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MOMENTUS KILLING THE INNER VICTIM

By Albert James Dager

You are among some thirty or forty other people, anticipating a life-changing experience. You've been told that the person leading the group is going to help you gain control of your life and overcome the negative aspects of your personality in order to be more loving, in turn receiving more love than you've ever experienced. The initial session, the agreements to cooperate with the trainer and to abide by the rules of the group sessions, and the money you've paid to be here lend impetus to your resolve; you will be a better person for having gone through this.

The lights are dimmed; loud music is pumped into the room. You've not had much sleep for having had to do the intense "homework" assigned the previous day; you're not feeling very well. In fact, you're on edge and it shows. The trainer begins to belittle you for lack of full cooperation, or for a "bad attitude." You were late getting to your seat and he doesn't like that; you have to pay for your inconsiderateness.

The trainer begins to curse at you, calling you names, stripping you of every vestige of your dignity before these strangers who, prompted by the trainer, also turn on you.

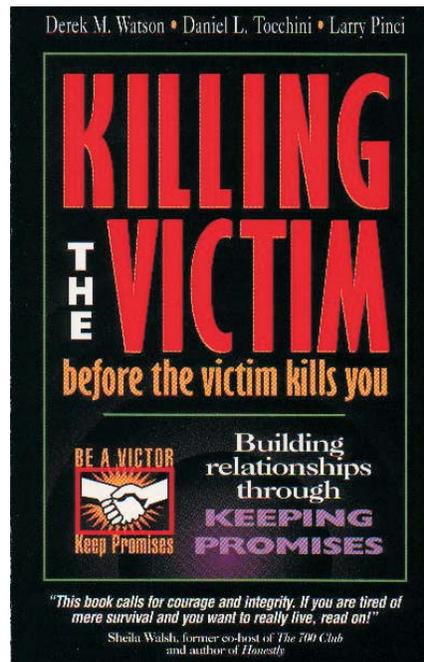
Shaken, you find yourself at first defending your position, then retreating to silence, eventually agreeing that, yes, you are a bad person. You need to be remade into a more considerate, loving person who will no longer bend, let alone break, the rules.

You're in good company, because almost everyone else in the room has gone through, or will go through, the same intense experience.

You're required to make judgments upon others in the room, choosing those who are worthy of life and death in a mock replay of the "Lifeboat" game. Those who are considered wor-

thy of "life" recognize their inherent goodness; those judged worthy of "death" are left to ponder what they lack in order to be conformed to the image deemed suitable by the trainer.

At the end of the intense, experiential weekend you return home either extremely happy with the outcome of your experience, or devastated, needing, you believe, psychological or even psychiatric care. There are few of your classmates who fall somewhere between the two extremes.



The Momentus Philosophy is explained in the book, *Killing the Victim Before the Victim Kills You*.

What was this that brought upon your mental state either such elation or such depression? Have you just joined some mind-bending cult, or engaged in some psycho-spiritual New Age self-awareness training, or fallen into a trap set by a religious brainwashing program?

No, you have just experienced a weekend of self-examination meant to conform you into the image of Christ, conducted by a Christian ministry called Momentus.

Momentus uses the encounter group format to cause people to intensely examine themselves in order to discover what hinders them from being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. The premise of the Momentus training is to transform participants from being victims of their circumstances into victors over their circumstances—killing the inner victim before it kills you.

Not surprisingly, Momentus has come under fire by cult awareness groups, as well as by many former participants. But at the same time, it has received high praise from some pastors as well as leaders in such organizations as Youth With A Mission (YWAM).

HISTORY OF MOMENTUS

Momentus defines itself as a dynamic Christian seminar which "restores self-examination as a crucial aspect of Christian transformation."¹ It is an outreach of Mashiyach Ministries, Inc. (MMI), founded in 1992 by Daniel Tocchini. Headquartered in Santa Rosa, California, Mashiyach Ministries and Momentus operate under the auspices of Santa Rosa Christian Church, an interdenominational church pastored by John Robert (JR) Young.

On its Web site, MMI provides some background to its existence:

MMI is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to providing trainings, workshops and other experiential learning environments to support the individual and the church in the ongoing process of being transformed into the image of Christ....

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MMI is led by Derek Watson and Daniel Tocchini. Both are ordained ministers and have extensive backgrounds in dealing with people on issues of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Daniel Tocchini is the founder of MMI and the principal creator of the Momentus training. Dan was raised in the Catholic church and attended Jesuit schools where he first came in contact with the experiential learning model at a high school retreat. He was an accomplished athlete and studied theology and philosophy while on a football scholarship at the University of Santa Clara. Dan eventually lost his scholarship because of a rebellious attitude and drug addiction.

Dan dramatically entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in 1978 at a home Bible study in Novato, California. At that time, Dan was employed by Lifespring, Inc., a secular training company employing experiential educational techniques to promote business and personal success. While at Lifespring, Dan dedicated himself to witnessing to coworkers and customers, leading a number of them into a relationship with the Lord. While at Lifespring, Dan studied the Biblical foundation of experiential educational models.

In 1989, Dan believed God was directing him to leave Lifespring and develop a Christian model of education that would communicate God's word in a powerful and life-defining way. He believed God would mature His people as a community of leaders and bring many new converts into the kingdom. Dan is a coauthor with Derek of *Killing the Victim Before the Victim Kills You*, a book released in 1997. The book communicates the theological, philosophical, and psychological assumptions behind MMI's ministry. The book is available through Christian and secular bookstores.

Derek Watson is an ordained minister who met Dan in 1992 at one of the first Momentus trainings. Derek contributed to the ongoing development of Momentus and other workshops presented by MMI. Derek holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and linguistics, magna cum laude, from Princeton University and a Masters of Business degree from the Anderson Graduate School

of Management at UCLA. While at Princeton, Derek studied Latin, Greek, and German. Derek heads up Mashiyach's publishing division and is the primary author of *Killing the Victim Before the Victim Kills You*.²

We do not know of any "Biblical foundation" of experiential education models Tocchini may have studied while at Lifespring. And it is telling that his first encounters with experiential learning was under the auspices of Jesuit priests. Even so, Momentus does not hide the fact that Dan Tocchini was a trainer for Lifespring. In fact, they take the position that using secular means to minister God's truth is nothing to shrink from. However, to fully understand the nature of Momentus, it is prudent to understand something about the nature of Lifespring and the movement from which it arose.

LGAT's & Lifespring

Lifespring, Inc. is an outgrowth of the encounter group movement of the 1960s. These groups were, and still are, used by businesses and other organizations to alter thinking through an intense personal experience. Michael D. Langone, editor of *Cultic Studies Journal*, describes these groups which he and other cult experts call Large Group Awareness Trainings (LGATs):

In the 1960s the encounter group movement was born. Advocating enhanced communication and intensified experience, this movement evolved into something that was part psychotherapy, part spirituality, and part business. In some scholarly articles, these groups were referred to as "Large Group Awareness Training" or LGATs. Erhard Seminars Training (est) was the most successful of these groups, and it has been widely imitated. Even though it no longer officially exists [it came to be called "The Forum"], in the minds of many est is identified with the entire LGAT movement. It is in a sense the progenitor of a myriad of programs that have been marketed to the public and the business community. Lifespring is, perhaps, the next best known program after est. It is probably not an exaggeration to estimate that there are hundreds of training programs in the genre that est made famous. However, because most of these programs are businesses, they will usually emphasize that which they want potential consumers to think distinguishes them from their

competition. "Exciting" words and phrases, such as "breakthrough," "unique," "your full potential," "must be experienced," and "changed my life" are used again and again with training after training.

The est model of self-transformation is structured around an intense weekend experience which brings together several dozen or several hundred people and a "trainer" with one or more assistants. People are together morning, afternoon, and evening. Breaks, even for the bathroom, tend to be highly structured and limited. Participants are led through a long series of exercises that proponents say are designed to cut through psychological defenses, increase honesty, and help people take charge of their lives. Undoubtedly, many variations of this basic model exist, and some LGATs may depart substantially from this model.

Although reliable scientific data are not available, probably at least a million people in the United States have participated in at least one LGAT, with several hundred thousand having gone through est alone.

Because many observers of this phenomenon have associated such trainings with the New Age Movement (NAM), LGATs have also been called "new age transformational training programs," or "new age trainings." According to Dole and Langone, the new age can be defined as "an alternative religious paradigm that is rooted in Eastern mysticism, eclectic in its practices and beliefs, tolerant (or undiscerning), depending upon one's perspective) of nontraditional practices and beliefs, and optimistic about humanity's capacity to bring about a great evolutionary leap in consciousness." New age transformational trainings use an eclectic mix of psychological techniques and exercises that proponents believe will improve one's spiritual, psychological, and material well-being.

Some observers have also associated some LGATs with at least the potential to cause psychological distress to some participants. Some compare the trainings to thought reform programs, or "brainwashing," and to "cults."

