

# SATAN'S TARGET - YOUR MIND

## Supernatural Living in the American Marketplace

By: David Metcalfe



*“The first gate will open the way to city and regional transformation. Since 1990, large numbers of us have been talking about, mobilizing for, praying for, and prophesying into city transformation. But, in over ten years, we cannot as yet point to one concrete case study of a transformed city in the U.S.A. The missing pieces needed to see this begin to happen are most likely fully-functioning territorial apostles and marketplace apostles.”*

C. Peter Wagner, Church in the Marketplace<sup>1</sup>

**H**ave you visited Wal-Mart's book section? Featuring Near Death Experiences, trips to hell, demonic possession and a gaggle of grimoires in the form of spiritual warfare books, the dystopian mundanity of America's home of falling prices is a gateway to a strange world of supernatural living and suburban sorcery. 30% off the publisher's price and complete command over the unholy legions of Hell, not a bad deal for aspiring conjurers who find themselves wandering the aisles.

Many outside the United States,



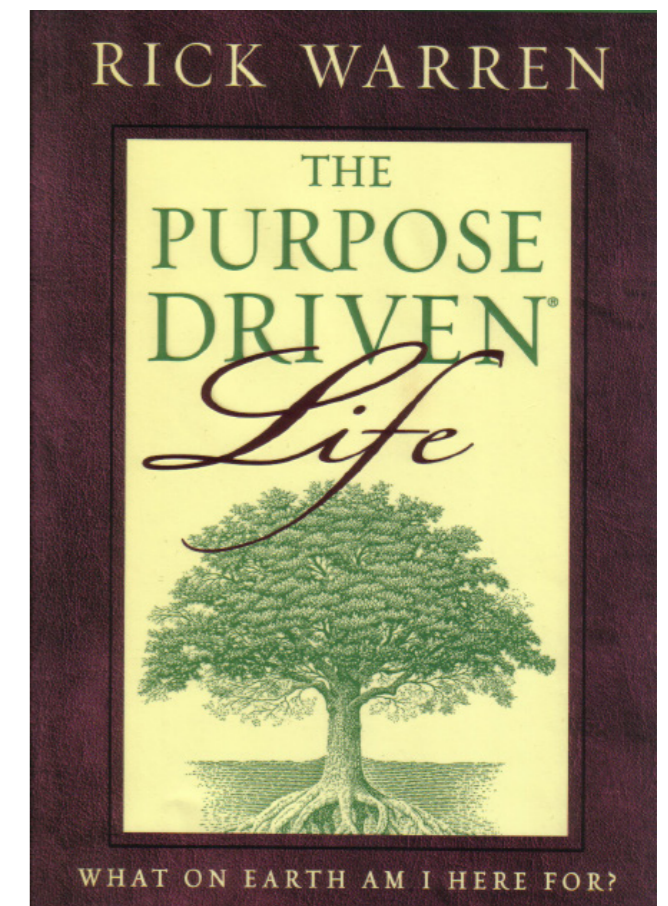
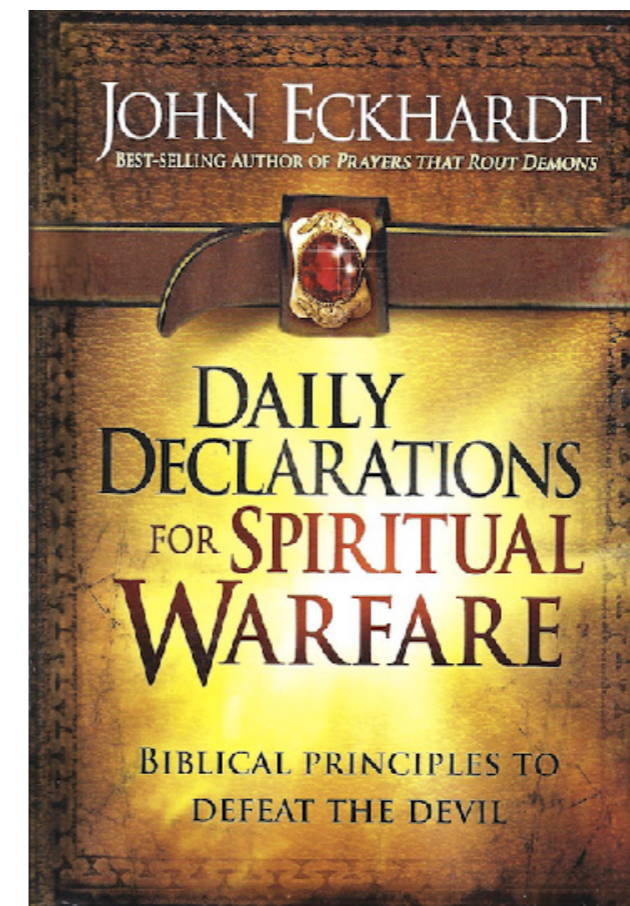
and even within, are unaware of the surprising growth of a charismatic Christian movement, known as the New Apostolic Reformation, which has been making inroads in politics and commerce over the past 20 years. Lead by figures such as C. Peter Wagner, a former Professor of Church Growth at the Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Missions, this movement focuses on what they call "supernatural living," a potent mix of behavioral research, strategic marketing and practical occultism that they interpret as the means to bring "heaven down to earth." Under the guise of a more spiritually focused Christianity these new apostles are promoting exorcism manuals, isochronic brain entrainment and complex socio-political strategies to influence and incite cultural change around the globe.

