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## ENNEAGRAM

### PAGAN MYSTICISM PROMOTED AS CHRISTIAN GROWTH

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*“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.” (Colossians 2:8)*

#### Introduction

Enneagram is relatively new to evangelicalism but is now becoming popular and can be found in some evangelical colleges and universities. Before describing the Enneagram and its accompanying teaching, I need to document my sources and define some key theological categories. The three books that are part of this review include: Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert, *The Enneagram A Christian Perspective*, (Crossroad 2019 translated from the 1989 German edition); Christopher L. Heuertz, *The Sacred Enneagram*, (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2017); and Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile, *The Road Back to You - An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery*, (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, 2016). In this article, references to these books will be bracketed with page numbers.

To understand my critique of Enneagram we need to understand two important religious worldviews. The first is the worldview I endorse and is the view of Christian theism through the ages. Christian theism says that the Triune God of the Bible existed as God from all eternity. God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit existed before anything was created. This means that God is non-contingent. God was perfect in all His divine attributes before anything was created. Once God created, He was and always is transcendent to the creation. The transcendent Creator cannot be dependent on His own creation. This quality is called “aseity” in Christian theology.

A view that is very popular today

denies the transcendence of God in important ways. This view is called pantheism. A simple way of explaining pantheism is that “God is in everything.” Though the Enneagram authors I review here do not claim a certain view, their teachings and desire to incorporate Buddhism and other philosophies of the East indicates pantheism. Today’s popular pantheism rejects the idea that history is linear—having a beginning in creation out of nothing and ending in eternal judgment. I wrote about this in my book on the Emergent Church. Also, God being in everything helps give credence to the idea of social and spiritual evolution which is popular with religious ecumenists such as these authors.

Christian theism says that history is heading toward judgment. Christian theism affirms the Fall with the whole human race being plunged into sin and darkness. All the descendants of Adam and Eve are born spiritually dead, lost and alienated from God. God’s plan of Messianic salvation is the only way of escape from eternal judgment. I am writing from this viewpoint. Though the Enneagram authors we review state that they are coming from a Christian perspective, we ultimately have to ask whether pantheism can ever rightly be called “Christian” when it denies most of the key teachings of the Bible. With this stage set, let’s explore the claims of Enneagram.

#### The Enneagram

As I read the three Enneagram books, it did not take long to see the pagan

sources of the Enneagram as the authors tout its ancient, pagan sources. The point of the Enneagram is to discover the “true self” and thus find God. Those who enter the Enneagram process will find it horribly confusing. I will sort through the these authors’ claims and explain how unbiblical they are.

The Enneagram itself, as we will explain, is a circle with nine numbered points equidistant around it. The points are connected with lines that create three triangles internal to the circle. These are considered important in the whole Enneagram spiritual scheme. The nine numbers represent nine vices or sins that are associated with nine personality types. Each of the personality types has its own, unique problems caused by how the inner child developed due to various parental abuses. The processes of spiritual formation taught by Enneagram proponents are geared toward each person’s number and designed to bring them back to the pristine self of the child before they developed into a vice-ridden individual. At the outset, the Enneagram seems complex and confusing. The authors provide sections on each of the numbers that provide descriptions of personality types. They assume that readers will identify with one of the numbers and then plunge ahead hoping to find the real “self” that is much better than the one they presently experience.

#### Pagan, Mystical Sources

Richard Rohr is the key proponent of the Enneagram, as he is praised and cited by the other authors. He wrote the foreword for Heuertz’s book, and Cron explains how he overcame prejudices from his evangelical youth to embrace the work by Rohr and others on Enneagram (Cron: 14, 15). Rohr is a Roman Catholic Franciscan monk whose work makes it clear that he promotes ecumenism with all religions. Many mystics, ancient and current, are favorably portrayed as great leaders who will help guide the contemplative journey to the

“True Self” (Rohr and Heuertz consistently capitalize the “true self” they tell their readers to seek).

