

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS

"*Living Temple* [written in 1903 by J.H. Kellogg (1852-1943)] contains the Alpha of these theories. The Omega would follow in a little while. I tremble for our people. These beautiful representations are similar to the temptation that the enemy brought to Adam and Eve in Eden . . . [and claims to teach how to reach] a higher spirituality."—*1 Sermons and Talks, 341 (1904)*.

"In the book *Living Temple* there is presented the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given."—*1 Selected Messages, 200 (1904)*.

The alpha, first presented to our people in the first decade of the 20th century, had to do with reaching a higher level of spirituality through a closer understanding of God and a closer contact with Him. It is likely that the omega of apostasy, predicted to arise later among our people, would also have something to do with achieving higher spirituality.

Just now, in the first decade of the 21st century, there is something of a most startling nature that has quietly entered our denomination and is now, in 2011, rapidly spreading through our churches, colleges, universities, and publishing houses.

This strange new thing that is being presented to our people is being called "marvelous new light which will bring a wonderful revival to our church."

It claims to provide wonderful new ways for our people to draw close to God and seek higher spirituality; it has, as its foundation, the ancient mystical and pantheistic teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism.

This collection of ancient pagan errors is called

spiritual formation. Although clothed in most beautiful garments, these theories and practices, if accepted, will most surely lead our people away from the Creator God and His Inspired Writings.

Therefore, this extremely thorough examination of *spiritual formation* has been prepared. Our people must be warned! As you will learn in this report, **the leading advocates and instructors in spiritual formation repeatedly declare that it originated over many centuries in ancient Hinduism and Buddhism, and the medieval Catholic Church.** They are not ashamed of the fact. —*vf*

Centering prayer is a primary method of achieving "spiritual formation," and is supposedly used for personal renewal and peace. **It involves emptying the brain of all thoughts and, for a lengthy period of time, mindlessly repeating a single word. This is supposed to let the Holy Spirit enter. But it is another spirit that invades the mind.**

Draped in Christian clothing, this is New Age meditation which is creeping its way into mainstream Christianity through, what is called, "the spiritual formation movement." **This stilling and emptying the mind into a trance-like state actually originated with ancient Catholic ascetics and monks who inherited it from Buddhism and Hinduism.**

It is dangerous to enter a passive mental state; because, in those situations, our minds have no protection against falsehood or evil. —It is made even worse when we voluntarily choose to do it for the express purpose of emptying the mind, realizing the well-known Buddhist and Hindu origins.

Biblical meditation, on the other hand, involves conscious thought about Scripture, as we prayerful read it and apply its principles to our life. Biblical meditation is having our minds actively engaged in con-

IN-DEPTH COVERAGE OF THE SUBJECT

This is a rather complete overview of what is involved in spiritual formation, plus the unfortunate inroads it is making in our own denomination at this time. This information is of crucial importance, as you will understand when you read this.

In 1995, I published a summary of Derek Morris' 12-page booklet, which he gave to all his students at Southern Missionary College, in which he told how a Catholic "disciplined" him into spiritual formation, how it has helped him, and how they should use its imaginings and submissions in the guidance of more future spiritual leaders in our church. That two-part tract set, *Spiritual For-*

mation [WM-658-660], quoted all the essential points in this booklet (which is no longer available).

I reprinted that 1995 study in its entirety, plus additional material in 2005, in the four-part *Spiritual Formation: 2005 Update [WM-1286-1289]*.

When this present eleven-part, 44-page tract set is completed, I will send the first four tracts as soon as possible. The other four will follow regularly, unless a major news story breaks.

All of that, plus the previous 16-page 2005 Update, will at that time be available in a 60-page booklet which you can obtain from us and share with those who need it. The title of the booklet will be *Inside Spiritual Formation*.

templating God's Word. James 4:7 says to "submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you." **Resistance is key to remaining alert and cautious, and requires a thinking mind that has submitted to the control of God.**

The peace experienced in Christian meditation is not found by looking "within" or imagining that we are becoming gods. Rather, **peace comes by humbly, obediently looking to the Creator God of the Bible.** When we thoughtfully consider God's truth in our minds, the Holy Spirit works to change our hearts and leads us into fuller knowledge and obedience.

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."—Joshua 1:8.

The effects of spiritual formation practices on the mind are remarkably similar to that of hypnotism or attendance at a spiritualist seance. (For much more on hypnotism, see my 82-page *Hypnotism Tractbook*.)

"The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience."—*Great Controversy*, 588.

The hand of spiritualism, through the movement of spiritual formation with all its associated dangers, is even now being grasped by the hand of Protestantism; and **we, as Seventh-day Adventists, are in grave danger as we are being brought face to face with this movement.** Far too many of our people are yielding to it!

In a view into the last days—in which we are now entering—we see this:

"This delusion will spread, and we shall have to contend with it face to face; and unless we are prepared for it, we shall be ensnared and overcome. . .

"I saw the rapidity with which this delusion [spiritualism] was spreading. A train of cars was shown me, going with the speed of lightning. The angel bade me look carefully. I fixed my eyes upon the train. **It seemed that the whole world was on board.** . . Then he showed me the conductor, who appeared like a fair, stately person, whom all the passengers looked up to and revered. I was perplexed and asked my attending angel who it was. He said, **'It is Satan. He is the conductor, in the form of an angel of light. He has taken the world captive. . . And they are all going with lightning speed to perdition.'**"—*Early Writings*, 88.

— SECTION ONE —
NOW IN THE OTHER CHURCHES

SADDLEBACK AND WILLOW CREEK

Two of the largest and most influential Protestant churches are **Rick Warren's Saddleback Church, in southern California, and Willow Creek in northern Illinois.**

Rick Warren praises spiritual formation:

"From time to time God has raised up a parachurch movement to reemphasize a neglected purpose of the church: . . . [This is] the Discipleship, Spiritual Formation Movement. A reemphasis on developing believers to full maturity has been the focus . . . of authors such as . . . **Richard Foster** and Dallas Willard, who have underscored the importance of building up Christians and establishing personal spiritual disciplines. . . [This] movement has a valid message for the church. . . [It] has given the body a wake-up call."—*Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Church*, p. 126.

An official statement by Willow Creek has this message:

"The practice [of spiritual formation at] Saturday morning meetings provides a rhythm of worship, teaching on a particular spiritual discipline and time to experience or "practice" that discipline. **This practice time allows participants to get a fuller understanding of how to incorporate the discipline into their daily lives.**"—*Spiritual Formation at Willow Creek*.

Ruth Haley Barton, former *Associate Director of Spiritual Formation* at Willow Creek Community Church, wrote this:

"A few years ago, I began to recognize an inner chaos in my soul. . . No matter how much I prayed, read the Bible, and listened to good teaching, I could not calm the internal roar created by questions with no answers.

"I sought out a spiritual director, someone well versed in the ways of the soul. . . Eventually this wise woman said to me . . . 'What you need is stillness and silence so that the sediment can settle and the water can become clear.' . . I decided to accept this invitation to move beyond my addiction to words."—*Ruth H. Barton, "Beyond Words: Experience God's Presence in Silence and Solitude."*

Richard Foster (**a Catholic priest and prominent leader in the Catholic/Protestant spiritual formation movement** who, as we will learn in this report, has led out in connecting spiritual formation closely with its ancient roots in Catholicism and Buddhism), author of the *Spiritual Formation Bible*, has written this:

"By now enough water has gone under the Chris-

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

tian Spiritual Formation bridge that we can give some assessment of where we have come and what yet needs to be done. When I first began writing in the field **in the late 70s and early 80s the term 'Spiritual Formation' was hardly known, except for highly specialized references in relation to the Catholic orders.** Today it is a rare person who has not heard the term. Seminary courses in spiritual formation proliferate like baby rabbits. **Huge numbers are seeking to become certified as spiritual directors to answer the cry of multiplied thousands for spiritual direction.**—*Richard Foster, Spiritual Formation, a Pastoral Letter.*

Larry Crabb predicts that spiritual formation will be a key element in bringing the full power of the Holy Spirit into the churches:

“The next reformation is due. It will focus on what it means to know God with a power that changes who we are and how we relate. I predict the Spiritual Formation Forum will play a vital role in the Spirit’s next great movement.”—*Larry Crabb, The Association of Christian Counselors.*

SOUTHERN BAPTIST SEMINARIES

Spiritual formation has spread so rapidly through the Protestant Churches, that **it is now even being taught in Southern Baptist seminaries.** Don Whitney, a seminary professor in the Southern Baptist seminary, authored a May 5, 2005, news release: “*The Importance of Spiritual Formation in the Training of Ministers.*” He was formerly Assistant Professor of Spiritual Formation at **Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary** in Kansas City, Missouri. Later he moved to the **Southern Baptist Theological Seminary** in Louisville, Kentucky.

“*Louisville, KY*—The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary recently appointed to its faculty noted spiritual disciplines scholar Donald S. Whitney to teach in the new professorship of biblical spirituality and **to pioneer a doctoral program in Christian spirituality.**”—*Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.*

Thus even America’s largest “Protestant” denomination—and its most conservative,—is going full speed into spiritual formation.

One internet listing of Protestant seminaries (where future pastors are trained) brags that “over a thousand seminaries around the world” now include spiritual formation as required in their master’s and doctoral degree programs.

“Examine **Spiritual Formation Doctoral Degrees**, offered by +1000 top accredited universities & colleges. Find detailed information, contact . . .”—*emagister/net/doctrinal_degrees.*

METHODIST SEMINARIES

Here is another example. It is part of the General Bulletin for **Duke University, a United Methodist**

school:

“*Duke University, Academics, Spiritual Formation*—**Each first-year student has been prayerfully placed in a small, intentionally diverse spiritual formation group.** These groups are led by local pastors, many of whom are Duke Divinity alumni. Each week the groups gather to share concerns and to reflect theologically on the nature of Christian discipleship.

“Sponsored by the Chaplain’s Office of Duke Divinity School, **attendance at one of these retreats** fulfills the M.Div. requirement for Spiritual Formation.

“As part of the spiritual formation experience, students are also to be invited to take time apart from their studies to attend two spiritual retreats, one each semester.

“Founded in 1926 as the first of the university’s graduate professional schools, **the Divinity School attracts students from across the nation and around the world.** One of 13 seminaries founded and supported by the United Methodist Church, the school has from its beginnings been ecumenical in aspiration, teaching, and practice.

“I recently took a seminary course on the book of Luke. It was a summer intensive and was one of only two classes being offered at the time. About midway through the week, while the class was steeped in trying to discern the intent and significance of the book of Luke, **we began to hear the echoes of mystic chanting coming through the walls.**

“As it turned out, the other class being offered was parked right next to ours. The paper thin walls were carrying the choruses of **a class exploring the life and teachings of Catholic mystic Henry Nouwen.** We proceeded, trying to concentrate on studying the Scriptures while tuning out the chants that were carrying on next door.

“**Perhaps what was more unsettling though is the class studying Nouwen was chock full,** while there were plenty of empty seats next door for anyone wanting to learn about the inspired book of Luke.”—*Ryan Habbena, commenting on a Baptist seminary course during the summer of 2005 at Bethel Theological Seminary in Arden Hills, MN.*

How can this be? A Methodist seminary was favorably studying the teachings of this Catholic mystic, whose own biographers describe as having had emotional problems and homosexual inclinations.

“I met a lady who attends a Christian college. As part of her study program **she was required to take a course on spiritual formation at her college. Spiritual formation in her class also concerned the study of Roman Catholic mystics and**

the search for techniques to help those who implement them feel closer to God. This study also explored ‘spiritual disciplines’ which promised to make those who practiced them more Christ-like.”

CHRISTIANITY TODAY

Christianity Today, the leading Evangelical magazine in existence today, has **an article by Richard Foster, the acknowledged leading writer and speaker at this time in the spiritual formation movement (and a Catholic priest).** He says:

“There is a more than 2,000-year record of great ones in this [spiritual formation] life—Augustine and Francis and Teresa and a Kempis and many more [all Catholics]—who, by following hard after Jesus in this way, became persons of absolute sterling character. The record is there for anyone who wants to see. . .

“Christians of all sorts now know about the need for spiritual formation, and look to saints—Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant—for guidance. . . In our day, the desperate need is for the emergence of a massive spiritual army of trained spiritual directors. . .

“Let us do all we can to develop the *ecclesiola in ecclesia*—‘the little church within the church.’ The *ecclesiola in ecclesia* is deeply committed to the life of the people of God and is not sectarian in any way. **No separation. No splitting off. No setting up a new denomination or church. We stay within the given church structures and develop little centers of [spiritual formation] light within those structures.”—Richard Foster, “*Spiritual Formation Agenda*,” *Christianity Today*, January 2009.**

RAPIDLY PENETRATING OUR OWN CHURCH

Spiritual formation is rapidly spreading throughout our own denomination and is being taught in our Seminary at Andrews University.

Sections Four and Five of this report will explain that in some detail. Much more on this Adventist connection there.

This in-depth analysis of spiritual formation and its inroads is being prepared because of this rapid penetration of that devilish error into our midst. Our people must be warned about this; and they must be shown what it involves—so they can avoid the slightest participation in it!

— SECTION TWO —

LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

NAMES YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF

Before providing you with additional facts about the

inroads of spiritual formation in our denomination,—**it is urgent that you learn (1) its code words; (2) the names of its most influential, interdenominational leaders; and (3) the names of key practices used in spiritual formation,** to draw your mind into control by demons.

Please understand: When spiritual formation is first presented to you, it will appear to be very nice. But the concepts and methods used to put it into your life practice have sinister results. You may not feel any different after each contact; but a demon has been permitted to start implanting thoughts in your mind, there to steadily work to cause you to swerve more fully into wrong paths and away from God. One of those thoughts will be a sense of depression, urging you to keep returning to these apparently meaningless sessions.

You need to know in advance the special words, names, and key practices—so you can avoid its first stealthy approach when a friend, teacher, or pastor presents it to you! I am sorry to have to tell you that individuals and church articles may attempt to lure you into it. Those men and women have earlier been enticed into “mind-expanding experiences” in spiritual formation, and now want you to join them in this closer walk with a spirit.

The peace experienced in Christian meditation is not found by repeating certain words or looking “within” for guidance.

Peace comes by looking to God; studying His Inspired books (the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy); and, through the enabling grace of Christ, obeying His Ten Commandment law. The Holy Spirit does not change lives apart from their willing submission to God and humble obedience to Him.

NAMES BY WHICH IT IS CALLED

“I am here because our president, Dr. Mark Coppenger, **believes that vigorous spiritual formation is both the antidote and the preventive for many rampant ministerial problems.** He believes this so strongly that the creation and filling of the *chair of spiritual formation* was the first change in the faculty he made upon arriving at Midwestern Seminary in 1995.”—Don Whitney, “*The Importance of Spiritual Formation in the Training of Ministers.*”

One of the new names for this movement is the “emerging spirituality.” It is presented as a wonderful new experience which leads the soul closer to God, a spiritual fullness which is emerging, bursting out in the schools and churches of Christendom.

This movement, through its emphasis on the teachings of the “Desert Fathers” (the Catholic mystics of ancient times), is in reality leading many Protestants back into the arms of Rome and Eastern mys-

Continued on the next tract

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

**PART TWO
OF Eleven**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

ticism. In order to be on guard, you need to be aware of the seemingly harmless code words used to describe spiritual formation:

Some of the various names under which these strange concepts are entering our denomination are the **Emerging Church, ReFormation, Renovare, Re-think, New Think,** and **Emerging Spirituality.**

Terms you will find in this **Emergent Movement** are: **Prayer Stations, Breath Prayers, Lectio Divina, Taize, The Silence, Sacred Space, Ancient Prayer Practices, A Thin Place, Spiritual Direction, Ignation Contemplation, Contemplative, Centering, Centering Prayer, Divine Center, Inner light, Mantra, Beyond Words, Spiritual Disciplines, Spiritual Formation, Prayer Labyrinths,** and **Prayer Rooms.**

RETURNING TO ANCIENT "TRADITIONS"

You will be told that these are just a new revival of ancient "traditions." That is true. **Roman Catholics have used these practices for centuries. They originally came from the Eastern religions, through the mystery religions of Asia Minor. Monasteries and nunneries** continue to provide special instruction in the meditative and contemplative disciplines. In addition, **"spiritual retreats"** have been common among Roman Catholics who seek relief from the stress of every day cares. Their religion does not provide comfort in Christ, and they gladly turn to other things. This is another spiritual formation practice now entering Protestantism.

Among non-Catholic Christians these contemplative traditions have played a relatively minor role for centuries. But the hunger for spiritual solutions is still there; because, by living in ongoing sin without obedience to God's laws, they crave something that they do not have.

In reaction, many are returning to what they call **"the great contemplative traditions of early Christianity."** But these traditions are neither first-century Christian nor Biblical in origin. They are Roman Catholic, adopted from pagan religious practices. When proponents of this "return" speak of "early Christianity," they really mean the apostate traditions that result in the monastic-type practices of Roman Catholicism.

In many churches, cell groups are springing up which offer opportunities for close-knit fellowship with other seekers. Among these, without realizing it, **many are learning and practicing together variations of ancient Buddhism, mingled with strange, new meaningless activity that is called "prayer" and "Bible study."**

In addition to meditative and contemplative exercises, **they are taught to study the lives of ancient and modern mystics,** in order to learn how to have a deeper experience.

LEADING SPIRITUAL FORMATION WRITERS

Here are several of the prominent spiritual forma-

tion authors at this time:

Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, David Benner, Kenneth Boa, Larry Crabb, Henri Nouwen, Bruce Demarest, A.W. Tozer, Eugene Peterson, and Martin Sanders.

LEADERS IN THIS RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT

Actively promoting the revival of the meditative and contemplative traditions among mainline Christians today is **Renovaré** (pronounced *ren-o-var-ay*; this is a Latin word, meaning "to make new spiritually"). It was founded by pseudo-psychologist **Richard J. Foster.**

Like **John Wimber** of *Vineyard International Ministries*, it is out of the religious traditions of the Catholics that Foster has come with the startling message that today's Christians are missing out on some wonderful spiritual experiences that can be found only by studying and practicing the meditative and contemplative methods of monks and mystics of earlier centuries and other cultures.

Co-directing Renovaré at its start was **William L. Vaswig**, a Lutheran minister whose experience in the religious disciplines was gained through the **Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation** in Washington, D.C.

Several well-known and influential leaders within Christianity are, or have been, involved with Renovaré. These include **Lloyd John Ogilvie, Jack Hayford, G. Raymond Carlson** (General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God), **David Hubbard** (President of Fuller Theological Seminary), **Jamie Buckingham, Anthony Campolo, J.I. Packer, John Wimber, David and Karen Mains, and C. Peter Wagner** of Fuller Theological Seminary, to mention just a few.

Other important speakers and writers include: **Henri Nouwen, Brennan Manning, Thomas Merton, Rick Warren, Ruth Haley Barton, Thomas Keating, Larry Crabb, Dallas Willard,** and **Tony Campolo.**

Here is additional information on some of the leaders in modern spiritual formation:

RICHARD J. FOSTER

Richard J. Foster is the author of several best-selling books, including ***Celebration of Discipline***. A dedicated Catholic priest, he is the founder of Renovaré, which is committed to "the renewal of spirituality in the churches." Renovaré claims to produce Christ-like character in people, beyond that which can be done in any other way.

Foster is also the general editor of the ***Renovaré Spiritual Formation Study Bible***. Our own Adventist North American Division strongly recommends Richard Foster's book, ***Prayer, Finding the Heart's True Home***.

It is of interest that Richard Foster is also on the Board of Reference for the Evangelical feminist group, www.cbeinternational.org, which outright teaches to call God "mother" while claiming to be "Evangelical."

Foster regularly speaks at various Adventist gath-

erings. One example of this was the *NAD Youth/Young Adult Ministries Leadership Summit, IGNITION*, held February 14-17, 2008, in Dallas.

“It will give intentional focus to significant young adult issues, feature innovations, as well as exhibit effective young adult ministries for the local church and campus. . . How do you ensure that is happening in your life? **A good place to start is to learn from leaders in the spiritual formation field. John Ortberg and Richard Foster** will join host George Barna for a challenging and exciting look at how leaders can be consistently developing their spirits during a special CCN broadcast: *Spiritual Disciplines for Leaders*. . .

“**Richard J. Foster is the author of several best-selling books**, including . . . *Celebration of Discipline*. **He is the founder of Renovaré, an infra-church movement committed to the renewal of the Church** in all of its multifaceted expressions and the formation of Christ-like character in people.

“**He is also the general editor of the Renovaré Spiritual Formation Study Bible. Adventist North American Division recommends Richard Foster’s book; Prayer, Finding the Heart’s True Home.**”—*Announcement for the NAD Youth/Young Adult Ministries Leadership Summit, IGNITION, held February 14-17, 2008, in Dallas, Texas.*

Richard Foster’s book, *Celebration of Discipline*, which promotes meditative prayer, has sold over two million copies.

THOMAS MERTON

Thomas Merton (January 31, 1915 – December 10, 1968) was a 20th century British-American Catholic writer. In 1949, he was ordained to the priesthood and given the name Father Louis. **He became a Trappist monk** of the Abbey of Gethsemani, Kentucky. He strongly believed in mixing the religions. His 1948 book, *Seven Storey Mountain*, sent scores of disillusioned World War II veterans, students, and even teenagers to join monasteries across the U.S.

He pioneered dialogue with prominent Asian spiritual figures—including the Dalai Lama; D.T. Suzuki, the Japanese writer on the Zen tradition; and the Vietnamese monk, Thich Nhat Hanh.

I first learned about him when, in the 1980s, I wrote a tract set on the way-out *Collegiate Quarterly*, which students in Adventist colleges and universities are encouraged to study instead of the *Senior Quarterly*, with its Bible studies. Merton was frequently quoted in the *Collegiate Quarterly*.

(However, in preparation for this article, I find that for a number of years now the *Collegiate Quarterly* has been much more Biblically oriented. I am thankful for that.)

BRENNAN MANNING

Brennan Manning, a leading Catholic speaker in

the spiritual formation movement, gave the Week of Prayer at Pacific Union College in the fall of 1995. (See our tract set: *The Catholic Gospel at Pacific Union College [WM-661-662]*.) Who is he?

Christened Richard Francis Xavier Manning, he is an author, friar, priest, contemplative, and speaker. He enrolled at Saint Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania, in the late 1950s. **Upon graduation from a Catholic seminary in 1963, Manning was ordained to the Franciscan priesthood.**

In the late 1960s, Manning joined the Little Brothers of Jesus of Charles de Foucauld, a religious order committed to an uncloistered, contemplative life among the poor. Manning transported water via donkey, worked as a mason’s assistant and a dishwasher in France, was imprisoned (by choice) in Switzerland, and spent six months in a remote cave somewhere in the Zaragoza Desert. In the 1970s, Manning returned to the U.S. and began writing and lecturing after trying to stop his alcoholism.

RENOVARE

The writings and influence of Renovaré have been likened to the Holy Spirit bringing the many streams of Christian thought and practice into a single, mighty rushing river.

Founded by Richard J. Foster, **Renovaré’s methods use four basic disciplines: prayer, meditation, contemplation, and devotional reading.** While diverse in their applications, all four disciplines are considered by Renovaré to fall under the basic heading of prayer.