### **Selling the supernatural**

Those enrapt in the increasing academic interest in the history of occult and esoteric philosophies can easily miss this potent contemporary, and still active, strain of applied occultism, especially as it falls under the ignoble milieu of popular Christianity. Once you look deeper, however, books such as *23 Minutes in Hell*, *Hells Spells: How to identify, take captive, and dispel the weapons of darkness*, *the Spiritual Warfare Bible* and some of the other selections available at Wal-Marts across the United States provide a powerful esoteric education. As one of the most accessible venues to purchase them, Wal-Mart's book section has become a marketplace for Christian material that makes the *Satanic Bible* look like a pale bit of primary school pastiche in terms of practical occultism.

Historian Bethany Moreton, writing on Wal-Mart's Evangelical friendly history points out that, "as Christian books like *The Prayer of Jabez* and *The Purpose-Driven Life* topped national bestseller lists early in the twenty-first century, Wal-Mart's market dominance made the original

Christian product distributors victims of their own success. Having made Christian culture a true mass culture, the network of small Christian stores watched their customers desert them for the discount version of the same merchandise. The share of Thomas Nelson's revenue coming from mass



merchandisers like Wal-Mart and K-Mart jumped from 2 percent in the mid-1980's to about 15 percent in the mid-1990's."<sup>2</sup> A cynical critic might see Wal-Mart's current offerings as nothing more than an obvious extension of their lucrative hold on the Christian market, yet many of the books featured, like John Eckhardt's *Daily Declarations for Spiritual Warfare*, make odd shelf companions for *The Purpose-Driven Life*, *The Prayer of Jabez*, or Joel Olsteen's latest prosperity gospel offering.

### Daily declarations

Compiled as a daily prayer book, Eckhardt's *Declarations* offers a meditative course in "Biblical principles to defeat the Devil," who, as a ubiquitous adversary in all areas of life, is purported to affect everything from small bouts of depression to life threatening

accidents in order to destroy your faith and unmoor your stability. How is this devil defeated? Through petitionary and active prayers, positive affirmations and devotional declarations. Unlike some of the classic devotionals of the past, however, the prayers and declarations in Eckhardt's book have an uncanny resonance with practical magic and goal setting mnemonics:

#### Prayer Declaration

I have the keys of the kingdom, and whatever I bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever I loose on earth is loosed in heaven. I will proclaim the kingdom of God to those to whom the Lord has called me. I will speak of the truth of the Word of God and will loose the captives from the kingdom of darkness.

Each day's declaration is sanctified with meditations on various Bible verses seen through the lense of pre-

paring for an anti-Satanic supernatural mind war. Often written in the first person, these sections take on a hypnotic quality where the 'Voice of God' offers a self affirming set of intentions and instructions for action that rephrase and repeat the declaration's themes:

My child, I have given you the keys to My kingdom. In my power and authority you will be able to bind the power of the enemy and loose the captives from his dominion. You will know the mystery of My kingdom and will bring the glad tidings of My kingdom to those who live in darkness...