Rohr’s co-author writes in the preface, “The masters and soul guides of all spiritual traditions of the West and East have known that true self-knowledge is the presupposition of the ‘inner journey’” (Rohr: xi). This quest for finding the true self is predicated on beliefs and teachings of these ancient mystics. Sources that cannot be proven but are wishfully mentioned include Pythagoras, early monastic mystics, Islamic Sufism, Jewish Kabbalah, Roman Catholic monastics, Eastern Orthodoxy and Buddhism (Rohr: ix-xiii; Heuertz: 43, 44). In the process, Jesus is added to the mix by the use of very bad exegesis and reading pagan ideas into the gospels. Rohr includes a picture of the Enneagram toward the end of his book with a picture portraying Jesus as the perfect center of it (Rohr: 245).

One revered source for Enneagram is Evagrius, a 4th-century ascetic monk. Evagrius, according to Rohr, took John’s mention that 153 fish were caught (John 21:11) as a number to be mystically allegorized to find a deeper meaning. Evagrius’ work makes sense, according to Rohr, based on the “Pythagorean numerical symbolism” (Rohr: 12). The odd mathematical material described by Rohr leads to the number 153 being “triangular.” The triangle will be important later in Enneagram because the nine points around the circle create three triangles that are taken to mean that solitude, silence or stillness will be the prescribed practice for different personality types based upon which number they are on the Enneagram. Rohr is not claiming that Evagrius invented the Enneagram because in most of his work he identifies eight evil thoughts or passions, though nine were mentioned once (Rohr: 13). The nine points around the Enneagram are based in the old Roman Catholic list of seven deadly sins plus two more.

Rohr and Heuertz give rather detailed analyses of the source of Enneagram and consider George Gurdjieff, Oscar Ichazo and Claudio Naranjo the inventors of Enneagram in approximately its present form. Gurdjieff was born in the 19th century and did his

work on this in the early 20th century. He was a mystic and spent his efforts seeking “esoteric truths” (Heuertz: 45). Ichazo, according to Heuertz, claimed that his Enneagram material did not have Gurdjieff as its source (Heuertz: 46, 47). Ichazo claimed an angel visited him in a seven-day vision and gave him the Enneagram teachings (Heuertz: 47). It may seem shocking to most of my readers, but having mystical, occult sources is seen by contemporary proponents of Enneagram as a good thing, thus making it more credible. Rohr describes Naranjo and his contribution: “The psychiatrist Claudio Naranjo, from the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, adopted Ichazo’s model and developed it further” (Rohr: 20). Thus Enneagram became part of Jesuit retreats and counseling.

This odd conglomeration of mystical sources has been modified and integrated with pop psychology, temperament theory and ad hoc mystical spirituality to become what is taught in the books I am reviewing. It is rather alarming that people who call themselves evangelical see no problem with this. Rohr, the Roman Catholic mystic, makes this important statement about Enneagram:

It has been shown that the Enneagram is compatible with the Christian tradition of spiritual counseling and human leadership as well as with diverse psychotherapeutic approaches. Hence it can build bridges between spirituality and psychology. . . . But in the present state of affairs the Enneagram does not claim to have been “scientifically” corroborated” (Rohr: 20).

Rohr then says that his book is indebted to gurus of “Eastern and Western wisdom and spiritual guidance” (Rohr: 20).

What we have is a spiritual teaching that makes serious, religious claims that purport to explain the most important issues such as the nature of human beings in their true essence, the nature of God’s relationship to the human “self,” the cause of human maladies and the means of remedy and true well-being. This teaching is grounded in occultism and ancient mysticism and does not claim to be scientific (Cron: 11 calls it “scientifically unsupported”).

The use of the Bible that is found a few times in these books contains allegory and untenable suppositions about various passages to make it appear compatible with the Bible. That claim would only be accepted by people who do not understand the most basic and necessary Biblical truths and who do not seek to know the Biblical authors’ meaning. **Deuteronomy 29:29** says: “*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.*” Enneagram comes from occult sources as even its proponents claim. It is not revealed in the Bible unless we really think that the 153 fish the disciples caught gives credibility to Enneagram. Frankly, the number 153 is how many fish they actually caught. John does not suggest that the number is an allegory for something else.