The first—*prayer* itself—is said to be thoughtful communication with God through petition, praise, worship, and other common elements that make up prayer as we know it from Scripture. In this Renovaré is correct. However, in practice, little of this generally occurs. **The emphasis is always on meditation, as they interpret it,—and especially contemplation and devotional reading in the mystics.**

The second—meditation—is said to be remaining still and letting God speak. It may or may not involve visualization of Jesus in one’s presence or visualization of an action, such as healing, that one may wish accomplished through this form of “prayer.”

The third—contemplation—is basically just sitting still, as a means of being “in the presence of God.”

The fourth—devotional reading—primarily involves the reading of selected “spiritual masters” rather than Scripture.

All four disciplines may be intermingled. For example, one may begin with prayer; then do devotional reading; and from there go into meditation, visualization, and contemplation.

Such well-known Roman Catholic mystics who transcend mere Bible teachings (such as Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross [whom Johnston calls “my great guru”], Thomas Merton, Gregory of Nyssa, etc.) are put forth by both Johnston and Renovaré as ex-

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

amples to emulate for those seeking the “deeper spiritual experience.”

In order to show the “spiritual power” of the “contemplative masters,” Foster cites, as if they were true, “St.” Anthony’s wrestling with demons and Francis of Assisi’s conversation with “brother wolf,” whom he allegedly brought to peaceful terms with a village which that wolf had been terrorizing.

These “Christian” fables have nothing to do with reality or God’s truth. (For more such fables, see *Great Controversy*, pp. 56, 574-577, 681-683.) Yet faithful Catholics, as well as Foster, believe Francis of Assisi’s adventures with animals to be real happenings.

JOHN ORTBERG

John Ortberg is the Senior Teaching Pastor at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in California. He received a Master of Divinity and Ph.D. in clinical psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, where he now serves on the board of trustees.

Both John Ortberg and Richard Foster made important presentations to our leading young adults at the February 2008 NAD Youth/Young Adult Ministries Leadership Summit in Dallas, Texas.

SHALEM INSTITUTE

Representatives of the Shalem Institute have spoken at some Adventist gatherings. What is the Shalem Institute?

Founded in the late 1970s in Washington, D.C., **the Shalem Institute has provided special instructions to many of our national leaders.** But many, many others also attend their gatherings and retreats.

Renovaré’s various spiritual formation groups are patterned after those found at Catholic spiritual renewal centers which blend ancient rituals with Christianity, to produce a hybrid form of spiritual enlightenment.

Because of **Bill Vaswig** (a Lutheran minister), one such center has especially influenced Renovaré’s instructional methodology. This is the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, which works closely with Vaswig.

Vaswig states that he learned his meditative and contemplative practices from the Shalem Institute; and then he worked to improve it even better. He travels a lot and instructs his audiences and followers in these methods.

Shalem (*Sha-lame*) is a Hebrew word that, in the Institute’s words, “speaks of wholeness: to be complete, full, sound” (*Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, General Program Brochure, 1991-1992*).

Among the courses offered by Shalem Institute in its catalog can be found a course, entitled “*Pure Contemplative Presence*,” taught by Gerald May (Vaswig’s mentor). The course description is revealing:

“Insights and support for our presence together will be drawn from Christian contemplative and Tibetan Buddhist Dzogs-chen (Mahamudra) traditions.”—*Ibid.*

This particular course was taught at Bon Secours Spiritual Center in Marriottsville, Maryland, **a Roman Catholic spiritual center at which the Shalem Institute holds many of its courses.**

Ancient Catholic traditions and concepts of Buddhism and Hinduism are very close and interweave.

TONY COMPOLO

Tony Campolo, when he spoke in Brisbane, made much of the error that time is “relative” and that **Jesus Christ was still hanging on the Cross; because past, present, future, and eternity are all the same** to God. This is a fearful deception, on the same pathway as “no absolutes” of morality or righteousness. **If there is no “real” time, then there is no absolute reality either.** The doorway is wide open to a supernaturally given false “Jesus”; do not go through and gain an evil spirit guide!

Tony Campolo is a popular speaker because much of what he says seems so unusual. He has been a frequent speaker at Adventist gatherings since the late 1970s. He says his ideas come from frequently practicing centering prayer. On page 26 of his book, *Letters to a Young Evangelical*, he writes:

“I say his name over and over again to drive back the 101 things that begin to clutter up my mind the minute I open my eyes. [The word] **Jesus is my mantra**, as some would say.”—*Tony Campolo, Letters to a Young Evangelical, 26.*

Compolo’s 1983 book, *A Reasonable Faith*, stated that “Jesus is actually present in each person.”

LEONARD SWEET

Leonard Sweet is an ordained United Methodist minister who is currently Professor of Evangelism at Drew Theological School in Madison, New Jersey, and a visiting professor at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. In both 2006 and 2007, he was voted by his peers as **“one of the 50 most influential Christians in America”** by *Church Report Magazine*.

Sweet is one of the founding leaders of the Emerging Church (or Emergent Church movement or, as it has also been called, the “contemplative” movement) along with Brian McLaren, Doug Paggitt, Tony Jones, Richard Foster, and many others. **Rick Warren endorses him, which is why he has been able to speak in so many Evangelical churches and denominations.**

Sweet was the featured speaker at the Fourth Annual National Adventist Conference on Innovation. This was held in October in Columbus, Ohio, in September 2008. This Conference on Innovation is sponsored each year by Raj Attiken, president of the Ohio Conference of Seventh Day Adventists. (*More on Attiken later.*)

Sweet calls **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin** (the late pantheist, known as “the father of the New Age movement”) the “twentieth-century Christianity’s major voice.” (See Sweet’s book, *Aqua Church*, for more details.) Chardin spoke of the “cosmic Christ,” which is the “I AM God” in every creature and the “energy matter” of

everything. Chardin (1881-1955) was a French Jesuit priest.

“God and the universe are identical. The Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe.”—Leonard Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality*.

“You have within you the powers of goodness resident in the great spiritual leaders like Moses, Jesus, Muhammed, Lao Tzu.”—Leonard Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality*.

REIKI: ENTRANCE TO FALSE HEALING

The practice of Reiki is described in the New Age publication, *Common Ground*, in these words:

Reiki (ray-key) is the Japanese word for “Universal Life Energy.” Reiki is an ancient natural healing art revived in modern times by Dr. Mikao Usui while studying sacred Tibetan (Buddhist) sutras in the late 1800s.

Many people have experienced the Reiki energies as an assistance to their personal inner clearing and transformational process. During the *First Degree workshop*, a series of four “attunements” are given. A *Traditional Reiki Master* will align and tune in the energy centers of the student. After this process is completed, the Universal Life Force becomes amplified when drawn through the hands. (Ad for Reiki Master Dr. Paula Horan, *Common Ground of Puget Sound, Seattle, WA, p. 38.*)

Keep in mind that **enabling the powers within you to take control of your life is a key concept running through all these spiritual formation theories, practices, and ceremonies.**

The *New Age Catalog* describes it this way:

“Reiki is an effective technique for prevention of diseases and energy imbalances on all levels of your being. Reiki is also a unique, highly effective tool for personal transformation, growth, and change. Reiki is a natural energy-balancing and renewing method that can be used in conjunction with any other technique of health-care treatment, as well as with any other personal growth therapy.”—Barbara Weber Ray, “What is Reiki?” *The New Age Catalogue, p. 154.*

The phrase, “all levels of your being,” is a New Age description for wholeness of body, mind, and spirit. **Like most New Age and Eastern mystical practices, Reiki claims to be nonreligious.** That claim aside, Reiki is designed to bring about wholeness through the spiritual realm. **It is an un-Biblical activity that opens one up to demonic entities,—as do all spiritual exercises not specifically taught in Scripture.**

ECUMENISM: DOCTRINAL OBLIVION

One of the essential—and very successful—aspects of Renovaré’s ecumenism strategy involves working with all the churches, regardless of their doctrinal

teachings. Many of its leaders and instructors consider that close contact with non-Christian religions is of mutual benefit.

One such is a Roman Catholic nun, **Sister Thomas Bernard**, of the order of St. Joseph of Carondelet. **Bernard is actively pursuing dialogue with Buddhism through her office of Director of the Spirituality Center for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.**

In her message to one Spiritual Formation Conference, she extolled the doctrine of **John of the Cross**, whom she called “one of the great Spanish mystics of the 16th century.” According to Bernard, **John of the Cross “built his whole spirituality on the concept of the Nada and the Todo—the Nothing and the All. And he kept saying that “it is in the Nothing that we will find the All”** (*Sister Thomas Bernard, Tape, A National Conference on Personal Spiritual Renewal*). This, too, demonstrates the mysticism of one who lacks proper understanding of God’s nature. It is essentially Buddhist.

God is not “Nothing.” Nor do we find Him by doing “nothing.” He reveals Himself to us through His Word as a transcendent God with a will and intellect that is wholly distinct from His creation. He is unknowable, except as He chooses to make Himself known to man. His primary revelation to us is through Scripture and Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures.

— SECTION THREE —

METHODS FOR PRACTICING IT

ORIGINS

Because unregenerate men ruled through the hierarchical structure of the Roman Church, physical force was employed as a means of advancing the papal mandate for world dominion. Being religious men, however, it was incumbent upon them to assuage their bloody consciences through the practice of personal self-denial. **It was as if all the atrocities committed during the Dark Ages in the name of Jesus would be made acceptable to God if the men responsible for those atrocities could bathe their consciences in moments of spiritual renewal.**

Since the Scriptures do not offer any such means for salving one’s conscience apart from total repentance, it became necessary for wicked men to devise ways to placate God. Certain pagan cultures which they penetrated, both Oriental and African, offered such ways through ascetic religious traditions. **So Roman prelates established monasteries, where whole orders of monks could study and practice the meditative and contemplative traditions of paganism.** It was hoped

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

PART THREE
OF Eleven

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

that, in this way, the sins of the leaders could be washed away. Contact with Asian nations through trade exposed Christendom to Buddhist meditation. **It is no coincidence that the garb and religious practices of Roman Catholic monks is almost identical to that of Buddhist monks.**

Some of these practices include the mind-emptying practices of the Buddhists, which have now penetrated modern Christian churches.

“Like the Virgin Mary, we ponder these things in our heart.”—Richard J. Foster, *Tape, Prayer as a Discipline for Preaching, A National Conference on Personal Spiritual Renewal.*

“MEDITATING” ON THE BIBLE

This is a frequently used method of first getting Christians into these ancient Buddhist practices. **They are told to open the Bible, look at one verse, and then keep repeating one word in it for twenty minutes to an hour.**

In the technique of introducing people to samadhi, the Western tradition differs considerably from Zen (which only uses the lotus position). There was little about bodily posture.

(Lotus is the famous position in which a person sits cross-legged, with one foot on top of the other leg, both hands outstretched partially, with palms up, possibly as he looks at a candle flame.)

There does seem to have been considerable interest in breathing, particularly in the Eastern Church and in the tradition that flourished around Mount Athos, but much of this was lost or forgotten; and the farther west one moves the more intellectually appealing the whole thing becomes. Yet underneath it all is the fog and vapor of Buddhist practices.

At first, the newcomer may be told to read a verse of Scripture and think about it. But he is soon told that a more simplified and powerful way is to keep repeating a single word in that verse, and eventually just sit there in a blank-minded silence, which is called “contemplation.” This is Hindu/Buddhist samadhi.

The instructor will explain that **this is the deeper stage into which everyone seriously devoted to mental prayer should arrive. This is said to be true prayer and meditation** (*William Johnston, Christian Zen*).

The position in which this “arrival” into mediation best occurs is important. Richard Foster, in his presentations, does not actually place his audience in the lotus position; but he comes as close to it as possible without arousing alarm in those who might recognize it as Zen Buddhist in origin. By having them place their hands on their knees while sitting, he accomplishes the best possible initiation into Zen, while seemingly maintaining an outward detachment from it. (*More on the*

sitting and lotus position later.)

CENTERING PRAYER

Centering prayer is essentially a form of self-hypnosis. It makes use of a “mantra,” a word repeated over and over to focus the mind while striving, by one’s will, to go deep within oneself. The effects are a hypnotic-like state: concentration upon one thing; disengagement from other stimuli; a high degree of open-mindedness to suggestion; a psychological and physiological condition that externally resembles sleep, but in which consciousness is interiorized and the mind is subject to suggestion. After reading a published description of centering prayer, a psychology professor said, **“Your question is, is this hypnosis? Sure it is.” He said the state can be verified physiologically** by the drop in blood pressure, respiratory rate, lactic acid level in the blood, and the galvanic conductivity of the skin.

Centering prayer is used in an attempt to draw closer to God. **A single word is repeated over and over for the purpose of “opening the heart up to communion with God.”**

“Just use the prayer word to keep your mind otherwise blank as you wordlessly spend time with God. Do not give in to endlessly contemplating [thinking about] the sound and meaning of the prayer word. **Just say the word within yourself** [without speaking it aloud]. The goal of Centering Prayer as with other forms of contemplative prayer is to spend time with your loving Creator.”—*Centering Prayer: An Ancient Christian Prayer Form, King of Peace Episcopal Church, Kingsland, Georgia.*

In other words, do not think! Doing so will keep the spirit from entering you. Keep your mind blank and awaiting the entrance of a spiritual presence.

Although the goal may be different, **centering prayer is essentially the same as Eastern meditation. Mantras are used in yoga, Zen, Hinduism, and transcendental meditation.** They are also an essential part of deeper spiritual formation exercises.

Here are several more code words:

“Richard Foster speaks on personal renewal by **meditative prayer**—where one **centers down**, becoming **quiet and passive**, and then uses **guided imagery** and **visualization** of Christ. . . His methods have similarities to New Age or Eastern techniques that are used in meditation. Foster’s meditation, which is aimed at **centering oneself**, begins by concentrating on breathing.”—*Let Us Reason Ministries, “Meditation: Finding the god within.”*

We must guard our hearts and our minds as we seek to follow God and lead disciplined lives that honor Him. **God promises renewal and peace to those who seek Him in rest and quietness** (see Isaiah 30:15),

W
M

1
5
9
2

through submission and obedience, but not through the use of hypnotic trances or mantra repetition.

MANTRAMEDITATION

“Mantra meditation is a VERY powerful technique! You will discover that the repetition of mantras allows your mind to focus and concentrate more completely on sound and clear away other thoughts, emotions, and distractions which divert our energies.”—Rhea’s Rhapsody, “Meditation.”

The following quotation is an example of the foolish talk used to attract people into this. **Because it is suggested that they will do so, they imagine that they are entering some marvelous new form of existence.** — And you can be sure that Satan affects the mind, so as to appear that they are temporarily new beings. But then afterward, he affects them with depression; so they will want to return to yet another of these self-hypnotic sessions.

“The repetition of a mantra . . . is meant as a method of practice which brings about a power (siddhi) to reach the supreme state of consciousness. In this state there is silence within the mind which becomes still (shaant); and eventually you will merge the mind or individual awareness with the whole, which is Pure Consciousness and Knowingness.”—Meditation For Life, Four Stages of Mantra Meditation.

Compare that with this:

“It was grateful to the taste, and as she ate, she seemed to feel a vivifying power, and imagined herself entering upon a higher state of existence. Without a fear she plucked and ate. And now, having herself transgressed, she became the agent of Satan in working the ruin of her husband. **In a state of strange, unnatural excitement,** with her hands filled with the forbidden fruit, she sought his presence, and related all that had occurred. . .

“In answer she urged him to eat, repeating the words of the serpent, that they should not surely die. She reasoned that this must be true, for she felt no evidence of God’s displeasure, but on the contrary realized a delicious, exhilarating influence, thrilling every faculty with new life, such, she imagined, as inspired the heavenly messengers. . .

“After his transgression Adam at first imagined himself entering upon a higher state of existence.”—Patriarchs and Prophets, 56.

Does all this sound dangerous? It surely is!

I will quote part of a statement again:

“Just use the prayer word to keep your mind otherwise blank as you wordlessly spend time with God. . . Do not give in to endlessly contemplating the sound and meaning of the prayer word. Just say the word within yourself.”—Centering Prayer: An Ancient Christian Prayer Form (Kingsland, Georgia: King of Peace Episcopal

Church).

You are learning where “spiritual formation” classes and retreats will eventually take you. Is that where you want to go?

Tragically, all that these exercises accomplish is to open the way for demonic influences to flood your consciousness with feelings of euphoria and even “love” emanating from the dark presence that has invaded your mind. This euphoria is believed to prove that you are on the correct spiritual path.

This may ultimately result in visions, out-of-body experiences, stigmata, levitation, even healings and other experiences that seem to be miracles. But the evil source of all this remains the same.

EMPTYING THE MIND

New Age meditation, which is creeping its way into mainstream Christianity through the spiritual formation movement, focuses on the stilling and emptying of the mind. **In contrast, Biblical meditation, on the other hand, involves conscious thought about Scripture and its application.**

It is dangerous to enter a passive mental state; because, in those situations, our minds have no protection against falsehood or evil.

According to Roger Oakland, **it was two Catholic mystics—Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen—who brought this mindless repetition “out of the convents and monasteries . . . to Protestant and even Evangelical circles” (Roger Oakland, Faith Undone, p. 83).**

In his book, *The Way of the Heart*, Henri Nouwen discusses single-word repetition in prayer:

“The quiet repetition of a single word can help us to descend with the mind into the heart. This repetition has nothing to do with magic. It is not meant to throw a spell on God or force him into hearing us. On the contrary, a word or sentence repeated frequently can help us concentrate, to move to the center, to create an inner stillness and thus to listen to the voice of God.”—*Henri Nouwen, The Way of the Heart, pp. 80-81.*

“A Baptist seminary was favorably studying the teachings of this Catholic mystic [Henri Nouwen], whose own biographers describe as having had emotional problems and homosexual inclinations.”—Bob DeWaay, Dangers of Spiritual Formation and Spiritual Disciplines. Also see Michael Ford, Wounded Prophet, for more on Nouwen.

Both Nouwen and Foster are Catholic priest mystics.

PALMS UP

At a typical Renovaré Conference, Richard Foster teaches his audience how to have a true “prayer session.” **He says this is a form of contemplation which he calls “palms down; palms up.” He says that this incorporates relaxation and a quasi-trance-like state.**

Speaking slowly and softly, **Foster has his audience first place their hands on their knees, palms down—**

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

11

W
M
1
5
9
2

and tells them that this releases any cares or anxieties they may have brought with them. After a time of waiting for this strong suggestion to take effect on their minds, he has them turn their palms upward as a gesture of receiving from God “whatever He would like to teach us.” What Foster is practicing here is not prayer, but a form of what Buddhists call Zen (a particular form of meditation found among mystics of various religious faiths).

In his book, *Christian Zen: A Way of Meditation*, Irish Jesuit William Johnston, as does Renovaré, ascribes this form of “prayer” to the mystics of “early Christianity.” But, in reality, it is far more ancient and entered Roman Catholicism through the mystery religions of Asia, and thence from Hinduism and Buddhism.

CENTERING DOWN AND RE-COLLECTION

These terms, frequently used by spiritual formation guides, are consistent with New Age terminology.

“This time is for learning to “center down,” or what the contemplatives of the Middle Ages called “re-collection.” It is a time to become still, to enter into the recreating silence, to allow the fragmentation of our minds to become centered.”—Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, p. 24.

The term, “center down,” is a New Age reference to remaining absolutely still in mind and body, focusing on the silence of the universe—which Foster calls “the recreating silence.” This “recreating silence” is itself New Age terminology that has nothing to do with the reality of God.

SO-CALLED “MEDITATION”

Foster does not have a clear understanding of the meaning of genuine meditation.

Some feel that the Christian way of meditation is essentially the same as the pattern used in the Eastern religions. But there is no comparison! **Eastern meditation is an attempt to empty the mind; Christian meditation is an attempt to prayerfully fill a receptive mind with new light from God, as revealed in His Written Word. We read the Bible, and we think about it, and we apply it to our lives.**

All Eastern forms of meditation stress the need to become detached from the world. There is an emphasis upon losing one’s identity and individuality—in order to merge with “the cosmic Mind.” There is a longing to be released from the burdens and pains of this life and be caught up in a pool of cosmic unconsciousness.

Detachment is the final objective of Eastern religion. It is an escaping from human existence. The voice of conscience, warning us to repent of our sins is silenced. There is no God to be attached to or to hear from. Both Zen and Yoga are popular forms of this approach.

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

Transcendental Meditation (TM) should be men-

tioned here. **It has the same Buddhist roots as Zen and Yoga; but, in its Western form, it is something of an aberration.** In its popular form in the West, TM is meditation for the materialist. You do not need to believe in a spiritual realm in the least to practice it; for **it is merely a method of controlling the brain waves** in order to improve your physiological and emotional well-being.

More advanced forms of TM do attempt to achieve the divine nature; but, in those instances, it has exactly the same characteristics as other Eastern religions.

ENTERING THIS “MEDITATION”

Bill Vaswig explains the contemplative aspect of Renovaré’s spiritual disciplines:

“I find that there’s another kind of prayer called contemplation. And that’s the Christian life, or it’s life lived in the presence of the Lord. The first thing I do in the morning when I get up is go up to my study and I sit down there, and I look—I sit and look. Like, **I get a cup of coffee first, so that I don’t fall asleep. And, it’s a big cup. Two cups.** And it’s stiff coffee. And it’s got honey in it. . .

“Sometimes I start talking out loud to Jesus. But most of the time it rather quickly ends up where I have placed myself in the presence of God. **And I don’t try to hear things, I don’t try to think about a Scripture, I don’t try to do anything. I just sit.**

“And sometimes, **I really feel a tremendous awareness of the Presence.**”—Bill Vaswig, *Tape, Christian Meditation in the 20th Century, A National Conference on Personal Spiritual Renewal.*

What Vaswig is describing here is what New Agers or those familiar with Eastern mysticism would call “being there.” **It is a state of mind that is essentially uncluttered by rational thought. Satan does not like us to think!**

SATORI

When Buddhists talk about satori, they are not referring even remotely to guidance by the Holy Spirit. **Satori is a form of enlightenment associated with self-realization or realization of oneness with the divine.** That is the goal that is the sole objective: **to more fully be God.** It is the culmination of one’s spiritual quest for himself as God or part of God.

There is no attempt to put away sins, obey moral laws, or live a better life. **The plan is to simply empty the mind of thought because then the person becomes God.**

—**But this is spiritualism! First, there is no sin. Second, since we are our own standard, we are our own gods. That is what Satan told Eve in the garden!**

—And this is exactly what Satan is telling people today. Here, quoted in a chapter entitled *Spiritualism*, are the words of Satan:

“Ye shall be as gods,’ he declares, ‘knowing good and evil.’ Genesis 3:5. Spiritualism teaches ‘that **man is the creature of progression**; that it is his destiny from his birth to progress, **even to eternity, toward the Godhead.**’ And again: ‘Each mind will judge itself and not another.’ **“The judgment will be right, because it is the judgment of self. . . The throne is within you.**’ Said a spiritualistic teacher, **as the ‘spiritual consciousness’ awoke within him:** ‘My fellow men, **all were unfallen demigods.**’ And another declares: ‘Any just and perfect being is Christ.’

“Thus, in place of the righteousness and perfection of the infinite God, the true object of adoration; in place of the perfect righteousness of His law, the true standard of human attainment, Satan has substituted **the sinful, erring nature of man himself as the only object of adoration, the only rule of judgment, or standard of character.** This is progress, not upward, but downward.”—*Great Controversy*, 554-555.