Eckhardt's *Daily Declarations* works as a well crafted entrainment device for inculcating the mindset and mission for "Kingdom" driven apostles to go out and bring heaven to earth. More than the power of positive thinking,

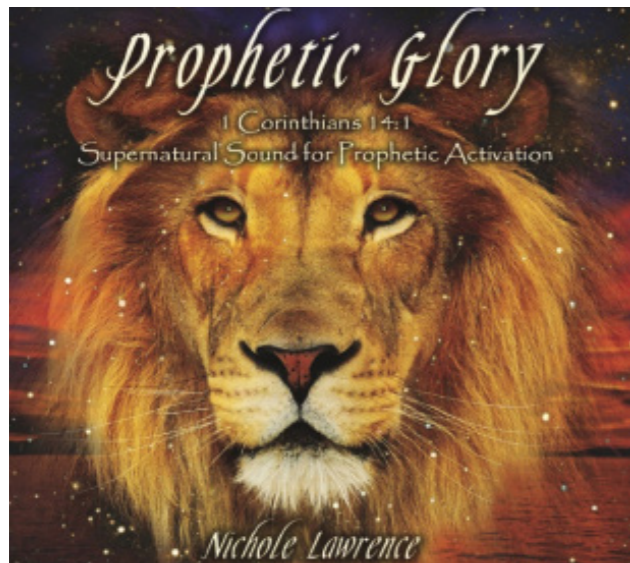
books on topics such as out of body journeys through the afterlife, cultivating the assistance of angelic hierarchies, curse breaking, secret Biblical codes, and exorcism develop an active cultural consciousness that stands against the techno-progressive mindset of the 21st century.<sup>3</sup>

### The science of supernatural living

Before we assume that this implies some sort of slip back into a new dark age we have to recognize that this developing brand of Christian occultism has drifted far a field from whatever roots it might have in traditional practice. While these books bear a cursory resemblance to folk practices, they are more deeply informed by high level university studies in behavior and psychophysiological indicators such as those conducted by the Cen-



ter for Biopsychosocial Research at Fuller Theological Seminary. Looking at Eckhardt's *Daily Declarations* in this light, the hypnotic repetitions, key words, and emotionally primed inferences take on a much more poignant



sense of planning.

Considering the deep mythological narrative which surrounds the applied psychology it's tempting to ignore how effective innovations in behavioral science have been integrated into these offerings. Influences become

more clear once we encounter the "supernatural sound from heaven" of "untrained" yet "inspired" keyboardist, Nichole Lawrence.

### Supernatural sounds

In an email sent to subscribers on July 28th, Steve Schultz, lead editor and publisher for the Elijah List, provides some heavily hyperbolic and intention setting praise for Lawrence's music:

From the desk of Steve Shultz:

...These musical CDs by Nichole Lawrence are so good, we many times have played them continually, 24/7 in our house. My wife was listening to one of them for the first time and she started to take it out, but suddenly she just couldn't. They are that good! They carry with them a great anointing, HIS GLORY, and healing.

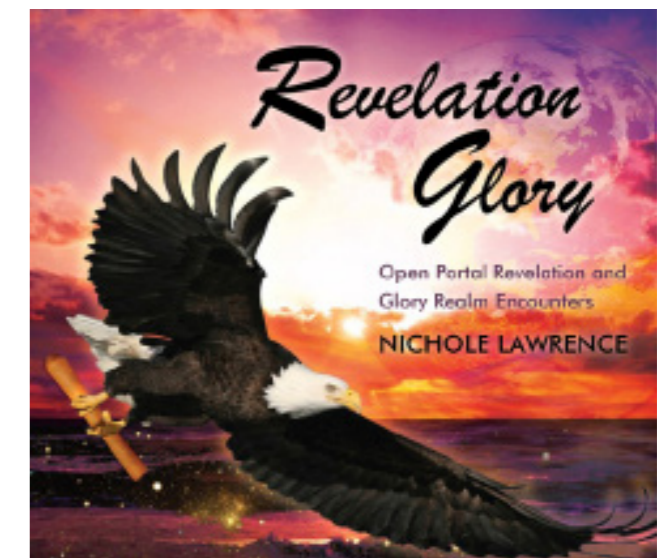
I HIGHLY recommend them to you. They are what you want and what you NEED to restore your soul. As I pass it by, playing lightly, I am edified. YOU will be edified. Nichole is humble in attitude and gentle in Spirit as well. PLEASE get them. They will help you immensely!

It's a spontaneous, walk on water experience that God has anointed with miracle power!<sup>4</sup>

The Elijah List is a popular website catering to followers of prophetic and apostolic ministries such as John Eckhardt's, and Shultz' espousal of Nichole Lawrence's "supernatural" credentials gives us a cipher for understanding the deus ex machina that hovers behind the scenes of these purportedly miraculous spiritual techniques.

