

Omega?

“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.” 1SM 200

“Be not deceived; many will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. We have now before us the alpha of this danger. The omega will be of a most startling nature.” 1SM 197

“In his (Dr. Kellogg’s) presentation he cloaked the matter somewhat, but in reality he was presenting scientific theories which are akin to pantheism.” BCL 108

Notice that the alpha was akin to pantheism. The omega will also most likely have something to do with pantheism.

“Living Temple 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. When but a girl I went to New Hampshire to bear warning against these same doctrines. There was a man by the name of Billings and another by the name of Bennet who were preaching a higher spirituality.” 1SAT 341

The alpha had to do with reaching a higher level of spirituality. The omega will also most likely have something to do with achieving higher spirituality. But isn't higher spirituality in our churches something to be desired? Yes. But it is not attained by being sought for. It is a natural side effect of obedience to God. There is something that is coming into our church that is of a most startling nature. It has to do with seeking higher spirituality and has eastern mystical/ pantheistic foundations. It is called Spiritual Formation.

Spiritual Formation, A Pastoral Letter by Richard Foster: "By now enough water has gone under the Christian 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." <http://www.theooze.com/articles/article.cfm?id=744>

“Spiritual Formation is a movement that has provided a platform and a channel through which contemplative prayer is entering the church. Find spiritual formation being used, and in nearly every case you will find contemplative spirituality. In fact, contemplative spirituality is the heartbeat of the spiritual formation movement.” <http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/spiritualformation.htm>

Foster teaches new age mysticism and a form of pantheism: "After you have gained some proficiency in centering down, add a five-to-ten-minute meditation on some aspect of creation. Choose something in the created order: tree, plant, bird, leaf, cloud, and each day ponder it carefully and prayerfully. The simplest and oldest way in which God manifests Himself is through and in the earth itself. And He still speaks to us through the earth and the sea..."

Richard Foster teaches that we can bring Jesus into our presence by the use of the imagination: "As you enter the story, not as passive observer but as an active participant, remember that since Jesus lives in the eternal now and is not bound by time, this event in the past is a living present-tense experience for him. Hence, you can "actually" encounter the living Christ in the event, be addressed by his voice and be touched by his healing power. It can be more than an exercise of the imagination it can be a genuine confrontation, Jesus Christ will actually come to you."

Albert James Dager makes an interesting comment on this amazingly occult quote: "One can no more actually bring Jesus into his presence through such figments of one's imagination than a Catholic priest can change wine into the actual blood of Jesus. The Lord cannot be manipulated by our whims of fancy. And contrary to Foster's mystical ruminations, Jesus exists at the right hand of the Father during this present time.

His book "Celebration of Discipline" originally had the words "new age" on page 170, but this was changed to avoid criticism: "We of the New Age can risk going against the tide." became changed to, "We who follow Christ can risk going against the tide."

In his book *Celebration of Discipline* he writes: "A fourth form of meditation has as its objective to bring you into a deep inner communion with the Father where you look at Him and He looks at you. In your imagination, picture yourself walking along a lovely forest path. Take your time, allowing the blaring noise of our modern megalopolis to be overtaken by the sound of rustling leaves and cool forest streams . . . After awhile there is a deep yearning within to go into the upper regions beyond the clouds. In your imagination allow your spiritual body, shining with light, to rise out of your physical body. Look back so that you can see yourself lying in the grass and reassure your body that you will return momentarily. Imagine your spiritual self, alive and vibrant, rising up through the clouds and into the stratosphere. Observe your physical body, the knoll, and the forest shrink as you leave the earth. Go deeper and deeper into outer space until there is nothing except the warm presence of the eternal Creator....listen carefully...Note any instruction given....return to the meadow. Walk joyfully back along the path until you return home full of new life and energy."

