The New Age Peale Factor: (Part 3) Rick Warren’s Email

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Excerpted from A Wonderful Deception, pp. 58-68
Continued from The New Age Peale Factor: (Part 2) George Mair’s Book

THERE IS ALMOST NOTHING CORRECT IN MAIR’S BOOK.
—e-mail from Rick Warren to Lighthouse Trails

In a May 31, 2005 midnight e-mail to Lighthouse Trails Publishing, Rick Warren made it clear that he was not happy with George Mair or with Lighthouse Trails regarding the subject of Ken Blanchard. With an apparent effort to take the spotlight off Blanchard’s New Age affinities, Warren attempted to place it on George Mair and Lighthouse Trails instead.

With no documentation, Rick Warren immediately accused Mair of having “literally hundreds of errors and made-up conclusions” in A Life with Purpose. At the same time, he took Lighthouse Trails to task for relying on anything that Mair wrote in his book. Ironically, the only thing that Lighthouse Trails had quoted from A Life with Purpose was the statement that Warren had “hired” Ken Blanchard to help with his P.E.A.C.E. Plan. The April 19, 2005 Lighthouse Trails Press release stated:

According to a new biography on Rick Warren, A Life With Purpose written by George Mair, Rick Warren has solicited the services of Ken Blanchard to aid him in training leaders: “Rick taps the best and most famous to help train church leaders to be like Jesus. He has hired Ken Blanchard . . . . to come to Saddleback to help train people how to be effective leaders.”

Rick Warren didn’t seem to understand how a reasonable person could misinterpret the phrase “signed on” to mean “hired.” True, George Mair had assumed that “signed on” meant “hired,” but that was not even the issue Lighthouse Trails was raising. The issue was why would Warren choose a New Age sympathizer like Ken Blanchard to “equip” leaders around the world to “lead like Jesus”? Lighthouse Trails was not focusing on George Mair’s book—only on Blanchard’s New Age sympathies. Mair just happened to be the one who mentioned that Warren would be working with Blanchard to equip leaders. What proved to be so revealing to those watching Rick Warren, was how he and his apologists turned the tables on people. Rather than dealing with the New Age implications of the Purpose Driven movement, they tried to discredit those of us they perceived to be “critics.” In this case, George Mair and Lighthouse Trails became the “problem” rather than Blanchard’s New Age affections.

Rick Warren’s midnight e-mail to Lighthouse Trails cited his many unsubstantiated objections
to George Mair’s book. Interestingly, that e-mail was posted on the Internet by Richard Abanes within just a few hours after Warren sent it to Lighthouse Trails. It began circulating quickly, and within twenty-four hours, Lighthouse Trails was receiving calls and e-mails about Warren’s e-mail to them. Lighthouse Trails would later post a point-by-point response to Warren’s e-mail, contending that most—if not all—of his complaints regarding George Mair’s book and the Lighthouse Trails Press Release were generally misstated and simply not true. Warren’s e-mail and the Lighthouse Trails point-by-point refutation are still posted at www.lighthousetrailsresearch.com.

Thou Dost Protest Too Much

In his e-mail to Lighthouse Trails, the pastor with a reputation for being “seeker-friendly” was anything but “seeker-friendly” with George Mair. Although Rick Warren has stated on numerous occasions that there are 2.3 billion Christians in the world, he made it clear in his e-mail he did not consider Mair to be one of them. Even though Mair described himself as a Christian (and actually was attending Saddleback for two years while he was writing *A Life with Purpose*), Warren dismissed Mair as “an unbeliever”—someone who “was not even born again.” In questioning Mair’s faith, Warren was trying to undermine Mair’s credibility in commenting on anything pertaining to Warren and the Church Growth movement. In his e-mail to Lighthouse Trails, Warren wrote:

George Mair, an unbeliever, evidently wanted to make a quick buck turning out a book on me, at the peak of the popularity of *The Purpose Driven Life* . . . Since he is not even born again, he certainly wouldn’t understand theology, what I believe, or even the basics of our ministry.

Perhaps hopeful that Mair’s reference to “New Age prophet Norman Vincent Peale” would be buried along with the Lighthouse Trails documentation of Ken Blanchard’s New Age endorsements, Warren made it seem that George Mair’s book was completely worthless—even though Mair’s book had nothing but effusive praise for Rick Warren and his ministry. Using capital letters to make his point and to express his displeasure with Mair, Warren wrote in the e-mail:

| THERE IS ALMOST NOTHING CORRECT IN MAIR’S BOOK. Practically every page has either a factual error, a made-up story, or Mair’s weird interpretation of my motives and beliefs. |

After detailing these alleged “factual errors,” Rick Warren added:

| I could go on and on, but any author who gets such basic facts wrong (that are easily checkable) should not be trusted with his interpretation of anything. |