According to the Press Release, we find her CD titled *Revelation Glory* has, " a supernatural third Heavenly

sound coming through this that will bring the Kingdom into your midst, including healing, creative miracles, signs, wonders and the depth of His love!" In mentioning a "supernatural



third sound" some savvy music aficionados might begin to get a hint at where the magic comes from.

Lawrence's music is actually ambient keyboard soundscapes which utilize isochronic tones to induce altered states of consciousness in the listener. Those expecting standard contempo-

rary Christian fare will be quite surprised to discover tracks of crafted isochronic harmonies which continue well past the 20 minute mark and bear little relation to standard songcraft.

Isochronic tones are a more effective aural entrainment technique than the binaural beats which made national headlines in 2012 when concerns were raised regarding claims they provide a safe way to induce a drug experience.<sup>5</sup> As bio-feedback researcher Dave Siever explains, “Isochronic tones are evenly spaced tones which turn on quickly and off quickly. They are an effective auditory entrainment method because they elicit a strong auditory evoked response via the thalamus and most people find them tolerable. They are exceptionally dissociating and have hypnotic qualities, particularly when slightly randomized in frequency.”<sup>6</sup>

Rather than uneducated fundamentalism, this new occult Christianity is using well known cognitive technology to create an atmosphere of supernaturalism amidst the grey landscape of contemporary America.

### **Training the apostles**

Imagine, you purchase your *Daily Declarations for Spiritual Warfare* and decide to spend a quiet meditative evening with the book. You’ve had a stressful day at work, so you put on the latest Nichole Lawrence CD recommended in the email you received from a respected, at least within your circle of faith, Christian leader. You remember that Lawrence’s music is “anointed” and “supernatural” which primes your mind, and as the isochronic tones begin to bring you into a light trance state you start to read, pray and focus on Eckhardt’s advice

for spiritual warfare.

If you are dedicated to your faith you continue this for the entire year based on the timeline set out in the book, perhaps even taking Shultz’ subtle recommendation to listen to Lawrence’s music 24/7, during that time reinforcing the experience with additional reading material on Christian near death experiences and out of body journeys, visions, prophecies, dream interpretation, deliverance from devilish influence, and so on. It’s an amazing, and integral, way to build dedicated disciples. If you are one of the small percentage of people who are highly susceptible to hypnosis you might even begin to have an anomalous experience or two, and interpret meaningful coincidences in your life with more acute attention.

To look at any of these products in isolation misses the fact that they exist

within the culture of contemporary Christianity and the interconnected information landscape of contemporary communications. Each book, CD, FaceBook post, sermon, and website is a small piece within a larger imaginal structure which stretches across the “7 mountains” identified as key components in guiding society. For those unfamiliar with this concept, the website *Reclaiming the 7 Mountains of Culture*<sup>7</sup> provides a history, as well as a vision for what it means when implemented:

In 1975, Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade, and Loren Cunningham, founder of Youth With a Mission, had lunch together in Colorado. God simultaneously gave each of these change agents a message to give to the other. During that same time frame Francis Schaeffer was given a similar message. That message was that if we are to impact any

nation for Jesus Christ, then we would have to affect the seven spheres, or mountains of society that are the pillars of any society.

These seven mountains are business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, the family and religion. There are many subgroups under these main categories. About a month later the Lord showed Francis Schaeffer the same thing. In essence, God was telling these three change agents where the battlefield was. It was here where culture would be won or lost. Their assignment was to raise up change agents to scale the mountains and to help a new generation of change agents understand the larger story.”

At Wal-Mart these insights form the basis of a full scale assault on the American mindscape, where the concept of “Choice Architecture” stretches well beyond simple product placement.

Due to the high ROI on faith based products Wal-Mart is more than willing to feature whatever the Christian market comes up with that keeps the consumers happy and the money coming in, and savvy Christian evangelists are happy to apply the latest innovations in behavioral conditioning to increase sales and train disciples.

### **The choice architecture of Christian dominion**

In a paper published in 2012 Eric Johnson, Center for Decision Science, Columbia Business School, Columbia University, explains that, “choice architects have significant, if perhaps underappreciated, influence, much like the architect of a building who affects the behaviors of the building’s inhabitants through the placement of doors, hallways, staircases, and bathrooms. Similarly, choice architects can

influence choice in many ways: by varying the presentation order of choice alternatives, the order attributes and their ease of use, and the selection of defaults, to name just a few of the design options available. While it is tempting to think that choices can be presented in a “neutral” way (“Just the facts, Ma’am”), the reality is that there is no neutral architecture—any way a choice is presented will influence how the decision-maker chooses.”<sup>8</sup> Wal-Mart, in this instance, has an advantage in the amount of access spiritual leaders and groups have to their devotees lives. Choice Architects usually don’t have access to a person’s mind on a continuous basis, whereas, due to the added religious element, the evangelists of the New Apostolic Reformation can sculpt an entire worldview with very little to hinder their influence.