The implied, if not explicit, religious nature of many of these trainings and the potential for psychological damage in some trainings have resulted in lawsuits against

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some trainings and employers who have sponsored them. On February 22, 1988 the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued a notice on new age training programs which conflict with employees' religious beliefs. This notice gave official credence to the claim that some of these trainings are fundamentally religious in nature, even though they may be corporately organized as a business....

Given the person-hours devoted to LGATs during the past two decades, it is astounding how little solid scientific research has been conducted. Indeed, there is not enough research to make any sweeping generalizations about this genre of training program. The research on est suggests that a small, though certainly not insignificant, percentage of participants were psychologically harmed by the training in ways that are detectable by standard measures of psychological distress. How much "subtle" harm occurs is still open to dispute.

I know of no research, however, that convincingly demonstrates positive behavioral effects of these trainings....

The research and anecdotal evidence seem to indicate that LGATs are very successful at producing positive opinions about the trainings—an outcome that the financial officers of every service business would value. However, whether or not they have a substantial positive effect on behavior that is not due to placebo factors, is still an unanswered question.

There are also a host of ethical questions that can be raised about how many of these trainings recruit new trainees and persuade graduates to continue to take more courses.³

So LGATs in general seem to produce positive reports about the trainings from some of their participants, but there is no empirical evidence that life-long positive behavioral traits are produced to any significant degree.

In assessing Momentus we must be careful not to automatically assume that Momentus is an offshoot of Lifespring simply because its founder came out of Lifespring and has patterned the Momentus training after Lifespring's methodology. Tocchini readily acknowledges that Lifespring is a secu-

lar organization and that some of its objectives are used for evil purposes. He distinguishes Momentus from Lifespring in Momentus' focus on effecting spiritual changes in its participants with the goal of bringing them into conformity to the image of Christ.

WHAT DOES MOMENTUS TEACH?

Momentus, of course, is a non-organic entity. Its beliefs are those of its founder, Daniel L. Tocchini, and of two other major leaders within Momentus, Derek M. Watson and Larry Pinci. Their beliefs are outlined in the book, *Killing the Victim Before the Victim Kills You* (Mashiyach Press).

The "Statement of Faith" for Momentus is generally orthodox and appeals to early church councils for its doctrines. Additionally, "The Guiding Principles of Momentus," found on their Web site states:

The Momentus Training is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, whose greatest commandment to us is summarized in the following scripture:

"Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'" - Matthew 4:37-40, NKJV

The Momentus Training is about practicing what it takes to love God and love others in ways that matter to them. Although the training focuses on the way you relate to God, others and to yourself; on giving you opportunities to see yourself clearly in relationship to God and others... and to choose to grow from that revelation, it doesn't stop there. Ultimately, the Momentus Training will provide an opportunity to direct yourself out from yourself, and into a deeper, renewed call to love God and the others in your life.

It is not the aim of the training to teach you what to think. Rather, the entire training and the trainer are focused on assisting you discover for yourself what you really think, and how you think. The principles underlying the training are Christian. You decide for yourself, moment to moment, session to session, day by day, how you will choose to act from the revelations you have during the training. The clearer you are about

what you are committed to, the more powerfully the Momentus training can serve you in discovering what it will take to walk them out in your life.

The authors' insights into God's Word are at times very astute. As with anyone, they are not perfect in their views or approaches to the problem of sin. They do emphasize the need for those among whom they work to be transformed from loving self first to loving God and others first.⁴

Their emphasis is upon changing people from being victims of their own failings and of the dictates of others to that of victors over all circumstances. This, they say, is based upon the need to love God and others above loving ourselves. They use the term "cathedral building" as a metaphor for inner spiritual transformation:

Cathedral building is a metaphor for a way of living as a victor. It is driven by cathedral thinking. This is what Jesus was doing when He commanded us to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and our neighbor as ourselves. He made it clear that the Father's concern was the heart of man and that the heart ought to be our concern, too, in making disciples of the nations. He knew that the only way to make disciples of the nations was through loving. No crusades, no inquisitions, no coerced conversions to favored doctrines can accomplish what a relationship of love with God and one another can accomplish. The purpose He sets before every man and woman is to be governed by love; to be responsible to another; to love as I would have another love me.⁵

Love, according to the authors, is best demonstrated through the keeping of promises. It is only through making and keeping promises that we demonstrate our selflessness and devotion to the welfare of others:

Making and fulfilling promises makes the invisible God visible to us. Promise works the same for us. They make our invisible feelings and intentions visible. Until we make and keep a promise, our intentions and feelings are mysterious to others and are therefore useless. A promise made and kept demonstrates visibly in action the subjective feelings inside and the attitude of heart from which the emotions spring.⁶

The crux of promise keeping, say the authors, is found in our willingness to

give up trying to control things that we cannot control, which makes us victims:

By attempting to control what is uncontrollable, we perpetuate the popular illusion that somehow life *ought* to be controllable. In the move to control beyond our power and jurisdiction, we become victims and set up an idol in the place of God. Whatever we look to for protection, whatever we find to alleviate the feeling of insecurity, becomes the idol that we worship. And then when our idols fail us, as indeed they must, we can even be a victim to our idols!

The victor on the other hand, covers himself with the shield of faith, and through being fully persuaded that all things will turn out for the good for those that love God and are called according to His purposes (Romans 8:28), stands firm on God's promises and his own promises, regardless of the circumstances.⁷

The validity of our claim to love God is directly linked to the reality of our love toward others:

As the church has been overcome with the existentialism of our culture, we have come to believe that the love we feel in our hearts toward God has an independent reality. We think that we can love God even when our relationships are discordant, strident, and full of enmity toward others. Perhaps even worse, we believe that we love God when we are indifferent to others. Promise interrupts the isolation of subjective emotion and directs us to reach another. The first epistle of John hits the heart of this issue:

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (I John 4:20).

"I don't hate my brother," you may well interject—but the absence of hate, if it is not filled with love, is indifference. This is the worst hatred of all. The horror of the Nazis was not just the slaughter of six million Jews in the Holocaust, but the complete indifference with which they acted. The Nuremberg trials shocked the world by revealing the Nazis' attitude that the Jews were just animals and thus not worthy of remorse. How different are we than the Nazis? If we are indifferent to others—indifferent to the promises they make to us and we to them—our love for God, even if it burns within

us, is useless. If we love others as shown through keeping promises, we love God; if we are indifferent to others and the promises we have made them, we are indifferent to God.⁸

It appears as if the authors are saying that, by virtue of our establishing relationships with others, we assume certain responsibilities toward them. These responsibilities are implicit if not explicit promises of concern, loyalty, and all the benefits that come with a loving relationship. With this we would have to concur. The Promise Keepers-type graphic on the cover of their book aside, their concept of promise keeping goes deeper than that expressed within the Promise Keepers organization.

The authors assert that it is in keeping one's promises—demonstrating love toward God and others above ourselves—that we change from being a victim to being a victor. This, in fact, is the theme of the Momentus training: recognizing our victimhood and dealing with it in such a manner that we become victors over all circumstances in our lives. The theme of victim/victor is the basis for *Killing the Victim Before the Victim Kills You*, and for the Momentus training seminars.

While I would personally choose to state these truths in other terms that do not seem quite so based on psychology, I cannot deny their self-evidence. Yet while I agree with the authors in this area (and in a few others), I find myself at several points of disagreement with them in other areas. In the area of victim vs. victor, I find some disparities. The definitions of victim and victor are as much a problem as are the terms "victim" and "victor."

...We have defined a victim as someone whose life is governed by external circumstances, people, or events. In contrast, the victor governs himself by his vision and promises. Circumstances on the one hand and vision on the other are not mutually exclusive.⁹

The authors say that self-governance is the ideal expression of the victor; we should not be governed by external influences. Yet to one degree or another we all are controlled by external influences. Even the demonstration of our love toward others is often defined by our response to their needs. Momentus would say that how we choose to respond is the difference between being a victim or a victor: if

we are controlled by external influences then we are not exercising self-control, which they call self-government. But is self-control the same as self-government? No.

Self-control is purposeful restraint over one's own impulses, emotions or desires. In scriptural terms it is keeping from sin.

Self-government, on the other hand, is control of one's affairs. One may have self-government while giving vent to all sorts of evil. He allows no one—God or man—to exert influence over his desires and actions. Judging by their definition of self-government (to govern your vision to benefit the other), this is not the understanding of Momentus. Yet by equating self-government with self-control, Momentus errs greatly.

Momentus As Victim

One of the signs of a victim, according to Momentus, is reacting in self-defense to the negative attacks of others. This results in complaints and the shifting of blame:

The victim complains, threatens, moans, and most of all shifts the blame by pointing the finger at others, circumstances, and even God. The victim inside rebels at the idea that whatever we reap, we must have sown.

...Being a victim is a way of relating to people and events around us that surrenders the control of our lives to others.¹⁰

According to Momentus, forgiveness for those who have offended us is the mark of a victor.

