual understanding. Truth became marred by tradition and legalism.

Jesus said of them that “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me” (Mat.15.8). The Pharisees were not only hypocrites but were spiritual dwarfs in giants' clothing.

Second, the Pharisee represents **the ruler Priest** tradition; the people must go to him to get knowledge of God. He insists on submission from the congregation who, in turn, rely on him to give them spiritual instruction.

Finally, Jesus says that all **secrets will be revealed**. So practice openness from the onset. Jesus says, **Say all in the light!** The formation of a spiritual elite who exclude others from fellowship and information is a breeding ground for false doctrine, mind control and the domination of the laity.

Part II

Jesus also said, “Beware of the leaven of Herod”.

“And He charged them, saying, “Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod” (Mark. 8.15).

The leaven of Herod is not so much about secrecy as it is about domination as we will see.

Take heed is a warning. Leaven is sin or error that starts small but grows huge with serious consequences. The leaven of Herod is best understood by studying the Herodians. Herod the Great, king of Judea under the Romans, murdered all the baby boys (Rachel weeping for her children), his Jewish wife, and most of his family. He tried to achieve immortality through building. Herod Antipas, his son, married his brother's wife. When warned by John the Baptist, Herod mistook him for the Messiah, had him imprisoned and eventually murdered. This leaven is evil sensuality, greed, and power. In the church, Herod's leaven eventually murders truth.

When the leaven of Herod infects spiritual leaders, the love of the world, the love of money, the lust for power and the big name become the motivation. Like the Herods, they trample over everyone at the expense of anyone who stands in their way. In fact they will find Scriptures to justify their carnality. Coming to mind is the F.O.T.M, The Fellowship of The Martyrs, an off shoot of Todd Bentley, who justified serial adultery by the Scripture in Genesis, “whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” Their legal wives were not actually God's intended joining, they reasoned.

The study of these two leavens is important for any serious student of the Word. **Herod is the political ruler King; the pharisee, the ruler priest**. But God says all believers are kings and priests. And, Jesus said that those who lead should not follow the Gentile pattern of hierarchy but rather lead by being servants of all (Lk.22.25).

Another example of the Herodian infection is found in the Seven Mountains doctrine that requires the Super apostle to **conquer** all worldly systems for Jesus. Probably nothing is quite as seductive as the Seven Mountains. It is a subtle witchery that turns “Make disciples out of all **nations** (goyim, those

who are not Jews) into “conquer the World for Christ.”

Apostle Frank Dupree morphs Micah 4.1-2 into a metaphor. This passage describes the Lord's house established on the top of the mountains, “exalted above the hills” with peoples coming from all nations into Jerusalem (a mountainous city) to worship in the House of the Lord. But Dupree says:

“The House of the Lord today is The Church and it is to be exalted above all the other mountains of society. That means that the Church is supposed to have a "sphere of influence in society. (Google Dupree / Seven Mountains. Of course, this sphere of influence will be achieved by the seven mountains agenda, they believe.

I am convinced that Micah is speaking of a future time in the millennium, and a real Mountain, Mt. Zion upon which the Messiah will physically rule.

The only metaphor in that passage is “exalted above the hills” as it can't be read literally. But no passage is safe from the metaphor mill of the Apostolics. In no way is Micah speaking about the exaltation of the church over all other mountains of society. These guys are clever though.

Dupree's friend, Apostle Mark Pfeifer, tries to get the body to answer their “call” as kings: Pfeifer has changed “He has **made us Kings and Priests**” (Rev.1.6) into we are “**called** “ to be kings and priests. Therefore, apostles have to teach us potential kings how to achieve our calling. No doubt involving tiresome steps.

Pfeifer continues: "Kings are rulers with a **conquering mentality**: logical, functional, money-minded, and strategic. However, research shows that Kings can maximize their ability to successfully lead people by also operating as a Priest." Can you see the Herod infection?