Since Enneagram is occultic, mystical, unscientific, unbiblical, and comes from various esoteric sources, one would think that it could not be taken seriously. But sadly it is. Since people are arranging their lives, spiritual hopes and personal relationships around the categories and processes of Enneagram, we must deal with its details and explain the dangers and pitfalls. Heuertz’s title suggests that the Enneagram is “sacred.” 2 Timothy 3:15 calls the Scriptures “sacred.” One must ask how something suitable for the service of God can come from the occult and pop-psychology.

### False Theology

It is clear that the theology that underlies Enneagram is lacking a view of God that is consistent with His self-revelation in the Bible epitomized by having spoken to us in His Son:

*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand*

of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:1-3)

Theology that can be correctly derived from verses such as these is grounded in God's eternal, non-contingent existence and His condescension to speak binding truth to humans. As I stated in the introduction, these truths are essential to Christian theism.

Enneagram's deity is immanent (close at hand) but not truly transcendent in the manner God has revealed Himself. That is why Enneagram can find common ground with Eastern religions such as Buddhism. The Bible teaches that God is transcendent and immanent: "*For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, 'I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite'"* (Isaiah 57:15).

Rohr speaks of God as the "Totally Other," but not in the manner of Christian theism as revealed in Genesis 1 and the Hebrews passage just cited. Transcendence for Enneagram is more like the Eastern idea of transcendental meditation. The "Other" in such thinking is God infused into the universe or part of the universe. I heard Rohr speak approvingly of Brian McLaren, which confirms that he has much in common with the pantheism of Emergent. In speaking of the "masters and spiritual guides" desire for people to get beyond their "egocentric" viewpoint, Rohr wrote:

We have to press through to God, the Totally Objective, who for Christians is at the same time Totally Ours, since he has committed himself to our world and become part of it. We must be capable of meeting someone other than ourselves. (Rohr: 21)

This "encounter" with the "Totally Other," we will find out, is achieved through the Enneagram process which will require solitude, silence and stillness. This is not the Judeo-Christian idea where God spoke clear, authoritative words on Sinai and Transfiguration. No, this pantheistic deity is encountered through meditation that requires the

removal of thinking about concrete, theological truth. As Heuertz says, "Centering Prayer is a nonconceptual prayer practice rooted in the Christian tradition. . ." (Heuertz: 227). He then speaks of Trappist monks from the 1970's and silent prayer.

In stark contrast to the theology that says "God has spoken" in full and final revelation using human languages that are meaningful to God and to the recipients of that revelation, the immanent theology of Enneagram requires silence and a lack of concepts to encounter the "Totally Other." I am not saying that Enneagram has no theology, I am saying it does not have a Christian theology unless the Bible is fully rejected. Simply reading ideas into the Bible and finding convenient sections to support one's own ideas and inclinations is not the same as God having spoken authoritatively, clearly and with valid meaning that can be determined by a hermeneutic grounded in the intent of the Holy Spirit-inspired, Biblical writers. Furthermore, if one cannot know the meaning of the clear words of the Biblical authors, how can we be more certain of knowing the meaning of silent, metaphysical impressions gained through "centering prayer" and other such techniques?

Lacking in Enneagram theology is the Biblical doctrine of the Fall and the inherent sin nature of humans in Adam (Romans 5:12). The Bible teaches the Hebraic idea of corporate solidarity and applies that to the Fall. We come into the world alienated from God because we are "by nature children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). This corporate solidarity is taught in this passage: "*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive"* (1Corinthians 15:22). All are in Adam by natural generation (being born as Adam's descendant). One can be in Christ only through supernatural regeneration. This means being born again. Believing these truths means that the Enneagram teaching of a pristine original child is patently false. Being alive in Christ happens when one repents and believes the gospel, not through a long process of recovering the inner child or "True Self."

What we are lacking in Adam is the forgiveness of sins provided by the substi-

tutionary death of Christ: "*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit"* (1Peter 3:18). Christ is the "last Adam" (1Corinthians 15:45). Salvation is taught as the reconciliation of previous enemies (Romans 5:1-10), not finding "The Other" through solitude, silence and Eastern meditation practices. The salvation Paul spoke of in these and other passages requires turning to God in faith. We must "repent and believe the gospel" as Jesus and His disciples preached. Jesus said: "*Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me"* (John 14:1).