Yet as we see the pages of self-defense against their detractors, not only on their Web site, but in the very book that lays the foundation for their work, we find that Momentus itself plays the role of the victim to the hilt.

On its Web site, Momentus has published 8 pages of defense written by Daniel Tocchini against Christian Research Institute's "unfounded" charges. Nowhere does Momentus even suggest that there are any problems with Momentus. The problem is the "watchdog" organizations that are out to destroy a wonderful work of God. Accordingly, then, Momentus is misunderstood, unfairly targeted and unjustly judged on the basis of a "few" disgruntled trainees who, in spite of Momentus' attempts to help them,

complain of having been victimized by Momentus.

Well, let's say this is all true; Momentus is perfect in all it does; there is no basis for criticism (at least none to which Momentus has admitted yet). Would the victor need to launch a defense of his actions? Would the victor not rest in the security that he has the blessing of God upon his work?

Is Momentus suffering financially or in any other way as a result of these unjust allegations? If so, might that not be God's will for Momentus if, in fact, the leaders' steps are ordered of God? They complain about others complaining about them. Are they not as much victims as those with whom they find themselves in conflict?

At this point we do not wish to make any judgment on the merits of either side in the dispute. We will examine some of the complaints against Momentus later on. For now, suffice it to say that Momentus has failed to live up to the standard it wishes to impose upon its adherents. The explanation for their present position is telling:

For the last five years, the work of Mashiyach Ministries, Inc. (MMI) has been opposed by the Christian Research Institute (CRI) and other "research" organizations. Until now, MMI has chosen not to respond, taking our example from Jesus, who was silent before his accusers. Now, however, we believe the time has come to break our silence.¹¹

Tocchini continues for several pages to raise the objections of CRI and others to its practices and to defend Momentus. But he never explains why they decided to stop "taking [their] example from Jesus," particularly when they cite Jesus as being a victor for not speaking out against His accusers.

The issue isn't whether or not Momentus is right or wrong; the issue is that Momentus has glaringly failed for the past few years in modeling the role of the victor according to its own definition, while insisting that everyone else keep silent about injustices done to them. We are not to insist upon being right even if we are right:

Our idols may not be as obvious to us as the molten calf. We may worship the idol of doctrinal correctness and conformity—a dogmatic insistence on certain nonessential tenets of the Christian faith—and thereby fall under the third category of idolatry. This category is "being right" or

the pride of life about which John wrote. We not only have an overwhelming desire to be right, but we want people to know that we are right. How many denominations do we have in this country alone? How many churches have split over doctrinal struggles? These struggles get their divisive energy from the idol of being right.¹²

Whether we like it or not, whether we agree or not on doctrinal issues, as long as we hold to the basic tenets of the Christian faith, we will be together for eternity! Why not seek understanding now?¹³

Momentus presents a conundrum for those who detect problems with its methodologies. Because the stated doctrinal differences are not great they are immune from criticism. We are not to question their methods because, after all, their doctrine is orthodox. To call attention to areas of disagreement is to not seek understanding; it is unjust.

But what is there to understand? "Understanding," in the context of conflict resolution, equates to compromise; it means being silent against those areas where disagreement exists. This is not the biblical model, as we see the defenders of the Faith confronting not only erroneous doctrine, but erroneous practices.

Sound doctrine extends beyond stated tenets of the Faith; the devils believe and they tremble in fear of the judgment (James 2:19). Knowing truth and practicing truth are two different things. And, as Momentus rightly acknowledges, the basis for all service must be love. The question is, does Momentus practice true, biblical agapé love in its methodologies?

Those who perceive that they have benefited from Momentus training believe that the trainers do minister in agapé love, even if that love must manifest itself in harsh treatment. Others, who claim to have been harmed in one way or another by Momentus training, believe that they have been stonewalled by Momentus in its failure to properly address their grievances and make corrections to its practices.

Valid For Everyone?

Ultimately, the authors point to the need to follow our own vision for life in order to not be victimized by others. This explains why they say their methods work for unbelievers as well as for Christians:

Both the Christian's and the non-Christian's answers to the question of control are equally correct. The Christian can affirm that the Scriptures state clearly that Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 5:9 and 12:2) and so He ultimately determines our eternal destiny. Even the lives of those who don't believe in Him are in His control, in that God has sovereign control of all creation. But the non-Christian's answer is also true: if you don't take action to have your life turn out according to your vision, nobody, including God, will make it happen for you. As Proverbs says, "Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed....In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps" (Proverbs 16:3, 9 NIV).

Other scriptures, such as I Samuel 10:7 (in which the prophet Samuel encourages Saul to "do for yourself what the occasion requires; for God is with you"), point out the necessity of taking action based on your own vision of what is best.¹⁴

These Scriptures are taken out of context to make the point. They refer to the heart of a righteous man, not to the unbeliever. The intent of the unregenerated heart is selfish. It is only when the heart is made new by the cleansing of the Word of God and the entering in of the Holy Spirit that one's heart is changed toward the desires of God. Thus, Scripture can rightly say, as it does in leading up to the verses in Proverbs 16 cited by the authors, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD" (v. 1). It is of the self-righteous man that verse 2 speaks: "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits." And it is to all men that verse 3 speaks: "Commit thy works unto the LORD and thy thoughts shall be established." Yet verse 3 does not apply to the unbeliever who does not become a believer and commit his works unto the true God.

Likewise verse 9 is in reference to the believer; for the steps of a righteous man are ordered of God (Psalms 37:23). He allows the ungodly to go their own way to destruction.

As for Saul, God was with him as long as he remained with God. But when he departed from God, God departed from him. And the evil of the curse was greater than the good of the blessing, for in the end it consumed Saul.

This issue is not as minor as one might suppose. For it is this erroneous assumption that leads Momentus to believe that its methods are as effective for unbelievers as for believers. In its script for the first training session, Momentus states:

Whether you are Christian or not I request you be coachable for the next four days. For you who are not Christian, I am not here to get you to be Christian. That is strictly up to you and God. I am here to facilitate the training, to share the love I have received from God with you and to open up the possibility of your liberty of conscience and self-government (to govern your vision to benefit the other). I am a Christian and I won't hide it from any one (*sic*) here. My Christianity does not depend on you believing like I do. This training is a course which is designed from a Biblical perspective. It is designed to assist you in standing clearly in what you believe and to govern what matters to you into reality.

This training is not about your religion or lack of it; this training is about how you govern your vision or what matters to you into existence....

Welcome to your life. For this is your life! I welcome you. I am not speaking to the you that listens from how it can get people to approve of it, but the you that was made before the foundations of time. The one that needs no defense. The you that knows the Father and fears not because you know of the Father's provision. The you that knows perfect faith and the grace of God.¹⁵

Wait a minute. First, we are told that MMI is dedicated to supporting "the individual and the church in the ongoing process of being transformed into the image of Christ." Then we learn that Momentus does not concern itself with what one believes or does not believe. The idea is to get everyone to realize their personal vision for their lives. How does this differ from Lifespring or any other secular LGAT?

Second, we learn that Momentus believes there are two "yous": the "you" that is present and messed up, and the "you" that "knows the Father" and "knows perfect faith and the grace of God." Yet if it matters not what one believes about God, how can it be said that they have a "you" that knows the Father, etc.? This also implies a former consciousness in eternity past.

And what, exactly, is the "life" to which Momentus is referring when it says, "For this is your life!?" Is not Jesus the Way, the Truth and the Life? Yet it doesn't matter if they have Jesus or not. The "life" to which Momentus refers is the "new life" the trainee will acquire for having gone through the intense personal confrontation with the trainer—whether or not Jesus is the trainee's Savior. This is referred to as "life defining benefit" for the participants as revealed in Momentus' description of its program:

Who will benefit from the training?

The people who will most benefit from the training are those who will answer the following questions with a "YES"

- Are you committed to make positive changes in your life?
- Are you willing to come face to face with your current ways of being and doing that just aren't working to produce the life you envision and are called to?
- Are you willing to look honestly at yourself and responsibly at your relationships?
- Are you willing to listen to others even if you may not agree with them?
- Are you ready and willing to repent for sins that may be revealed in your life?
- Do you have the character, discipline and commitment to suffer the discomfort and pain that you'll encounter as you seek to breakdown (*sic*) strongholds in your life?
- Do you have the patience and humility to trust God's love, mercy and grace, when all else you have tried has failed?

If you can honestly say "YES!" to these questions, then you could derive life defining benefit from participating in the Momentus Training.¹⁶

Remember that all this is directed toward Christians and non-Christians alike. And if it is equally valid for both, how can it be of God? God does not care about the "visions" of men—whether believers or non-believers. He commands obedience to *His* "vision." When Christians seek to help people—especially unbelievers—achieve their own vision they are encouraging self-centered-

ness, regardless of their claims to the contrary. In addressing the victimization of people, the authors ask us to consider who or what controls us:

Consider the question of who or what is in control apart from your theological, political, and philosophical convictions; apart from the way you *hope* your life is; and ponder who or what controls you in reality. What does the reality of how you live, the fruit of your day-to-day existence say about who or what controls you? How often do you shrink from someone because of past hurts or failures? How often do you refrain from acting because of your resentment or bitterness from past betrayals? How often do you determine what is possible for you and others based on the circumstances that surround you in the moment of decision?¹⁷

Some food for thought: even Paul "shrank" from Mark because of Mark's prior failure to be faithful.