“He [Satan] declares, through the spirits, that **‘true knowledge places man above all law;’** that **‘whatever is, is right;’** that **‘God doth not condemn;’** and that ‘all sins which are committed are innocent.’ When the people are thus led to believe that **desire is the highest law,** that liberty is license, and that **man is accountable only to himself,** who can wonder that corruption and depravity teem on every hand? Multitudes eagerly accept teachings that leave them at liberty to obey the promptings of the carnal heart.”—*Great Controversy*, 555-556.

“If there were no other evidence of the real character of spiritualism, it should be enough for the Christian that **the spirits make no difference between righteousness and sin,** between the noblest and purest of the apostles of Christ and the most corrupt of the servants of Satan. By representing the basest of men as in heaven, and highly exalted there, Satan says to the world: **‘No matter how wicked you are, no matter whether you believe or disbelieve God and the Bible, live as you please; heaven is your home.’** The spiritualist teachers virtually declare: **‘Everyone that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord,** and He delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?’ Malachi 2:17. Saith the Word of God: ‘Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness.’ Isaiah 5:20.”—*Great Controversy*, 556-557.

THE LOTUS POSITION

This is the famous position in which **a person sits cross-legged, with one foot on top of the other leg, both hands outstretched partially, with palms up,** possibly as he looks at a candle flame.

Modern advocates of spiritual formation maintain that this position is not necessary in order to make contact with the spirit within you. You can sit in a chair or walk in order to accomplish it. **All that is needed is the saying of a mantra and emptying of the mind.**

Thomas Merton, a Catholic Trappist monk and one of Renovaré’s spiritual masters, says that the lotus position is not necessary in order to enter satori.

In a letter to Johnston, Merton wrote this:

“Dear Father Johnston [Johnston is a Catholic priest], Many thanks for your kind letter. I was interested to hear about the spiritual retreat. I myself think that the lotus posture is quite unimportant.

“The problem of entering satori [enlightenment] is more delicate. Possibly the Zen people have their own idea of what we mean when we say that we believe in God. Perhaps they think that it necessarily implies dualism and **the establishment of an ‘I-Thou relationship’ [a contact between man and a separate God]—something concerned with subject and object. And, of course, this would make satori impossible.**

“To get the true satori one must have no plans whatever about the possibility of being a Christian and, at the same time, getting satori. One must be completely detached from such plans. Perhaps the Zen people have a kind of intuition that **Christians practising Zen are in such a psychological position that, no longer realizing it during satori, they no longer believe in a God outside of themselves.**

“Probably the best thing to do is to use Zen for purposes of inner purification and liberation from a system [such as Christianity] and flawed conceptual thinking without bothering about whether or not we get satori. With every best wish, Thomas Merton.”—*Thomas Merton, quoted in William Johnston, Christian Zen,*

Thus **Merton is saying that the I-Thou concept of man’s relationship to a God apart from himself makes such Buddhist enlightenment impossible. By its very nature and objective, the “enlightenment” of the Eastern religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.) cannot be attained by a real Christian,—for that Eastern enlightenment is the attainment of personal godhood.**

It seems incongruous that people who believe what the Bible teaches about the Creator God, Christ, the crucifixion, and heaven—can also imagine that they themselves are God.

VISUALIZING

“Ignatius of Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises* encouraged his readers to visualize. . . Every contemplation he gave was designed to open up the imagination. . . **His thin volume of meditation**

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

PART FOUR
OF Eleven

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

exercises with its stress on the imagination has had a tremendous impact upon the sixteenth century and afterward.—Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*.

But, by far, the greater quantity of his instruction to his priests was to submit their wills into the hands of their superiors. “You are,” he said, “to be as the staff in the hand of your superior.”

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

William Meninger was a Trappist monk (a Cistercian of the Strict Observance). He read the medieval text, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and developed “centering prayer” as a way to achieve “contemplative prayer.” He taught it to fellow monks of St. Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts.

These included his abbot, Thomas Keating, and Basil Pennington; these men have done much to popularize it not only among Roman Catholics, but increasingly among Evangelicals.

Keating defines it as “a method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, prayer in which we experience God’s presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself.” It involves specific practices, including the use of a “sacred word” (another name for a mantra); sitting and breathing in specific ways; maintaining internal silence; and doing all this for a specific period of time.

Although it is rooted in Eastern religions, mainstream Catholicism considers it solidly “Christian.” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* lists “contemplative prayer” as a third type of prayer, after “vocal prayer” and “meditation.”

There is much discussion of “contemplative prayer” in the history of Catholic spirituality; authors don’t always agree on specifics. Following Theresa of Avila, some divide “contemplative prayer” into two parts: “infused contemplation” and “acquired contemplation.” **In “infused contemplation,” God acts. It is a state of rapture, which rips the person from the ordinary sphere. It is the state in which prophets are aware only of God and receive heavenly communications.**

CHANTING

It is very dangerous to let your guard down by repeatedly chanting even a Bible word, relaxing and trying to enter an “Alpha” state; so that you can experience a euphoric closeness to “God.” Please don’t try this; because it is allowing a false spirit to control your mind. Intentionally trying to empty your mind by single-word hypnosis (whether merely spoken or chanted), so a spirit can enter should never be done!

SAMADHI

Samadhi (in Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and yogic schools) is **a higher level of concentrated meditation**, or *dhyana*. In the yoga tradition, it is the eighth and final limb identified in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patañjali.

It has been described as a nondualistic state of consciousness in which **the consciousness of the experiencing subject becomes one with the experienced object** and the mind becomes still, “one-pointed” or concentrated, although the person remains conscious (*The Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen*).

The mind is emptied and the person is saying or thinking nothing.

Johnston explains how Catholic mysticism is preoccupied with samadhi:

“I have already spoken briefly about this samadhi [wordless contemplation] which flourished in the great schools of spirituality that drove their roots into the rich cultural soil of medieval Europe. **There were schools of Cistercians, Dominicans, Carmelites, Franciscans, and the rest. Then there were the Victorines—the schools of mysticism in the Rhineland and in Flanders and even in stolid old England. To say nothing of the great Orthodox schools.**

“All these schools had their way of leading to contemplative silence and peace, beyond words, beyond images, beyond ideas, and beyond desire.”—Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*.

BASIC CONCEPT BEHIND THEM

The underlying concept and objective of these Hindu and Buddhist practices—is to arrive at nothingness!

William Johnston writes about a conversation he had with a Buddhist in Japan:

“When the time came around for the next meeting, this time to be held in Kyoto, with this in mind I spoke to a Buddhist friend who was to be a participant. He listened kindly, and his answer, typically Buddhist and deeply interesting, was more or less as follows:

“[The Buddhist said:] ‘Do you really think that you can talk about nothingness, emptiness, or the void? Do you really think you can talk about God? Of course you can’t. **You are a part of the void; you are part of nothingness; you are already part of God. All is one.**’

“And here I found, clearly and directly expressed, something that runs all through Zen, whether it be in the thinking of the simplest Master or the most sophisticated scholar: that is to say, **there is no duality, no ‘I and Thou’ [man and God are not two separate personages], that underlies all Mahayana Buddhism.** Let me illustrate it further

with a story about the great Dr. Suzuki.

“One time the old philosopher gave a talk on Zen to Western people in Tokyo. **He spoke of the silence, the emptiness, the nothingness, and all the rest, together with the deep wisdom that comes from *satori*.**”

“When he had finished, one of his audience rose to his feet and, not without a touch of irritation, exclaimed, ‘But Dr. Suzuki, what about society? What about other people? What about the other?’ Whereupon Suzuki paused for a moment, looked up with a smile, and remarked, ‘**But there is no other! There is no other, and there is no self. This is the answer he had to give, and this basically was also the answer of my Buddhist friend.**’

“We met in Kyoto, where we spent a wonderful week, fifteen of us. The atmosphere was permeated with good will and deep religious faith. Not only did we talk together, we also sat together in a wordless dialogue of silent communication.

“The meeting was highlighted by a talk from an eminent roshi [a “roshi” is a Zen Buddhist teacher] who described with great enthusiasm **the experience of enlightenment that had made him wild with ecstatic joy. His head seemed to be shattered and for several days he did not know where he was or what he was doing. Satori could never be described or explained, he said.**”—*William Johnston, Christian Zen, p. 11.*

Are these the kind of concepts you want to have implanted in your mind? By entering upon the path of “spiritual formation,” this is where it will eventually take you: personal belief that you are fully God, just as you are, with all your sinful practices.

At the very heart of Vaswig’s contemplative exercise we find the very essence of Zen as described by Johnston:

“True to these principles, **Zen inculcates an asceticism that is truly extraordinary. One must be detached from everything, even from one’s self.** Zen detachment . . . goes much deeper to include detachment from the very process of thinking, Zen has something in common with psychoanalysis and can even be therapeutic.”—*Bill Vaswig, Contemplative: The Prayer-Filled Life, A National Conference on Personal Spiritual Renewal.*

COMBINING BUDDHISM, CATHOLICISM, AND PROTESTANTISM

“Some years ago, Arnold Toynbee declared that, when the historian of a thousand years from now comes to write the history of our time, he will be preoccupied not with the Vietnam war, not with racial strife, but with **what happened when for the first time Christianity and Buddhism began to penetrate one another deeply.**”

“This remark is profoundly interesting and, I believe, profoundly true. **Christianity and Buddhism are penetrating one another, talking to**

one another, learning from one another. Even the stubborn old Catholic Church, in a flush of postconciliar [post-Vatican II] humility, feels that she has something to gain by sitting at the feet of the Zen roshi [Zen master] and imbibing the age-old wisdom of the East. Surely this is progress.”—*William Johnston, Christian Zen.*

Johnston was ahead of Renovaré by about two decades. At the time he originally wrote his book, *Christian Zen* in 1971, he lamented the fact that the West had not yet caught up to the East in its practice of Zen. But times have changed since then.

Johnston sums up his faith in Jesus as something that cannot be fully understood—until we sit at the feet of the Eastern religions. It is they, he says, who will complete our understanding of those deep truths;—for truth, he says, can be found in all religions.

“To us Catholic Christians, the Vatican Council brought the refreshing news that we are still seekers, and so **we can join hands with other searchers, whether they be Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, or anything else, in our common quest for truth.**”

“Needless to say, we have Christ, who I believe spoke of God as no man ever spoke; but I do not think we can claim to understand the revelation of Christ in all its fullness.

“Perhaps we are still at the beginning. Moreover I also believe that in sundry times and in diverse ways God spoke to our fathers through the prophets,—and **these include prophets whose voices echo beautifully in the Gita, the Lotus Surra, and the Tao Teh Ching.**”—*William Johnston, Christian Zen, p. 10.*

The *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, in commenting on contemplation, sees both Eastern and Western aspects as two parts of a single unity:

“*Contemplation*: from the Latin *con* and *templum* (a space set aside for the observation and interpretation of signs and portents). Although the interpretation of the term has changed, its religious origin has not been entirely lost. The interpretation of *theoria*, or theory, in Greek philosophy, merely enlarged it with a truth-related aspect. . . **The Catholic mystic, Hugh of St. Victor, regarded *contemplatio* as the third and final stage of knowledge in the ascent of the soul,** which must first pass through *cogitatio* and then through *meditatio* in preparation . . .

“In the broader scheme of things **the tradition of mysticism, both of the East and of the West, has for millennia stressed contemplation or meditation as the means to enlightenment, *moksha*, or *satori*.**”—*William L. Reese, Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought.*

The three phases expounded by Hugh of St. Victor—*cogitatio*, *meditatio*, and *contemplatio*—would be equivalent to Renovaré’s stages of cognitive prayer, medi-

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

15

tation and contemplation.

The objective is to move from conscious communication with God, to being God, as Bill Vaswig, key organizer in Renovaré puts it.

IT IS PENETRATING MANY CHURCHES

The following quotation is a list of all the speakers at a typical Spiritual Formation Conference. It reveals how many different religions and church bodies are deeply involved in this pagan mysticism that is pouring into Protestantism—like a mammoth flood!

“Renovaré’s Speaking Platform (October 1991, Los Angeles Conference):

• **Sister Thomas Bernard**, Director, The Spirituality Center, Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles • Isaac Canales, Assistant Director, Hispanic Ministries, Fuller Theological Seminary • Sister Dolores Cazares, Coordinator, School of Spiritual Direction • Eugene Coffin, Quaker, Counselor for Memorial Gardens, Crystal Cathedral • **Murray Dempster**, Professor of Social Ethics, Southern California College • Gary Dennis, Senior Pastor, La Canada Presbyterian Church • Edward England, Renovaré Team Member • **Marty Ensign**, Renovaré Team Member

• **Richard Foster**, President, Renovaré • Roger Fredrikson, Renovaré Team Member • **Jack Hayford**, Senior Pastor, The Church on the Way, Van Nuys, California • **David Hubbard**, President, Fuller Theological Seminary • **Jerry Johnson**, Executive Pastor, Lake Avenue Congregational Church • Carolyn Koons, Director, Institute for Outreach Ministries, Azusa Pacific University • **H.B. London**, Senior Pastor, First Church of the Nazarene of Pasadena • Don Moomaw, Senior Pastor, Bel Air Presbyterian Church • Robert Munger, Long time Presbyterian pastor and leader.

• Chuck Mylander, General Superintendent, Friends Church Southwest, Yearly Meeting • Lloyd John Ogilvie, Senior Pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood • **John Ortberg, Jr.**, Senior Pastor, Horizons Community Church • John Perkins, Director, John M. Perkins Foundation for Reconciliation and Development • C.W. Perry, Senior Pastor, Rose Drive Friends Church • Pat Rexroat, Director, Extended Education in Southern California, Fuller Theological Seminary • Lydia Sarandan, Minister of Adult Education, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church • Bob Seiple, President, World Vision, Inc.

• Jim Smith, Renovaré Team Member • Slang-Yang Tan, Director, Doctor of Psychology Program, Fuller Theological Seminary • Janine Tartaglia, Pastor with Senior Adults, First Church of the Nazarene of Pasadena • Donn Thomas, Renovaré Team Member • **William Vaswig**, Renovaré Team Member • **Dallas Willard**, Renovaré Team Member.”—*Renovaré’s Speaking Platform, October 1991, Los Angeles Conference.*

YOGA

Much of what we have already discussed is also taught in yoga, which originated in India but is now found throughout the Far East. It especially focuses on meditation, although other activities are also included. The person must sit in the lotus (in yoga called *padmasana*) position with palms up. **The practices are essentially the same as satori and samadhi** (plus some extra ones), **and also the objective of purifying the life and uniting with divinity.** A yogi is a person skilled in yoga.

The Sanskrit word, *yoga*, is derived from the Sanskrit root, *yuj*, meaning “to control,” “to yoke,” or “to unite.” The word, *yoga*, may also derive from *yujir samadhau*, which means “contemplation” or “absorption.”

— SECTION FOUR — FLOODING OUR OWN CHURCH

Sections One to Three of this report dealt with the inroads of spiritual formation into the other churches, its special names and practices, and identity to ancient Catholic, Hindu, and Buddhist rituals.

This Fourth Section will present the remarkably rapid and deep inroads of the spiritual formation movement into Adventism. This, indeed, is tragic. The very people raised up to carry the final messages to the world to repent of their sins and return to a full obedience, through the enabling grace of Christ, to the Ten Commandment law of God are repeating the error of the Israelites after the death of Joshua. They are going to the world and asking its great men to instruct them.

For some reason, when the other churches start a new fad, there always are some in our leadership who are overly concerned to copy it—and bring it into our own churches and into the lives of our workers and members.

Spiritual formation is no exception.

Here are facts you can use in warning others about the dangers of spiritual formation and the fact that our denomination is being inundated by it.

We are about to discover, below, that now, a decade after the beginning of the new century, **nearly every major Adventist media in North America is now actively promoting this New Age/Catholic/Buddhist set of practices for emptying the mind and making contact with the spirit world.**

This is astounding! Since the 1980s, our denomination has been seriously engrossed with the new theology of “sin can be ignored, since we cannot stop doing it, and obedience to the Ten Commandments is impossible.” Never before, in the history of our denomination’s downward trend, has such a concerted movement occurred!

But now it is taking place—and rapidly.

Of the following eight major organizational projects,

in giving heavy publicity to spiritual formation in our denomination, the first four will have the greatest impact on our church:

- 1 - **A major project started by the North American Division (the NAD iFollow Program).**

- 2 - **A joint project of the Voice of Prophecy and Faith for Today (The Jesus 101 Program).**

- 3 - **Special new spiritual formation set of eight in-depth classes, required for the Doctor of Theology degree at Andrews University.**

- 4 - **Ministry magazine is the journal for our ministers and church leaders. This publication now, officially, has Derik Morris as its new senior editor. Derek Morris has been the leading promoter of spiritual formation in our denomination since 1995.** He has been a widely traveled speaker in recent years; now he will have a large platform from which to spread his beloved spiritual formation theories, which, by his own admission, he received from Catholics who disciplined him. (*More on this later.*)

- **Our North American Division heartily recommends that our people read Foster's latest book, *Prayer, Finding the Heart's True Home*.** Foster is founder of Renovaré and general editor of its *Spiritual Formation Study Bible*, which is strongly recommended reading by the NAD.

- **Three Angels' Broadcasting frequently interviews spiritual formation advocates** (including Derek Morris).

- **An increased number of leading Protestant and Catholic spiritual formation advocates are being asked to address major Adventist gatherings** (including Richard Foster, founder of Renovaré, and speakers from Shalem Institute—Brennan Manning, Tony Compolo, and others).

- **Important news releases through Adventist Network News**, a General Conference department (ANN Feature: "*Church and Congregations Increase Focus on 'Spiritual Formation'* "). However, ANN provides these reports as news releases given to them to print, without personally advocating them.

Thankfully, Amazing Facts has not in the slightest been touched by this Buddhist heresy. It never recommends any aspect of spiritual formation, Eastern reli-

“Stay away from non-Biblical spiritual disciplines or methods of spiritual formation that are rooted in mysticism such as contemplative prayer, centering prayer, and the emerging church movement in which they are promoted.”—*Ted Wilson, newly elected General Conference President, Inaugural Sermon, on the last Sabbath at the 59th General Conference Session, Atlanta, Georgia, 2010.*

gions, or Catholicism.

Why are many of our church leaders advocating spiritual formation? The answer is that **far too many of us have arrived at the point where “forgiveness alone, without separation from sin and obedience to God's law,” is standard in our church sermons, publications, and programs.** We are already imbibing Protestant errors in regard to this; and far too many of our leaders no longer have any disagreement with the principles and objectives of spiritual formation.

This mind-emptying, spirit-filling, set of practices was borrowed over a thousand years ago by Catholic mystics from the Eastern religions and then was given to modern Protestants who are now sharing it with our own ministers and church members.

Some of the programs noted below may have many worthwhile aspects to them. Yet each one, by its own admission, also includes information on indoctrination into spiritual formation practices.

Fortunately, by his own statement, our new General Conference president does not share in this massive takeover project. (See box at the bottom of this page.) This statement by Ted Wilson, although brief, is full of meaning: (1) He clearly knows the practices and recognizes the dangers of spiritual formation. (2) He understands its sources. (3) He takes a firm stand against it. But will he have the authority and determination to work steadily to put it to an end?

1 - THE NAD IFOLLOW PROGRAM

“The iFollow program is for every church and member in the North American Division.” It will provide Division-wide instruction in the discipleship of spiritual formation.

“The iFollow Discipleship Resource

“Finally: a discipleship training resource that pastors can really trust.”

“The new discipleship training resource, called iFollow, has been developed specifically for Adventist congregations, **and it responds to both a serious and growing demand for practical, reliable discipleship training.**

“Thank you for your interest in discipleship training. Dan Day, Director of the NAD Church Resource Center and Executive Editor, iFollow.”—*NAD iFollow Program, no date.*

Here is a second article on this:

“The iFollow Discipleship Resource, by Dan Day, Director, NAD Church Resource Center, March 10, 2010.

“People have been asking for more details about the iFollow discipleship resource we've been discussing here in the pages of Best Practices. When

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

**PART FIVE
OF Eleven**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

will it be available? What will it contain? How will we use it? Let me begin to open the door a bit more widely, so you can begin to think about how the new resource could impact your ministry.

“The first elements of the new iFollow resource will be introduced at the NAD Pavilion of the General Conference Session in Atlanta, which will take place during the end of June and the beginning of July this year [2010]. It will be fully rolled out by the time of the NAD Ministries Convention, in January [2011].

“Over five years in development, the new iFollow discipleship resource is a product of the Adventist Church in North America, developed in response to research findings with Adventist pastors who said it was the most important resource that could be provided. It was developed by teams of Adventist writers and editors, under the direction of the NAD Church Resource Center, who contracted with the Center for Creative Ministry for the early work. It is a content-rich tool that will enable pastors and congregational leaders to access a broad set of discipleship resources, and is being engineered to serve the local congregation in discipleship training in several different ways.”—*Dan Day, The iFollow Discipleship Resource, March 10, 2010.*

2 - VOP JESUS 101 PROGRAM

Now there is spiritual formation training from the Voice of Prophecy and Faith for Today! This is for church members, pastors, and students.

In the very opening words of their explanation of what is in this *Jesus 101* program, we are told this:

“The Basics:

“What are we doing?

“The *Jesus 101 Biblical Institute* offers instruction/training in two major areas:

“(1) Biblical Studies

“(2) **Spiritual Formation/Discipleship**”

Here is additional information on this new, VOP-FFT Biblical Institute:

“Jesus 101 Biblical Institute - Elizabeth Talbot, Mike Tucker.

“The Jesus 101 Biblical Institute is a ministry of Voice of Prophecy and Faith for Today in accordance with the evangelistic goals of both ministries.

“We offer training in various and diverse locations and for different audiences: church members, clergy, ministerial students. Where does the training take place? Local churches. This type of training is done primarily with weekend seminars and workshops designed for church members.

“*Conferences and Unions.* This form of training occurs during various meetings, convocations

or camp meetings sponsored by local conferences or unions. Separate classes are available for church members and clergy.

“*Academic Institutions.* Intensive classes are offered to enhance the curriculum of ministerial students throughout the world.

“The training classes are offered anywhere in the United States and Canada, as well as internationally—wherever we are invited to teach.

“The Jesus 101 Biblical Institute offices are located at the Adventist Media Center in Simi Valley, California.”

3a - ANDREWS SEMINARY TRAINING

The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, is promoting contemplative spirituality (i.e., spiritual formation) through a new concentration in their Doctor of Ministry degree program. An October 2009 Andrews newsletter explains that *Discipleship and Spiritual Formation* will begin in February 2010.

According to the syllabus of one of the courses in the Andrews spiritual formation program, **contemplative mystic advocates will be used to teach students. Professor Jon Dybdahl is using a number of contemplative authors to “demonstrate a continuing maturity in Christian formation, personal growth and ministry.”**

This suggested opportunity, to attain to “maturity in Christian formation,” is typical language by contemplatives who teach that true maturity can only come through spending time in contemplative silence.

Since Richard Foster has been a leader in developing the basics of modern spiritual formation, **it is not surprising that Dybdahl has asked Foster for guidance.** Other contemplatives being used in the class are: **J.P. Moreland and Peter Scazzero.**

A “short spiritual retreat” will also take place during the course.

Scazzero’s book, *Emotionally Healthy Spiritually*, tells about contemplative mystics and pantheists. Some of those that he directs readers to are **Basil Pennington, Tilden Edwards, Henri Nouwen, Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Avila,** and several others.

On page 153 of J.P. Moreland’s book, *Kingdom Triangle* (also used in Dybdahl’s class at Andrews), he talks about a maturing process that takes place through “spiritual formation.” Moreland tells readers that a “treasure of deep, rich knowledge of the soul” can be found in the writings of the “Desert Fathers” which, he says, includes Henri Nouwen and Richard Foster. These sources ultimately point followers to Eastern-style meditation of mindless repetition of a word (mantra).

