

Silva Mind Control (Silva Method): Christian or New Age Mind Cult?

Silva Method (formerly Silva Mind Control [SMC]) was developed by José Silva. Over six million students in 71 countries have taken the Silva International courses (formerly Silva Mind Control International). (One of Silva's goals is to have the Silva Method course taught to all school children, both in grade school and in college.) He claims that any person who will take his 48-hour (four day) course will develop psychic powers. A student is shown how to enter an altered state of consciousness, and in that state is taught how to tap into "higher intelligence in the universe." The student is taught how to function psychically and clairvoyantly, and how to invite counselors, or psychic guides, into his mind to help him with his problems. By the third day of the course, students are supposed to be able to operate psychically enough so that they can project their awareness outside of their bodies; i.e., have out-of-body experiences. Their minds are supposed to be able to tap into any source in the universe for the information, including the minds of other men, alive or dead.

Silva Method uses visualization and guided imagery quite heavily; both have long been recognized by sorcerers of all kinds as the most powerful and effective methodology for contacting the spirit world in order to acquire supernatural power, knowledge, and healing. This sort of thing has been going on down through history. It's known as "shamanism," or witchcraft. Yet, Silva claims that God sent Jesus to teach us all of this!

Obviously, the Silva Method is little more than a New Age psychological mind control technique, rather than a cultic system of teaching with readily identifiable followers. Nevertheless, it does have spiritual underpinnings (see Silva's book *Keys to the Kingdom*), and it does, in many ways, consider itself Christian. Below are the highlights of what Silva Mind Control/Silva Method teaches concerning its source of authority, Christ, sin, salvation, the Holy Spirit, and prayer:

1. Source of Authority. Authority for the Silva Method student is José Silva and his official publication *THE SILVA METHOD*.

2. Jesus Christ. The Silva Method teaches that Jesus did miracles in the same way that the Silva Method teaches its students. The Bible teaches that Jesus was *not* doing miracles by mind over matter. He did them by the power of His Father. Silva Method fails to differentiate between the miraculous, genuine supernatural power of God and that which man attributes to his own mind, which is nothing more than the usurping of the authority of God and trying to be little gods themselves.

Silva Method also teaches that "Rabbi Jesus was assigned by Almighty God of the Universe to Planet Earth to teach humanity, in a step-by-step procedure, how to look for and find what is called the kingdom of God within us all. ... Jesus came to give us a message to correct the problem of human development on this planet because Moses didn't do it and Noah didn't do it, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob didn't ... Zoroaster, Krishna, Buddha, Mohammed didn't do it. So Jesus finally came to straighten out their mess and problem ..." Silva says that Jesus said that we are to go into an alpha state (an altered state of consciousness) with our spirit guides, thus gaining the psychic powers necessary to correct the human situation. (Silva also says, "Jesus is *not* coming back, so we've got to do it. But He gave us the keys; He gave us the message. Look inside; find this power; you've got the power and you can make earth 'paradise earth.'")

3. Sin. Silva denies original sin and sees only "problems to be solved." Silva teaches that the present is a process of materializing thoughts, while the future is composed of conceived thoughts not yet materialized. He talks about being able to prophesy, a process of projecting into thought patterns to see if we can detect information that can help us solve problems. According to the Silva Method, this information is for no other thing than for solving problems -- "to make this planet a better world to live in. ... if you get information to solve problems, where people are suffering, and you do alleviate that suffering and you correct the problem, who cares where the information comes from? The idea is get it anyway you can to stop a problem and forget everything else." Silva's done away with the blood of Jesus Christ; he's done away with the sacrificial death of Christ for our sins. According to the Silva Method, it's not a sin problem anymore, it's ignorance!

4. Salvation. Since Silva believes that we have been sent to the planet to solve problems (i.e., "to convert this planet into a paradise"), salvation is earned by one's success in problem solving. The emphasis is one of total pragmatism. But just the fact that one is solving problems does not answer the question of whether or not an activity itself is right or pleasing to God. "Positive" results can occur through the occult world or the psychic world.

Being "born again" also has a unique meaning for Silva Method practitioners: "When we enter the kingdom of heaven, once there we become centered and have access to the use of the right brain hemisphere ... This would truly be the concept of being born again ... being born again' means 'Go back and retrace your steps and pick up the use of the right

brain hemisphere like you did when you were born originally.' ... when you get to use both brain hemispheres, that is *really* being born again." Silva sums up what salvation is *not* in the Silva Method: "Somebody who died 1900 years ago or 2000 years ago, his blood cleansing us from sin and so forth, that doesn't help solve problems today." Salvation for Silva leads the lost away from the sacrifice of Christ for their sins upon the cross. They don't need that anymore. All they need is alpha in the right brain.

The message of the Silva Method is one of complete rejection of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ upon the cross, i.e., a claim that we have the *power within us*. Silva overlooks the major problem of evil in the human heart, the sin nature of man, to which Jesus specifically said, "I come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." One hears no repentance from Silva, no acknowledgement of any real guilt. Instead, it's just something that's a state of mind that you can get rid of by going into your alpha level.

5. Holy Spirit. In the Silva Method, the Holy Spirit is a "dimension that we can create -- a state of mind to enter it and make use of it for problem-solving situations. ... We were sent to do a work for God -- help God with creation in thinking of His creatures."

Rather than the Holy Spirit as Counselor, on the third day of Silva Method training, students are asked to pick two counselors. The lecturer explains how to invoke them. And in the last session, during meditation, two counselors appear in the laboratory of the mind of the student and they are available from that point on, whenever the student needs them. Silva says that anytime that you find yourself with a problem and you do not know what to do next, you consult your counselors: "They are here to do the work for you; they are here to help you evolve ... become ... as good as they are, whoever they are." This, of course, is spiritism; and the nature of spiritism is ultimately demonic. One can hear the same things from mediums and spiritists who talk to their advisors or their spirit guides or counselors, all of which is prohibited by Scripture (cf. Deut. 18).

7. Prayer. For Silva, praying is psychic -- the use of mind: "... we're praying; we're using psychic systems to pray, to visualize ... imagine what's to happen, and believe that you already have it and you shall receive it." (Sounds like the "name-it-and-claim-it" teaching of the Positive Confession movement.)

*Most of the material in this report came from a panel discussion on the subject on a 1988 John Ankerberg Show.