And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches. (Acts 15:36-41)

Perhaps Paul was wrong; perhaps he sinned by not "forgiving" Mark. But he did not have sufficient confidence in Mark to continue with him. On the one hand, Paul was allowing Mark to control his circumstances; yet on the other hand, Paul was controlling the circumstances by not allowing Mark to continue with him. Was Paul the victim or the victor? If his steps (and the steps of Mark) are ordered by God, then he (and Mark) were both victors. But how would Momentus address Paul were he in one of its sessions today?

Would Paul even sign up for a Momentus seminar?

As far as who is in control, while Momentus insists that every person must be in control of his own life, God's Word tells us to be under the control of the Holy Spirit:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1)

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. (Romans 8:5)

Even the best intentions and actions of men are of the flesh if not submitted to the Father through following the leading of the Holy Spirit. We may build wood, hay and stubble out of good works lain upon the foundation of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 3:12).

The heart being deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9), we may think we are serving God when we are really serving the flesh. The heart in tune with the Holy Spirit through humility and obedience to God's Word is the only heart that is not exhibiting the wickedness that is natural to fallen man.

If this is the understanding of Momentus they fail to state it in terms that would negate their emphasis upon encouraging unbelievers as well as believers to follow their particular "vision." One who has not learned obedience to God cannot please Him.

POSITIVE TESTIMONIALS

Momentus offers the testimonials of some participants who seem to indicate that they have become more loving and tolerant of others, and have been able to overcome particular sins that have plagued them:

- "Momentus training has had a dynamic impact on my Christian life. I have been a believer for twenty-six years and I have finally begun to grasp hold of what it means to love God with everything and to love my neighbor as myself." (*Sheila Walsh, Contemporary Christian Music Artist, Virginia Beach, Virginia*)
- "It opened my eyes to how important people are, especially to God. I experienced how fulfilling it is to get close to people." (*Scott Scutchfield, M.D., Danville, Kentucky*)
- "I experienced life breathed into my bones." (*Mario Aviles, Former*

Contra General, Managua, Nicaragua)

- "The Momentus training was a tremendous experience of the life-giving power of commitment. As a result I have found greater joy and effectiveness in both work and personal relationships." (*Paul Looney, M.D., Psychiatrist, New Waverly, Texas*)
- "The training is an astonishing encounter with the Holy Spirit. As a result, I discovered the skills necessary to tear down the walls isolating me from those under my care. I now possess a level of intimacy with my wife, children, and others that I did not dream possible." (*J.R. Young, Pastor, Santa Rosa Christian Church, Santa Rosa, California*)
- "A rare opportunity to discover what isn't working in my relationships; now I experience a renewed vision and passion for impacting others in my life in a way that glorifies the Father." (*Derek Watson, Financial Consultant, Costa Mesa, California*)¹⁸

These are testimonials from people who might be considered above average in intelligence and natural abilities.

One trainee, Judi Klug, has posted on the Internet her praises of Momentus in dialogue with some of that organization's detractors:

I will remain ETERNALLY thankful for the Momentus training, praising God whenever I think of it! (Although what we learned in Momentus has nothing to [do] with JAL [John A. Lynn, Momentus sponsor], we do owe him lifelong thanks for loving my husband enough to put up [with] his attitude until he decided he wanted to attend.)

Although I was incredulous at him within only 2 days, after 4 days my husband came home choosing to live almost opposite to the way he had chosen to live for 2 decades before. It was such a miraculous answer to my largest and longest-running prayer, and such an amazing transformation that I knew I had to take "the training" to find out who these people were and how they could do in 4 days what I'd failed at for 20 years!...

So I went to watch what happened and learn. But I didn't leave my Lord behind! I knew I'd have to separate

truth from error there as I do EVERYwhere in this fallen world.

I never thought the trainers or team was perfect, nor was I going to swallow whatever they said. But I knew they had SOMETHING and I wanted to find out what! It was immediately obvious that their doctrine on many biblical issues was different from mine. No problem: what other subject could they impart something to me on?

Their PASSION for life, for loving God and loving His people thrilled my soul!!

The EFFORT they extended to interrupt the path of death so many of us were barreling down blindfolded! They didn't have to care. They'd never met us and might never see us again. But they worked and worked and worked with each of us, fighting not with us but for us.

After Fri or Sat night I do remember wondering if everything I'd ever thought was wrong—if I'd ever done anything right in my life—but then I heard myself thinking that and caught the accuser's lie. I was still who God said I was no matter how much of myself I'd seen that I didn't like. Momentus didn't tell me I was a jerk. It didn't attack me. The TRAINER didn't say I was something I didn't like, I MYSELF saw it by listening to him, to others and to myself and LOOKING at the truth of it.

I LOVED being confronted! I loved being held accountable for every word I said. I'd never even THOUGHT of half what they talked about! It was a tremendous adventure in the excellence I seek because I owe every breath I take to my Lord Who bled and died for me and who saved my children from death's door and who saved my very soul from hell.¹⁹

Judi Klug's testimonial for Momentus is obviously heartfelt. She believes that Momentus effected a change in her husband that she could not effect in 20 years of marriage (as if that were her responsibility). And she lauds Momentus for not confronting her on her beliefs, but on her attitude and actions in life. She goes on to explain about the differences in beliefs between herself and the Momentus trainers:

I believe exactly opposite to the Trinity view held by both the trainers at that time. I've had folks leave my home when they heard I didn't believe Jesus was God. Yet those 2 men loved me with CHRIST's unconditional love and will forever be con-

sidered 2 of my absolute dearest friends on Planet Earth. That the adversary could rip one of them off and destroy his marriage and ministry has nothing to do with Momentus. I grieve tremendously for him with every thought of him and I hope anyone of you reading this who knows him pray for him as your brother in Christ that he is.²⁰

What Klug is referring to is one of the trainers for her seminar who left his wife for another woman. She believes Satan stole his life from him. In truth, we all make our own choices in life. Satan may tempt us, but we are the ones who choose to succumb to the temptation.

In spite of her theological differences with the Momentus trainers, Klug is convinced that the exercises they put her and her husband through (as well as her children), have resulted in positive changes in their lifestyles.

But what good are positive lifestyle changes if one is left holding erroneous spiritual beliefs? If Jesus is not God in the flesh, then His sacrifice is merely that of a mortal man; it possesses no efficacy to save from sin; then the Gospel is not true. This is a vital tenet of the Christian faith; to not believe it is to not be a Christian in the true sense of the word. What does this say about Momentus' claim to be a means by which people may be conformed to the image of Christ?

Klug's testimony is typical of others (according to Momentus, the majority of those who have taken the course) who have found a new way of approaching life. But not all who have taken the Momentus training are as enamored of its methods.

NEGATIVE RESPONSES

As we look at the methodology of Momentus we find some disturbing practices. These involve not only the training sessions, but the approach to recruiting and securing people for their training sessions.

Space does not allow for the printing of all the negative assessments that we have received. We have included a lengthy disavowal by a former Momentus trainee in the sidebar accompanying this article.

His experiences have been verified by similar accounts by other former trainees who perceive that their encounter with Momentus was not to their spiritual benefit.

A PERSONAL STATEMENT OF MY EXPERIENCES WITH MOMENTUS

By William Barton

One of the biggest problems I have with Momentus is the conspiracy of silence surrounding what it's really like. Just as secret societies such as the Masons and various other occult groups hide the truth of what they're really about until people are too deeply involved to easily get out or see the truth, so does Momentus hide its true nature under a facade of Christianity. Before the training, all a prospective trainee hears about Momentus are the glowing reports of those who've taken it, who claim that it's "changed their lives so dramatically." That last part is often true, but the change is not always what it seems to be. But try to get the details about what goes on within the training and you get evasion at best, stonewalling at worst.

I believe that this evasiveness is because the trainers, as well as most graduates of the training, even if they love Momentus, rightly know that most Christians would *never* take Momentus if they had any inkling of what went on in it. I know that I never would have. And that's because what goes on in it has little or nothing to do with life and godliness as unveiled in the Word of God. But it does have a lot to do with psychotherapeutic practices (from Freudian to primal scream therapy), with indoctrination techniques (similar to those used by the Red Chinese during the Korean War, as well as by cultists even today), and with New Age visualization and occultism.