Sales strategies for kingdom building C. Peter Wagner has been called the father of the New Apostolic Reformation, and as a “horizontal apostle” in the movement he has been a leading figure in the centralization of a strong set of leaders and change agents who carry on the “Kingdom focused” mission of cultural change.<sup>9</sup> This means meeting with top level influencers that can then go forward and encourage



regional and local leaders in the strategic goals of bringing the “Kingdom of God” to earth.

The quote which opens this paper,

taken from an article Wagner wrote to describe his vision of the strategic value of influencing the marketplace, mentions 1990, which is significant as it represents a strategic marker for monitoring successful social engineering based on sales, a strategy common to the social planners of the Christian Right.<sup>10</sup>

According to Moleton, when Walmart began featuring more spiritually oriented material, “sales were impressive, and in many stores customers asked for even more, leading to expanded Christian product lines in about three hundred stores by the mid-1990’s. Within ten years, Walmart had become the country’s largest merchandiser of Christian items, with over a billion dollars in annual sales.”<sup>11</sup> This level of influence has shown fruit in responsive political figures who have taken up the language of the New

Apostolic Reformation to court voters, however Wagner’s goal is to see clear signs of “dominion” in local and regional spheres.

### **The blessings of theocracy**

The media’s attention has been drawn to Conservatives such as Michele Bachmann, Sarah Palin and Rick Perry whose use of spiritual warfare rhetoric opens up discussions on the dangers of theocracy and the influence of fundamentalist Christian groups in the political arena.<sup>12</sup> It is a clear sign of the movement’s growing success that a significant number of politicians would show solidarity through campaign speeches. In reacting to charges of malintention Wagner offers up a candid picture of the movement’s motivations, along with a sophisticated strategic plan for invoking influence in society without obvious coer-

cion:

“The usual meaning of theocracy is that a nation is run by authorized representatives of the church or its functional religious equivalent. Everyone I know in NAR would absolutely reject this idea, thinking back to Constantine’s failed experiment or some of the oppressive Islamic governments today. The way to achieve dominion is not to become “America’s Taliban,” but rather to have kingdom-minded people in every one of the Seven Mountains: Religion, Family, Education, Government, Media, Arts & Entertainment, and Business so that they can use their influence to create an environment in which the blessings and prosperity of the Kingdom of God can permeate all areas of society.”

Wagner’s publishing imprint, Arsenal<sup>13</sup>, carries an apt name considering they provide the training material necessary to carry out these goals. While

atheist pundits focus on what they see as irrational elements, and the potential for active violence predicated on such strong martially based language, what is missed is that Wagner himself provides a more strategically sound means of social control, a simple three step process of infiltration, assimilation and activation.

By implementing a sophisticated use of choice architecture which takes advantage of the behavioral economy of the U.S. market, the New Apostolic Reformation has the ability to “use their influence to create an environment in which the blessings and prosperity of the Kingdom of God can permeate all areas of society.” A main drawback to all this is the fact that most Americans don’t take the so-called “supernatural” very seriously, and one of the key emotional drivers for the movement focuses on exorcism

as a key tool for behavioral entrainment.

### **Developing demoniacs**

In order to cast out demons one has to have demons to cast out, or at least have a group of people who believe that there are demons to cast out. This is where the neutrality of the marketplace provides one of the more interesting tools for social engineering.

One route to getting the right demonic atmosphere is through the glut of movies focusing on exorcism that have come out in the past few years. In the last three years there have been 8 films released dealing with exorcism, supported by high profile news pieces on the Vatican's decision to increase support for exorcists due to what they are reporting is a growing need. Writing for Salon.com, Andrew O'Hehir picks up on the fact

that the most recent film to focus on exorcism, "The Conjuring" is one of the cleverest and most effective right-wing Christian films of recent years."<sup>14</sup> On Entertainment Weekly Owen Gleiberman states it even more clearly, "It comes on as straight-up devil's candy, but beneath the occult shock theater, it is also deep-dish sacramental corn. The fantasy that drives exorcist movies is that if the Devil is here, then God is going to have to reveal Himself to beat the Devil back."<sup>15</sup> The question is, does paranormal pop culture really affect people's relationship to organized religion?