Jesus warned us of these little spoilers that can harm those congregations that hunger for the deeper things of God, but instead get under the thrall of a controlling leader. This leader usually is not the pastor; he may be a ministry the pastor is “submitted to” or he may be a strong influence behind the scenes, but his goal is to get control. Secrecy in the local body invites **mind control** which charismatic leaders have down pat. Mind Control has very recognizable patterns before it becomes a demonic infection.

Traits of mind control are: secrecy, exclusivity, loyalty to the leader rather than to God; tearing down people with humiliation, criticism, insult, oppression, coercion, black balling; not allowing criticism, not allowing questioning; has favorites, organizes inner groups; Invades members personal lives, especially their money!!!! and causes members to worry more about what leadership thinks than what the Holy Spirit thinks.

The Apostolic / Prophetic movement are past masters of domination. This movement seeks to establish its pyramid hierarchy under a **super apostle** such as a C. Peter Wagner or his protege, Chuck Pierce, or under many others too numerous to name. They spring up like dandelions, impossible to weed out. The tricky thing is that any one of these teachers can have some good messages. But what is the tree into which they are grafted and what is the fruit and what is the spirit behind them?

The super apostle makes his subtle inroads into a local church with sub-apostles who carry their mission and mind think. They use terms such as “*the restoration of the five fold ministry, the manifest sons of God, the apostolic mandate, going deeper with God, or learning how to hear from God, authority, covering, umbrella of protection.*

Except, crushed under the super apostle in the pyramid are all the “little guys” at the bottom. Since the super apostle “hears from God” he then claims the right to ultimate obedience and submission from the laity. Nicolaitanism, domination of the laity, is a doctrine that “God hates” says Jesus to John. (Rev.2.15).

How is the church to be protected?

The following practices would help eliminate some of the dangers of secrecy and potential domination:

Make meetings of public record; Have an able secretary record in detail and publish notes.

Make all functions and classes open to the congregation by bulletin announcement and invitation.

Establish a firm biblical foundation to avoid doctrinal distortion.

Although not all are readers, most of us may be helped to become more biblically literate.

It is useful to learn the correct use of the metaphor, type and symbol;

to learn to trace the pronoun back to the antecedent;

to recognize who is speaking and who is the audience;

to note whether or not the passage is before or after the cross;

to understand the prophetic time-line.

to know something of dispensationalism: was the event before the law, after the law, during the church age, before creation, before or after the flood?

to recognize wild fancies of interpretation which will prevent the esoteric from getting a grip. Error finds a fertile field by poor reading.

Part III Secret Knowledge

Esotericism or **Esoterism** signifies the holding of [esoteric opinions](#) or beliefs,^[1] that is, ideas preserved or understood by a small group or those specially initiated, or of rare or unusual interest.^[2] The term derives from the Greek *ἑσωτερικός* (*esôterikos*), a [compound](#) of ἔσω (*esô*): "[within](#)", thus "pertaining to the more inward", mystic. Its [antonym](#) is "[exoteric](#)".

The term can also refer to the academic study of esoteric religious movements and philosophies. which include [Alchemy](#), [Astrology](#), [Anthroposophy](#), [Christian mysticism](#), [Magic](#), [Mesmerism](#), [Rosicrucianism](#), [Swedenborgianism](#), [Spiritualism](#), the [Christian Theosophy](#) of [Jacob Böhme](#) and his followers(Wikipedia)

Esotericism goes under the broad label of the New Age. David Wilkerson warns that the New Age has crept into the church. Derek Prince argues that all secret societies and involvements with them bring a curse which must be broken by standing on Gal.3.13&14.

The Apostolic and Prophetic movements now stealing into the church are just such a purveyors of esotericism. They teach that Christians must acquire deeper, hidden knowledge which involves following many steps that only the leader can demonstrate. These teachings also involve labored metaphorical or allegorical treatment of the Scriptures. The argument is that if one understands the symbolism correctly and then follows particular steps or practices, one may attain the secret knowledge hidden in the symbol or the metaphor.