Ridicule, mockery and abusive language directed against the trainees by the trainers (and eventually, as they get into the "spirit" of Momentus, the other trainees) is par for the course, as they work to shock and break down the trainees into abandoning their own belief systems and accepting those of the trainers. But, as I said, you don't hear any of that before you take Momentus. The only indication you get of what may come is a requirement that, if you're in therapy or have been in the past few years, you get a letter from your psychiatrist stating that it's okay for you to take the training, plus a vague caution that the interactions with the trainer may at times become "intense." But you get this information only after you've sent in your nonrefundable \$150 training fee, which you don't get back even if the trainers decide you shouldn't take the training.

The opening session begins with a dramatic reading from some introductory material, interspersed with a few almost unrecognizable verses from *The Message*, a Bible "version" that I find nearly impossible to reconcile with any other version of Scripture I've ever studied.

After the opening session the trainers ran us through the "ground rules," and required us to sign an agreement to abide by those rules. We were also required to sign a "hold harmless" agreement, asserting that we had been "adequately informed" of what the training consisted of, and that no matter what happened to us in (or as a result of) the training—including death—we would hold the trainers and the sponsors harmless.

Now, I don't recall *ever* having to sign such an agreement before taking any Bible class, or any other class I've taken through any church or ministry, except for Momentus. But Lifespring, on the other hand, does require such an agreement, as do many other similar New Age courses, because some people *have* died as a result of taking such training.

"Intense" is hardly the word I'd use to describe the abusive language (including profanity) the trainers used as they contradicted, mocked and baited people during the training we sat through. I took several group dynamics courses while attending Indiana University, so I was no stranger to intense interaction. But those were a cakewalk compared to Momentus. (Incidentally, just as people coming out of Momentus often proclaim how close they feel to the other trainees, we all experienced similar feelings after our group experiences in those secular, abiblical psychology courses—which suggests that such feelings have no real bearing on the validity of such training situations. And victims of abuse often come to feel closer to their abusers, even to the point of considering themselves being wrong and their abusers in the right.)

(Continued on page 18)

STATEMENT BY WILLIAM BARTON

(Continued from page 13)

Many aspects of Momentus have been carried over from secular mind dynamics training such as Lifespring. For example, after the manipulative introductory session you are plunged into darkness and subjected to loud, swelling (and, ultimately, nearly deafening) music that seems designed to assault your senses and play with your emotions. The music is not godly, worshipful music, but more often secular, played at deafening volumes various times during the training. Combined with lack of sleep and constant harassment, the trainees are put into a state of extreme susceptibility.

The training consisted of what I would classify as “psychological warfare” against us. The program is seemingly designed to break the participant down to the point that he would accept whatever the trainers wanted him to accept (although the trainers denied this throughout the sessions). Much as how many cultic brainwashers operate, the trainers spent the first two days tearing us down through verbal abuse and exercises with no real point other than to get us to take our focus off the Lord and put it upon ourselves. And that, I believe, is the whole goal of Momentus: to get us to the place of self-government, as they call it, so that we would essentially become our own gods (though, again, this goal was greatly disguised in Momentus as opposed to its open revelation in est and Lifespring). We would, in essence, be creating our own “realities” via our choices, within the confines of “the physical universe.” The focus was thus taken off the things of the Spirit as revealed by God’s Word, and put on things carnal.

Unwittingly, still believing that something of value could be obtained from the Lord in following the trainers’ directions, I committed myself to “causing” openness and honesty. Thus I set myself up to suffer whatever spiritual garbage was thrown at me. It would be months before I realized this, and then, only thanks to the healing power of the Lord and the loving help of brothers and sisters in Christ.

The first two days of the training ended with the “Lifeboat” exercise, in which we were forced to condemn our brothers and sisters to “life or death.” Who “lived” and who “died” depended on whom we voted into the lifeboat; this after a New Age-like visualization exercise in which we were on a cruise ship that suddenly began sinking. The lesson actually taught that only those who live the kind of life the world values—the aggressive, pushy attitude that attracts a lot of attention—would end up in the lifeboat and be saved. Those exhibiting such traits as meekness, humility, self-denial, ended up in the water, “dead.” We then had to give our “epitaphs” from our watery graves about how worthless we were. And people were worked up by the actions of the trainers to actually experience acute

emotional pain over having to “condemn others to death” in what was essentially a huge, manipulative, New Age mind game.

This exercise, more than anything else, revealed to me the true nature of Momentus with its focus on aggrandizing self over everything else, including the things of God.

We were required early on in the opening session to choose a buddy to “watch over” during the training. This “buddy” was to be someone we were not particularly attracted to (how would that make someone feel?). We were told that if anyone left the training their buddy had to leave also. This turned out to be an outright lie, as several people did leave the training and yet their buddies were always allowed to stay—but not before being subjected to serious condemnation and verbal abuse for not somehow forcing their buddies to stay through the entire training. Such lies exhibit the dishonesty of the Momentus trainers who insist that “promise keeping” is essential to their concept of godliness. Why would they not keep their “promise” to expel those whose buddies left?

In the final days we were required to bring in pillows to beat on during the session in which we laid a good portion of our problems on our parents. As we beat on the pillows shouting “Mommy, Mommy, Mommy” and “Daddy, Daddy, Daddy,” this act was supposed to “free us” of hidden resentments we’d harbored for all the “evil things” our parents had done to us when we were little (regardless of whether or not our parents had actually done us evil or we harbored such hidden resentments).

Other exercises the final day included breaking up into groups and telling each other our hidden, inner secrets—such as the worst betrayal we’d ever experienced. We were sometimes required to “share” these secrets in a “nonsense language”—another example of secular psychotherapy techniques employed in a training that denies it even uses such techniques.

Those who did not enter into the training with total abandonment were condemned by the misapplication of 1 Timothy 4:2, and accused of having a “conscience seared with a hot iron.”

I confess that, during the entire training, the Holy Spirit was revealing to me the ungodliness of it all. Yet I was determined to see it through, hoping that the promptings within my spirit were just my own negativity getting in the way. How I wish now that I had listened to the “still small voice” that gave me the warnings.

Yet it is because of my experience that I am able to warn others of this deception. So the Scriptures are true:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

A full transcript of William Barton’s statement may be acquired by writing to:

William Barton
PO Box 26290

Indianapolis, IN 46226-0290

Please include \$1.00 to help with the costs of postage and a large return envelope.

Or you may get a copy from his Web page at http://e2.empirenet.com/~messiah7/rec_mombarton.htm

Who's Accountable?

A common complaint heard from Momentus' detractors is that the trainers use abusive tactics to get the people to open up and divulge their inner feelings and thoughts. These have been described as "intimidation," "accusations," "condemnation," "cursing," "name-calling," among other things. These are the same tactics used by the Large Group Awareness Training courses *est* and Lifespring, Tocchini having been a trainer for the latter.

The following is an excerpt from the statement of a former Momentus trainee:

It is true that each of us is held accountable for our own lives. We are each responsible for the choices we make and the actions we take. However, there is additional responsibility on the shoulders of those who lead, teach or instruct others.

Momentus is not responsible for the choices people make, but is responsible for influencing or leading people to make certain choices. The exercises, atmosphere and whole framework of the training is engineered by someone. There is a plan, there is an agenda, and someone is responsible for that agenda. Participants are told, "I request you to be coachable for the next four days," "I ask you to participate 100% and allow yourself to be open to experience your life," "participate as if your life and sanity depends on it." They are asked to trust and not "hold back" and [are told] that the training is "God's provision" for their life. "Everything works here." "There is no right or wrong way to participate." "Show up and play." "This is a provision of God." However, the training is set up by men, and those men are responsible before God for it.

What accountability does the trainer have for what occurs in the training room? I saw very little personal accountability, but a very strong message that whatever he said or did was right and his actions beyond being questioned. If anyone objected to what was occurring they were instantly belittled or personally attacked. Any perspective other than the trainer's or what the trainer allowed was looked upon as wrong or unimportant. All that mattered was what the exercises or interchange "revealed" about the participant, not the manner in which it was done. When speaking to an experienced and dedicated

Momentus staff member about the discrepancies between how the training was run and how the Body of Christ is to function, he replied, "The training has nothing to do with the Body of Christ." That is quite an amazing statement. God does not use exercises, but life and walking with Him to reveal what we need to know about ourselves, others and Him. To say that the Momentus training can operate in a godly manner outside the principles of the Body of Christ is grave error. God has set up the principles within the Body of Christ that are to be followed concerning renewing our minds (Rom. 12:1-3; Eph. 4:20; 5:2), edifying and encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ (Eph. 4:1-3), admonishing someone if they are overtaken in a fault (Gal. 6:1; II Tim. 2:24-26; I Cor. 4:14; II Thes. 3:15), walking in love and unity (Eph. 4:1-3; I Cor. 13), and the operation of our ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:17-21). In these verses I see kindness, gentleness, meekness, tender-heartedness, humility, patience, lowliness, bearing with one another, speaking the truth in love, and very specific instructions on how to confront one another, that many times I did not see in the operation of Momentus.²¹

Momentus denies that its trainers use abusive language and tactics. If, under intense pressure to examine themselves some participants use such language, it is not Momentus' fault. It is the trainee's reaction to Momentus' loving confrontation. Still, these complaints are lodged against the trainers themselves, and come from several locales involving different trainers.