A four-part series that Moreland did for Focus on

the Family reveals that **Moreland combines Christian terminology with spiritual formation practices.**

Jon Dybdahl's contemplative propensities are strongly presented in his 2008 book, *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul*, which is widely sold in the ABCs.

In *Hunger*, Dybdahl explains and recommends contemplative practices such as *lectio divina*, visualization, and breath prayers.

Dybdahl tells in his book how, in his “not-so-secret quest for God,” he turned to the Quaker, Thomas Kelly’s book, *A Testament of Devotion*. **It is Kelly, a pantheist, who, in his book, said that within every human being is a “Divine Center,” a “secret sanctuary.”**

In his thinking, this “secret sanctuary” is what he calls an “abiding Light behind all changing [life] forms.” He adds: “In that Current we must bathe. **In that abiding, yet energizing, Center we are all made one**” (p. 38).”

Dybdahl says, in *Hunger*, that Henri Nouwen “intensified” his “craving” for “God’s presence” (p. 12). But the presence that Nouwen is speaking of is the same as that of mystics; and **it is this mysticism that led Nouwen** (in his book, *Sabbatical Journey*) **to reject Jesus Christ as the only path to God** at the end of his life.

Dybdahl’s book is brimming with references to contemplative mystics—such as **David Benner, Morton Kelsey, Adele Alberg Calhoun, Tilden Edwards, Richard Foster, and Ken Boa.**

Another person who will be teaching at Andrews, in its *Doctor of Ministry Program in Spiritual Formation*, is **Ben Maxson**, pastor at Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church in Paradise, California, and adjunct professor at Andrews University.

Maxson will be teaching *Mentoring for Discipleship and Spiritual Formation*. In an article by Maxson, entitled “*Renewing our Minds*,” he says that the “spiritual disciplines” (the tools of spiritual formation) help one develop “intimacy with God”; and he encourages practicing “the presence of God.”

One of the other spiritual formation courses in Andrews Theological Seminary’s D.Min. program on spiritual formation, taught by **Allan Walshe**, is *The Personal Practice of Spiritual Formation*. While the course’s syllabus is not currently posted online, we can partly identify Walshe’s contemplative propensities elsewhere. Walshe, at a New Zealand Conference, quotes contemplative pioneer Dallas Willard in referring to “intimacy with God.” **This intimacy with God to the contemplative is obtained through the mindless mantra of spiritual formation.**

The Doctor of Ministry program on spiritual formation is not the only way through which spiritual formation is being implanted into the minds of our future leaders at Andrews.

The youth ministry degree program is also involved with contemplative spirituality and emerging spiritu-

ality. In CHMN 720 *Current Issues in Youth and Young Adult Ministry*, professors Steve Case and Allan Walshe are using emerging church figure, Shane Claiborne, as well as emergent Youth Specialties author Chap Clark in his book, *Deep*. **That book is about the emerging kingdom-on-earth theology and turns to such figures as liberal theologians Jim Wallis and Tony Campolo.**

Thus, as is usually the case, **when a college or seminary begins to incorporate contemplative prayer, eventually they begin to head into emerging church ideas.**

Contemplative prayer does not use the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy as its basis; but **it uses the mind-blowing practice of spiritual formation. It is not just some obscure subculture; it is full-blown Buddhism.**

It is overrunning the churches and seminaries of Christendom. —And it has now penetrated our own.

3b- ANDREWS COURSE DESCRIPTION

Here is the official Andrews University description of the program of studies in this field at Andrews University for the D.Min. degree. Its official title is *Discipleship and Spiritual Formation*.

“Discipleship and Spiritual Formation

“The *Doctor of Ministry Discipleship and Spiritual Formation Concentration* integrates an understanding of **a theology of discipleship and spiritual formation with the process and dynamics involved in the participants’ personal spiritual growth and consequent modeling, mentoring and teaching roles** within the context of family, church and community.

“*Competencies*: The D.Min. Discipleship and Spiritual Formation Concentration **seeks to create competency in the areas related to the discipline.**

“*Academic*: To enable participants to **acquire knowledge of current and classic literature related to the area of spiritual formation and the process of discipleship.** To engage this area of ministry through theological, biblical, and psychological perspectives, as well as to learn basic research skills relating to the field of discipleship and spiritual formation.

“*Spiritual and Theological Formation*: **To enable participants to reflect on their personal spiritual and theological perspectives and to integrate them into their practice of ministry.**

“*Praxis [practice sessions]*: To enable participants to **acquire skills pertinent to their practice in pastoral care and spiritual leadership within the context of discipleship and spiritual formation** in the family, church, and wider community.

“*Self-reflection/Personal Growth*: To enable participants to understand that, in Christian ministry, being is as important as doing and that true spiritual formation is grounded in a ‘double knowledge’—that of self and God. [Nothing about the Bible, Bible truth and doctrines, or Spirit of Prophecy]

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

19

W
M
1
5
9
4

ecy.]

“*Outcomes:* Upon completing this program, the participants will be able to:

• *Articulate* a Seventh-day Adventist perspective on discipleship and spiritual formation. • *Demonstrate* a continuing maturity in Christian formation, personal growth and ministry. • *Integrate* the theological, theoretical, experiential, and practical dimensions of discipleship into a theologically reflective practice of ministry. • *Train* spiritually mature and relationally gifted people as spiritual mentors. • *Embrace* and carry out a biblically and theologically faithful praxis [practicing] of discipleship and spiritual formation both individually and corporately. • *Discern* truth from counterfeit as a means of both personal and corporate protection in light of the growing number of nonbiblical ‘spiritualities.’ ”

3c - REQUIRED CLASSES

“Cohorts [subsidiary classes] are identified by the year in which they formed. Cohort participants will take these courses and modules:

“CHMN 705—*Theological & Historical Perspectives on Spiritual Growth* (6 cr) - Jon Dybdahl, Feb 10-19, 2010 - Orlando-Celebration, FL

“GSEM 790—*D.Min. Project Seminar* (2 cr) - Daily schedule for intensive, Bill Knott &/or Kenley Hall, Feb 21-26, 2010 - Orlando-Celebration, FL

“CHMN 707—*The Personal Practice of Spiritual Formation* (6 cr) - Allan Walshe, May 2-12, 2011 - Andrews University

“GSEM 730—*Field Research for Ministry* (2 cr) - Monte Sahlin, Feb-July 2011 - dates posted in syllabus virtual delivery

“CHMN 708—*Mentoring for Discipleship & Spiritual Formation* (5 cr) - Ben Maxson & Allan Martin, Feb 13-21, 2012 - Loma Linda University

“GSEM 796—*D.Min. Project* (3 cr) - spring semester 2012

“CHMN 709—*Constructs of Corporate Ministry for Discipleship & Spiritual Formation* (5 cr) - staff, Feb 11-19, 2013 - Andrews University

“GSEM 796—*D.Min. Project* (3 cr) - spring semester 2013 - Contact the concentration coordinator, Dr. Allan Walshe.”

Do not imagine that ours is the only Christian university offering doctoral degrees to ministers which are heavily oriented to spiritual formation. Andrews is just copying programs which are already being taught in other Protestant, Catholic, secular, and liberal Jewish universities.

Read this news note from the internet:

“**Examine Spiritual Formation Doctoral Degrees, offered by +1000 top accredited universities & colleges.** Find detailed information, contact . . .”—*emagister/net/doctrinal degrees.*

Here is a selective list of some of the most promi-

nent and influential of the many educational institutions (secular, Catholic, liberal Protestant, Evangelical, and Jewish) now placing heavy emphasis on spiritual formation:

Baylor University, Texas
Chicago Theological Seminary, Illinois
University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana (heavily Roman Catholic)
Pittsburg Theological Seminary, Pennsylvania
Talbot School of Theology (Biola University, La Mirada, California)
Hebrew Union College: Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio
University of California at Santa Barbara
Liberty University, Virginia (It is strongly Evangelical; Jerry Falwell founded it.)
Florida State University, Tallahassee

4 - DEREK MORRIS - NOW AT MINISTRY

Derek Morris, the teacher who first began teaching spiritual formation widely in our denomination in 1995 was promoted, in December 2010, to senior editor of our General Conference magazine for pastors: *Ministry* magazine. This is astounding! Some in top leadership in the church want him to indoctrinate our pastors and workers into these practices!

The obvious objective is to dramatically increase the penetration of spiritual formation into our church, by instructing our ministers how to more effectively put it into the lives of our church members!

Derek Morris taught for a number of years at Southern Missionary College (now Southern Adventist University), where he wrote a lengthy paper on how Roman Catholics initiated him into the discipleship program of spiritual formation, and how his students and fellow church members should begin doing it. He printed it and was giving copies to the students and faculty of SMC.

He was rewarded with an important position as senior pastor of the Forest Lake Church in Apopka, Florida. Our Florida Conference office and academy are both located there.

According to a brief biography published by the denomination, prior to being hired as a teacher by SMC Derek Morris completed a Doctor of Ministry in Practical Theology from Andrews University and a Doctor of Ministry in Preaching from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Located in Charlotte, NC, this institution is a leading Protestant seminary. **About eight years ago, I learned that Gordon-Conwell has very close ties to the Catholic Church and its practices.** Since then, I have noticed evidence of strong pro-Catholic ecumenical leanings there.

Morris has been sent around the world to preach and lead out in workshops for pastors. His book, *Powerful Biblical Preaching*, has been translated in several languages. His most recent best-selling book, *The Radical Prayer*, is available from our ABCs and also teaches

his views on his favorite topic: spiritual formation.

Derek Morris has published extensively in *Ministry* magazine and, as of December 2010, has been placed in charge of everything published in that influential journal, which is sent monthly to our pastors and administrators to read!

“On October 12, the denomination’s Executive Committee asked Florida pastor Derek Morris to serve as editor of *Ministry* magazine, the church’s international journal for clergy of all faiths. Morris, who subsequently accepted the position, succeeds Nikolaus Satelmajer, who served in the position since 2005 and last month announced his retirement.

“Morris currently serves as senior pastor of Forest Lake Adventist Church in Apopka, Florida, and holds a Doctorate of Ministry in practical theology from Andrews University and a Doctorate of Ministry in preaching from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. *Ministry* has previously published his articles.”—*Personnel Shifts, Adventist News Network, October 14, 2010.*

SOUTH PACIFIC DIVISION

In the November 2004 issue of *Signs of the Times* magazine (the Australian-New Zealand edition), Centering Prayer, an important Buddhist practice in spiritual formation, is promoted in an article called “Stillness is Golden.”

“Contemplation is essentially wordless, but its core cry is ‘I consent to Your presence and Your action within.’ Feel your hunger for connection with the Divine and express your adoration. God is waiting to connect with you, but it may take some time for you to focus. If you are distracted by thoughts, let them float past you without following. **One method, called ‘centering’ prayer, encourages you to refocus on God by internally saying one of the names of God that you relate to.** This can help you to be present to God again.”

ICELAND CONFERENCE

The Iceland Conference is urging all of its pastors and members to participate in a conference-wide training program which focuses on discipleship and spiritual formation.

“Seventh-day Adventists in Iceland are making discipleship a priority.

“In 2006 the Iceland Conference created a new and separate department for discipleship. ‘We live in a world of crumbling spirituality and collapsing morals, a development that unfortunately infiltrates the church more than we would like to admit,’ says conference president Eric Gudmundsson. ‘A concerted effort in resisting this development by promoting spiritual revival and Christlikeness among members—young and old—

is thus of utmost urgency. Thus, the creation of this department.’ **The Iceland Conference is building its discipleship model around spiritual formation**, a term that identifies the focus of discipleship—the practical and spiritual re-forming of broken human hearts back into the image of Jesus.”—*Adventist World.*

COLLONGES-SOUS-SALEVE SEMINARY

This is our denominational college in France. Many of our future pastors and workers in Europe receive their training in the Seminary at Collonges. **Spiritual formation is the new emphasis; and it is being promoted amid a strong sense of urgency.**

“A design for spiritual formation during the academic life of the Adventist seminary students at Collonges-Sous-Saleve, France.

Description:

Problem: This project report addresses the problem of lack of **practicum [scheduled practicing] of a spiritual formation for students** at the seminary of Collonges-Sous-Saleve, France.

Method: The project is developed in four stages as follows. *First*, it investigates how spirituality was approached in the Roman Catholic as well as the mainline Protestant milieu. *Second*, it explores the Seventh-day Adventist background of spirituality. *Third*, it focuses in the Pastoral Epistles with regard to Paul’s spiritual concerns for the leaders of the church. *Fourth*, it recognizes other needs of seminary students that must be considered in the light of spirituality.”—*Bruno R. Vertallier, Seminary at Collonges-Sous-Saleve.*

ADVENTIST CHAPLAINCY MINISTRIES

Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (headquartered at North American Division in Silver Spring, MD) **is promoting the Shalem Institute as the leading place for studying to become a spiritual director.**

Shalem is staffed with Roman Catholic nuns who are experts in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. Also on the staff are Episcopal priests and psychiatrists.

YOUNG ADULT LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

The following news report was released in January 2008. Notice that two of the leading speakers in the Catholic/Protestant spiritual formation movement gave public addresses to young Adventists at this gathering.

“NAD Youth/Young Adult Ministries Leadership Summit

“IGNITION, running February 14-17, 2008 in Dallas, will give intentional focus to significant young adult issues, feature innovations, as well as exhibit effective young adult ministries for the local church and campus. Important issues, such as sexuality, postmodernism, social justice, **spiri-**

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

**PART SIX
OF Eleven**

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

W
M
1
5
9
5

tual formation, and campus ministry will not only be addressed but **practical solutions, relevant models, and successful initiatives will be exhibited, experienced**, and exchanged. Best selling author George Barna is the featured speaker. Early registration and group discounts are available. [George Barna is one of the leading Roman Catholic spiritual formation teachers in the “Emerging Church Movement”!]

“By the most basic of definitions, to be a spiritual leader, you need to be growing spiritually. To maintain integrity and perspective—and to avoid burnout, egotism, and pragmatism—leaders need to stay close to God and his word. But, while contending with busy schedules, competing agendas, wide-ranging expectations and demanding standards, **how do you ensure that is happening in your life? A good place to start is to learn from leaders in the spiritual formation field. John Ortberg and Richard Foster will join host George Barna for a challenging and exciting look at how leaders can be consistently developing their spirits during a special CCN broadcast: *Spiritual Disciplines for Leaders*.**

[CCN is the *Church Communication Network*, an interdenominational telecast which regularly broadcasts programs by various Protestant and Catholic leaders.]

“Among the takeaways: an increased ability to teach people about a life of ‘righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,’ as described in Romans 14:17. **You’ll also discover more about the integral role that spiritual disciplines play in helping you remain God-centered.** Learn how we build a history, develop a friendship, and experience intimacy with God. **Genuine spiritual leadership is impossible without a vigorous and integrated life of personal and corporate spiritual disciplines.**”

“**John Ortberg is the Senior Teaching Pastor at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in California. He received a Master of Divinity and Ph.D. in clinical psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena**, where he now serves on the board of trustees.

“**Richard J. Foster [a Catholic priest] is the author of several best-selling books, including *Celebration of Discipline*. He is the founder of Renovaré, an infra-church movement committed to the renewal of the Church in all of its multifaceted expressions** and the formation of Christ-like character in people. He is also the general editor of the *Renovaré Spiritual Formation Study Bible*. **Adventist North American Division Recommends Richard Foster’s book: *Prayer, Finding the Heart’s True Home*, by Richard Fos-**

ter (Harper Collins Publishers).

“Next week IGNITION, the Youth/Young Adult Leadership Summit of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, will be taking place at the Adam’s Mark Hotel in Dallas, February 14-17.

“**Also** [at the Dallas youth conference were], **other Spiritual Formation Authors** [including] . . . George Otis, Jr., author of *Informed Intercession*, and Jim Cymbala, who wrote *The Promise of God’s Power*.”—NAD Youth/Young Adult Ministries Leadership Summit, news release, January 2008.

Here is John Ortberg’s personal autobiographical paragraph at his Menlo Park Presbyterian Church:

“**John Ortberg is passionate about ‘spiritual formation,’** which is how people become more like Jesus. His teaching brings Scripture alive and invariably includes practical applications and warm humor. John’s education includes a Master of Divinity degree and doctorate in clinical psychology from Fuller Seminary. The former senior pastor of Horizons Community Church in southern California, John also served as teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church in the Chicago area. John is the author of . . . [many books]. **He contributes to various publications, and teaches around the world about spiritual formation.**”—mppc.org.

We have already covered in detail Richard Foster’s deep involvement in teaching the Buddhist/Catholic practices of spiritual formation.

SPECIAL ANN NEWS RELEASE

The following is an abridgment of a very lengthy *Adventist News Network* press release that was issued in February 2004. For this reason, it is somewhat out-of-date. Many innovations and enlargements have occurred since then to bring our denomination, leaders, pastors, colleges, universities, and church members into a much fuller lock-step coordination with current spiritual formation practices in the other churches.

“**ANN Feature: Church and Congregations Increase Focus on ‘Spiritual Formation’**

“3 Feb 2004—**Spiritual formation is a topic being raised by many pastors and church leaders in a growing number of Christian denominations.** It’s no longer enough to just know doctrine and facts. —**In today’s hectic society people are searching for something deeper and more meaningful**, something that makes sense in their whirlwind lives. . .

“These concerns can be linked to how the church rates **in the area of spiritual formation, which has been defined by one Adventist Church pastor as ‘the process of becoming a mature Chris-**

tian disciple of God.' Another person describes it as 'whatever you do to specifically nourish your relationship with God.'

"Today this subject is receiving serious emphasis in Adventist institutions, as well as in local congregations. Though the church doesn't have an accredited educational program dealing with spiritual formation at any of its theological schools [they now do], it's seeing this subject become more common in today's modern, seeking world. **Spiritual formation is not a new idea or concept, and 'a lot of Protestants are in the same boat—we are rediscovering it,' says Dr. Jon Dybdahl,** president of Walla Walla College, an Adventist institution in Washington State. And, he adds, the Adventist Church has some work to do. . .

"Pastor Martin Feldbush, associate director for Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, whose work brings him in contact with leaders of several other denominations, says that **the Adventist Church is not alone in its quest for deeper spiritual formation among members.** 'A lot of churches out there are struggling with the same issues as we are. We're not in isolation as though there's something wrong with us. . .

"John Jenson, pastor of the 150-member South Bay Adventist Church in Torrance, California, says, **'There's a need for spiritual formation within the [Adventist] Church because we have been so doctrinally oriented.** . . Jenson says that, without spiritual formation, a person would be 'spiritually uncivilized.' **It 'is the process by which they can go from being a spiritual infant to spiritual maturity . . . developing the potential that God has put within you.'** Dybdahl adds that people need to 'begin to recognize that knowledge without life experience can be dead. [They need to] recognize how crucial it is to people's lives [and] how much the younger generation values experience.'

"Nikolaus Satelmajer, from the church's *Ministerial Association*, responsible for continuing education for Adventist clergy, **believes there's now a shift from emphasis on doctrine to more emphasis on spiritual formation within the Adventist Church.** . .

"Though it's not a concept that's easy to grasp for an organization as a whole, spiritual formation is something each individual member can work on,' Feldbush says. . .

"Spiritual formation is not about what one does, but what the motivations behind one's actions are. Dr. Roger Dudley, professor emeritus of *Christian Ministry* and director of the *Institute of Church Ministry* at Andrews University Theological Seminary, and the 2002 survey coordinator, says there are stages of moral development. **'A person who studies the Bible every day because he'll be lost if he doesn't has a low level of moral development.'**

[Spiritual formation takes on several forms:]

"There are disciplines of devotion, meditation, prayer, listening and so on,' Feldbush explains. **'It's a discipline which can be heeded through the assistance of a person who is trained in helping people grow in these ways.'** . .

"The Adventist world church created the *International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education* (IBMTE) in September 2001, designed to provide overall guidance and standards to the professional training of pastors, evangelists, theologians, teachers, chaplains and other denominational employees involved in ministerial and religious formation, or spiritual formation, in each of the church's 13 regions around the world."—*Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, Wendi Rogers/ANN [Adventist News Network]*.

Why would anyone want to learn, practice, and teach Catholic/Buddhist methods of mind-emptying self-discipline? It is not easy to be indoctrinated into taking time in each day to sit with the mind vacant for a period of time. Why would anyone want to do this,—instead of worshipping his loving God directly through a study of His Inspired Word and seeking for Christ's strength to obey it?

Unfortunately, far too many prefer the con-science-salving practices of Buddhists; this is because these nominal Christians have already accepted basic principles of Buddhism, which are these: no sin to worry about eliminating and no obedience to God's laws needs to be attempted.

The Catholic confesses his sins to the priest in the confessional, and that takes care of them.

The Protestant and Adventist can now discuss their misdeeds with their spiritual mentor in frequent disciplining conferences.

However, even a casual comparison of these practices with the clear statements given in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy reveal that something is missing. *A lot is missing!*

- Going directly to God daily and asking Him for forgiveness, as we decide to put our sins away.

- Praying to Him for help to resist temptation and overcome sin.

- Praising Him for victories over temptation and sin,—and the wonderful way He helps us obey His will as revealed in the Inspired Writings and in His sacred Ten Commandment law.

- Praying for ways to help others learn how to also live a life of daily overcoming and victory.

- Praying for enabling strength and a close walk with Him daily in order to be kinder and more helpful to others.

- Praying for others around us and afar, who so much need a closer walk with God. And then trying to help them.

This is genuine Christianity!

In stark contrast to genuine Christianity is empty-

ing the mind and repeating a word, in obedience to the instructions of fallible human beings; this brings the person willing to do it into subjection to spiritist demons.

The truth is: **We are not to confess our sins to man as our spiritual father. We are not to obey any instructions that contradict the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.**

Only Jesus, through His holy Writings, can guide us properly, as in His strength we put away our sins and plead for help. This is the only safe discipling we may enter into.

Yes, we are to be disciples,—*but disciples of Christ, not of men.* He is the only Master that is to instruct us. We dare accept no one else as our spiritual leader.

Here is what Jesus has said about the terrible effects of emptying the mind and waiting for something to fill it:

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

“Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.

“Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”—Matthew 12:43-45.

— SECTION FIVE —

MORE ADVENTIST ACTIVITIES

BRIAN MCLAREN SPEAKS AT LOMA LINDA

In 2006, Brian McLaren was a guest speaker at Loma Linda University. McLaren rejects the traditional view of the atonement (substitutionary death of Christ for sins). **Loma Linda now has spiritual formation as an integral part of school life.** Interestingly, **it uses the *Journal of Spiritual Formation*, published regularly by Biola University, in order to help its students enter the experience.** Biola is heavily involved in the search for a deeper “contemplation” of the spirit.

BILL CORK'S TESTIMONY

Bill Cork was appointed pastor of the North Houston and Spring Creek Seventh-day Adventist churches in Texas, *a mere three years after leaving Catholicism.* He was quickly hired into the Adventist ministry because he had several advanced degrees in theology.

Here is what he has to say about the importance of spiritual formation instruction in our denomination:

“The Evangelical world is all abuzz about ‘spiritual formation’ these days, thanks primarily to the work of writer Richard Foster. Courses in ‘spiritual formation’ are taught in many Evangelical seminaries. Books and articles abound,

some suggesting that we haven’t paid enough attention to ‘spirituality.’ Some act as if the traditions of the Reformation have nothing to offer—that ‘spirituality’ consists in recovering specific medieval Catholic practices. Others are more intrigued by modern practices and perspectives rooted in Jungian psychology.

