

LABYRINTHS INCREASING IN POPULARITY AMONG EVANGELICALS (-Rev. David Cloud)

On October 13, 2007, Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisburg, Virginia, dedicated its new labyrinth. It was the fulfillment of a 15-year dream by Wendy Miller, professor of spiritual formation (“Following the Path of Prayer,” Mennonite Weekly Review, Oct. 24, 2007).

This is only the latest example of how the Pagan-Catholic labyrinth is gaining in popularity among evangelical Protestants and Baptists.

The June 1, 2004, issue of The Mennonite featured an article on labyrinths. Marlene Kropf, who teaches at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, promotes labyrinths. Bethany Mennonite Church, Bridgewater Corners, Vermont, has a labyrinth in its lawn. The church’s female pastor uses it as a “personal prayer discipline.” Michele Hershberger, chair of the Bible department at Hesston College, uses labyrinths.

Simpson University in Redding, California, has a labyrinth. This school is associated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance

Other schools with labyrinths are Eastern University, Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, San Francisco Theological Seminary, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Lancaster Theological Seminary, Northwestern University, Manchester College, Eden Seminary, Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Abilene Christian University.

Even some Southern Baptist churches are building labyrinths. The Weatherly Heights Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama, built a permanent labyrinth of stones on its grounds in 2004

The labyrinth is a circle with a twisting path that winds its way to the center and which is used for prayer and meditation. The International Labyrinth Society says it is a “tool for personal, psychological and spiritual transformation.”

Used by pagan religions for centuries before the coming of Christ, the labyrinth was “Christianized” by the Roman Catholic Church as part of its desperate search for spirituality apart from the Bible.

Native Americans called it the Medicine Wheel; Celts called it the Never Ending Circle; it is called the Kabala in mystical Judaism (<http://www.gracecathedral.org/labyrinth>).

The most famous labyrinth was built into the floor of the Roman Catholic Chartres Cathedral in France in the 13th century. It has been duplicated at the Riverside Church in New York City and Grace Cathedral (Episcopal) in San Francisco, both hotbeds of theological liberalism and New Age philosophy

The three stages of the labyrinth testify to its paganism. (This description of the stages is from the Grace Cathedral web site.) The stages are Purgation (“a time to open the heart and quiet the mind”), Illumination (“a place of meditation and prayer”), Union (“joining God, your Higher Power, or the healing forces at work in the world”).

Lauren Artress, a canon at Grace Cathedral, founded Veriditas, The World-Wide Labyrinth Project, with the goal “to facilitate the transformation of the Human Spirit.” Observe that Human Spirit is capitalized, testifying to the New Age view that man finds divinity within himself. Artress says that she discovered the labyrinth in 1991 through Jean Houston’s Mystery School Network, a psychic New Age organization

The following quote by Houston leaves no doubt as to her philosophy: “As we encounter the archetypal world within us, a partnership is formed whereby we grow as do THE GODS AND GODDESSES WITHIN US” (<http://skeptdic.com/houston.html>). Exercises at her Mystery School Network “include psychophysical work, psychospiritual exploration, creative arts, energy resonance, movement and dance, altered states of consciousness, ritual and ceremony, high drama, high play and mutual empowerment.

Artress says: “My passion for the labyrinth has never let up! I think this is because I get so much from it. I also can teach everything I want to

teach through the labyrinth: meditation, finding our soul assignments, unleashing our creativity, spiritual practice, psycho-spiritual healing; you name it! IT HAS THE EXACT COSMIC RHYTHMS EMBEDDED WITHIN IT. I sense that THIS DESIGN WAS CREATED BY GREAT MASTERS OF SPIRIT, who knew the pathway to integrating mind, body and spirit” (Interview with Arts and Healing Network, September 2003).

It is obvious that the labyrinth is an effective tool for New Age meditation, and as such its usage is exploding. There are more than 125 in Ontario alone.

The labyrinth is even being adopted by psychologists for mental health care. St. Joseph’s Healthcare in Hamilton, Ontario, has two labyrinths.

That the same pagan-derived practice would be adopted by evangelicals is a loud testimony of evangelicalism’s apostasy and its frightful communion with “doctrines of devils.”

There is nothing like a labyrinth in the New Testament Scriptures.

When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray in Matthew 6, He did not even hint at a labyrinth-type prayer. Rather His instructions were very straightforward and simple:

5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is
the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also
forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father
forgive your trespasses.

God forbids His people to adopt things from the devil's program and to
associate with pagan things such as labyrinths.

“And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that
believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God
with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I
will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they
shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye
separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will
receive you” (2 Cor. 6:15-17).