http://www.despatch.cth.com.au/Despatch/foster_vol_7_2.htm

Steve Muse of *Eastern Regional Watch Ministries* writes: "More than thirty years ago, as an occultist, I was deeply involved in mysticism and the practice of contemplative prayer. I learned this meditation technique from studying Catholic mystics who said then, and even teach now, that one does not have to believe in Jesus Christ to enter into the contemplative experience but that all roads would take us to the same destination. I went even further by becoming a disciple of Transcendental Meditation, which was identical to the Catholic contemplative prayer techniques I had already learned. Those I walked with into this journey of mysticism experienced a much deeper spiritual realm leading many into relationships with seducing spirits rather than with God. These same techniques are encouraged by today's new mystics and especially New Age advocates—such advocates feel encouraged to see Christians moving into this type of prayer experience. I had not given this sudden push to contemplative spirituality much thought until I started seeing centering prayer being taught in the local prayer center and in various retreats in churches throughout the area. When I heard about the Emerging Church as a new expression of the church, I looked for those I could talk to and ask questions; much to my surprise, I was told of many alternate forms of worship and contemplative prayer techniques that were being promoted as good and righteous in many youth groups and youth organizations such as Youth Specialties. If Kimball and other "emerging" leaders are endorsing the use of contemplative (centering prayers, mantra prayers, breath prayers, silence prayers) prayer techniques of any kind, they are leading believers into eastern meditative prayer experiences. This is really nothing more than a Christianized version of Hindu prayer techniques that were introduced through Roman Catholic priests, Thomas Keating and Basil Pennington, as a result of their own mystical prayer experiences."

<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/stevemuseemerging.pdf>

Tony Campolo says in his book *Letters to a Young Evangelical*: "Intimacy with Christ has developed gradually over the years, primarily through what Catholic mystics call "centering prayer." Each morning, as soon as I wake up, I take time--sometimes as much as a half hour--to center myself on Jesus. 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. Jesus is my mantra, as some would say. The constant repetition of his name clears my head of everything but the awareness of his presence. By driving back all other concerns, I am able to create what the ancient Celtic Christians called "the thin place."... After a while, an inner stillness pervades."

He later reiterates: "Having an intimate relationship with Christ is at the core of being an Evangelical." He explains there are three things to consider: 1. "Centering prayer," 2. "Contemplative Bible study" and 3. "spiritual disciplines."

Campolo says 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.

<http://www.fromthelighthouse.com/blog/index.php?cat=24>

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 ones 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 openness to suggestion, a psychological and physiological condition that externally resembles sleep but in which consciousness is interiorized and the mind 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.

<http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/1997/9711fea1.asp>

http://www.newmorningtv.tv/todaysshow_101303.jsp (see centering prayer video under Waking Up)

Going into silence which is a big part of contemplative spirituality is promoted by Richard Foster

If Foster's silence becomes the standard vehicle for going deeper with God, the Christian of the future (perhaps the near future), may soon resonate with Thomas Merton, who said: "It is a glorious destiny to be a member of the human race, ... now I realize what we all are If only people could all see themselves as they really are ... I suppose the big problem 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."

That is the crux of the controversy. If one takes the time to research the contemplative prayer movement in its totality, one will certainly find that the above observation by Merton is not just an anomaly but is the standard perception and outcome of contemplative spirituality. That is where Foster's silence will lead those who follow it.

<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/richardfosterbestilldvd.htm>

Going into silence is so that you can hear God talk to you. Prayer journaling becomes very important so you can record God's thoughts.

In the Book *Ordering Your Private World* Gordon MacDonald writes: "All of this is part of listening to God. As I write, I am aware that what I am writing may actually be what God wants to tell me. I dare presume that His Spirit is often operative in the things I am choosing to think about and record."

"The main value of a journal is as a tool for listening to the quiet Voice that comes out of the garden of the private world. Journal keeping serves as a wonderful tool for withdrawing and communing with the Father. When I write, it is as if I am in direct conversation with Him. And there is that sense that in the words that you are led to write, God's Spirit is mysteriously active, and communion at the deepest level is happening."