In stark contrast, Enneagram teaches that we are the object of God's faith. Here is how Rohr explains faith:

God believes in us. This is the basis on which we can believe in God, without thereby losing our human dignity. God trusts us and hopes that we return the compliment. Because God has confidence in us, we can develop a healthy self-confidence. (Rohr: 141)

This claim shows that Rohr rejects the doctrine of the Fall and the resultant sin nature inherited from Adam. The Biblical writers show that the heart (the inner person) is wicked and deceitful. Consider this important passage in Jeremiah: "*Thus says the LORD, 'Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the LORD'"* (Jeremiah 17:5). Jeremiah goes on to explain why trusting man is cursed: "*The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds."* (Jeremiah 17:9, 10). The heart, the very essence of the person, is wicked and sinful. Therefore those who trust in man are cursed. Yet Rohr claims that God believes in us and tells us to have "self-confidence." Faith in God is not something God hopes we have as a returned compliment. It is commanded! Those who trust in God are blessed (Jeremiah 17:7) in contrast to those who trust man.

Jesus' assessment of the human heart shows the same bleak reality: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders" (Matthew 15:19). John's gospel tells us about Jesus' knowledge of what is in man:

*But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man. (John 2:24, 25)*

Rohr's claim that God believes in man is patently false as far as the Bible is concerned. There is no innocent, pristine self to be found and on which God places His faith. Humans are wicked sinners and need conversion, not self-discovery.

This theology diminishes both the reality of the Fall and the true transcendence of the Trinitarian God of the Bible whose eternal, self-existence is not contingent on anything and who in His perfection, eternally existed before He created the universe. Enneagram is based on a panentheistic view where God is in everything and lacks what we call in theology, "aseity." John 1:1-18 claims that Christ, the eternal Logos, created everything and "came into the world." Rohr has a version of this, but it is not the Biblical Christ: "Christ represents God and hence the essence of the world, its true being" (Rohr: 232).

Rohr has no problem with the humanity of Christ but falls woefully short on the divinity of Christ. Thus Christ for Rohr become the wholeness of the numbers of the Enneagram:

*In the following passages, when we describe the Enneagram as the icon of the face of Christ, we interpret this as at once "the face of God" and "the face of the (true) man" . . . Jesus realized "true personhood" in a manner that explodes the possibility of pinning him down to any one personality type. . . . He is the perfect exemplar of a person who has heard the invitation of God and had the freedom to answer it. (Rohr: 232, 233 quotation marks his)*

Rohr includes a graphic of the Enneagram with the face of Jesus in the middle of it (245). Since this theology lacks a true doctrine of the Fall, and lacks the transcendence of God, it makes Jesus a perfect man who exemplifies man, but fails to show fallen sinners our true need for repentance, conversion and the forgiveness of sin. Instead we need to be our best version of one of the nine numbers with a "wing" of another number next to ours.

Heuert's version sees a pristine self that got messed up and has to be regained through self-awareness. This happens by deconstructing the false self, and then reconstructing him or her back to the true self (Heuert: 191, 192). The way for all this to happen is the mystical, contemplative route they prescribe which means solitude, silence and stillness. He writes, "But with contemplative practice as our companion and guide, we will find faith and courage to become who we were before the assault on our original righteousness or Virtue occurred" (Heuert: 192). Finding the "True Self" who is in some sense fully connected to the divine being is the goal: "Fundamentally what we are doing here is excavating our essence, our True Self, from the lies, programs, and temptations we've wrapped around our identity" (Heuert: 193). What Jeremiah called wicked to its core (the heart of fallen man), Heuert sees as the pristine original righteousness to be "excavated."