Psychological Abuse

Another major complaint against Momentus is how psychological stress is utilized to motivate people and break down their defenses.

Psychological exercises similar to those employed in encounter groups incorporated by humanistic psychology are used "to allow the Lord to reveal a person's heart."

Psychological exercises, encounters, searching the past, music and other means common in the field of psychology are very powerful tools used in Momentus to evoke people's emotions, commitment and action. However, we need to carefully look to God's Word as our standard for truth as to what is occurring and not just say everything is "OK" because

there are "results." The humanistic psychology movement claims results also.²²

Now, we must consider that every trainer is different, and the tactics used by some may not be used by others, at least not to the same degree. But that is little comfort to those who do encounter trainers who use these tactics to the extreme. Certainly Momentus should keep a tight reign on its trainers to ensure that no psychological abuse occurs. But from the Momentus information we have garnered there appears to be not only a denial that such abuse occurs, but the shifting of blame upon the participants for the emotional trauma they have suffered. In other words, it is not Momentus or its tactics that are the problem; it is the response of the participants. They have chosen to be victims rather than victors. This is what is meant by Momentus' contention that whatever one reaps is what they have sown; no one can be victimized by anyone else unless they have created the conditions for that victimization.

This may seem to be in accordance with the scriptural truth that, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). But one must take that Scripture out of context to reach this conclusion. Paul is speaking about sowing to the flesh and from that sowing reaping corruption, or death. It does not mean that every adverse thing that happens to us at the hands of unscrupulous people is the result of our having invited it upon ourselves. That is closer to the Hindu concept of karma.

It is true that if we sow evil we will reap the consequences in this life or in the next (barring repentance and God's grace); but that does not mean that every evil that we encounter is the result of our sowing evil. People are victimized by others, sometimes because they are too trusting or too loving. Jesus warned us that in this life we would suffer tribulation because the world hates us for our love for Him:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted

me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. (John 15:18-21)

It is upon an erroneous, karmic concept (whether or not the leaders recognize this) that Momentus bases its entire philosophy of victim vs. victor, and justifies its practices of emotional confrontation, then absolves itself of responsibility for any injury.

Hidden Costs

One of the major complaints from some former Momentus trainees is that Momentus did not disclose sufficient information about the program until after they had sent in their non-refundable \$150 fee. Momentus does not hide the fact that their fee is non-refundable. But participants also have to sign a “Hold Harmless/Release and Arbitration Agreement,” which absolves Momentus and its trainers of any liability for “any personal, physical, psychological, or emotional injuries you may suffer as a result of the training.”²³

The alternative would be to pay an additional \$300 or leave, forfeiting the \$150 fee already paid.

One of the elements of Momentus’ training program that is stressed is the love with which it is offered. But would love motivate requiring the participants to either forfeit any legal recourse for damage, including death,¹⁹ or pay an additional \$300? And if they don’t do either, should they forfeit their original \$150 fee?

We should state, however, that the \$150 initial fee goes to the sponsors and not to the trainers or MMI *per se*. The sponsors get to keep anything that’s left over after expenses. The trainers take up an offering at the end of the training for themselves and MMI, plus they sell tapes and other seminars on tape to trainees. So technically, MMI can’t give back the registration fee to anyone offended by the training—only the sponsors can. It is, however, MMI’s policy that the fee is non-refundable, and sponsors are told that they can abide by that policy or not, as they choose. Most choose to follow MMI’s policy, as they are also covered by the HH agreement. Of course, love would dictate that they should refund the money. Regardless of who gets it, it’s still a MMI training.

Additionally, Momentus and its trainers assume no responsibility for the trainees either during or after the seminars. Yet they insist that Momentus training is an important step for one to be conformed to the image of Christ. That, in itself, puts the trainers in the role of eldership, usurping the role of local assembly leadership. Can the trainers be loving if, after taking the people’s money and putting them through intense psycho-spiritual exercises, they assume no responsibility for their spiritual wellbeing afterward?

If Momentus is going to insist upon obedience to its dictates, then it must assume the same responsibility that any godly spiritual leadership would assume—to watch for the souls of those who submit to them, even for the short course (especially if they demand payment for their spiritual services). Certainly they will be called to give an account (Hebrews 13:17).

The above objections form the crux of complaints from the majority of those who contend that they have been abused by Momentus. Every statement from diverse quarters is similar. On the basis of the many witnesses whose statements we have on hand, we must conclude that this is an organization that is not biblical in its teachings or practices, regardless of their statement of faith. This is not to impugn their sincerity, but sincerity does not necessarily equate to godliness.

When we apply Momentus’ criteria for ministry—unconditional love—to Momentus’ practices we find a dichotomy: Momentus does not practice love toward those who claim to be injured by Momentus. Whether or not their claims are valid is not at issue. Even if one perceives erroneously that a believer in Christ has injured them, the believer in Christ must do all he can to make amends and bring about a resolution. In the case of Momentus, they should not only issue an apology for having offended, but should be willing to refund any monies taken from those who claim to have been offended. Even the world offers money-back guarantees if not satisfied.

How can anyone who claims to minister in the name of Jesus Christ use such tactics? The only reason they have gotten away with it is because those whom they have hurt have felt it would be wrong to bring brethren in Christ to answer before a court of law.

My question is, would a true brother in Christ commit such fraud in the first place? And another question is would the Holy Spirit use the tactics found in secular LGAT’s to effect positive changes in the lives of believers who take the Momentus training course?

OBJECTIONS

The following objections to Momentus’ principles and methods are those voiced by some participants, including former trainers for Momentus. Following each objection is a response from a Momentus representative, in turn followed by my comments.

Objection: Momentus is based on the New Age psychological model found in Erhard Seminars Training (est) and Lifespring, which came from est.

MMI: This shift from beliefs to practice is invalid. By this logic, if one of these groups used jumping jacks as part of their programs, then all Christians would need to avoid jumping jacks. Furthermore, MMI makes no claim that its programs are essential to being a Christian. Rather, MMI views its trainings as tools, much like a mirror, which Christians and non-Christians alike can use to examine the belief systems that govern one’s choices.²⁴

Comment: MMI’s response to this objection does not deny that its practices are similar to those of New Age transformation groups. Rather, MMI defends its practices by alluding to the use of “jumping jacks.” This illogical argument is often used by those who set up smokescreens rather than admit that the objection is valid. But purely physical exercises (such as playing jumping jacks) are not the same as spiritual exercises. The former only affect the body; the latter affect the soul and spirit.

Additionally, MMI’s view of its training tools, which may be used by Christians and non-Christians alike, is open to question. While saying that it makes no claim that its programs are essential to being a Christian, its promotional literature insists that the purpose of Momentus is to bring its participants into conformity to the image of Christ. If that’s not essential to being a Christian, what is? And certainly MMI claims to be a Christian ministry under the auspices of a Christian church. What is the purpose of the Church if not to provide the spiritual guidance essential to being a Chris-

tian? If it is engaging in or supporting any other spiritual programs they cannot be biblical.

Objection: Those who disseminate negative information about Momentus are “sinning against the mandate of Christ contained in Matthew 18:15-19.” The objection, in this case, is directed against Christian Research Institute (CRI) which has published a position paper on Momentus.

MMI: Nor have the actual writers of these letters followed the initial steps of approaching MMI, its officers, or its Board of Directors, either privately or with witnesses before making a public statement. Since these individuals have pursued a public venue to air their complaints, MMI is choosing to respond in the same venue through this document.

Furthermore, CRI is transgressing the command of Paul in I Timothy 5:19, “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses,” by receiving a complaint against an elder of the church without corroborating witnesses. In fact, all of the assertions leveled in these letters condemning MMI and Momentus can be contradicted by many witnesses of the same events.

Comment: This accusation against those who do not personally go to those whose teachings and practices are public in order to air their grievance is commonly used by false teachers to defend their positions. Again, they do not address the sin, but the person who reveals the sin. In the first place, Matthew 18:15-19 has to do with personal offense committed by one brother against another. It has nothing to do with addressing public teachings and practices of organizations or their leaders. In the second place, even if Matthew 18:15-19 could legitimately be applied to the dispute between MMI and its detractors, it doesn't matter if the detractors are in error by not applying those verses to their approach. If one brings the truth to another in error, it is up to the one in error to admit his error and repent. It doesn't matter if the messenger's demeanor is unloving, and even obnoxious. It is the truth to which we must bend, not the messenger of the truth. And in the third place, CRI and other organizations that have addressed MMI's teachings and practices do have the statements of more than two or three witnesses. The fact that MMI can produce more in

number that support it does not matter if MMI is in error. It isn't a matter of pitting one set of witnesses against another set of witnesses. Every error has its proponents. The truth remains that many have been at the least offended by Momentus' actions, and some even claim to have been severely abused by them. These are not isolated objections, but rather common. Many people have approached MMI with their concerns, only to be rebuffed and told that they are their own victims; MMI and Momentus are not responsible if these people's reactions to the trainings are negative.

