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Do You Want to Know... *The Secret?*

by J. Greg Sheryl

It has been the subject of articles in *Newsweek*¹ and *People*² magazines; newspaper articles in *USA Today*,³ *The Christian Science Monitor*,⁴ and television shows, such as *The Oprah Winfrey Show*,⁵ *Larry King Live*,⁶ and *Nightline*.⁷ "It" is a book⁸ and DVD⁹ called *The Secret* — the work of 55-year-old Australian TV producer Rhonda Byrne, who now lives in California.

Seminary professor and author Donald S. Whitney, in an online review of *The Secret*, wrote:

"In March of 2006 it was released on the Internet, but soon went to DVD. By late autumn, the phenomenal success of the video placed it on two episodes of *Larry King Live*. Shortly after, two of the teachers featured on *The Secret* were guests on Ellen Degeneres' daily TV show. Before Christmas, *The Secret* DVD had spun off a book by the same title which Oprah Winfrey catapulted to the top of the charts in February of 2007."¹⁰

The Secret promises just about everything a person might want:

health, wealth, happiness, success, fulfilling relationships, and peace of mind. And it has been well-received, judging from book and DVD sales and media coverage.

The message of *The Secret* is an attractively packaged form of monistic, pantheistic¹¹ Hinduism presented as New Thought and New Age concepts.

The terms "New Thought" and "New Age" are difficult to define, and there is some overlap between the two movements. The 19th-century New Thought movement preceded the 20th-century New Age movement. Both movements are eclectic, with deep roots in Hinduism. The worldview of New Thought can also be seen in the "mind science" religions, such as Christian Science, Unity, and Religious Science.

Calling it *The Secret* is clever. Valerie Reiss, Belief.net spirituality editor said of it, "everybody wants to know a secret."¹² A second hint about its

(continues on page 11)



Inside this Issue:

TAMPA NEWSPAPER SPOTLIGHTS WHITES' EXCESSES	PAGE 3
THE NEW MYSTIC YOUTH: NO LONGER JUST PULP FICTION ..	PAGE 4
WHAT IS THE STILL, SMALL VOICE?	PAGE 5