In the book *The Hour That Changes The World*, Dick Eastman writes: "Always remember, listening serves a practical function. You are not merely listening for divine 'niceties' ... The value of having paper and pencil is that it displays faith. It says to God, 'I believe you will truly speak to me, and I have come prepared to record your instructions'"

"There are dangers to be faced when we enter these deeper aspects of prayer. Much of prayer is an experiment in spiritual growth that involves both failure and success ... As Bridgid Herman so accurately states, 'One hour of such listening may give us a deeper insight into the mysteries of human nature, a surer instinct for Divine values, than a year's hard study or external intercourse with men.'"

<http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/journal.htm>

Meditation/contemplation techniques may bring the practitioner to experience any or all of the following three stages:

1. Bring the body to a relaxed state
2. Empty the mind by focusing concentration
3. Connect to an entity

<http://users.stargate.net/~ejt/NewsV3N15.htm>

To direct people on a spiritual journey for 40 days, Rick Warren wrote *The Purpose Driven Life*. The bestselling book has impacted millions of persons. Some of Pastor Warren's purpose involves his recommendations for "Becoming Best Friends with God." The author shares six secrets to become God's friends, one of which is practicing God's presence by being in "constant conversation" with him. After quoting 1 Thessalonians 5:17 ("pray without ceasing"), Warren asks how a Christian can practice unceasing prayer to which he answers, "One way is to use 'breath prayers' throughout the day, as many Christians have done for centuries. You choose a brief sentence or a simple phrase that can be repeated in one breath." Then after providing ten examples of prayers, short biblical phrases that could work as breath prayers, Warren advises "Pray it as often as possible so it is rooted deep in your heart." In this context Warren also cites the book of Brother Lawrence (c.1605-1691), *The Practice of the Presence of God*, who advocated experiencing the presence of God in the most menial of circumstances, by praying short

conversational prayers throughout the day. The Roman Catholic practice of praying the rosary is also akin to breath prayers.

<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/breathprayer.htm>

Many New Age gurus, as well as Teresa of Avila who was a 16th century Catholic mystic, distinguish between meditation and contemplation. According to them, meditation is the process for arriving at the state of contemplation. Total mental silence and physical quietness is achieved through meditation, which leads into contemplation, the non-verbal communication by "God." For Catholic mystics, New Agers, and non-Christian meditators, one of the primary purposes of meditation/contemplation is to experience God and be infused with His love. In chapter 25 of her "The Way To Perfection," Teresa of Avila describes the love she experienced during contemplation: "In case you should think there is little gain to be derived from practicing vocal prayer perfectly, I must tell you that, while you are repeating the Paternoster [Our Father] or some other vocal prayer, it is quite possible for the Lord to grant you perfect contemplation. In this way His Majesty shows that He is listening to the person who is addressing Him, and that, in His greatness, He is addressing her, by suspending the understanding, putting a stop to all thought, and, as we say, taking the words out of her mouth, so that even if she wishes to speak she cannot do so, or at any rate not without great difficulty.

"Such a person understands that, without any sound of words, she is being taught by this Divine Master, Who is suspending her faculties, which, if they were to work, would be causing her harm rather than profit. The faculties rejoice without knowing how they rejoice; the soul is enkindled in love without understanding how it loves; it knows that it is rejoicing in the object of its love, yet it does not know how it is rejoicing in it. It is well aware that this is not a joy which can be attained by the understanding; the will embraces it, without understanding how; but, in so far as it can understand anything, it perceives that this is a blessing which could not be gained by the merits of all the trials suffered on earth put together. It is a gift of the Lord of earth and Heaven, Who gives it like the God He is. This, daughters, is perfect contemplation."

Although Teresa of Avila wrote: "she is being taught by this Divine Master, Who is suspending her faculties," it is not by the suspension of our faculties that we come into the fullness of God's love or by which He teaches us.