In a recently published book on spiritual warfare, Evangelical author Jason Lohman admits that his entry point into "supernatural" Christianity and ideas of spiritual warfare came from reflecting on childhood experiences that he feels are paranormal:

"Spiritual warfare, in particular, incited my interest probably due to my many childhood paranormal experiences. This fascination of these studies was ever increasing and continued on for many years after that."<sup>16</sup>

The Assemblies of God National Youth Ministries director, Heath Adamson, quoted in Charisma magazine, has a strategic view of this counter intuitive correspondence:

"I'm more encouraged than discouraged," he says. "There has never been a generation more ripe for a Pentecostal expression of the gospel. Our culture is fixated on the supernatural. The Holy Spirit is the true form of what Satan is trying to counterfeit with this undead trend. Rather than talking about what we're against, we need to talk about who Jesus is and what we stand for."<sup>17</sup>

One need only look at some of the

works written by 20th century evangelists such as Billy Graham to recognize that this correlation has been understood for a very long time. In his book *Angels: God's Secret Agents*, published in 1975, Graham states:

"During my ministry I have heard or read literally thousands of (supernatural) stories. Could it be that these were all hallucinations or accidents or fate or luck? Or were real angels sent from God to perform a certain tasks?"

Just a few years ago such ideas would have been scorned by most educated people. Science was king, and science was tuned in to believe only what would be seen or measured. The idea of supernatural beings was though to be nonsense, the ravings of the lunatic fringe.



All this has change. Think, for example, of the morbid fascination society has for the occult.”<sup>18</sup>

He goes on to discuss the prevalence of supernatural and occult media on tv, in movies, in book stores and on newstands, something that will be very familiar today with the increased attention for the “paranormal romance” genre. In Wal-Mart’s book section you will find that the “Inspirational” section which holds books on spiritual warfare, near death experiences, and demonic oppression sits comfortably next to the Young Adult section which features fiction encouraging everything that the outwardly Christian material says is evil.

*Twilight*, *The Hunger Games*, *Harry Potter*, *Beautiful Creatures*, and a slew of less well recognized pro-supernatural fiction provides a perfect foil to the material focused

on spiritual warfare. These are intermixed with similar genre titles such as *The Shack*, by William P. Young, which tells the story of a young man encountering “God.” While each piece is innocuous in isolation, when combined it creates an environment that is ripe for guiding the experience of consumers who, unwittingly, are reinforcing and priming specific narratives every time they wander through Wal-Mart’s book section.

#### **Satan’s target, your mind**

Perhaps the most ironic detail in all of this is that for years conservative Christians have leveled charges at competing ideological groups for initiating the same practices in the marketplace. Evangelical author Tim LaHaye, best known for his rapture ready *Left Behind* series, seems to be looking in a mirror when he writes in his book, *The*

*Battle for the Mind* (coincidentally the same title as the psychologist William Sargant’s book on induced trauma and behavioral change):

Many years ago, my mother, along with others of her generation, used to lament the rapid decline of morality in America. She considered the natural descent of fallen, secular man an irreversible trend. No doubt she echoed the feeling of most active Christians of her time.

What her generation did not realize was that the majority of Americans were not really that immoral by nature, but were being led down the path of moral degeneracy by the humanist social planners who dominated our society<sup>19</sup>

While these Christian writers are fond of telling you that Satan’s target is your mind, they are not so open

about the fact that they have the same goal in mind. Utilizing a potent mix of applied psychology, behavioral economics, technological proficiency and a bit of archetypal mythology they’ve been able to create and enchanted imaginal landscape in which to pursue their goal of bringing heaven down to earth.

Today the ubiquity of advanced communication technology, centralized distribution through discount stores such as Wal-Mart, and the growing interdependence of the global economy make such influence important to understand more clearly. While we shouldn’t fall into a lazy paranoia over the potential of choice architecture to irrationalize society when misapplied by eager evangelists, it is necessary to see that these dominion minded ministers are working hard to bring their concept of supernatural

living into consumer's living rooms and lives, and with their religious ideology at the fore, they may not be too careful with the consequences.

#### Biography

David Metcalfe is an independent researcher, writer and multimedia artist focusing on the interstices of art, culture, and consciousness. He is a contributing editor for Reality Sandwich, The Revealer, the online journal of NYU's Center for Religion and Media, and The Daily Grail.

#### Footnotes

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