Objection: MMI uses the same techniques Daniel Tocchini learned at Lifespring, and shares its humanistic and New Age presuppositions.

MMI: We do not have humanistic or New Age beliefs or presuppositions. Our beliefs are orthodox. Our techniques and exercises, although also used by secular training formats, are not inherently humanistic or New Age. The exercises address issues that theologians and philosophers have wrestled with since the time of Socrates. The format of the training is similar to how Jesus dealt with the crowds and Pharisees by asking questions, making assertions, and allowing individuals to reveal their own agendas. Our trainings are not designed as a means of attaining perfection or salvation. The purpose is to equip individuals to love God and love their neighbor as commanded by Scripture.

Do we consider Lifespring bad or not?

Again, our accusers attempt to draw a false dichotomy by asking whether *Lifespring* is good or bad. We consider *Lifespring* to be a secular organization of people who need the Lord. While employed at *Lifespring*, Daniel led over 100 people to Jesus. We believe that whatever is true is of God. In what is taught at *Lifespring*, some is true. They have some wisdom about how to teach. However, they use this truth for evil and selfish ends. While Daniel worked there, he taught people to use the truth they learned there to find the Lord instead of a dream house or a dream job. Although Daniel has not been associated with *Lifespring* for more than 12 years, our accusers still attempt to make MMI guilty by past association.

Many Christians do not believe that the secular world has anything to offer us as the church. We do not see this in Scripture. The Scriptures are clear

that God uses the secular to demonstrate his truth just as he uses the church to demonstrate his truth, and that we should be seeking the truth whether in the church or in the world! God has a habit of using the church to confuse the wise of the world, and he uses the world to confuse those who would boast of themselves in the church. Scriptures that support God's use of things secular are:

Matthew 5:45 — *He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

I Corinthians 1:27-29 — *But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God.*

These Scriptures are clear that the scope of God's kingdom is much broader than the church itself. His kingdom includes all people and all things. And he shall use what he pleases to confound the wise in both domains.

Comment: Again, MMI uses faulty logic and misapplies Scripture to defend itself. Quoting the above Scriptures does not address the question. God choosing the foolish, weak and base things of the world refers to His choosing those who would believe in Him to confound the world. We were at one time of the world, foolish, weak and base, but we are no longer of the world once we come to Christ. This is not the same as using Lifespring's methods on Christians. In fact, we see a defense by MMI for using Lifespring's methods. In other words, MMI not only denies using Lifespring's methods, it affirms that using those methods for God is perfectly okay.

Yet it accuses its detractors of using guilt by association even though Tocchini's Lifespring stint was over 12 years ago. It is not guilt by association if Tocchini continues to incorporate what he learned and taught at Lifespring, no matter how long ago it was.

Furthermore, the claim that “the exercises address issues that theologians and philosophers have wrestled with since the time of Socrates” is no excuse for using methods devised among the ungodly. Such methods are psycho-spiritual exercises not found in Scripture. Because theologians and philosophers stumble through life try-

ing to find answers to man's spiritual problems while substituting spiritual exercises for biblical discipleship does not justify using their methods. As for the reason not to use such methods, Scripture insists that it, itself, is sufficient for all our spiritual needs if we will but **obey** God's Word:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Objection: God's plan of salvation is not referred to during the training.

MMI: This concern reveals the problem of excluding contrary evidence. Our critics have overlooked the fact that Mashiyach has been used by God to support over 1000 people coming to Jesus. If we were neglecting God's plan for salvation, which is Christ himself, then why would so many people come to him during the training? This fruit is evidence that we teach and demonstrate salvation in such a powerfully tangible way throughout the training that on Sunday, when we give all those present an opportunity to ask Jesus into their lives as Lord and Savior, or to rededicate their lives, many jump at the chance. The startling fact is that some 90 percent of the unbelieving public in attendance at the Momentus training have come to Jesus. This statistic includes Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Agnostics, and Atheists. These facts have been ignored and excluded by our detractors.

Comment: Of course we have only Tocchini's word for these conversions. Yet we must resist impugning his character by suggesting that he may be lying or padding the figures, particularly since by 1997, the total number of people to have gone through the Momentus training was 4,000. The number of conversions among participants would suggest that the significant number are unbelievers. And the percentage of conversions would suggest that Momentus has stumbled upon the greatest evangelistic tool ever devised!

Yet I suppose that it is possible that there have been as many professions of faith as Tocchini states. How many of those professions of faith are genuine only the Lord knows. If there is only one, we must praise God for it. Yet even if every one of the 1,000 claimed by Tocchini were genuine we cannot overlook the problems with Momentus. Be-

cause God uses us to bring others to Him does not mean we ourselves are pure before Him. At the least we must continually examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. Even Paul maintained a concern that, after having worked so faithfully and saved others he himself might be cast away (I Corinthians 9:27).

None of us can boast in the work we have done for Christ. It is not we, but Christ who does the work. When we begin to count the victories we may well be on the way to defeat. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12).

AN INDEPENDENT REPORT

In 1993, a neutral investigator, Barney Coombs, was invited by Santa Rosa Christian Church to determine if the complaints against Momentus were justified. The major issues raised by Coombs were as follows:

- The Cross does not seem to be central;
 - The Scriptures appear to be played down and personal experience played up;
 - Momentus Training seems to be fundamentally similar to Lifespring in several ways;
 - There is an inaccurate view of repentance;
 - Sanctification is treated as a quick fix;
 - MTS is a para-church business in which a number of board members have a financial interest;
 - There is a very low view of the Church;
 - Cheap grace is presented in a "cavalier" style;
 - Earlier groups were encouraged to hug inappropriately;
 - Profanity is used in the training.
- About Dan Tocchini the report states:
- He lacks proven credibility as a minister of the Gospel;
 - He has roots in secular psychology and a non-Bible-based church;
 - He has a dictatorial leadership style;

There were other serious concerns too numerous to list. What is important about this independent report is that it was never acted upon by Santa Rosa Christian Church, and no written response has been given to address these issues.

In spite of the many concerns raised by former trainees of Momentus, as well as by Coombs, Momentus Training continues to grow and impact churches throughout the United States. Early warnings offered by CRI and others have been largely ignored.

Our purpose in presenting this report is so that anyone who reads it will at least be aware of what to expect should they decide to take the Momentus Training.

BRIDGE BUILDERS

In addition to its own program, Momentus has devised Bridge Builders, a similar program for youth. Bridge Builders works through church youth groups and on campuses to effect transformation of young people. The following statement from Deborah Morgan reflects her personal experience with Momentus through her youth group:

For quite some time, my youth leader had been involved with Momentus. I thought he was the greatest youth leader when I was not right with God because he let me do anything. He was on my side and never for my parents.

After I had come back to God the rest of the youth group was still in their rebellious stage. It was October, '95. Our youth group was coming back from a retreat.

I was in one car with two other people in the youth group and the rest were in a van with our youth leader. After driving for an hour, we stopped to get gas and some yummy snacks. I stayed in the car and a few minutes later my youth leader came over to talk to me. He asked me if all of us could come into the van.

I was excited and asked him if we were getting together to share what God had done this weekend. To my surprise he said, "Yeah!"

As I got in the van I felt some tension and anger in the air.

When we were back on the road, all of a sudden my youth leader said, "Well, why don't we start off by informing Debbie everything that she missed before she got into the van."

I thought, "Inform me about what?"

One of the guys in the group told me, "Well, earlier we were talking about you, saying harsh things and making fun of you." (It was pretty bad, and I don't want to repeat what they said because I have forgiven them for what they had done.)

He continued, "I butted in and told them not to talk that way. We are family, brothers and sisters in Christ, and I know that if God was here, He wouldn't want us to be talking the way we are."

One of the guys who had spoken harshly of me started yelling and getting upset. My youth leader didn't do anything. He just didn't care and let it carry on. When he found out that someone was defending me he became upset and rebuked the one defending me. Momentus believes strongly in expressing your "feelings," no matter what they are.

When I realized that the whole reason for getting into the van was aimed towards me I felt trapped and all alone. My youth leaders wanted everyone to "express" how they really felt about me so that I would know what kind of person I was. So there I was, stuck in this van, surrounded by all of my friends, who I love, telling me how they hate me. They spoke blatantly and held nothing back, pointing out all my faults. I was trying so hard to hold back the tears.

Worst of all, my youth leader—the one I had trusted in—encouraged all this to happen.

After everyone had gotten their anger out on me he said it was now time for me to apologize for all that I had done. I did so, even though I felt it wasn't right, since I hadn't done anything wrong.

I can still hear my youth leader saying how wonderful and healthy this was for our youth group. But I felt as if I had been ripped apart by everyone that I loved and cared about.