“Some who are leading this effort have felt such a lack of spiritual nourishment in their own tradition that they risk grasping at whatever comes their way without either understanding the history of Christian spirituality or their own tradition, and without critically evaluating practices and principles. **Some others have gone to the opposite extreme and reject anything that uses the terms, ‘spirituality’ or ‘spiritual formation.’**”

“I can understand the hunger. When I was in a period of searching, **I, too, cast aside the Seventh-day Adventist principles in which I was raised and went to see what others had to offer.**”

“In 1985 I started my studies at Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary, and was immersed in Lutheran spirituality and introduced to other approaches. We had a seminar in spirituality from Fr. Mark Gibbard, an Anglican Benedictine. **I took classes in the history of spirituality and in Franciscan spirituality,** at a Franciscan seminary in Washington, DC, the Washington Theological Union. Through the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory **I was introduced to Jungianism.**”

[Carl Jung (1875-1961) was a Swiss psychiatrist and a close friend of Sigmund Freud. **Jung taught that we must combine the conscious mind with the unconscious** in order to succeed in life. He also spoke of a “collective unconscious” in which all human beings share. In 1913, at the age of thirty-eight, Jung experienced a horrible “confrontation with the unconscious.” He saw visions and heard voices (probably from demons). **He worried at times that he was “menaced by a psychosis” or was “doing a schizophrenia.” He decided that it was valuable experience; and, in private, he induced hallucinations in his patients in order to help “expand their minds.”** His most important book was *Psychology of the Unconscious* (1912). Jung is greatly admired by many advocates of spiritual formation, because of his pioneering research into the values of emptying the mind. Faithful Christians have nothing to do with Jung’s concepts.]

“I [Bill Cork] joined an ecumenical Franciscan community, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, founded by John Michael Talbot. I went on retreats with Benedictine and Camaldolese monks. **In 1992, due to these and other influences, I joined the Catholic Church.** I was initially drawn to more liberal expressions of Catholicism, but over the years grew more conservative, **and was attracted to more traditional forms of Catholic spirituality, especially through the influence of *Opus Dei***

[a Catholic organization of business people, who are taught to whip themselves and wear spiked arm or leg bands for hours each day]. All these experiences led me to look again at where I came from and to appreciate anew my roots, **and three years ago I returned to the Adventist Church in which I had been raised.** I tell the story here. My point here is that my critique comes from a great deal of both experience and academic study in the area of spirituality.”—*Statement by Bill Cork.*

Cork, a firm believer in the methods of spiritual formation, was impressed by a spirit to investigate other religions. Later, he was impressed to return with that knowledge to our own denomination, where he was quickly made a pastor. **Satan, knowing that it is important to keep placing men trained in spiritual formation in key positions in our denomination, encourages them to enter Adventist employment in order to help initiate still others.**

THE ADVENTIST BOOK, HUNGER

In his new book, *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul* (Review and Herald, Autumn House, 2008), Jon Dybdahl is writing to Adventists. (The book was published by the Review and Herald and distributed through Adventist Book Centers.) Yet he seems to deliberately avoid discussing specifically Adventist contributions, concerns, and authors. The Sabbath and the Second Coming are strikingly absent, as is the Adventist understanding of the nature of man, the health message, the Adventist practice of the Lord’s Supper, Sabbath School, prayer meeting, testimony meetings, camp meetings—all of which seem to me to be key elements of Seventh-day Adventist spirituality. Ellen G. White, the most important and most widely read spiritual author of the church, is mentioned only in passing.

Here is the back cover of this new book:

“There’s a hunger within us.

“A longing for something more—something we can’t quite describe.

“Something has been missing.

“This is it! . . .

“It is an approach to life and religion that may take you by surprise. But, as you embrace it, you’ll feel a sense of coming home, the confidence that this is how it was meant to be.

“It is an invitation to return to the original definition of the Christian religion. It is a call to live a life of communion with God.”

Published in 2008 by Autumn House Publishing, a division of the Review and Herald Publishing, **this new book, *Hunger*, contains the principles of an incredibly popular seminary class** that drew students seeking to transform their spiritual lives.

In his book, *Hunger*, now being sold in Adventist

Book Centers, **Dybdahl says he is going to lead the reader on a journey that will satisfy the longing of the soul.** It is significant that **he makes some startling statements in which he suggests that there are aspects of Eastern meditation that can be of some benefit when brought into Christian worship.**

“The prayer is biblically based [Luke 18:38] and says simply: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ You can shorten it even more in various ways, such as ‘Jesus, have mercy on me’ or ‘Have mercy on me.’ **The Orthodox tradition repeats the prayer, either out loud or in the heart, many, many times** until eventually it moves from the head to be the constant melody of the heart, influencing all areas of life.

“**Francis of Assisi reputedly prayed all night** saying just ‘Jesus, my Jesus.’ Another method of simple praying is the use of one’s own breathing, a form often called the breath prayer. Since most religious traditions practice it, **can we consider it Christian? Yes, if the content and context are Christian.** [The same reasoning is used to make a lot of rock music Christian. See my book, *Inside Rock Music*.] The way I use the prayer for myself is to pray for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. I simply say as I inhale, ‘Spirit of the living God’ and as I exhale, ‘fall afresh on me!’ I find the combination of the words with my breath very powerful, especially as I remember that ‘spirit’ means ‘wind’ or ‘breath.’ We can employ any scriptural words. In fact, we pray a shortened Jesus prayer. Simply inhale to ‘Lord, Jesus Christ’ and exhale to ‘have mercy on me (a sinner).’ ”—*Hunger*, p. 52.

This is something that a new theology oriented Adventist can heartily appreciate. No concern to put away sin, resist temptation, obey God. Just “have mercy on me.” No concern about studying God’s Word and asking for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to obey it. Just “Spirit of God, fall afresh on me.”

Breath prayer has its origins with the Desert Fathers who were hermits, ascetics, monks, and nuns (Desert Mothers) and lived mainly in the deserts of Egypt, beginning around the third century A.D. The best known of them was “Saint” Anthony, who moved to the desert in 270–271 and was, for practical purposes, the founder of desert monasticism. By the time Anthony died in 356, thousands had begun to live in the desert, following Anthony’s example and thinking that doing so would wash away their continued sins. The Christianity taught them by Rome did not satisfy the soul; so they tried to find God by living as hermits.

One former New Age follower, who is now a Christian, upon learning that they are in Protestant churches, said in astonishment that she was taught the breath prayers when she was in ashtanga yoga!

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

PART SEVEN
OF Eleven

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

Flynn, another New Age author, explains the inner workings of so-called “breath prayers”:

“Breath prayer . . . is used or described as a technique to silence the mind or supposedly to ‘practice the presence.’ Richard Foster also advocates breath prayers as a method to achieve the same purpose.

“Remember it is repetition that brings one into an altered state of consciousness. Breath prayers are just another way of using meaningless repetition to gain an altered state. The practitioners believe they will feel closer to God through this method.”—*Brian Flynn, Running against the Wind, p. 199.*

Vocalist John Michael Talbot describes breath prayer this way:

“One powerful tool for meditation is breath prayer. Many of us exclusively associate this method with Eastern Religions. . . In Hinduism and Buddhism uniting meditation with breath is fundamental. It is a way to give the body and mind something to do without distracting it into complications. It also slows the body, the emotions, and the thoughts [by stopping the thinking process], so as to better focus all of them on the meditation at hand. Focusing on the breath is often the beginning stage of meditation. . .

“With both Christian and non-Christian expressions some bodily posture is recommended that will enable the practitioner to stay relatively still and quiet for an extended period of time, say twenty to thirty minutes. How do we do it? I teach that we must first find a quiet place that will be relatively free from intrusion for the meditation time. Next we sit either in the traditional cross-legged [lotus] position or in a straight back chair with feet flat on the ground.”

[The Spirit of Prophecy says, as does the Apostle Paul, to “pray without ceasing.”]

“Cultivate the habit of talking with the Saviour when you are alone, when you are walking, and when you are busy with your daily labor. Let the heart be continually uplifted in silent petition for help, for light, for strength, for knowledge. Let every breath be a prayer.”—*Ministry of Healing, 510-511.*

Notice that this genuine, unceasing prayer is intelligent prayer about ongoing activity and daily life! It is not intended to “slow the body, the emotions, and the thoughts” as Talbot recommends!

Paul combined continual prayer requests for specific things with rejoicing and thanking God!

“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks.”—1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

In addition to promoting monkish and Oriental “breath prayers,” this book, *Hunger*, primarily written for Adventists, also recommends *lectio divina*:

“*Lectio divina* is Latin for divine reading, spiritual reading, or ‘holy reading,’ and represents a method of prayer and scriptural reading intended to promote communion with God and to provide special spiritual insights. The principles of *lectio divina* were expressed around the year 220 A.D. and practiced by Catholic monks, especially the monastic rules of Sts. Pachomius, Augustine, Basil, and Benedict.

“The practice of *lectio divina* is currently very popular among Catholics and gnostics, and is gaining acceptance as an integral part of the devotional practices of the Emerging Church. Pope Benedict XVI said, in a 2005 speech, ‘I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of *lectio divina*. . .

“*Lectio divina* is also said to be adaptable for people of other faiths in reading their scripture—whether that be the Bhagavad Gita, the Torah, or the Koran. Non-Christians may simply make suitable modifications of the method to accommodate secular traditions. . .

“The actual practice of *lectio divina* begins with a time of relaxation, making oneself comfortable and clearing the mind of mundane thoughts and cares. Some *lectio* practitioners find it helpful to concentrate by beginning with deep, cleansing breaths and reciting a chosen phrase or word over and over to help free the mind.”—*Hunger, pp. 62-63.*

This *lectio divina* is essentially the same as transcendental meditation and other dangerous rituals in which **the brain is stripped of all thoughts as a single word or phrase is repeated. Very soon it becomes a mindless, senseless activity.** The Catholic mystics and Buddhists use it as a means of “emptying and freeing the mind in order to empower oneself with new energy.” It is pretty obvious as to the nature of the spirit which enters and provides this new energy!

In dramatic contrast, the Christian prays intelligently, and then opens the Bible and reads it thoughtfully for its meaning. Intermingled with his reading, he will send up additional, purposeful prayers. God said His people are destroyed for lack of real, solid knowledge that they need to receive and obey (Hosea 4:6).

Emptying-the-mind rituals, in obedience to Buddhist principles—even though the request comes from Protestant instructors—should never be done!

RECOMMENDED FOR ADVENTIST READING

Jon Dybdahl, in his book, *Hunger*, recommends the writings of the following nine authors who are leaders in the Mystical, Contemplative, Spiritual Disci-

plines movement: **Thomas Kelly, Henri Nouwen, Richard Foster, Morton Kelsey, Tilden Edwards, Dallas Willard, Thomas Keating, Tony Campolo, and M. Scott Peck.**

Here is a brief look into the beliefs of these nine men, whose books Dybdahl says Adventists should read:

Tony Campolo was the featured speaker for Black History Weekend at Walla Walla University in February 2008. He states that he “learned about this way of having a born-again experience from reading the Catholic mystics, especially *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*,” who developed “a ‘oneness’ with God,” through contemplative practices. Campolo says that, when the Reformation took place, we “left too much behind” and that “some Catholic saints” helped to deepen his prayer life.

Thomas Kelly writes:

“**Deep within us all there is** an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, **a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice**, to which we may continually return. . . **It is a Light Within** that illumines the face of God and casts new shadows and new glories upon the human face. . . **Here is the Slumbering Christ**, stirring to be awakened, to become the soul we clothe in earthly form and action. **And He is within us all. . . The Inner Light, the Inward Christ**, is no mere doctrine, belonging peculiarly to a small religious fellowship, to be accepted or rejected as a mere belief. It is the living Center of Reference for all Christian groups—yes, and of non-Christian groups as well who seriously mean to dwell in the secret place of the Most High.”—*Thomas Kelly, A Testament of Devotion.*

Henri Nouwen:

“The quiet repetition of a single word can help us to descend with the mind into the heart.”—*Henri Nouwen, The Way of the Heart.*

Richard Foster:

“**We must be willing to go down into the re-creating silences, into the inner world** of contemplation. In their writings, all of the masters of meditation strive to awaken us to the fact that the universe is much larger than we know, that **there are vast unexplored inner regions** that are just as real as the physical world we know so well.”—*Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline.*

Thomas Merton:

“Thomas Merton has perhaps done more than any other twentieth-century figure to make the life of prayer widely known and understood. . . **His interest in contemplation led him to investigate prayer forms in Eastern religions.** . . [He is] a gifted teacher.”—*Spiritual Classics.*

“**If only they [the people] could all see themselves as they really are.** . . I suppose the big prob-

lem would be that **we would fall down and worship each other. . . At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusions, a point of pure truth. . . This little point . . . is the pure glory of God in us.** It is in everybody.”—*Thomas Merton, Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander.*

Morton Kelsey:

“You can find most of the New Age practices in the depth of Christianity [in church tradition].”—*Morton Kelsey, In the Spirit of Early Christians.*

Tilden Edwards:

“**This mystical stream [contemplative prayer] is the Western bridge to Far Eastern spirituality.**”—*Morton Kelsey, Spiritual Friend.*

Thomas Keating:

He was a Trappist monk who began teaching a form of Christian meditation that grew into the worldwide phenomenon known as “centering prayer.” Twice a day for 20 minutes, practitioners find a quiet place to sit with their eyes closed, totally empty the mind as they repeat a single word or phrase, and surrender their minds to “God.”

“My acquaintance with Eastern methods of meditation has convinced me that . . . there are ways of calming the mind in the spiritual disciplines of both the East and the West. . . **Many serious seekers of truth study the Eastern religions.**”—*Thomas Keating, Open mind, Open heart.*

“**We should not hesitate to take the fruit of the age-old wisdom of the East and ‘capture’ it for Christ. Indeed, those of us who are in ministry should make the necessary effort to acquaint ourselves with as many of these Eastern techniques as possible. . . Many Christians who take their prayer life seriously have been greatly helped by Yoga, Zen, TM [transcendental meditation], and similar practices.**”—*Thomas Keating, Finding Grace at the Center.*

“For the centering prayer practitioner, **regular practice of ‘contemplative’ prayer sets in motion a dynamism of divine psychotherapy**, organically designed for each of us, **to empty out our unconscious.** . . As this false self is dismantled, **we come to see our true Self, the center of which, so say proponents, is God.** . . If you are aware of no thoughts, you will be aware of something and that is a thought [a new thought implanted by a spirit]. If at that point you can lose the awareness that you are aware of no thoughts, you will move into pure consciousness.”—*Thomas Keating, Open mind, Open heart.*

M. Scott Peck:

It is astounding that any Adventist would recommend books by M. Scott Peck! Yet Jon Dybdahl, in his Review and Herald book, *Hunger*, wants Adventist readers to do just that!

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

27

W
M
1
5
9
6

Here are several quotations from M. Scott Peck. For more of his quotations see my tract set, *Adventists on the Road Less Traveled* [WM-769-770]. I wrote that June 1997 report because **it had come to my attention that some of our colleges had Peck's books in their bookstores and were requiring it as reading for some classes.**

"We must say concerning **the unconscious** that there is a part of us that **is wiser than we are**. . . This 'wisdom of the unconscious' primarily is in terms of self-knowledge and self-revelation."—*M. Scott Peck, The Road Less Traveled*, 251.

"The collective unconscious [within us all] is God. . . I have said that **the ultimate goal of spiritual growth is for the individual to become as one with God**. . . Since the unconscious is God all along, we may further define the goal of spiritual growth to be the attainment of godhood by the conscious self. **It is for the individual to become totally, wholly God.**"—*M. Scott Peck, The Road Less Traveled*, 282.

"**As soon as we believe it is possible for man to become God**, we . . . must constantly push ourselves to greater and greater wisdom."—*Ibid.*, 270-271.

"For the call to grace in its ultimate form **is a summons to be one with God, to assume peer-ship [equality] with God.**"—*Ibid.*, 305.

"**Zen Buddhism should be taught in every fifth grade class** in America."—*M. Scott Peck, Further Along the Road Less Traveled*.

"**Christianity's greatest sin is to think that other religions are not saved.**"—*M. Scott Peck, Further Along the Road Less Traveled*.

"If the New Age can reform society rather than just adversely challenge it then it can be extremely holy and desperately needed."—*M. Scott Peck, Further Along the Road Less Traveled*.

"**That community, which includes all faiths and all cultures** without obliterating them, **is the cure** for the core of our greatest contemporary problem."—*The Different Drum*, 20.

"Since **the unconscious is God all along**, we may further define **the goal of spiritual growth to be the attainment of godhood by the conscious self.**"—*M. Scott Peck, The Road Less Traveled*.

"Self-examination is the key to insight, which is the key to wisdom."—*The Different Drum*, 66.

"**As a mythic symbol**—and all myths are about human nature, one way or another—**take the wonderful story of Adam and Eve**, the Garden, the apple, and the snake (dragons have slipped in, even here). Is it a story of our fall from grace and alienation from our environment? **Or is it a story of evolution into self-consciousness?** . . . Myths are required to contain and embrace the richness of human nature."—*Ibid.*, 171-172.

"**Genesis 3 is a myth about how we human**

beings evolved into consciousness. . . . This wonderful story teaches us about the power of choice. Until we ate that apple from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, we didn't have real choice. We did not have free will until that moment described in Genesis 3 when we became conscious."—*The Road Less Traveled*, 108, 109.

"**Anything that can't be measured scientifically can't be known and isn't worth studying.** They must begin to doubt even their own doubts."—*The Road Less Traveled*, 201.

"I sometimes tell people that **one of the great blessings of my life was an almost total absence of religious education**, because I had nothing to overcome."—*The Road Less Traveled*, 113.

"**The Bible is . . . a mixture of legend**, some of which is true and some of which is not true."—*The Road Less Traveled*, 107.

ADVENTIST PASTOR SAMIR SELMANOVIC

Samir Selmanovic pastors an Adventist church in Greater New York City. (See *Samir and Fellow Travelers* [WM-1379]). **Samir, who firmly believes in spiritual formation techniques for deepening "the spirit connection," believes that, in this way, he has been taught advanced truths.**

Originally a Muslim, Samir Selmanovic joined the Adventist Church. But even before being appointed to a pastoral position, he was already imagining strange, new concepts about how to improve all religions.

He states that the emerging church movement has come to believe that the ultimate objective of the spiritual aspirations of a follower of Jesus Christ is not Christianity but rather the kingdom of God; and **to believe that God is limited to Christianity would be an attempt to manage God.** Samir adds that, **if one holds that Christ is confined to Christianity, one has chosen a god that is not sovereign.**

Selmanovic's web site presents an interfaith vision that will "seek to bring progressive Jews, Christians, Muslims, and spiritual seekers of no faith **to become an interfaith community for the good of the world.** We have one world and one God."

While Selmanovic says he includes Christians in this interspiritual dream for the world, he makes it clear that, **while Christians might be included, they in no way have an exclusive truth.** He states: "Is our religion [Christianity] the only one that understands the true meaning of life? . . . **The gospel of the kingdom of God belongs to the kingdom of God, and cannot be hijacked by Christianity.**"

MORE ON DEREK MORRIS

Derek J. Morris, Professor, Advocates Jesuit Spiritual Formation

A few years ago, Derek J. Morris, then Professor of Homiletics and Pastoral Theology at Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists (more recently a pastor in Florida), gave a talk and produced a paper, calling for

spiritual formation in Adventism. He entitled it “*Spiritual Formation in Ministry*.”

In this talk and paper, calling for spiritual formation in ministry, he reveals the inner working of spiritual directors.

“I would like to explore with you this morning the process of **spiritual direction and its relevance as a dynamic for spiritual formation in ministry**.”—Derek Morris, *Spiritual Formation in Ministry*.

Morris Credits Jesuits with Preserving Spiritual Direction. He writes:

“**For much of the Christian era the practice of spiritual direction was confined to Catholicism, particularly monasticism and the Society of Jesus [the Jesuits].** In recent years, there has been a revival of interest in spiritual direction as a resource for spiritual formation among both Catholics and Protestants. **A leading Protestant advocate of spiritual formation is Tilden Edwards, director of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Washington, D.C.**

“As I began my own prayer search for a spiritual friend, **I came across the significant work by Tilden Edwards, *Spiritual Friend: Reclaiming the Gift of Spiritual Direction*.** I [Derek Morris] strongly recommend this book as a valuable resource. . . .

“In the final chapter of this book, Edwards refers to a spiritual direction training program at the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Washington, D.C.”—Morris, p. 7.

Morris Explains that, in the mid-1990s, when he wrote this, Roman Catholics were in charge of most Spiritual Direction Programs on the graduate level!

At this point Morris refers the reader to his footnote, where he explains more:

“The Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation began its experiment with long-term group spiritual direction in the fall of 1973. Its *spiritual direction training program* commenced in the fall of 1978.

“Another such program began at the same time at Wainwright House in Rye, New York, under the *Guild for Spiritual Direction*.

“The two most intensive **Roman Catholic training programs offering graduate degrees in spiritual direction are run by the Jesuits of Weston, MA, and by the *Dusquesne Institute of Formative Spirituality in Pittsburgh, PA.***

“**The only non-Roman Catholic graduate program in spiritual direction is offered by the Center for Christian Spirituality at the *General Theological Seminary (Episcopal)* in New York.”—Derek Morris, footnote, p. 7.**

Obviously, Morris is quite comfortable with Jesuitism, Jesuit spiritual formation, and spiritual directorship, and is an enthusiastic advocate of implementing this Jesuit training within Adventism.

When Morris sensed danger, he found comfort in assuring himself that God was leading him into spiritual direction. Morris continues:

“I called Shalem and shared with Dr. Gerald May that I was a pastor, interested in the process of spiritual direction.”—Morris, *Spiritual Formation in Ministry*, p. 8.

Dr. May sent him a list of names of graduates and enrollees in Shalem’s program.

Morris relates that—

“I was embarrassed, anxious, afraid. This whole experience was a journey into the unknown. However, I found comfort in the counsel of Elizabeth O’Conner, reiterated by Dr. May.

“I prayed, ‘O Lord, I know that you are leading in this process. Please give me the courage to follow you.’”—Morris, p. 8.

Morris Plunged ahead, overriding the Spirit’s powerful warnings

Notice how the Holy Spirit was warning Morris about the course he was taking; but he plunged ahead anyway, insisting that the Lord was leading him. What spirit was leading him into Jesuit spiritual formation and Jesuit spiritual direction?

High Level of Resistance from the conscience

Morris tells how he was “experiencing a high level of resistance. I was to learn later that such resistance is common” (p. 8).

That resistance is the voice of conscience, warning a person not to do this! But Morris determinedly overrode the resistance. He tells of how he had “twenty days of resistance” (almost a full month!). But then he ‘called Louise Young. “I shared with her my spiritual journey and my desire to explore the process of spiritual direction” (p. 8).

Jesuit experts explain how to overcome “resistance”

Morris then explains how **William A. Barry** and **William J. Connolly**, two Jesuits, in their book, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, spend an entire chapter dealing with the phenomenon of “resistance” (Morris, p. 8). **Morris urges his readers to read their book.**

Morris would have us go to the Jesuits, to find out how to overcome the Holy Spirit’s voice, warning us about Jesuit spiritual direction!