Rohr affirms Carl Jung's work on the "collective unconscious," calling it the "Ground of Being" (Rohr: 193). Rohr diagnoses various important people as being certain Enneagram numbers and claims Jung was a "NINE." He says this about Jung:

*He also discovered the "collective unconscious," that deepest ground of the soul in which opposites are cancelled out, because there all persons are equal and "one." NINES feel deeply connected with the primal Ground of Being. They can help others find their way back to this Ground. (Rohr: 193)*

Rohr sees Jung's mystical, speculative theory to have been "discovered." Yet

Enneagram is not scientific and is very much of the occult which makes Jung's work appealing to Rohr. The influence of Eastern religion is easy to see. There is no way that Jung's collective unconscious idea and the interconnectedness of all souls is established science. But in Rohr's way of thinking, it conveniently serves to lend credibility to Enneagram.

### The "True Self" and "False Self"

The key object of Enneagram theory is the self. Our authors use many terms to describe the self as it is and the self that their process promises to recover. Rohr refers to Genesis and creation to explain the self:

*The person, as created by God, is according to the Bible very good (Gen. 2:31). This human essence (one's "true self") is exposed to the assault of threatening forces even during pregnancy and the latest from the moment of birth. The Christian doctrine of original sin points to this psychological fact by emphasizing that there actually is not undamaged, free, and "very good" person at any point of an individual's existence. (Rohr: 4, 5)*

He explains his psychological ideas based on the self "internalizing certain ideals" that come from the external world and shape us into the false self that Enneagram is supposed change. There supposedly is a true inner self to be found and brought to the surface. This process is like a conversion: "The Enneagram is more than an entertaining game for learning about oneself. It is concerned with change and making a turnaround, with what religious traditions call conversion or repentance" (Rohr: 4). He offers a key definition of what they are looking for: "The Enneagram can help us develop an awareness of our future and destiny, for that true face that we do not yet 'have,' but that already slumbers deep down inside us" (Rohr: 5). This is what they promise—the recovery of the true self that has been subjugated by various harmful "structures and influences from our environment."

Rohr's sources are often mystics influenced by Eastern mysticism. These,

he thinks, have insights we need for finding the “True Self.” For example:

Thomas Merton was a true seer, in my opinion. Another contemporary seer, Ken Wilbur, says that the vast majority of religion is “translative” rather than transformative. It is concerned with bolstering up the separate self with meanings, rituals, moralities, and group conformity rather than “dismantling” the separate self so that it can fall into the Great Self of God. (Rohr: xvi, he misspells Ken Wilber’s name).

I wrote a chapter about Wilbur in my book on Emergent.<sup>1</sup> Wilbur is a Buddhist who believes in the interconnectedness of all things. Merton is a darling of many deceived evangelicals who long for an Eastern, mystical version of Christian faith. Henri Nouwen is admired by Christopher Heuertz who devotes some pages of his book to describe Nouwen’s life, work and teaching (Heuertz: 18-20). Nouwen was a Catholic mystic. The theme of finding one’s identity is something that Heuertz found in Nouwen.

This theme of the true self and one’s true identity is certainly central to Enneagram. These teachers believe that Enneagram is a “sacred” tool for finding one’s way from the false self to the pristine, inner “True Self” and in so doing finding the way to God. Heuertz writes, “Ultimately, though, for those willing to persevere, the Enneagram offers a sacred map for our souls; a map that, when understood, leads us home to our true identity and to God” (Heuertz: 26). True self and false self with many synonyms fill the pages of the three books I am reviewing. Cron cites Parker Palmer: “Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic selfhood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we ought to be” (Cron: 138).

The Enneagram identifies nine types of people who have developed false selves in nine distinctive ways. How that happens is variously described, but focuses on survival mechanisms that help people function in light of the harmful messages they were taught by parents, other authority figures and society. Lurking in the background is the true, pristine, and

godlike “self” that was thwarted and hidden by this process. Each of the numbers is assigned a plan to find the ultimate, “True Self” that is still there beneath all of the baggage. Cron describes this:

Worst of all, by overidentifying who we are with our personality we forget or lose touch with our authentic self—the beautiful essence of who we are. As Fredrick Buechner so poignantly describes it, “The original, shimmering self gets buried so deep that most of us end up hardly living out of it at all. Instead we live out all the other selves, which we are constantly putting on and taking off like coats and hats against the world’s weather.” (Cron: 23)

Pop psychology is evident throughout these books, including the inner child idea, staving off shaming messages, social determinism, temperament theories, brain hemisphere theories and other versions of self-discovery and self-enhancement. The true self vis-a-vis the false self is the unifying theme. The “True Self” is somehow connected to their pantheistic version of God. Each author claims that finding this “True Self” is the way to finding God. The process requires contemplative spiritual practices as taught by mystics.