In attempting to discredit George Mair, it appeared that Rick Warren was also attempting to discredit Lighthouse Trails and what they had written about Ken Blanchard. However, as Lighthouse Trails was quick to point out, it was Warren who was getting most of his facts wrong. For example, in regard to Blanchard’s New Age endorsements, Warren stated in his e-
mail to Lighthouse Trails that Blanchard’s actions were the result of Blanchard being a “new believer.” He said Blanchard should not be held responsible for those endorsements because they had been made before he was a Christian. He wrote:

Ken is a new believer—a new creature in Christ. He should not be held accountable for statements or endorsements he made before he became a Christian. And he’s just learning now.7

But Lighthouse Trails would show in their point-by-point refutation that Rick Warren’s statement about Ken Blanchard being “a new believer” was not true—at least according to Blanchard, who, by his own description, had been a believer for fifteen years—since the late 1980s. In fact, Warren was sitting next to Blanchard at the 2003 Lead Like Jesus Celebration in Birmingham, Alabama when Blanchard described the date of his conversion to everyone at the conference. Blanchard told Warren and all those in attendance and watching on the simulcast that he had come to the Lord “in 1987-88.” As previously mentioned, Blanchard stated:

And God started sending me this team, Bob Buford, Norman Vincent Peale, and [Bill] Hybels. All kinds of people started coming after me. I finally joined up in 1987-88 and turned my life over to the Lord.8

Ken Blanchard, by his own description, was anything but “a new believer,” contrary to what Rick Warren told Lighthouse Trails in the e-mail he made public through Richard Abanes. In addition to the Birmingham Lead Like Jesus Celebration, Blanchard described his 1987-88 conversion in his 1994 autobiography, We are the Beloved: A Spiritual Journey. In We are the Beloved, Blanchard similarly explained that prior to his conversion he had been spiritually prepared by Norman Vincent Peale, Bob Buford and Bill Hybels—three men associated with Robert Schuller.9 The fact that Blanchard came to the Lord under the tutelage of Peale and two other colleagues of Schuller, explains a lot more about Blanchard’s New Age endorsements than Warren’s attempt to blame them on Blanchard being “a new believer.”

Another New Age Link: Henri Nouwen

A website for Hindu Guru Paramahansa Yogananda discloses that We Are the Beloved—Blanchard’s 1994 Christian testimony—is actually “ghost-written” by Blanchard’s longtime New Age friend, associate, and Yogananda devotee Jim Ballard.10 One of the people Blanchard dedicates his book to is Norman Vincent Peale.

Along with his praise of Norman Vincent Peale, Blanchard states that the title of his book—We Are the Beloved—was inspired by the late mystical/contemplative/Catholic priest Henri Nouwen’s book, Life of the Beloved.11 Blanchard quotes Nouwen frequently in his book and credits Leadership Network head, Bob Buford, for introducing him to the writings of Nouwen.12 Many emergent and alternative church figures were trained by Bob Buford’s Leadership Network. They too tout Nouwen and other mystics in their writings. Nouwen is a favorite of both Rick Warren and his wife, Kay. In Ray Yungen’s book, A Time of Departing, which exposes the contemplative prayer movement, Yungen documents the Warrens’ strong
admiration for Nouwen as well as Warren’s promotion of other contemplative prayer
teachers. 13

Interestingly, Robert Schuller incorporated Nouwen’s ideas into the Institute for Successful
Church Leadership that was attended by thousands of pastors, including Rick Warren. In
addition, Schuller had Nouwen as a special guest on the Hour of Power television program in
dramatically.” 14 In his book Here and Now, Henri Nouwen presents his bottom-line belief—
that is also the bottom-line teaching of the New Age/New Spirituality—that God is “in”
everyone. He wrote:

The God who dwells in our inner sanctuary is also the God who dwells in the
inner sanctuary of each human being. 15

Nouwen’s seductive but obviously false New Age teaching that God is “in” everyone parallels
Robert Schuller’s sermon at the Crystal Cathedral when he proclaimed that God is “in” every
single human being. 16 This foundational teaching taught by Nouwen, Schuller and countless
New Age teachers is, again, what Norman Vincent Peale taught in his 1952 book The Power
of Positive Thinking when he wrote: “God is in you.” 17

Blanchard’s Book with Peale

A probable key to Ken Blanchard’s New Age inclinations is alluded to in We are the Beloved.
He writes that one of the ways he listens to God is by reading The Daily Word—a monthly
New Age publication his mother had been giving to him since he was a child:

Listening, for me, also includes reading other helpful devotional books. In
addition to reading the Bible each morning, I usually read a selection from a
daily devotional—a collection of inspirational readings designed to be read
through in a year. My current favorites are Time With God and The Daily
Word (a monthly publication my mother has given me since I was a
child). 18

The Daily Word is published in Unity Village, Missouri by the New Age Unity School of
Christianity. Their “Christianity” is definitely not biblical. In fact, they are long-time proponents
of A Course in Miracles that teaches that “the recognition of God is the recognition of
yourself” 19 and that we are all Christ. 20 As previously mentioned (on page 38), the Unity
School of Christianity is where Robert Schuller told New Age believers about the need to
counter Christian “Fundamentalists” by “positivizing” the Christian faith.

Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller were both drawn to the New Age/New Thought
“principles” of the Unity School. Peale said he believed the Unity movement was “good”
because it “has brought the Divine into the consciousness of untold thousands of people.” 21
Schuller also showed his adherence to these Unity “principles” when he said “how helpful they
had been to him in his work.” 22
While Rick Warren and his apologist probably hoped that the Ken Blanchard “problem” would just quietly disappear, more New Age implications regarding Blanchard would come to light. In 1988 when Blanchard really was a “new” believer—he co-authored a book with Norman Vincent Peale. The book was titled *The Power of Ethical Management* and was based on New Age/self-esteem type principles popularized by Peale and Schuller through the years. The book was published just two years after Peale endorsed Bernie Siegel’s book *Love, Medicine & Miracles.*

### Church Growth: Peale, Schuller, Warren

In his e-mail to Lighthouse Trails, Rick Warren made only one mention of Norman Vincent Peale in expressing his objections to George Mair’s book. He stated: “Mair says that New Age Minister Norman Vincent Peale was my mentor!” But as Lighthouse Trails pointed out in their response to Warren, Mair never said that Peale was Rick Warren’s “mentor.” Mair simply stated that Peale had been instrumental in laying the groundwork for today’s Church Growth movement. Robert Schuller, however, has openly described Peale as *his* mentor. And Schuller has described how Peale’s 1957 appearance at his church helped to catapult Schuller and his church into prominence. Schuller’s megachurch soon inspired the whole Church Growth movement. And while Warren avoids crediting Peale or Schuller for influencing his ministry, there is no doubt that Saddleback Church was forged in the bowels of a Church Growth movement that was inspired by their teachings. Just as clearly as Schuller described Norman Vincent Peale as his mentor, Schuller’s Hour of Power website stated that Rick Warren had been “mentored” by Schuller’s ministry.

### Stumbling into the Truth

Many people felt empathy for George Mair. All he did was write a positive, upbeat account of Rick Warren and his Purpose Driven movement. It was a given that Mair was a popular writer who knew he had a good story in Warren. But the fact of the matter is that he wrote a very flattering account of Warren’s life and ministry. He had even subtitled his book—*The Reverend Rick Warren: the Most Inspiring Pastor of Our Time.* While writing his book, Mair had attended Saddleback Church and even contributed money to the church. On paper—or no book—George Mair would seem to be the kind of person Rick Warren would want to reach out to and try to encourage in the faith. Yet Warren expressed nothing but disdain for this man who had only good things to say about him. Mair had obviously hit a very sensitive nerve with Warren.

What was it about Mair’s book that affected Rick Warren so greatly? The objections Warren listed seemed rather trivial and superficial. Was Warren really that upset over whether or not he was described as meeting his wife in high school or college? Or whether or not Warren’s father officially headed up a youth ministry? Or were the issues Warren raised masking his real concern regarding Mair’s book—how Mair had described Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller as the founding fathers of the modern day Church Growth movement that eventually gave birth to Rick Warren’s Saddleback Church and his whole Purpose Driven movement?

Rick Warren protested in his e-mail to Lighthouse Trails that he had never even read Norman Vincent Peale’s *The Power of Positive Thinking.* But what Warren was overlooking was that Robert Schuller probably read every book Peale ever wrote and that Schuller had incorporated many of Peale’s teachings into his own books and sermons. These teachings
were then passed on to pastors, like Warren, who were now passing them on to others whether they realized it or not. In *Deceived on Purpose*, I wrote:

> [I]t seemed that one of Rick Warren’s unstated purposes was to mainstream Robert Schuller’s teachings into the more traditional “Bible-based” wing of the Church. Many believers who seem to trust Rick Warren, ironically, do not trust Robert Schuller. Rick Warren’s “magic” seems to be able to make the teachings of Robert Schuller palatable to believers who would have otherwise never accepted these same teachings had they come directly from Schuller himself. 28

Whether or not Rick Warren ever read *The Power of Positive Thinking* or ever met one-on-one with Robert Schuller were not the issues. The point George Mair made most effectively in his book was that Warren and the whole Church Growth movement had been greatly influenced by Norman Vincent Peale and Schuller. And this was not something that Rick Warren wanted to see in a book published by Penguin Books and going out to countless numbers of people. Mair’s observations have underlined my concern regarding the definite New Age implications to Rick Warren’s Purpose Driven movement.