William A. Berry, S.J. [initials for “Society of Jesus,” the name of the Jesuit organization], one of the Jesuit authors of the *Practice of Spiritual Direction*, has also written a companion book to the *Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*. Berry’s book is called *Finding God*

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

PART EIGHT
OF Eleven

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

in *All Things: A Companion to the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1991).

Foster Recommends Jesuit Barry

From the titles of the books by those Jesuits, it is clear that they are in the forefront of the Jesuit order in producing materials for the implementation of spiritual formation and spiritual directorship. Foster comments on Barry's companion book to the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*:

"This book of reflections on spiritual teachings of Ignatius of Loyola is an excellent treatment by a **noted Jesuit spiritual director and retreat leader.**"—Foster and Griffin, p. 299.

Finally, after much "resistance" and fear, a Catholic selected by the Catholics to help him (Barry Young by name) became Morris' spiritual director. Morris describes the "tremendous freedom" once he took the plunge to reveal his "hidden self." After repeated warnings, the Holy Spirit had withdrawn and left him to the control of a demon.

Spiritual Director, Father Confessor

As you would expect, the spiritual director functions as a kind of Father confessor. Morris quotes Elizabeth O'Conner's description of the process:

"It is an open relationship where your fear, feelings of rebellion, critical attitudes, misgivings, etc., **are confessed. . . Your spiritual director is one to whom you want to reveal your hidden self.**"—Elizabeth O'Conner, *Call to Commitment*, p. 201.

Traditionally in Roman Catholicism, while in the confessional the priest is supposedly not to see the person confessing his sins to him. But in this Jesuit-devised, Jesuit spiritual direction confessional, there is a face-to-face contact on a regular basis at regular times (p. 11).

Morris Receives Article by Jesuit on Spiritual Direction, Written for Roman Catholic Orders

In this first session with Barry, his spiritual director, Morris says, "I shared very openly about my personal history and my family relationships. . . Barry also shared with me an article by William J. Connolly, entitled 'Noticing Key Interior Facts in the Early Stages of Spiritual Direction.'"

The source of the article is William J. Connolly, S.J., "Noticing Key Facts in the Early Stages of Spiritual Direction," *Review for Religious* 35 (1976): pp. 112-121.

Connolly's Jesuit article was published in *Review for Religious*. "Religious" is a Roman Catholic term for adherents who belong to a Roman Catholic Order or congregation or are monks, friars, and nuns.

Thus the instructional material written by Connolly for other Jesuits, Franciscans, Benedictines, Dominicans, monks, friars, and nuns about how to be a spiri-

tual director—was eagerly devoured by this young Adventist, Derek Morris. Today, by his example and advocacy, he heartily recommends reading this; so others also can be a Father (or Mother) Confessor to their hearers.

Fully 70% of Barry's Spiritual Director's Disciples Are Involved in Discipling others

In another note Morris states, "Barry Young generally meets with directees on a monthly basis. It is interesting to note that **approximately 70% of his directees are involved in some form of ministry.**" Thus, **spiritual directors are first targeting the ministries of the Protestant Churches, training them in Jesuit practice**, forming them in the image of the Roman hierarchy.

Even the Mennonites are deeply involved in spiritual formation. Their North Carolina School for Christian Spiritual Formation has the book by William A. Berry (a Jesuit), *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, as one of its readings.

Ignatius of Loyola, one of the founders

These men claim that Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, knew about spiritual formation and helped improve it by adding to it the use of spiritual directors. (See material written by Joseph A. Munitiz, S.J., and Philip Endean, S.J.: *Preface and Introductory Notes to Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Personal Writings*. Cited in McDonough and Bianchi, p. 111.)

Spiritual Directors International—A Global Network of Confessors

Spiritual Directors International is now spanning the globe with an organized network of confession-hearing spiritual directors.

"Spiritual direction is the contemplative practice of helping another person or group to awaken to the mystery called God in all of life, and to respond to that discovery in a growing relationship of freedom and commitment."—James Keegan, S.J., *Roman Catholic, on behalf of the 2005 Coordinating Council of Spiritual Directors International*.

"Spiritual direction explores a deeper relationship with the spiritual aspect of being human. Simply put, spiritual direction is helping people tell their sacred stories everyday. **Spiritual direction has emerged in many contexts, using language specific to particular cultural and spiritual traditions. Describing spiritual direction requires putting words to a process of fostering a transcendent experience** that lies beyond all names."—Liz Budd Ellmann, M.Div, *Executive Director, Spiritual Directors International*.

In the early church, people flocked to hermits in the desert for spiritual counsel. Across the centuries we find striking examples in some Irish monks, in some German Benedictine nuns, in Charles de Foucault, Teresa of Avila, John of

the Cross, Francis de Sales, and others. Today, spiritual directors come from many traditions.”—*Marian Cowan, C.S.J.*

Spiritual Directors International was founded at the Sisters of Mercy in Burlingame, California. Sisters of Mercy was founded when Mary Baptist Russell and her group of eight women landed in San Francisco in 1854. Their organization, ***Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, is the organization that has fostered Spiritual Directors International, which has broken down the world into regions and state organizations to organize the global network of nuns coordinating spiritual directors confessionals.***

“Spiritual Directors International began in 1989, in a gathering of spiritual directors of the Christian faith at Mercy Center in Burlingame, California, USA.”—*Spiritual Directors International web site, “Purpose and History of Spiritual Directors International.”*

Mercy Center, run by nuns, not only hosted the founding of *Spiritual Directors International*, but also its frequent conferences.

For example, the conference held on March 4-7, 2005, was attended by the *Dharma Realm Buddhist Association*; the *San Francisco Zen Center*; and the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (USCCB), led by Friar Thomas Hand. At that time they united in praising spiritual formation, which is able to reach into the personal lives of so many people and celebrate its 20th anniversary at the Sisters of Mercy of Burlingame (*Project MUSE*).

A Jesuit Is Secretary of Spiritual Directors International

James Keegan, S.J., M.Div. '06, serves as the secretary of the group, headquartered in Gloucester, MA. Cathleen Murtha, D.W., is the President. **Spiritual Directors International is totally organized from world regions on down to state levels.**

Dominican, Benedictine, and Franciscan Nuns Coordinate the Spiritual Directors Organization

Just the first few pages of listings (out of many, many pages) for just the states of Illinois, Indiana, South Dakota, and Michigan reveal that **the coordinators on the state level are Dominican, Franciscan, and Benedictine, as well as other orders of nuns**; along with O.S.F. (Order of Saint Francis), O.P. (Order of Preachers-Dominicans), I.H.M. (Immaculate Heart of Mary), and O.S.B. (Order of St. Benedict—the Benedictines) appended to the coordinator’s name. Some of the designations of the organizations of these nuns (including P.H.J.C., M.P.S., S.N.J.M., and D.A.S.D.) are not even listed in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*.

Spiritual Directors International has become a global work, reaching into nearly every nation on earth.

Rome’s Intelligence System

The confessional is the greatest information-gathering system in the world. This is why Rome’s intelligence is the best that there is on the face of the planet.

This is also why, during the F.D. Roosevelt and Reagan administrations, the United States exchanged an ambassador with the Vatican and the Vatican sent a Papal nuncio to the United States. **Now, through *Spiritual Directors International*, this papal intelligence is flooded with information, gleaned from the personal lives and activities of pastors and leaders in many Protestant organizations.** Thus the Jesuits now have a global network of confessionals in all denominations from the Mennonites to the Adventists, from the Presbyterians to the Buddhists.

Thus Rome has access now to inside information in all churches and religions through the confessional of spiritual directors. Anyone who becomes involved in spiritual formation may imagine he is working with a Protestant “confessor.” But, in reality, they all have ties to Rome through *spiritual directors*.

— SECTION SIX — FELLOW TRAVELERS

LELAND R. KAISER

Leland Kaiser is a Colorado Adventist Church member in good standing, who, along with his son (Kevin) and daughter (Leanne), regularly holds seminars for Adventist groups and others under various names, including Kaiser Institute, Two Worlds Wisdom School, and Spiritual Leadership Institute. In addition, Kevin’s wife, Sarah, holds meetings under the name, *Presence, Inc.*, “an organization created to help the planet and culture step into a new era of greater alignment, greater peace, and greater healing.” (*See The Dangerous New Theology Path/Adventist Spiritualists [WM-1356-1357] for much more on the Kaisers.*)

Here is a listing of Kaiser’s Adventist Church sponsors, as of October 2005:

“Sponsored by: Partners in Innovation of the Ohio Conference of SDA; The Kettering Medical Center Network; Office of Creative Ministries; the Columbia Union Conference of SDA; . . . Leadership & Educational Administration Department, Andrews University.”—*October 2005 Kaiser Institute announcement sheet.*

In addition, **the General Conference also had the Kaisers present some of their concepts at the 2000 General Conference Session at Toronto.** As you might expect, those presentations provided the Kaisers with many additional contacts!

The Kaisers (Leland, Leanne, Kevin, and Sarah) present typical New Age “the god within you” content, plus spiritual formation instructions.

The Kaisers claim to offer wonderful new insights, awareness, and feelings which will be able to help you have a more vibrant personality, clearer thinking, better decision-making power, access to hidden powers

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

31

within, and contact with ancient powers without.

Remarkably, these “make yourself better by the power within you” claims are not hidden, but brazenly flaunted. Yet some Adventist entities continue to sponsor their meetings. **Those who are solidly steeped in the new theology will be enamored with these concepts. When a person no longer needs to worry about sin, the law of God, or the warnings of conscience, he is prepared for spiritualism. And now it is entering in full bloom.**

Sources for the following statements include *gnosticnotes.blogspot.com*; *kaiser.net*; and *sdapartnersininnovation.org*. (Because it is so revealing, *kaiser.net* is not always online.)

Here are several of their statements:

“*What is the Path to God?*—There are many paths to God. Some approach God with a little different emphasis, like similarly structured but differently named churches within Christianity. **Some approach God with more divergent mind-sets such as Buddhism and Christianity. These differences often trouble us. They do not trouble God.**”—Leland Kaiser, *Questions and Answers*>Series, July 14, 2006, *kaiser.net*.

“*Possibility Thinking*—Wisdom walkers live in a universe of infinite possibility waiting to happen. In their universe, nothing has to be the way it is. **There is no one right way to do anything.** For everything that is, there are an infinite number of things that could just as well be.”—Leland Kaiser, *kaiser.net*.

He says we are all god. This concept is mentioned by many spiritualists who have found the secret wisdom offered by the serpent in Genesis 3:5.

“*Why Am I Drawn So Strongly to Certain Persons?*—**We are all different aspects of God reflecting itself in the third dimension.** Poets, mystics, Gnostics and adepts all describe this phenomenon using different metaphors.”—*Questions and Answers* >Series, June 20, 2006, *kaiser.net*.

“*Metaphysics of Management*—The mental model for business management is about to change. Future managers will adopt a metaphysical view of their profession and the world they live in. They will easily cross over from the objective world of facts and figures to the subtle world of intentions and consciousness. They will live and work in two worlds.”—*Thoughts*>Lee, May 1, 2006, *kaiser.net*.

Since nothing is evil to the Kaisers, there are no evil thoughts. Any thought (no matter how corrupt it may be) which wanders into your mind is important, and you need to consider it carefully.

“Whatever the type of intuition you experience, you should pay attention to its message. It has something important to tell you. . . . As Spirit you are, as soul you know, as mind you think, as emotions you feel, as body you act. You can train yourself to receive intuitive impressions at any of these five levels. If all of the levels are in alignment, you have achieved an integrated state of consciousness variously known as [Christian] at-one-ment, atone-

ment, [Buddhist] enlightenment, or self-realization.”—Leland Kaiser, *Emerging Lifestyles magazine*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Spring 2004.

When fully integrated, you become infinite, part of the divine mind—and of everything else (pantheism). At this level, your thoughts become infallible.

“At the highest level of your Being, you are Spirit—an aspect of the Divine manifesting through you. At this level you simply are, and your awareness approaches infinity. **You know everything, because you are a part of everything that exists.** Spirit resides in all things and therefore knows all things. An intuitive message from your Spirit is infallible.”—*Ibid*.

Your finite soul is connected to your eternal Spirit by an infinite, incorruptible magnetic link, which he calls the silver cord. The goal of your life should be to solidly connect the two—so you can be assured of immortality.

“A bridge between your soul and your Spirit is present at birth in the form of a magnetic link (silver cord). Your soul has a property of reflectivity and can take the impress of your Spirit. This reflectivity increases with your soul maturity. This magnetic link permits your Spirit to operate through your lower vehicles and express itself in your life. **Your Spirit is infinite and incorruptible.** It is composed of neither energy or matter, but rather is a unit of consciousness that resides in the mind of God. Your soul is finite and corruptible. It is composed of subatomic matter. **The goal of your life on earth is to meld your Spirit and soul into one eternal monad** [so you will continue to live after death].”—*Ibid*.

Your Spirit can enable you to leave your body and travel across space and time.

“The bridge between soul and body permits the Spirit to alter your physiological functions and impact matter outside your body. Herein lies the seat of phenomena such as **healing, visions, out-of-body experiences, near death experiences, telepathy, lucid dreams, and interdimensional travel.**”—*Ibid*.

“You have spirit guides which you need to listen to; for their messages are important. They will help you with whatever you might consider doing. [Notice that, because there is no evil, every thought that comes into your mind is good, even the most vile ones.]

“You attract beings (angels, guides, and inner teachers) from higher dimensions who share your interest. Because they are in sympathy with your intentions, **they form a telepathic link with your higher mind.** . . . These Guardians of the human race plant seeds in your mind. . . . You are preparing vehicles for **intuitive communication with higher spiritual intelligences.**”—*Ibid*.

If you will let them, the sun and moon in the sky will provide you with special guidance.

“The Sun represents the male assertive power and the Moon represents the female receptive power. . . . Intuition is Moon power. . . . Ideally both females and males have their Sun and Moon equally

balanced. This is the goal of symmetrical development. . . **How do you develop your Moon power? . . . Go out at night, gaze at the Moon, and feel its rays penetrate your soul.** With intention, withdraw your outer directed assertive power and imagine windows in your soul with light streaming through them.”—*Leland Kaiser, Intuition Series, 34, kaiser.net.*

All the thoughts of dead people are floating around the Earth, and you can tune in to them.

“*The Thought Stream—Surrounding the earth is a vast thought stream that contains the thoughts of all people throughout all time.* It is the thought history of the Planet Earth. In deep meditation you can enter this stream. . . **To accelerate the evolution of our planet, highly developed spiritual beings ‘seed’ our thought stream.** These seed thoughts can be accessed and built-out by spiritual seekers in their meditations. Thus, a great deal of instruction is available to you.

“**You can also ‘return’ to your favorite period of history [past, present, or future] and enjoy the ‘current’ thinking of people who live there.** Eventually, this methodology will enable us to correct our history books. Because of the vested interests of the people who write history and their followers—particularly religious groups—it will take a lot of spiritual maturity to accept the revisions. In most cases, history did not happen as it is recorded.”—*Leland Kaiser, Intuition Series, August 17, 2005, kaiser.net.*

You can become one of the ancient gods.

“Often they are embodied as the gods of the cultures. **Although their names change, the energy-essence/entities are the same. For instance, Hermes, Mercury, Thoth, and Enoch are all the same energy/essence.** . . . By identifying with heroes of the past, you tap into their collective archetypal energies which are still active and alive in the spiritual realms. . . **One of my favorite archetypal [sic] is Thoth, the [ancient Egyptian] god of wisdom. . . Thoth is not a person, but rather an energy field built up over the years. It is a giant reservoir of wisdom developed by the students of Thoth.** . . . Surround yourself with pictures, relics, and images of this mythic personage. **View yourself as a living incarnation of him.**”—*Leland Kaiser, Gnostic Notes, June 18, 2006, on one of his web sites, gnosticnotes.blogspot.com.*

In order to fully become this kind of supergod, you need to open your mind, without reservation, to whatever the spirit world wants to teach you.

“*Beginner’s Mind—The term, ‘beginner’s mind,’ comes from Zen.* It refers to the mind that is clear—no judgments, no labels, no mental structure. The mind is clear, open, and receptive. . . **All intuitive**

impulses are received. Nothing is blocked or lost. [Whatever ideas the demons want to give you, you want it.] The analytical mind [including the conscience] is never activated. There are no reactions of fear or anger. There is a simple acceptance of ‘what is.’ . . . This will be a challenge, since to achieve a beginner’s mind **you will have to do a lot of unlearning. It means setting aside your judgments. . . You will not hear words. . . They come to you.**”—*Lee Kaiser, “Thoth.” [That is the name Leland printed at the bottom of this article! He believes he is the reincarnated Egyptian god, Thoth]. kaiser.net.*

“*Visions Channel Psychic Energy—Visions channel psychic energy from subtle spiritual realms* to our high density third dimensional world. . . **There is tremendous power in traditional images or symbols.** They are connected to thought forms that have been energized over the ages and, like a battery, hold their energy until it is discharged by appropriate human receivers. **A group of people calling upon the symbol are energized by it. As they become mentally and emotionally involved with the symbol, they add their energy to it.** The vision thus feeds the people and is fed by them. A two-way energy relationship exists between symbols and people.”—*Leland Kaiser, Visioning-25, Kaiser.net.*

“Everything in existence has a spiritual signature, which is a symbol. **To invoke the symbol is to summon the creature it represents. This, of course, is the basis for all sacred magic.** Manipulating symbols is manipulating the energies they contain and transmit. Ancient symbols still carry a full charge of energy and can be summoned as allies.

[*Kaiser had to be studying witchcraft books in order to know all of its inner teachings!*

[Kaiser teaches Adventists how they can individually summon ancient pagan idols and creatures into their minds. They will thus be enabled to begin working with magic. Studying books and rituals on magic will greatly help them do this.]

“As a worker in the realms of light, you need to understand both universal symbolism and your own personal symbolism. **Begin to understand your personal symbolism by studying your day and night dreams. Pick up a book on mythology and study the symbols utilized. Develop a rich vocabulary of symbols by studying Tarot, Kabbalah.**”—*Leland Kaiser, Gnostic Notes, Increasing Symbolic Intelligence, June 19, 2006.*

Tarot cards are used by witches in fortune-telling and predicting the future. **The Kabbalah are books written by Jewish spiritualists** during the Dark Ages.

Kaiser teaches how to have out-of-body experiences, fly through the air, and enter other dimensions and universes. In the following summary, in which he explains

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

PART NINE
OF Eleven

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

the powers you will receive after your “soul initiation,” he clearly shows he is a master at witchcraft. Only a witch claims to do these things:

“The new and desired spiritual gift is usually received in a soul initiation. With the new gift you move forward in grade and responsibility.

“In summary, **you can evoke the higher gifts** when your labors as a world worker require them. **These gifts include but are not limited to telepathy; out-of-body travel; time travel; healing; manifestation; control over the elements of air, fire, earth, and water; extrasensory perception; animal and plant communication; alchemical transmutation of substance; reading living energy fields; and reading the akashic records.**”—Leland Kaiser. [*“Akashic” is a Tibetan word, meaning “Hidden Library of Records.”*]

RAJ ATTIKEN

Raj Attiken is president of the Ohio Conference.

Born in Sri Lanka, he converted to Adventism. After completing two undergraduate degrees in India (Religious Philosophy and Theology), he obtained a Master’s degree in theology from Andrews University, followed by a Doctoral degree from the United Theological Seminary, in Dayton, Ohio. He has been president of the Ohio Conference since 1998. Headquartered in Mount Vernon, Ohio, the conference has 88 churches and 11,459 members. So it is an important conference.

It is Attiken’s goal to unite Adventism with the other churches and to bring practices of the other churches into the lives of our people.

In 2003, I wrote a five-part tract set, *Ohio Conference vs. the Law of God [WM-1181-1185]* about **Attiken’s attempt to coerce local Ohio pastors and congregations to eat out, after church, at restaurants on Sabbath.** This does seem astounding; but I document the story in the above 20-page report. **Raj believes that it is Sabbathkeeping that is the key problem separating our church from closer assimilation into the other churches.** He is determined to change the situation, and upper-level leaders seem unwilling to remove him from his presidency.

(For your information, it would be easy for them to do this; since church policy requires that the union president chair every two-year conference constituency session, when leaders are voted in.)

A second way that Raj is trying to move us closer to the world and the other churches is through his yearly *Partners in Innovation Conferences*, also referred to as *National Innovation Conferences*.

The following announcement, distributed widely to our people by the Ohio Conference for its *Partners in*

Innovation seminars, is one of these modernist appeals to the shallow minded to attend. Notice that **it does not actually tell what the church members and leaders will be told. It just says that their future will somehow be improved if they attend:**

“*Partners in Innovation*, with the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists as one of its primary partners, proposes to address this need [to expand our minds] by advancing the conversation about the church of the future and **by fostering research and development of replicable models** that connect people with God, with each other, and with their communities. Creating a compelling view of tomorrow’s opportunities and moving preemptively to secure the future require intentional effort. *Partners in Innovation provides individuals and organizations the opportunity to guide, shape, and resource* this futuristic vision.

“*Partners in Innovation commissions individuals and groups to do research and development; . . . hosts national Innovation Conferences* where the concepts of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial mission are explored; . . . **provides innovation training for select individuals; . . . creates awareness within the SDA Church of trends, data and issues relating to the Church’s future; . . . creates and resources high profile demonstration sites; . . . [and] disseminates information to the Adventist Church in North America on replicable models.**”—*Partners in Innovation, announcement sheet.*

Six *Partners in Innovation* Conferences have already been held (2004 to 2010). The next one will be held in the spring of 2011.

Here are some of the past “keynote speakers” at Attiken’s conferences:

2005-2006—The three primary speakers for two consecutive yearly conferences (2005 and 2006) were Leland Kaiser, Leanne Kaiser Carlson, and Kevin Kaiser.

This is remarkable, indeed; since you have already earlier read, in this present report, the “deep things of Satan” which they are teaching at their meetings. As we have noted, their messages consist of an overview of what is taught in professional witchcraft books.

2007—Philip Jenkins was an important 2007 speaker in Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University. He has published over 20 books on contemporary religious phenomena, but is best known for his book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*.

2008—There were three significant 2008 keynote speakers:

Robert Wuthnow is the author of over twenty-five books, including *America and the Challenges of Reli-*

gious Diversity and *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion*.

Kelly Monroe Kullberg. Kelly is the founder and director of the project development, called *The Veritas Forum*, which she first organized at Harvard in 1992. **She edited and coauthored a book on the values of post-modern religion, entitled *Finding God at Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Christian Thinkers* (1996).** A decade later she wrote *Finding God Beyond Harvard* (2006).

This *Fourth Annual National Adventist Conference on Innovation* was held in October in Columbus, Ohio, in September 2008. **It especially featured New Age sympathizer/emerging futurist Leonard Sweet.** The Ohio Conference web site announced it in these words:

“Partners in Innovation is a convergence of people and organizations committed to providing the environment, encouragement, resources and support **for the emergence of the Adventist Church of the future in North America.** . . . We ask you to consider becoming a partner in developing **this far-reaching initiative to energize a new future for the Seventh-day Adventist Church** in North America.

“Leonard Sweet, who promotes mysticism, christ consciousness, and the “New Lights” movement that touts people like Matthew Fox, Ken Wilber, and other mystic proponents, recently spoke at Rick Warren’s Small Groups Conference. Sweet states in his book, *Quantum Spirituality*, that the power of small groups is in their ability to develop the discipline to get people ‘in-phase’ with the Christ consciousness [meaning the divinity of man] and connected with one another [mystical interspirituality].”—*Quantum Spirituality*, p. 147.