### False Definitions of Sin

The Biblical definition of sin, “missing the mark,” is predicated on the truth that God has spoken and revealed His moral law in a binding way. Since Enneagram lacks a transcendent Lawgiver, its promoters assert a false definition of sin. Rather than transgression of God’s moral law, sin is seen as failure to achieve the goal of finding one’s True Self. The apostle John gives a succinct definition of sin: “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” (1John 3:4). In contrast, consider Rohr’s definition of sin: “Root sins are our primary emotional compulsions or mistaken attitudes. Sin means a separation or failure to reach a goal” (Rohr: 201). The root sins for Rohr are those on the nine points of his Enneagram (from 1 to 9): anger, pride, untruth, envy, avarice, fear, intemperance, shamelessness and laziness.

He tells us what these sins do: “They separate us from God, from our fellow humans, from the creation, most of all from ourselves” (Rohr: 201).

The Bible teaches that separation from God is the result of rebellion against God and is only resolved through repentance, faith in Christ and the forgiveness of sins through His blood. What exactly is “separation from ourselves?” The reason Rohr speaks of that is that he teaches the need to find the “True Self” and thus find God. This does not mean appeasing the wrath of God against sin, it means a mystical journey grounded in the Enneagram’s three triangles of solitude, silence and stillness to develop virtues to replace the nine sins. It is astonishingly deceptive for Enneagram mystics to speak of separation from God in the same terms as separation from creation, others and self. In fact, the “God” of which they speak is not transcendent to the creation and not coming in future judgment where there is eternal reward for believers and damnation for unbelievers. They see a God who is in everything and part of the whole process. If they did not believe pantheism or worse, pantheism, they would not extol the likes of Nouwen, Merton, and Ken Wilber.

Rohr’s claim that sin also means separation from ourselves is patently false. According to the Bible, the one thing persons and even fallen spiritual beings are not is separated from self. We read this in Revelation: “*And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever*” (Revelation 20:10). The “self” of the devil and his cohorts still exists. It is God and paradise from which they are separated. Verses 15 of the same chapter says that all whose names are not in the book of life will join them. These persons will still have “self,” though in hell. Therefore, Rohr’s definition that includes “separation from self” is false.

Rohr is rather straightforward in asserting his false definition of sin:

The word “sin” means our separation from God, but also from our fellow human beings and from ourselves. Sins are fixations that prevent the energy of life, God

love, from flowing freely. . . . In this book we understand by “sin” the self-erected blockades that cut us off from God and hence from our own authentic potential. Sins are attempts to cope with or enhance life with unsuitable means. (Rohr: 34)

That this is billed “a Christian perspective” in the subtitle of the book shows how utterly unbiblical Rohr’s worldview really is. It would be more honest to reject the Bible outright and admit he thinks it is in error than to suggest that this pagan viewpoint is “Christian.” Various pagans teach such things as “Christian,” but that does not mean that these ideas are found in the Bible. They are in direct opposition to the Bible. Sin is about wicked rebellion against God and will result in eternal damnation if sinners do not repent, turn to Christ and find the forgiveness of sins. A mystical journey to find the True Self is fallacious.

Ephesians tells Christians that we were dead: “*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1). Spiritual death was caused first by Adam and Eve rebelling against God and being removed from Eden. God’s plan of salvation is through the Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15), the seed of Abraham (Genesis 22:18), the descendant of David (2Samuel 7:12, 13) and the fulfillment of these promises which is in Christ (Matthew 1:1). The Biblical doctrine of the Christ’s shed blood for the remission of sins is the doctrine of substitution. The Righteous One died for the sins of lost sinners. Those who believe in Him, coming to Him on His terms, are saved and truly know God. Enneagram ignores this in favor of a journey “home”:

So how have we gotten so far off track? How do we heal ourselves from the false identities we’ve reinforced? Ultimately, how do we find our way home to the God of love and our true identity? This is where Enneagram comes in. It reveals our path for discovering our true identity and helps us navigate the journey home to God. (Heuertz: 23)

One can have Enneagram as its own religion derived from various sources, or the

Gospel of Jesus Christ. But you cannot have both because they are diametrically opposed to one another.