I held in the tears and asked God to give me comfort and strength. The rest of the way home I sat there and quietly forgave everyone for what they had done to me; I knew they were deceived and were just following what my youth pastor said to do. To this day I still love and cherish each one of those people, and by God's grace I have reconciled with some of them.

Through my parents' prayers and God's healing touch I am completely restored. But I would say that if this happened to someone that doesn't have a close relationship with Jesus Christ, they would probably be dealing with depression and having a hard time relating with people.

I have had a lot of experience since then with Momentus attacking

my age group and I must say from the deepest part of me, please be careful in discerning what is right and what is wrong; what is of God and what is of the enemy!²⁴

CONCLUSION

The purpose of all ministry in the Body of Christ is for the bringing of the saints into spiritual maturity. It is for this purpose that the Lord gave certain spiritual gifts which reside within the anointed offices of eldership:

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. (Ephians 4:11-15)

From the infancy of the Church the enemies of God have sought to persuade the people away from the truths which these elders are to impart for that purpose. In place of those truths have been substituted man's wisdom, deceptions from Satan and myths that have no foundation in the rock of God's holy Word. This gave rise to a great apostasy which culminated in a centralized, formal hierarchical structure known as the "Catholic" (or "Universal") Church. This religious structure usurped the autonomous authority of the local assemblies that fell within its political jurisdiction under Roman rule. As a result, the "elders" of the churches, for the most part, have been unqualified "clergy," largely led by the dictates of the denominational structures under which they have been "ordained."

Today's formal churches, for the most part also, are either descended from the Roman Catholic apostasy, or have been infected by it to some degree. As a result, the saints are hard-pressed to find solid spiritual guidance or discipleship from within the structured church system.

This is not an indictment against all structured assemblies. There remain some—albeit relatively few—which do attempt to remain faithful to the biblical guidelines. But their task is made all the more difficult due to the influence of Christian media upon their members. All sorts of winds of doctrine waft through the airwaves, lurk within the pages of books and magazines, and emanate from the pulpits. It has been left to lone prophetic voices to call believers back to the Scriptures as their sole spiritual authority. If there is one office that has been rejected over and over not only by Israel, but by the churches, it is that of the prophet—men and women who cry out against unrighteousness, false teachings and sin in the churches. For that reason these voices have often had to be found within so-called "parachurch" ministries.

In truth, there should be no need for parachurch ministries. All spiritual guidance should come at the hands of qualified elders within the local assemblies. But just as God has gone outside His properly ordained order to accomplish His will for His people in the past, He uses those who make themselves available to fill the gap.

Not all parachurch ministries are of God, however. Just as the voices within the churches must be tested, so, too, must the voices of those who claim to bring the truth while outside the walls of the establishment churches. This is especially true of those parachurch organizations which go beyond merely proclaiming truth to engaging their constituents in spiritual exercises.

The number of such organizations has been on the rise of late. Many focus on specific areas of spiritual growth, such as Christian marriage seminars. There are a number which strive to bring their adherents into spiritual maturity at every level, some of whom engage in psycho-spiritual exercises such as meditation and contemplative prayer. (See our special report, *Renovaré: Spiritual Formation Groups on the Rise*.)

While parachurch organizations may or may not be led by the Spirit of God, and may or may not be true to the Scriptures in their ministry, all, including Media Spotlight, are subject to testing by what God's Word *clearly* states.

The Lord's path for our lives is simple, but not necessarily easy to follow. Our hearts may be pure in the intent to

be conformed to the image of Christ, but we must battle not only our flesh, but our minds, when in comes to living out that intent.

It's easy enough to recognize the flesh at work; it's not so easy to recognize the fleshly mind at work. We may commit sins of the flesh, but rationalization of sin compounds the sin. Our minds tend to rationalize our evilness which we do not wish to face.

At the root of our souliness lies an inherent selfishness or self-centeredness which clouds our judgment of right and wrong were it not for God's light which delineates between the two. In truth, the greatest hindrance to our spiritual growth is not the temptation of our fleshly nature, but the temptation of our religious nature. The latter is so subtle as to appear righteous. It is much more difficult to spot our religious nature at work than it is to spot our carnal nature at work.

Our religious nature insists upon doing something—anything—that causes us to feel “spiritual.” It leads to asceticism, denial of the flesh to the extreme, eschewing even the good that God has provided for us within the natural realm of His creation. Religiosity brings up the pernicious lie of dualism: the spiritual is good; the material is evil. It tells us that, in order to achieve a high degree of spirituality we must devise ways to elevate ourselves above the earthly plane into the spiritual plane of God's presence. It fails to recognize that we can do nothing of ourselves to enter into God's presence. He brings His presence into our lives as He determines, in the manner in which He determines. Sometimes this results in feelings of euphoria; most often it is in the still small voice of His Spirit bringing to mind His Word in order to guide us as we trod the dangerous paths of existence within a fallen world.

God's normal way of dealing with us is insufficient for the religious spirit. It doesn't always give us the feelings of euphoria that we desire. So it becomes necessary (in our own thinking) to do something so that we can “feel God's presence.” This may even take the form of saturating ourselves with music that provides the feelings we need.

Not that there is anything wrong with offering worshipful music to the Lord; this is proper and scriptural. But we must do so out of a desire to express our love for Him, not as a means to lift our spirits. The first motive is pure;

the latter motive is fleshly, regardless of how “spiritual” it may cause us to feel. If, in our pure worship we experience something from the Lord, so be it; but we should not attempt to get feelings. It is not unusual for true spiritual worship to result in sorrow—sorrow for our sinfulness; sorrow for the plight of the lost; sorrow for the Lord's having had to suffer for our sakes. Joy is wonderful. So is everything we experience if it originates with God and not with our religious nature.

Spiritual maturity—the goal of all true believers—is often an elusive quality. God's Word offers all we need in the way of instruction on godliness.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

In addition to His Word, our Lord has provided us with His Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. (John 16:13). He guides us according to the Scriptures. As we study them to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, the Holy Spirit enables us to rightly divide truth from error. If we do not study His Word we cannot count on the Holy Spirit to bring to remembrance what He has stated therein, as promised by Jesus (John 14:26). It remains for us to learn His Word and, as we receive the light of truth through the Holy Spirit, submit ourselves willingly to His design for our lives. This takes an act of conscious surrender to His leading. It is a life-long task; there are no short cuts to spiritual maturity.

In spite of this truth, there have always been attempts by religiously-minded men to devise ways in which they can somehow bypass the God-ordained method to achieve spiritual maturity. These have taken the form of religious orders such as those of monks and nuns who cloister themselves from the outside world in order to focus on contemplative and meditative exercises designed to alter one's consciousness in order to “feel” God's presence. That these orders are devoid of Scriptural precedent and fraught with false doctrine is not an issue with those involved. Their religious spirits are being catered to and no amount of scriptural truth will dissuade most from their erroneous religious exercises.

Today's religious climate is largely based upon a similar spirituality, relying more upon feelings and experience than upon objective biblical reality. Modern contemplative and meditative methodologies such as Richard Foster's *Renovaré*, as well as the deliverance phenomenon, the “Toronto Blessing,” Holy Laughter, the Pensacola “Revival” and transformational trainings such as *Momentus*, are sweeping the churches—even some of the more fundamentalist ones—as ways to achieve spiritual maturity without a sound biblical basis.

But there is no method, especially one that takes only a few days, to achieve spiritual maturity. There are no quick fixes to men's spiritual problems. Spiritual growth is a life-long process that requires immersing oneself in God's Word and obeying it as the Holy Spirit brings to mind areas of our lives that need to be conformed to the Scriptures.

Anyone who offers quick fixes to complex spiritual problems is peddling snake oil, not the oil of God's anointing. ❖

NOTES

1. Greg Stockton, *Killing the Victim Before the Victim Kills You* (Santa Rosa, CA: Mashiyach Press, 1997), p. 56.
2. *Momentus* Web Site, (<http://www.momentus.org/moment/index.htm>).
3. (Michael D. Langone, Ph.D., “Large Group Awareness Trainings,” *Cult Observer*, Volume 15, No. 1, 1998, American Family Foundation Resource Guide, www.csj.org/rg/rgeessays/rgeessay_lgate.htm.)
4. *Killing the Victim Before the Victim Kills You*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 13.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
11. Daniel L. Tocchini, “An Apologetic from Mashiyach Ministries, Inc.,” www.momentus.org/apol/apol_frm.htm.
12. *Killing the Victim*, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 173-174.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 167.24.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
15. *Momentus Training Session Manual*, Introduction, pp. 2-1 - 2-2.
16. *Momentus*, www.momentus.org/moment/index.htm.
17. *Killing the Victim*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 26.
18. www.momentus.org
19. Judi Klug Testimonial.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Jean Cofield Testimonial.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Momentus, Hold Harmless/Release and Arbitration Agreement*, Section III, “Election of Release or Non-release.”
24. Daniel L. Tocchini, “An Apologetic from Mashiyach Ministries, Inc.,” www.momentus.org/apol/apol_frm.htm.