Sweet is Founder and President of SpiritVenture Ministries; and he is a frequent speaker and conversation partner at conferences both in the U.S. and around the globe. In 2006 and 2007 he was voted “one of the 50 most influential Christians in America.”

2009—Featured at the 2009 gathering was **Samir Selmanovic, who we earlier discussed. He is the founder of FaithHouse Manhattan, “an interfaith exploration of faith and spirituality.”** He served for several years as a teaching pastor at CrossWalk, an Adventist congregation in southern California. His newest book is *It’s Really All about God*. As you will recall, **Selmanovic teaches that God is in people of all religious beliefs.**

A second speaker was **Margaret Feinberg.** She is a popular speaker at churches and leading conferences such as *Fusion*, *Catalyst*, and *LeadNow*. **Feinberg invites people to discover the relevance of God and His Word in a postmodern world. Recently named by Charisma magazine as one of the “30 Emerging Voices” who will help lead the church in the next decade,** she has written more than a dozen books, including the critically acclaimed *The Organic God*.

Here is an announcement for the next conference, to be held in 2011. You will notice that it does not really say anything, other than tease the reader into thinking that some great light will be given there:

*“Seventh Annual National Innovation Conference, 2011, October 2-4, Dayton, Ohio—*The National Conference on Innovation is a three day gathering **for hope-filled, faith-inspired individuals with an almost cellular drive for transformation, creative change, and purposeful living. The sharp, daring, and provocative explorations will expand your thinking, stretch your faith, and compel you to live out your values in a bold and revolutionary way.**

“Every year we bring together a nationally renowned team of presenters in the fields of faith, spirituality, culture, academia, business and global affairs. Participants come from across the United States and abroad. Past attendees have consistently rated this event as unique, best-in-class, and of high value for their personal and professional lives.”

ANN ARTICLE ON RAJ AND HIS PLANS

The following Adventist News Network article on Raj Attiken and his Partners in Innovation was published in October 2008. It actually provides some relevant information that helps us understand Raj better:

“Innovators’ meeting to help reinvent worship, outreach—Raj Attiken wants ideas. The more unconventional, the better. The Seventh-day Adventist leader in Ohio is calling for a ‘culture of innovation’ within the church that encourages and applauds relevant and effective ways to worship and do outreach.

“Attiken worries that, when members become ‘so self-absorbed in preserving tradition and protecting truth,’ they can easily ‘slip further and further into inaction and irrelevancy.’

“Attiken and the church in Ohio head up *Partners in Innovation*, a group of people and organizations—including the church in North America’s **Church Resource Center** [at North American Division headquarters]—that provide support and resources for innovators. The group’s *4th Annual National Conference on Innovation*, from October 5 to 7 [2008], is expected to draw pastors, church administrators, lay leaders, educators, students and business people to Dublin, Ohio, this weekend.

“Attiken says innovators ‘often end up leaving the Adventist Church because they don’t feel they can take risks.’ When the church isn’t a ‘safe place to take risks for God,’ it becomes ‘stale and stagnant,’ he says, something he hopes the conference will help change. **‘You shouldn’t feel you need to go outside the church to try something bold for God.’**

“‘We don’t expect everyone to jump on board right away, and that’s OK,’ he says, **‘but we cannot afford to do what we’ve always done.’** Attiken isn’t pushing for an unrecognizable form of Adventism,

nor does he want to alienate more traditional members. 'Adventism is big and strong and dynamic enough for everyone. **We don't all have to be innovators, but we shouldn't stifle our innovators, either.**'

"Attiken says the change is due in part to **shifting attitudes toward religion**, especially in North America. **'We felt we needed to provide a forum that stimulates new thinking about ways the church can reposition itself—reinvent itself—and stay relevant,'** he says."—*Adventist News Network, article on Raj Attiken and his Partners in Innovation, October 3, 2008.*

Raj Attiken clearly intends to integrate the Adventist Church with the other denominations. Step by step, this is his objective. He fully believes that the closer he can bring our members to association with the other churches, and with non-Christians, the more vitality our denomination will have. (*More on this later in this report.*)

— SECTION SEVEN —
SOME ARE BEGINNING TO OBJECT

An increasing number of our people are not happy with this exciting new brand of supposed spirituality that is taking over the Adventist Church.

AN INCREASING NUMBER ARE OBJECTING

This tragic apostasy was predicted. It will ultimately lead to a full repudiation of the Bible Sabbath:

"With many, a philosophical idol is enthroned in the place of Jehovah; while the living God, as He is revealed in His Word, in Christ, and in the works of creation, is worshipped by but few. Thousands deify nature, while they deny the God of nature.

"Though in a different form, **idolatry exists in the Christian world today as verily as it existed among ancient Israel in the days of Elijah.** The god of many professedly wise men, of philosophers, poets, politicians, journalists,—the god of polished fashionable circles, of many colleges and universities, even of some theological institutions,—is little better than Baal, the sun-god of Phenicia.

"No error accepted by the Christian world strikes more boldly against the authority of Heaven, none is more directly opposed to the dictates of reason, none is more pernicious in its results, than the modern doctrine, so rapidly gaining ground, that God's law is no longer binding upon men."—*Great Controversy, 583-584.*

An ever-increasing number of God's faithful children are gradually arising and objecting to the tragic declines in spirituality and increase of pagan trends in our denomination.

Here is an excellent, brief overview of this developing crisis:

"In the last 10 years, New Spirituality (also called 'Emerging Church'), by whatever name its followers choose, has flooded Protestantism, especially Evangelical churches. **In the last five years, the waves are sweeping over many in the Adventist Church.**

"It is more than curious that **many Adventist pastors and administrators are usually [only about] five to ten years behind other waves in Protestant circles [in introducing it into our churches].** We think of the James Kennedy *Evangelism Explosion* in the 1960's-1970's; the *'Filled with the Spirit' Movement* in the 70's and 80's; the *Neuro-Linguistic Programming* in the 80's; *Fuller Theological Seminary*, Pasadena, CA [attendance for doctorates and conferences]; *Willow Creek megachurch training* from the 1980's to the present; then *Saddleback megachurch pastoral training*, Lake Forest, CA, to the present—and now *New Spirituality*.

"'Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints' (Jude 3)."—*Dr. Herbert Douglass, Northern Pacific Union Executive Retreat, July 2008.*

Raj Attiken's objective is to draw others closer to Adventism, by drawing us closer to them. He wants both to see that they have so much in common. This, in Attiken's thinking, is important because he believes the other churches and the secular world have so much that we need in order to shake us from our moribund condition, in a state of slow death because of our futile attachment to what the world considers to be two cardinal sins: our Sabbathkeeping and our insistence of keeping the law of God,—when the world does not want either and the other churches believe both have been done away.

A local Ohio Adventist church objected to Raj's twofold work to urge church members to loosen up on their strict Sabbathkeeping, while using his annual *Partners in Innovation* meetings to mutually draw us and the world closer together:

"Members of Worthington SDA Church senior leadership met formally with Raj Attiken, President of the Ohio Conference, on September 30, 2008. They presented their case, challenging the Ohio Conference's 'Inter-Faith' strategy; outlining why it is unsuitable for the Worthington Church, while voicing their support for historic SDA Christian doctrines and beliefs.

"This 'strategy' is indeed theologically flawed because of its mystical and ecumenical tenets, and is an issue worthy of understanding by the Ohio Sisterhood of churches.

"If you believe your Ohio Conference church should also continue to fully uphold historic SDA Christianity, including the proclamation of the Three Angels' Messages, then come and hear first hand about the debate occurring at Worthington on Thursday,

November 6, 2008.”—*Worthington Church Leaders Reject Ohio Conference Inter-faith Strategy, November 6, 2008.*

Here is a brief overview of what was said at that Dayton, Ohio, meeting:

“On November 22, 2008, a group of Seventh-day Adventist lay people and leaders, representing several of the Ohio Conference (OC) churches, met in Dayton, Ohio, **to discuss the growing concern about the Ohio Conference’s continued attempts to implement an inter-faith ecumenical strategy in Ohio.** The meeting was a continuation of past efforts to increase awareness, through communication and grass roots organization, among OC church members.

“Discussion centered on the need to solidify and formalize concerns among members and churches in the OC and present them to leadership through established channels within the SDA administrative hierarchy beyond the OC. **Attempts to meet with OC leadership by individual members and individual churches, to discuss their concerns, have met with unsatisfactory results.**

“In particular, a recent paper written by Dr. Herbert Douglass (presented at the *Northern Pacific Union Executive Retreat*, July 2008) was discussed.

“**Dr. Douglas, a highly respected Seventh-day Adventist leader and scholar, placed the Ohio Conference’s Innovation Seminars in the center of the New Spirituality or Emerging Church theology movement in Ohio.**

“According to Douglas, *New Spirituality* finds salvation not in Bible truth but in the theory that you can find God within yourself.

“**Very many of the past Innovation Conference speakers, at its gathering in Ohio, identify themselves as supporters or apologists for New Spirituality.** Aspects of this new movement teaches that God is universal for all [or no] religions. The God of Christianity and the gods of Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Catholicism, Atheism, or Paganism are one in the same.”—*Dayton Forum on Inter-Faith Spirituality, January 25, 2009.*

Nikolaus Satelmajer, an officer in our General Conference Ministerial Association (responsible for the continuing education for Adventist clergy), believes there is now a shift from emphasis on doctrine to more emphasis on spiritual formation within the Adventist Church. He is quoted as saying:

“We’re finding a serious lack of knowledge of our people [the history of the Adventist Church], our doctrines. . . I think we have de-emphasized them.”—*ANN Feature: Church and Congregations Increase Focus on Spiritual Formation.*

[Satelmajer says this is true particularly with the younger generation. But he adds that the cause of any stunt in the growth of spiritual formation is not because

of a focus on doctrine.]

“Spiritual formation is the implementation of spiritual principles in my life and in my actions. I think we’re missing something. It’s not just learning how to ‘meditate’;—[true] **spiritual formation is learning how to implement spiritual things that I know or am learning or experiencing into my life and then into my everyday life.**”—*Satelmajer, ibid.*

Dr. Jane Thayer, assistant professor of Religious Education and coordinator of the *Religious Education Program* at Andrews University adds this concern:

“We have a big blank when it comes to taking care of people once they have accepted the Lord. . . I think what people need to know is ‘how do you live the life.’ **Spiritual formation or discipleship needs to show how you live like Christ.**”—*Ibid.*

This next article was penned by Jan Doward, a faithful believer:

“**How is it possible for the predicted apostasy to take place among Seventh-day Adventists? . . . Today we live in an image oriented world. And somehow we’ve become pagans again.** It took us 2000 years to get away from paganism, and yet today here it is again. . . But there is a danger in an image oriented world. **When the image becomes more important than the message, then we are committing idolatry.** So we should be very careful.

“Of all the prophecies specifically relating to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, none can quite compare with the shattering scenario of the last day disloyalty, which synchronized with the agitation for Sunday enforcement.

“**As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel’s message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition.** By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the test is brought, they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side.

“Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. **They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren.**

“When Sabbathkeepers are brought before the courts to answer for their faith, these apostates are the most efficient agents of Satan to misrepresent and accuse them, and by false reports and insinuations to stir up the rulers against them.”—*Great Controversy, 608.*

In an atmosphere of advancement, reports, flow chart achievements, and the pageantry of progress, this does not make good copy. How much

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

PART TEN
OF Eleven

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

more comfortable it would make us feel if it said that only 'a small class' would leave! But even worse, those shifting to the opposition leap into the arena of persecution. 'They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren.'"—Jan S. Doward, *The Anatomy of Apostasy, Adventist Affirm*, Fall 1990.

Enoch Oliveira (1924-1992) was once an important church leader. From 1975 to 1980, he was the first national to be president of the South American Division. In 1980, he became a General Vice President of the General Conference, and held that post until his retirement in 1990.

A faithful worker, Oliveira waited until he was about ready for retirement before speaking more openly about his deep concern for where our denomination is headed. He wrote these words:

"*A Trojan Horse Within the Church*, by Enoch Oliveira

"In one of his famous epics, Homer describes the clever device the Greeks employed to conquer the city of Troy during the Trojan War.

"To enable the Greeks to enter the legendary city by stealth, the master carpenter, Epeius, built a huge hollow wooden horse. According to Homer, 100,000 soldiers besieged Troy. The ten-year siege ended when the Greeks concealed some soldiers in the horse and then left it behind as they pretended to withdraw.

"Despite the warning of Laocoön, Sinon persuaded the Trojans to move the horse inside the city walls. At night the Greek army returned and **the soldiers who had hidden inside the horse opened the city gates to their comrades. In this way Troy was invaded successfully and destroyed.**

"Although the war between the Greeks and the city of Troy is generally considered a historical fact, the episode dealing with the Trojan horse has been considered a mythological tale. **Nonetheless, from this epic we can derive some timely illustrations that are applicable to the situation our church finds itself in today.**

"For many years the Seventh-day Adventist Church succeeded in bravely and tenaciously resisting the fearful assaults of the enemy. The walls of the 'holy city' remained impregnable. But in his determination to conquer and destroy God's church, the prince of this world has undertaken to employ clever and deadly secret weapons.

"There is nothing that the great deceiver fears so much," wrote Ellen G. White, **'as that we shall become acquainted with his devices.'**"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 516.

"After many attempts to conquer the 'city of God' by applying the same kind of deceitful action employed by the Greeks, the great adversary

has been able to obtain his ends by surreptitiously introducing the Trojan horse of liberalism within the walls of Zion.

"Now that liberalism has become operative within our church, we perceive how vulnerable we can be to the assaults of Satan. As a church we have been inclined to believe that our greatest danger of being defeated by the powers of evil would come from without. While we may be able to perceive clearly from the walls of Zion what Satan is doing to conquer and destroy the church, **we do not seem able to do much about standing firmly against the evils that are developing insidiously within our midst.** Ellen White warns: 'We have more to fear from within than from without' (*1 Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 122 [Review; March 22, 1887])."

— SECTION EIGHT — PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Those of you who have read my autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, know that my kind heavenly Father providentially guided that I should begin writing in late 1979, just before the new theology crisis burst upon our church.

Only a few months later, significant changes in our doctrinal *Statement of Belief* were made at the Dallas General Conference Session in the summer of 1980. Within a few weeks, the *Glacier View Conference* in Colorado showed our leaders how much Desmond Ford's liberal views had already penetrated our churches and colleges. The *Cottrell Poll*, taken about that time, revealed that a very large number of our Bible teachers had accepted non-Adventist views of many key doctrines.

A decision had to be made: Should our faithful leaders clean house or should they try to just keep everything moving along steadily, in the hope that this new theology might not penetrate more deeply into our denomination.

You can read about this in detail in my past writings. *My New Theology Tractbook* is a good place to begin.

If you have read my book, *Broken Blueprint*, you know that accreditation and doctoral degrees have severely damaged our denomination. Accreditation placed a significant amount of academic and curricular authority over our schools of "higher learning"—into the hands of worldly accreditation agencies. At the same time, young men and women who wanted to teach in our schools were going to outside universities and obtaining doctorates in various fields under atheist and Catholic teachers—so they could be hired in our colleges and universities. *Broken Blueprint* provides the entire historical sweep of events from the 1890s on down to nearly the present time.

As a result, by the early 1960s, one-half of our Bible teachers were already in doubt on a number of our historic beliefs, as shown by the Daniel Committe which met repeatedly and finally adjourned—unable to reconcile the

two sides into uniting on the major beliefs which all our people once adhered to.

The 1980 Dallas *Statement of Belief* was purposely worded in such a nebulous way that it could be interpreted to defend new theology advocates, without arousing the concerns of historic believers. It was felt that this would help unify the church and make it more acceptable to the other denominations. Desmond Ford, himself, told N.C. Wilson on Friday, at the conclusion of the week at Glacier View, that he, Ford, was able to fit all his teachings into that Dallas Statement.

In the fall of 1980 after Desmond Ford was discharged, Elder Neal C. Wilson, General Conference president, sent out a general letter that was quietly given to our pastors. They were told that, even though they might have questions and doubts about our beliefs, as long as they kept quiet about them, they would not be discharged. He thought that this was the best policy and would disturb the *status quo* the least. But in this he erred. It enabled the new theology to strengthen and increase its adherents among our denominational workforce.

The next major compromise occurred at the 1984 Annual Council. Under strong pressure from our U.S. colleges and universities, the council approved an action, entitled “A Statement on Theological Freedom and Accountability” (General Conference Policy, File Number 127-84GN). (See *Theological Freedom [WM-110]*.)

This action, which permitted our Bible teachers to believe a variety of non-Adventist concepts without being discharged, opened the door for the teaching of error by the Bible teachers in our undergraduate and graduate schools.

From then on, the brainwashing of ministerial students accelerated. I have written on developments at length in earlier reports.

By the mid-1980s, a pattern had emerged which has continued, year after year, on down to the present time. It was fueled by desperate attempts to replace the large numbers who were leaving with new church members.

It happened in this way:

New theology graduates, fresh from Andrews University Seminary, where they had been grounded in the modern Protestant concept of “faith alone without the necessity of obedience to the law of God” were being hired as local pastors. When faithful local church members would contact their conference presidents about these pastors who were urging non-Adventist beliefs and practices, the presidents felt that it would disrupt the church the least to consistently side with the pastors. Tragically, this has resulted in an ongoing exodus from our churches of the most concerned and faithful church members. Those who were faithful and remained (and there are many) recognized that pastors would not cause them trouble if they did not protest wrong teachings and practices.

But, with the passing of time, recognizing that church donations had fallen off heavily, by the late 1980s, church leaders launched the first of several projects designed to attract and accept more into church membership (with

only a small amount of doctrinal instruction)—in an urgent attempt to increase membership and donations.

First came the celebration church movement, beginning about 1989. This project fell into decline when local members resisted having bands and rock music in their churches,—and the two leaders of the movement both apostatized from the truth.

Then, in the mid-1990s, “church planting” began. This was a project to attract people off the streets into small meeting halls—keyed to music, coffee and cakes, and trivial talks,—and always without doing this within the buildings of our existing local churches. This was done to bring more unbelievers into the denomination with offers of “only believe” salvation, without offending our existing congregations. But this project weakened later, when a number of those new “church plantings” (along with a number of the earlier “celebration churches”) apostasized and, along with their pastors, left the denomination entirely.

In the 1990s, an effort was made to train some pastors in LEAD courses, Labs 1 and 2, with advance instruction in NLP (neuro-Linguistic training), in order to more easily influence church members during presentations. But that fell into disfavor when NLP’s originator, Richard Bandler, became involved in a West Coast murder.

To this day, we continue to send pastors to Rick Warren’s Saddleback Church, in southern California, and Willow Creek, in northern Illinois, for instruction in how to Protestantize our local churches; so outsiders will want to attend. We could study how revivals and reformation succeeded in the Old Testament. (My small book, *Bringing It Back*, provides this information in detail!) But it is not counsel from the Bible that is desired.

After having read this entire tract set, you may wonder how all this could be. How could a young teacher at one of our colleges not be discharged, after he openly admitted to having spent years searching for spiritual guidance from Jesuits and then producing a 12-page paper for the students and faculty, on how wonderfully the Jesuits had provided such guidance!

Why was he then given the pastorate of one of our most influential churches in Florida? Why was he then sent on speaking tours to various parts of the world field—to convert still more of our workers and members into obtaining spiritual guidance from Jesuits and others? Why has he recently been moved up to a position as senior editor of *Ministry* magazine, the journal sent to our entire ministerial force? All this seems to be a mystery.

Why are Raj Attiken’s yearly meetings permitted, when his very first two sessions (2005 and 2006), for example, focused on the spiritist teachings of a father, son, and daughter team? Why has he not been removed from office?

Understanding the background of what has happened

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

W
M
1
5
9
9

since 1980, we can better understand why.

“Spiritual formation” has been but another desperate attempt to strengthen our denomination. The underlying problem is that, because we set aside the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible as our spiritual guides years ago, a spiritual dearth has entered our churches. Far too many of us no longer read those inspired books and plead with God in prayer for strength to live better lives and win souls.

There is a sense of emptiness in the hearts of many. It has been the hope of some leaders that, since our members are no longer encouraged to find in God’s Inspired books, the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, the help they need, they should be encouraged to gain spiritual strength by “disciplining”—following the guidance of frail, fallible men and women in the church or even Catholic laymen and Jesuits priests.

Lack of confidence, study, and submission of our people to God’s Word is the real cause of this growing, broadening, many-headed apostasy. Something has happened that has set us adrift from the spiritual and doctrinal moorings of our forefathers. My friends, I weep to have to say it: We are becoming worldly! Those faithful to our historical beliefs and the Inspired Writings recognize what is happening; the others strangely do not.

Raj Attken’s yearly meetings; our ongoing General Conference ecumenical councils with Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic leaders of other churches; the wild youth meetings at our camp meetings; our clown-training projects; the celebration church services; evolutionist errors; the presentation of church leaders from other denominations and the Catholic Church to our people at General Conference Sessions and other S.D.A. gatherings—all geared to helping us gather more people into the church and helping us integrate more closely with non-Adventist organizations, in the hope that this will somehow strengthen our denomination and vivify it with new life—the kind we had in earlier decades when we were busily working to bring others to Christ and into the church—and also to take the place of the thousands of faithful church members who have left since the early 1980s.

But, having read this, what should the faithful do about it?

—It is urgent that each one of us who truly loves God and His holy Word, each one of us who is trying to daily submit to His will and obey His Inspired Writings, each one of us who is devoted to the historic beliefs of our church as set forth in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy—it is urgent that we respond to these dangers and fulfill God’s plan for us, individually, at this time in history.

“The crisis is fast approaching. The rapidly swelling figures show that the time for God’s visitation has about come. Although loath to punish, nevertheless He will punish, and that speedily. Those who walk in the light will see signs of the approaching peril; but they are not to sit in quiet, unconcerned expectancy of the ruin, comforting themselves with the belief that God will shelter His people in the day

of visitation. Far from it. They should realize that it is their duty to labor diligently to save others, looking with strong faith to God for help. ‘The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.’

“The leaven of godliness has not entirely lost its power. At the time when the danger and depression of the church are greatest, the little company who are standing in the light will be sighing and crying for the abominations that are done in the land. But more especially will their prayers arise in behalf of the church because its members are doing after the manner of the world.

“The earnest prayers of this faithful few will not be in vain. When the Lord comes forth as an avenger, He will also come as a protector of all those who have preserved the faith in its purity and kept themselves unspotted from the world. It is at this time that God has promised to avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them.”—*5 Testimonies, 209-210.*

God wants you to be special! He wants you to be His humble, obedient child, faithful to His Word, helping others, warning others to repent before it is too late.

“These humble, devoted followers of Christ will be distinguished from the rest of the world by their soul anguish, which is expressed in lamentation and weeping, reproofs and warnings. While others try to throw a cloak over the existing evil, and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent, those who have a zeal for God’s honor and a love for souls will not hold their peace to obtain favor of any.

“Their righteous souls are vexed day by day with the unholy works and conversation of the unrighteous. They are powerless to stop the rushing torrent of iniquity, and hence they are filled with grief and alarm. They mourn before God to see religion despised in the very homes of those who have had great light. They lament and afflict their souls because pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of almost every kind are in the church. The Spirit of God, which prompts to reproof, is trampled underfoot, while the servants of Satan triumph. God is dishonored, the truth made of none effect.