### Deceptive Practices

The Enneagram teaching requires spiritual practices that will help its followers find their way away from the false self back “home” to the true, pristine self, and thus, God. The claim is that the practices must be tailored to the various numbers or types that identify Enneagram students. Heuertz provides ways to pray based on one’s number under the heading “Mapping the nine types with new ways to pray” (Heuertz: 207). Doing this correctly means, he claims, “spiritual growth.” It would be rather laborious for me to deal with each of the nine numbers and his prescriptions, but I will give examples for my readers.

By the time someone has studied this material carefully, he or she is expected to have figured out their number. Heuertz has a table that gives the “way home” for the number one that is broken down by categories explained earlier in his book. According to these categories, the “intelligence center” for “ones” is “Body/Gut/Instinctive.” The “harmony triad” is “idealist.” The dominant affect group is “frustration.” The prescribed prayer posture is “stillness.” Finally, the prayer intent is “rest” (Heuertz: 207). The reason to go through this laborious process is that “self-awareness is the beginning of liberation.” Being mystical is essential to this unbiblical system: “Solitude, silence, and stillness are the quintessential qualities of contemplative prayer and practice” (Heuertz: 169).

Despite it not being taught by Christ and His apostles, “Contemplative spirituality is crucial for everyone” (Heuertz: 169). It is amazing that something utterly necessary for true spirituality was found by merging Eastern religion, ancient paganism, occultism, pop psychology, panentheistic theology, temperament theories and unscientific speculation about human nature. The resulting ad hoc folk religion is supposedly what we always needed, but who knew? What God obviously never ordained in the Bible is touted as essential: “It’s unfortunate that we tend to resist soli-

tude, silence, and stillness because some aspects of our awakening, growth, and development cannot be realized without them: each is a work of grace, a work only God can do in us” (Heuertz: 180). The conclusion to this is, “In silence, God will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.”

This is fully antithetical to the means of grace revealed in the Bible. All of them are conceptual and corporate. The Lord’s Prayer contains doctrines like God’s transcendence, the need for forgiveness of sins, the holiness of God, the promise of a coming kingdom, the need for God’s will to be accomplished, our dependence on God for daily provision and deliverance from the evil one (Satan). All of this is found in a prayer we know Christ taught (Matthew 6:9-13). Without a robust understanding of solid doctrine from the Bible this would all be meaningless. The Word of God is a means of grace and it is where we find the truth and grow in our knowledge of God and His ways. The Lord’s Supper is a reminder of the blood atonement that was accomplished once for all, the promise that Christ will come again and bring us to His marriage supper, and the joy of the Christian table fellowship believers have now. Baptism reminds us that the old sinful “self” was buried and we now have new life, eternal life in Christ. Fellowship with other believers is where these things happen. None of this is “silence” nor is it “nonconceptual.” How can Heuertz and these other authors claim that grace comes in solitude and silence when the Bible says the opposite. Grace is a gift from God that only comes through Jesus Christ.

Cron claims that people who are characterized as being Nines, according to their scheme, have it easier in this process of being contemplatives:

If the goal of the spiritual life is the realization of union with God, then healthy Nines’ ability to merge gives them a spiritual leg up on the rest of us. . . . They’re natural contemplatives. . . . If you’re a Nine, be encouraged: when healthy your capacity for merging can place you in the same league as other great Nine spiritual leaders like Pope Francis and the Dalai

Lama. (Cron: 87)

Biblical means of grace are the same for all believers and do not depend on any capacity in man, whether innate or developed. They are provided for all who have the Holy Spirit and so truly know God (Enneagram claims there is some spark of divinity in all people). Believers who come to God on His terms and believe His promises are changed by His grace through His ordained means. These means are never prescribed as silence, solitude or stillness. These teachers have no authority from God to prescribe these things and certainly have more in common with various mystics of all religions and the Dalai Lama than anyone who believes the truth of God's Word and lives accordingly.