The initiate then tries to understand the correspondence between the invisible or symbolic and other mediating elements such as types, rituals, angels, visions, in order to access the spiritual knowledge. Thus the seeker undergoes initiation and **has arrived** when the required vision or voice or knowledge becomes imparted to him or her because of undergoing the steps taught by the esoteric teacher (paraphrased from Wikipedia on Esotericism).

A prime example of this kind of teaching is Patricia Clark's book [The Four Living Creatures](#). She imbues all of the elements of ordinary time, place, and events in the first chapter of Ezekiel with metaphorical significance. If the reader can access the secret knowledge that comes from her revelation, then, they may have more powers to heal, prophesy, hear from God, etc. By contrast, the Bible puts **all miraculous powers under the sovereign control of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12)**.

The Christian Fathers were at war with the Gnostics which was a religious movement claiming to possess secret knowledge or Gnosis. Often called the Gnostic heresy it now parades under the many faces of the New Age Movement.

One might well ask, doesn't Christianity contain hidden treasures and mysteries? Of course. Even Jesus referred to *mysteries* when he explained to his disciples as to why He spoke in parables.

He answered and said to them, Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [the masses] it has not been given” (Matt.13.11). Daniel says:

“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His
He reveals deep and secret things. He knows what is in the darkness and light dwells with Him” (Dan.2.20-22).

Yes, the Bible contains many mysteries. But all revelation must be found within the confines of the Bible itself, not manufactured out of excessive metaphor or typology, or unbiblical yet glamorous teachings. And Who is privy to such knowledge? The answer is disciples. **Any of us or all of us.** We do not need a mediator or super apostle. Disciples, not the natural man, but those who have been born from on high determined to follow Jesus.

Are disciples few and far between? Jesus says to “Go into all the World and make disciples out of all nations” (Matt.28.19). As many who believe in the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus may be His disciples. The natural man, described by Paul in 1st Corinthians, does not have access to the secrets of God, only the born-again are invited to mine the Scriptures for treasure.

Where do the secrets reside? In his Word. Those who seek God will find the **grace that opens and reveals.** It is not up to a person but up to God when to reveal secrets. His secret counsel is with the the righteous (Proverbs 3.32). Who are the righteous? Anyone who has right standing with God through faith in Jesus. God's invitation to righteousness extends to all.

The hungry seeker may search out God's unfathomable depths without the esoteric teacher. If any man lacks wisdom all he needs to do is ask (James 1.5) It is a labor of “line upon line; precept upon precept.” In His time, the Holy Spirit will make alive many times and in many situations, the exciting Word of God. Usually these revelations are accompanied by two or three confirmations.

But, one may argue that God gives special knowledge to His prophets. The Bible says that he does nothing that is not revealed first to his prophets. Yes, God's future deeds have been revealed to his prophets. I am content with that which was revealed to the prophets of old and recorded in the Bible. I am mindful of the modern prophet who tries to predict the future but fails again and again and offers a series of rationalizations that should shame them.

Such self-proclaimed prophets are not content with the rich treasure of the Word but try to wrest the secret things away from God who says:

“The *secret things belong to the LORD* our God, but those things which **are revealed** belong to us and to our children forever . . . (Deut. 29.29). Study that which has been revealed. There is enough there to satisfy our souls forever.

John says that those followers of Jesus who have the Holy Spirit do not need any man to teach them, but the same **anointing** teaches [them] all things (1st John 2.27). The Greek word for anointing in this passage is **Charis** which means **grace**. **God teaches us through His grace and the grace that He bestows** on His humble servants who are the pastors, teachers called by God as gifts to the body untainted by the Nicolaitan Spirit and by the leaven of the Pharisee and Herod.

Mary Pinkney Parnell, July 20, 2011 , All rights reserved