“The class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God.”—*5 Testimonies, 210-211.*

Tragically, we are also told that there are some in the church who will be passed by in that great day:

“The ancient men, those to whom God had given great light and who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed their trust. They had taken the position that we need not look for miracles and the marked manifestation of God’s power as in former days. Times have changed.

“These words strengthen their unbelief, and they say: The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil. He is too merciful to visit His people in judgment. Thus ‘Peace and safety’ is the cry from men

who will never again lift up their voice like a trumpet to show God's people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. . . . These persons come to feel secure in their deceptions and, because of His long-suffering, say that the Lord seeth not and then act as though He had forsaken the earth. But He will detect their hypocrisy and will open before others those sins which they were so careful to hide.

"No superiority of rank, dignity, or worldly wisdom, no position in sacred office, will preserve men from sacrificing principle when left to their own deceitful hearts."—*5 Testimonies, 211-212.*

"It is with reluctance that the Lord withdraws His presence from those who have been blessed with great light and who have felt the power of the Word in ministering to others. They were once His faithful servants, favored with His presence and guidance; but they departed from Him and led others into error, and therefore are brought under the divine displeasure.

"The day of God's vengeance is just upon us. The seal of God will be placed upon the foreheads of those only who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land."—*5 Testimonies, 212.*

And, my friend, these words of encouragement are especially for us, if we will prove faithful to the end!

"Courage, fortitude, faith, and implicit trust in God's power to save do not come in a moment. These heavenly graces are acquired by the experience of years. By a life of holy endeavor and firm adherence to the right the children of God were sealing their destiny. Beset with temptations without number, they knew they must resist firmly or be conquered. They felt that they had a great work to do, and at any hour they might be called to lay off their armor; and should they come to the close of life with their work undone, it would be an eternal loss. . . .

"Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed. There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light of truth, they knew their Master's will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works. These who were so familiar with prophecy and the treasures of divine wisdom should have acted their faith."—*5 Testimonies, 213-214.*

"Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost.

"We are too easily satisfied with our attainments. We feel rich and increased with goods and know not that we are 'wretched, and miserable, and poor, and

blind, and naked.' Now is the time to heed the admonition of the True Witness: 'I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.'

"In this life we must meet fiery trials and make costly sacrifices, but the peace of Christ is the reward. There has been so little self-denial, so little suffering for Christ's sake, that the cross is almost entirely forgotten. We must be partakers with Christ of His sufferings if we would sit down in triumph with Him on His throne. So long as we choose the easy path of self-indulgence and are frightened at self-denial, our faith will never become firm, and we cannot know the peace of Jesus nor the joy that comes through conscious victory. The most exalted of the redeemed host that stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, clad in white, know the conflict of overcoming, for they have come up through great tribulation. Those who have yielded to circumstances rather than engage in this conflict will not know how to stand in that day when anguish will be upon every soul, when, though Noah, Job, and Daniel were in the land, they could save neither son nor daughter, for everyone must deliver his soul by his own righteousness.

"No one need say that his case is hopeless, that he cannot live the life of a Christian. Ample provision is made by the death of Christ for every soul. Jesus is our ever-present help in time of need. Only call upon Him in faith, and He has promised to hear and answer your petitions."—*5 Testimonies, 214-215.*

— Vance

AS WE GO TO PRESS —

We have just received a letter asking faithful Advent believers to please sign a petition regarding the yearly Ohio meetings. If you are interested, on the internet go to:

gopetition.com/petition/38968.html

Then sign and submit it.

That web site also contains additional information on the teachings of three of the speakers at the 2010 annual Ohio gathering. I am going to reprint a small part of it on the next tract in this set. That will enlarge this ten-part tract set to eleven. You will find all of the statements in

sdapartnersinconfusion.org

The Dangers of Spiritual Formation

PART ELEVEN
OF ELEVEN

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

W
M
1
6
0
0

Barbara Bradley Hagerty, Alan Hirsch, Samir Selmanovic, Zack Plantak, and Neil Cole spoke at the 2010 6th Annual National Conference on Innovation, October 3-5; they were sponsored by the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, promoted by the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and were partnered with other Seventh-day Adventist entities. These Conferences on Innovation are billed as “Building Tomorrow’s Church Today” and are promoting an ecumenical, emergent/emerging church agenda.

The following is excerpted from sdapartnersinconfusion.org

Here are several quotations from the writings of Hagerty, Hirsch, and Selmanovic:

BARBARA BRADLEY HAGERTY

Quotations from *Fingerprints of God: The Search for the Science of Spirituality*, by Barbara Bradley Hagerty, Riverhead Books, 2009, hardback, 323 pages.

“Barbara Bradley Hagerty is NPR’s award-winning religion correspondent. Before joining NPR, she was a reporter at The Christian Science Monitor. She lives in Washington, D.C.”—*Outside jacket of her book, Fingerprints of God.*

Barbara Bradley Hagerty spoke at the 6th Annual 2010 National Conference on Innovation in Columbus, Ohio, October 3-5. This annual event is sponsored by the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; and it is promoted by the Columbia Union of Seventh-day Adventists as well as by the newsletter, Best Practices for Adventist Ministry, a North American Division-sponsored publication.

Barbara Bradley Hagerty should not be allowed to speak in any Adventist church, nor should she be allowed to speak at any Adventist-sponsored event. Her philosophical orientation and some of her stated beliefs are not at all congruent with Seventh-day Adventist theology and Biblical interpretation. Her teachings and insights are heavily influenced by mysticism and interspirituality. It is incomprehensible that this author would be invited to speak at an Adventist-sponsored event, especially when there are so many solid, Biblical teachers within our ranks.

Hagerty, in the process of relating the many interviews she has given, reveals to the reader in no uncertain terms that she is not so much interested in the existence of God per se, but rather the existence of spiritual, mystical phenomena.

Here, then, are the reasons why Hagerty’s beliefs and conclusions are not only unbiblical, but very inappropriate for a Seventh-day Adventist gathering:

QUOTATIONS BY HAGERTY

“As a Christian Scientist, I had absorbed Mary Baker Eddy’s version of Deity. The flinty founder of Christian Science defined ‘God’ as a list of qualities—Life, Truth, Love, Spirit, Soul, Mind, and Principle. The Christian Science God is not a person.”—Page 3.

“Christian Science holds as a central premise that healing is a function of spiritual understanding; that matter and its conditions, including sin and disease, are ‘false beliefs.’”—Page 46.

“Raised a Christian Scientist, I had learned to assume we have spiritual senses that perceive the spiritual realm—God’s universe—just as our eyes and ears capture the physical world. Or, as Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the religion, put it: ‘Sight, hearing, all the spiritual senses of man, are eternal. They cannot be lost.’”—Page 214.

“It is one thing to swallow doctrine as a child, another to find that the very ideas you discarded as an adult might in fact be legitimate. It unnerved me. But I found that these ideas were not so strange after all. Consider again Aldous Huxley’s ‘reducing valve.’ The author (and connoisseur of LSD) proposed that drugs, spiritual exercises, hypnosis—and, he might have plausibly added, death—can open up the valve to let us perceive at least a sliver of ‘Mind at Large.’”—Page 214.

“Without realizing it at first, I had looped back to the faith of my childhood. I found myself staring squarely at Mary Baker Eddy’s definition of God: ‘Principle, Mind, Soul, Spirit, Life, Truth, Love, all substance, intelligence.’ Perhaps Mrs. Eddy was onto something. Perhaps her view of reality presaged what quantum physicists and astrophysicists are finding today.”—Page 278.

(Hagerty’s regular usage and incorporation of ideas from people such as Aldous Huxley is quite alarming. Huxley was interested in parapsychology and philosophical mysticism, and he was a pioneer of self-directed psychedelic drug use.)

“After the encounter, the brain is physiologically different. For adepts in Buddhist meditation, the brain waves sprint along in perfect synchrony. For experts in Christian prayer, the encounter may allow them to quiet certain spatial lobes of their brain so that they feel at one with the universe. A brush with death appears to slow one’s brain-wave activity and jump-start a profound spiritual life. Psychedelic drugs and the electrical storm of temporal lobe epilepsy may open the ‘reducing valve’ that filters out information and allows people to perceive another, nonmaterial, dimension.”—Page 276.

(She admits in her book to ingesting peyote paste and peyote tea while taking part in a peyote ceremony [pages 105-106]).

“Knowing God through psychedelics. Seeing God through hallucinations. Hearing God through the serotonin system. Is it real? For Navajos, yes. Is the Eucharist the body of Christ? For Catholic believers, yes. Do I com-

municate with God through prayer? Yes, I believe I do. And when I'm praying deeply, my brain waves no doubt slow, or my serotonin levels probably rise—and in that altered state of consciousness, I find God. Who am I to say that peyote does not unlock the door to the transcendent?"—Page 111.

"Now, in the twenty-first century, drugs allow neurologists to watch the mystical experience unfold in real time. They can view the hand of God, or God's chemical proxy, as it courses through the brain, stimulating some parts, damping down others, to transport the subject to heaven or hell. It is like having God on tap."—Page 113.

(Hagerty interviewed Roland Griffiths of Johns Hopkins University Medical Center. Griffiths ushered Hagerty into what she called a "mushroom mecca." In this room, patients lay down on the sofa, take thirty milligrams of psilocybin (the active mind-altering ingredient in "magic" mushrooms), put eye shades on, and listen to mood music through head phones. They do this for six to eight hours.)

"This is the headline: Psychedelics can spark mystical experience. More precisely, twenty-two of the thirty-six volunteers (more than 60 percent) reported full-blown mystical experiences. They described feelings, visions, and insights that appeared to be similar if not identical to those experienced by mystics down through the centuries. And, like other 'natural' mystics I encountered, Griffiths' subjects saw their worldview, their relationships, and their priorities rearranged by the experience, which they considered as meaningful as, say, giving birth to their first child."—Page 115.

"Peyote contains mescaline. . . it acts like speed and dramatically alters your state of consciousness. And if the dosage is high enough, you will experience visions like those described by William Blake and Saint Teresa of Avila."—Page 108.

(Hagerty interviewed Solomon Snyder, a neuroscientist at Johns Hopkins. Here is what he had to say about his LSD usage:)

"I had this sense of being one with the universe, which involves a loss of ego boundaries, such that you can't tell the difference between yourself and the rest of the universe. . . And there's a vast literature, where everyone who has a mystical experience—whether Christian mystics, Zen mystics, or whatever—they describe almost exactly the same thing."—Page 169.

"Many of these people did view this 'Other' through the lens of their faith. In their everyday spiritual practices, Arjun Patel, a Buddhist, saw Buddha's eyes; Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, a Sufi, communed with the Beloved; and Adam Zaremberg, a Catholic, visualized Christ. But none of them claimed his 'God' as the only authentic God, nor did they begrudge anyone else a different view. They were like witnesses to the same God but from different angles."—Page 39.

"As the Christian nuns focused on God—or a word like Jesus or Elohim [centering prayer] that helped them connect to the divine—their frontal lobes shifted into overdrive. Similarly, as the Buddhist monks meditated on an image that allowed them to connect with the ground of being, their scans showed their frontal lobes as a red glow of activity."—Page 113.

"In short, speaking in tongues is the physiological antithesis to Christian centering prayer. Despite their shared beliefs in Jesus as the Son of God, their spiritual practices have very little in common, both in the brain and outside of it—which is not to pronounce one right and the other wrong, but rather to suggest that there do appear to be many routes to transcendence."—Page 179.

(It should be noted that, when those who spoke in unknown tongues were hooked up to the scan, their frontal lobe activity was actually shut down. They actually had surrendered their wills and were being controlled by another entity.)

"Every person I interviewed who had traveled to the brink of death returned with a new definition of God. I had first noticed this when I talked with people who had enjoyed spontaneous mystical experiences. And I saw the pattern repeat with those who experienced other transcendent moments as well. I realized that after encountering the 'Other,' people no longer clung to religious distinctions. If they had identified themselves as Christian or Jewish before, they might still attend church on Sunday or synagogue on Saturday, but they no longer believed their faith tradition could make a claim of exclusive truth."—Page 241.

"They were like witnesses to the same God, but from different angles. Or think of God as the head of a multinational corporation. He controls several subsidiary companies, each with its own president: Jesus heading up Christianity, Moses overseeing Judaism, Muhammed guiding Islam, the Buddha launching his own belief system, and on and on. But take the elevator up one level, above the religions that try to make sense of the spiritual world, and you find the 'Other' or 'Light' or 'Source'—that is, the CEO who presides over the whole enterprise."—Page 241.

"More problematic was the central tenet of Christianity—that there is only one way to God. When it comes to spiritual experience, there is not one story, and it certainly is not Jesus, not for everyone, not by a long shot. This became blindingly evident as I listened hour after hour to people with radically different story lines—ones that may or may not include God or religion but that involve a transforming encounter with another type of reality that is every bit as powerful to them as the Christian story is to me. These people are as 'born again'—with a new outlook, dreams, behaviors, and beliefs—as any Evangelical I have met. What story they selected, or what religion they followed, is their own best shot at making sense of something unexplainable—the ache for the eternal, the gnawing suspicion that Earth is not our home."—Page 282.

"Embracing a particular faith, I came to believe, is a little like hopping in a car. You can drive wherever you like. Some head to Rome, others to Mecca or the Western Wall. Still others exit the highways to find the winding roads called 'spiritual but not religious.' . . . I believe that ability to perceive and engage God is written in each person's genetic code and brain wiring. Religion is the overlay that allows people to navigate the world, and I came to believe that no one religion has an exclusive franchise on God or truth."—Page 283.

The fundamental distinctive teaching of Christian Sci-

ence is that creation is entirely spiritual and perfect and matter does not exist. Sin, sickness, and death also do not exist; we only think they do. “The only reality of sin, sickness, or death is the awful fact that unrealities seem real to human, erring belief, until God strips off their disguise.”—*Mary Baker Eddy, Science and Health, 472:27-29.*

Christian Science teaches that Jesus is divine but not God, and that Jesus’ human nature is a separate entity from the divine Christ. “Jesus Christ is not God, as Jesus himself declared, but is the Son of God” (Science and Health, 361:12-13). “Jesus is the name of the man who, more than all other men, has presented Christ, the true idea of God, healing the sick and sinning and destroying the power of death.”—*Mary Baker Eddy, Science and Health, 473:10-17.*

“In Christian Science, heaven and hell are states of mind. Heaven is “not a locality, but a divine state of Mind in which all the manifestations of Mind are harmonious and immortal.”—*Mary Baker Eddy, Science and Health, 291:13-16.*

ALAN HIRSCH

Quotations from *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating the Missional Church*, by Alan Hirsch, Brazos Press, 2006, paperback, 295 pages.

Alan Hirsch is the Director of Forge Mission Training Network. **Hirsch spoke at the 6th Annual 2010 National Conference on Innovation in Columbus, Ohio, October 3-5. This annual event is sponsored by the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; and it is promoted by the Columbia Union of Seventh-day Adventists as well as by the newsletter, Best Practices for Adventist Ministry, a North American Division-sponsored publication.**

QUOTATIONS BY HIRSCH

“A prophetically consistent Christianity means that we must remain committed to a constant critique of the structures and rituals we set up and maintain. Perhaps rather than calling this anti-institutionalism, a rather negative frame of mind, we should rather understand it as a form of holy rebellion based on the loving critique of religious institution modeled by the original apostles and prophets—‘holy rebels’ who constantly attempted to throw off encumbering ideologies, structures, codes, and traditions that limited the freedom of God’s people and restricted the gospel that they are mandated to pass on...The challenge for the established church and its leaders is to discern the will of God for our time, addressed to it in the mouths of its holy rebels.”—*Pages 55-56.*

“We must not abandon Christendom, for in it are God’s people, but it needs a fundamental change, a conversion if you like, if it is to become genuinely missional. This change is possible, but not without major realignment of our current thinking and resources...It is time to (re)discover a new story of the church and its mission. Enter the emerging missional church (EMC). This form of ecclesia is genuinely creative, because it does present a fundamental alternative imagination to the predominant one.”—*Pages 66, 67.*

“This is largely an unorganized Jesus movement-in-the-making. If you are looking for real church growth, here it is. But sadly, if we continue to look at this through the increasingly obsolete lenses of the Christendom paradigm, we won’t be able to see it and will simply miss it...My own journey has led me to invest almost completely in making sure that the EMC establishes itself and begins to thrive.”
—*Page 71.*

SAMIR SELMANOVIC

Quotations from *It’s Really All about God: Reflections of a Muslim Atheist Jewish Christian* by Samir Selmanovic, Jossey-Bass, 2009, hardback, 320 pages.

“Samir Selmanovic, Ph.D., is a founder and Christian co-leader of Faith House Manhattan, an interfaith community of communities that brings together forward-looking Christians, Muslims, Jews, atheists, and others who seek to thrive interdependently.”—*Inside jacket of Selmanovic’s book, It’s Really All about God.*

“Selmanovic is an ordained pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and cofounder of Re-church Network (<http://www.re-church.org>). He has been integral to the birth of the emerging church movement, serving as a member of the Coordinating Group of Emergent Village and representing emergents at the Interfaith Relations Commission of the National Council of Churches (<http://www.nccusa.org/interfaith>).”—*Statement on page 294 of his book.*

Selmanovic spoke at the Toledo [Ohio] First Seventh-day Adventist Church, pastored by Mike Fortune. He spoke Friday evening, August 27, and at 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Sabbath, August 28. Selmanovic also spoke at the 6th Annual 2010 National Conference on Innovation in Columbus, Ohio, October 3-5. This annual event is sponsored by the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; and it is promoted by the Columbia Union of Seventh-day Adventists as well as by the newsletter, Best Practices for Adventist Ministry, a North American Division-sponsored publication.

Selmanovic dedicates his book, in part, to Brian McLaren, who is considered by many to be a guru in the Emerging Church movement. Some of McLaren’s teachings are very disturbing and unbiblical, particularly in the areas of the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the nature of sin, and mysticism. Selmanovic calls McLaren one of the ‘Four Gospels’ who ‘have been saving my life.’

Among those whom Selmanovic lists as having been a blessing to him by way of assistance, influence, and inspiration, are Ryan Bell (Hollywood SDA), Jon Paulien, Monte Sahlin, Raj Attiken, Tony Compolo, Jon Dybdahl, Tony Jones, and Doug Pagitt.

So let’s get to the heart of the problem with Selmanovic’s book. He really takes issue with the idea that God has provided the plan of salvation within the Judeo-Christian heritage, and that the Person of Jesus Christ is the only avenue to a saving knowledge of God.

QUOTATIONS BY SELMANOVIC

“Some of my Muslim, atheist, Jewish, and Christian friends understand the subtitle of this book—Reflections of a Muslim Atheist Jewish Christian—as describing a per-

son who embraces four religious traditions at once.”—*Introduction, page XVII.*

“For me, the subtitle of this book is a string of adjectives modifying the noun Christian. . . I am not merely a Christian. There is no such thing.”—*Introduction, page XVIII.*

“The way religions contradict or collide with one another is not nearly as important to them as the way they complement one another.”—*Introduction, page XVII.*

After relating an experience in which he invited a witch to pray for a group of pastors: “What if God is on the outside too? Does God have to be absent out there in order to be present in here?”—*Page 3.*

“We are scared of finding our God in the other. Why do we fear something so wonderful?”—*Page 3.*

“God dwells in the lives of people. All people.”—*Page 3.*

“Is a God who favors anyone over anyone else worth worshipping?”—*Page 9.*

“If God created all humanity but gave life-giving knowledge—usually referred to as revelation—to only some of humanity, could God in any meaningful sense be thought of as the One God and not only as a God?”—*Page 9.*

“Wouldn’t such a God be historically or geographically local and therefore either disinterested, powerless, or in some other way incapable of giving lifesaving knowledge to all humanity? To say that God has decided to visit all humanity through only one particular religion is a deeply unsatisfying assertion about God.”—*Page 239.*

“If knowing God is a way to life, and if God has divided the world by revelation, then . . . Yahweh, Abba (meaning Daddy, a name for God that Jesus affectionately used), or Allah would not differ from Moloch, an ancient God of destruction reported in the Bible that required human sacrifice for his glory.”—*Page 283.*

“We can either stay within the Christianity we have mastered with the Jesus we have domesticated, or we can leave Christianity as a destination, embrace Christianity as a way of life, and then journey to reality, where God is present and living in every person, every human community, and all creation.”—*Page 62.*

“We can pretend that Christian religion—rather than

life—can be the ultimate arbiter of truth, justice, or beauty. We can pretend that others have nothing new to add to our understanding of God. . . But why would we?”—*Page 63.*

“They feel trapped, required to fall in line with fantasies of the religious supremacy of Christianity as a precondition for following the life and teachings of Jesus.”—*Page 68.*

“A new generation of believers wants to find a God who dwells outside the boundaries of their own tradition, a God that would be worth worshipping.”—*Page 69.*

“Religious people who worship nongods such as church, doctrines, festivals, rituals, liturgy, laws, habits, or any other religious entity also avoid relating their lives to the whole. Either way, their hearts have latched onto an object. . . Nongods such as faith or reason relegate the discussion about what matters to narrow or specialized language such as salvation or heaven.”—*Pages 136-137.*

“Now we have the responsibility and right to seek and find sacred space outside the walls of our religions. What an opportunity!”—*Page 14.*

“Now we have to unlearn what we think we know and then learn to embrace this newfound reality of our globally intertwined community.”—*Page 15.*

“Believing in God saves us from believing in nongods. That’s why atheism is inherent in Christianity, a kind of atheism that questions all our views of God and all our allegiance to religion. . . And that’s one of the reasons we need religions other than our own.”—*Page 146.*

“Shall we permit the world to shape the messages that God has given us to bear to them? Shall we entertain the proposals of Satan, and thereby entangle our souls and the souls of others, for the sake of policy? Shall we betray sacred trusts? If the world are in error and delusion, breaking the law of God, is it not our duty to show them their sin and danger? We must proclaim the third angel’s message...Unfurl your true colors to the gaze of men and angels. Let it be understood that Seventh-day Adventists can make no compromise. In our opinions and faith there must not be the least appearance of wavering.”—*EGW, Review, January 31, 1893.*

“Go forward, not backward. . . Do not succumb to the mistaken idea, gaining support even in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, of accepting worship or evangelistic outreach methods merely because they are new and ‘trendy.’ **We must be vigilant to test all things according to the supreme authority of God’s Word and the counsel with which we have been blessed in the writings of Ellen G. White.** Don’t reach out to movements or megachurch centers outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church which promise you spiritual success based on faulty theology. **Stay away from nonbiblical spiritual disciplines or methods of spiritual formation that are rooted in mysticism such as contemplative prayer, centering prayer, and the emerging church movement in which they are promoted.**”—*Ted Wilson, Sermon at the Atlanta General Conference Session.*

“For a long time I have seen the danger that was coming into our ranks in the tendency to look to human wisdom and to depend on human guidance. This will always prove a snare to souls, and I am bidden to lift the danger signal, warning my fellow workers against it, and pointing them to the Lord Jesus. The man or woman who leans upon the wisdom of the human mind leans on a broken reed. . . **Never should a worker encourage one who is in need of instruction and help to go first to human agencies for an understanding of his duty. . . It is a wrong education to teach our people to lean on human aids, instead of going to the Lord in prayer.** The enemy of souls has been the instigator of this, that minds might become obscured. . . Those who bear responsibilities in the work are to cooperate with heavenly angels in teaching men and women to **look to God as the source of their strength.**”

—*Upward Look, 290*