When I studied means of grace from the Bible and wrote about it, I pointed out that means of grace have to be accessible because they are practiced in faith by all Christians, not only some spiritual elite.<sup>2</sup> The early Christians practiced means of grace immediately after Pentecost (Acts 2:42) and did not need some esoteric process that took years to figure out. Enneagram destroys the idea of grace as God's gift through Christ that brings forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Heuertz writes, "Contemplative prayer is difficult; it requires practice" (Heuertz: 193). As I cited Heuertz earlier, he also recommends centering prayer which is "nonconceptual." So we pray without any concepts in mind, and "contemplative" prayer is even more difficult! Heuertz explains what contemplative prayer is about: "Fundamentally what we are doing here is excavating our essence, our True Self from the lies, programs, and temptations we've wrapped around our identity" (Heuertz: 193). The "posture" is either stillness, silence or solitude depending on a person's Enneagram number.

What God offers through the gospel is not a process of excavating the "true self," but dying to the old self and becoming alive through Christ. This happens through God's work of grace in those who believe the gospel:

*Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of*

*life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;*  
(Romans 6:4-6)

The "old self" was crucified for those who know Christ. We are now new creatures in Christ as Paul taught in 2Corinthians 5:17.

If these beliefs are truly "evangelical," which they have always been, then why are so many turning to the pagan Enneagram? Heuertz claims, "And thanks in large part to the great work done by Father Richard and others to bring a Christian perspective to this ancient tool, evangelical seminaries and churches everywhere are incorporating the Enneagram into their curriculum" (Heuertz: 51). This tells me that the term "evangelical" does not mean much these days. The Enneagram is antithetical to the gospel and has people engaged in a difficult process to become mystics and find the "true self" that God says we must die to. If the gospel were preached with authority and the Bible consistently taught with clarity, the Enneagram religion would be anathema to those who are evangelical in its true meaning. We would be horrified at the idea of excavating the true self who was rightfully buried once for all! We are not looking for the "True Self." We are walking in the newness of life we were given by God's grace when we believed the gospel.

### Conclusion

There are two things I see that make Enneagram attractive to people. One is that it requires no Biblical worldview or faith in the exclusive claims of Christ. It requires nothing more than being human, and it works with all religions. The other is that the temperament studies that have been recently integrated into it fascinate people. There are differences between people, and God intended it that way. In the church we have different gifts. People read the nine types and can find things that they can relate to about themselves and others they know. In the 70's there were temperament books published based on the ancient categories of sanguine,

choleric, melancholy and phlegmatic. These were blended together like the Enneagram does with "wings." Christians read these books and found themselves in various categories. But we do not need such knowledge (even if it were valid); we just need to serve God by His grace however we fit in a larger body with various people and gifts. My guess is the temperament material is the "hook" that draws people to Enneagram.

But this is far more than identifying temperaments and differences; it is filled with religious claims which are antithetical to the Bible. These claims cannot be reconciled with any Christian doctrine about the transcendent, Triune God who created the world out of nothing, who is non-contingent and who providentially rules over history. It is certainly not compatible with the doctrine of the final judgment with some people with God in heaven for eternity and others in hell. The Christ of Enneagram is not the Christ of the Bible. To adopt Enneagram we have to give up truths that have been cited as Biblical by Christians for millennia. Those who reject the faith once for all handed down to the saints in favor of this mystical, ecumenical spirituality had better think very seriously about what they are doing.

Thinking about the material I read in preparation for this article, I have four C's that describe Enneagram: complex, contrived, confused and convoluted. Frankly, reading these three books was distasteful and made me want to do something else. But the church needs to be warned. To adopt this when we have the simple truth of the gospel of grace is unthinkable. Join me in rejecting it.

### End Notes

1. The Emergent Church: Undefined Christianity (Bob DeWaay: 2009, 2019 edition). Wilber's philosophy is critiqued in Chapter 9 (pp. 213-240). This book is available on Amazon.com
2. See CIC issue 130, How God Changes Lives, Bob DeWaay

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