George Mair probably understood very little about New Age teachings. The New Age was probably not something evil or deceptive to him. But in his research, he came upon the *Lutheran Quarterly* article that described Norman Vincent Peale’s attraction to New Age teachings. All Mair did was report what he found. He wasn’t making any judgment about Peale or the New Age. I knew from a book Mair had previously written about Oprah Winfrey, that he had similarly discovered Oprah’s New Age affections and her relationship with New Age leader Marianne Williamson. To Mair, this wasn’t a negative thing. It was just part of what turned up in his research. However, by simply doing his homework, Mair had turned over a Norman Vincent Peale-Robert Schuller rock that Warren would have preferred being left alone. Ironically, Mair was just trying to write a positive book about Rick Warren. It just so happened that he stumbled upon the truth.

**Christian Charity?**

George Mair was stunned by Rick Warren’s overwhelmingly negative—even hostile—reaction to his book. It never occurred to Mair that “the most inspiring pastor of our time” would be so offended by the writing of such a favorable book. Prior to the untoward treatment he received from Rick Warren and his apologists, Mair said he had been extremely impressed with Warren and his Purpose Driven ministry. During the writing of his book, Mair said he had come to believe that Rick Warren was a “great man.” 29 After *A Life With Purpose* was published, Mair acknowledged he was genuinely shocked by the angry response he received from Warren and his apologist. Commenting specifically on this, George Mair stated:

> I am stunned by the viciousness of the attacks on me although I know that sort of thing happens (never has in my 20 or so previous works). . . . Even more curious to me is what happened to the concept of Christian charity. 30
Two further notes of irony. First, to insure the accuracy of his book, George Mair wanted to make sure his manuscript was made available to Rick Warren before it went to press. According to a written statement Mair provided to Lighthouse Trails, he contacted Saddleback’s “chief attorney,” but several months went by with no response from the attorney. When the Saddleback attorney finally responded, it was too late—the book had already gone to press. Secondly, as Warren appeared to distance himself from Ken Blanchard, Warren was actually sitting on the National Board of Blanchard’s Lead Like Jesus organization and would be one of the key endorsers of Blanchard’s 2005 book, *Lead Like Jesus*. But even with Saddleback’s all-out efforts at damage control, Rick Warren and his staff were about to be embarrassed in a whole new way by one of Rick Warren’s “best friends.”

To be continued: The New Age Peale Factor: (Part 4) Schuller – “The Real Leader”

Endnotes:

4. May 31, 2005 e-mail from Rick Warren, op. cit.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Lead Like Jesus Celebration, November 20, 2003, Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Alabama, op. cit.
12. Ibid.
23. May 31, 2005 e-mail from Rick Warren to Lighthouse Trails, op. cit.
27. “Who are we?” (*Hour of Power*, Jubilee Celebration Year; this is no longer on the Hour of Power website but can be accessed at: http://web.archive.org/web/20071122165352/http://www.hourofpower.org/Jubilee/who_are_we.
30. Ibid.

- Share this:
Former New Age follower and Lighthouse Trails author Warren B. Smith has a new YouTube channel created by Chris Lawson of Spiritual Research Network. Lawson will be adding numerous talks over the next several weeks that Smith has given over the past twenty-five years. Two particular videos on the channel took place in 2008. Your posting about Rick Warren and the Purpose-Driven Church, along with books offered on your website, have been most helpful. On June 26-29, I attended a PD conference at Saddleback Church. The church staff and spouses attended a Rick Warren. 1 Fan. 2 Pictures. 1 List. IMDB profile. Add to favorites. Use tags to describe a product e.g. for a movie Themes heist, drugs, kidnapping, coming of age Genre drama, parody, sci-fi, comedy Locations paris, submarine, new york. Condition. Not specified Mint Near mint Good Average Poor. Added date. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31. January February March April May June July August September October November December. 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020. 2. The O'Really Factor (1996). Rating: 4.48 Watched. 3. Piers Morgan Tonight. Rating: 4.4. Rick Warren Transformation into the New Age Plan. Rick Warren is a guy with a plan; the New Age Movement calls it “The Plan.” They plan to bring forth a personality that they call “The Christ.” This mystical figure, they claim is alive. They believe that he will arise and lead the world to peace. Consequently, we have a liberal so-called Christian leader, Pastor Warren who is connected to the Council of Foreign Affairs, (CFR) galloping around the world promoting the agendas of the New Age Movement and the United Nations leading the church to a new religious transformation. And more than 400,000