It is by reading and understanding God's word that we learn to walk in His word, fulfilling the command of Jesus. He said that whoever loves Him keeps His commands, which results in the perfection of His love: 1 John 2:5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

The first step in any mystical meditation is always to relax the body. A person is encouraged to find a place where he will not be disturbed, so the meditative process will not be broken. Yoga is often used as a way of bringing the body to a relaxed state. It's not necessary, but what is emphasized is that the body be comfortable in order to avoid distraction. There is a form of yoga where one concentrates on the various parts of the body (arms, legs, etc.) to bring them to a point of relaxation. The adherent is told to concentrate on each part of the body and release tension in each part one by one. If pursuing healing, he visualizes flowing water or rushing air washing away the tensions and anxieties or the impurity of the part of the body that is sick, then visualizes healing coming to that part.

Whether a person is pursuing healing or a deeper spiritual experience, the point throughout the meditative process is to never allow the mind to be distracted. If it does become distracted, repetition of the mantra holds the mind focused until the other thoughts or distractions subside. Sometimes a symbol is pictured in the mind and used instead of, or along with, the verbal mantra. Other practitioners use a phrase from Scripture or even the name of Jesus.

The repetition of Scriptural phrases to attain an altered state of consciousness is not why God gave us Scripture. Scripture was given so that we could understand God and His ways, and our need for Him, by knowing His plan of salvation. Scripture is to be read and studied and understood with a fully alert mind, not used as a technique to bring a person to a state of silence in which he does not or cannot think at all.

According to Teresa, meditation is the focusing on and reflection on some religious theme, often the life of Jesus while on earth. Or it could be the simple process of repeating a prayer, such as the Our Father. Mystical meditators often use a breathing technique to bring the body into a relaxed state, and in some cases the breathing itself is an actual part of the mantra. A person concentrates on his breath and does not try to control it. Often a two syllable mantra is used, focusing on the first syllable when breathing out, and then on the other when breathing in. Sometimes, the person counts each breath.

Often the consciousness is altered through the meditator's visualization of himself as a symbol, such as a candle or a bird. Through such visualization, he "becomes" the symbolic object, and at this point enters a deeper realm of the occult. This is the point at which he is "detached" from his thoughts and bodily senses and enters the state of contemplation, where he can do nothing but wait for "God" to mystically invade him.

<http://users.stargate.net/~ejt/NewsV3N15.htm>

Spiritual formation or contemplative spirituality is Catholic pagan/occultic mysticism. This is what Richard Foster has been bringing to Christianity.

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 book Celebration of Discipline was on the Christian bestseller list for many months. In his chapter on meditation he stresses discovering "the inner reality of the spiritual world which is available to all who are willing to search for it." While Foster does say one should distinguish between Eastern meditation and Christian forms, and that they are, "worlds apart" Foster also encourages "centering" exercises and concentrating on one's breath, also a common Eastern technique: unfortunately, his methods offered have similarities to new age or Eastern techniques that are used in meditation.

Foster's meditation aimed at centering oneself begins by concentrating on breathing. Inhale deeply, slowly tilting your head back as far as it will go. Then exhale, allowing your head slowly to come forward until your chin nearly rests on your chest. Do this for several moments, praying inwardly something like this: "Lord, I exhale my fear over my geometry exam, I inhale Your peace. I exhale my spiritual apathy, I inhale Your light and life. Then, as before, become silent outwardly and inwardly. Be attentive to the inward living Christ."

This clearly is combining eastern ways with Christ and it has a Christian veneer but is decidedly unbiblical. The Bible tells us to keep our minds on guard and protected. To bring oneself into a passive mental state, this type of consciousness is a steppingstone to the occult. For when the mind is not protected anything can enter in. Emptying thoughts means falsehood can be sent in without any resistance. 2 Cor. 10:5 states "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Biblical meditation is having our minds actively engaged on contemplating God's word. James 4:7 says to submit to God resist the devil and he will flee from you. Resistance is key to staying sober in mind. To do this one must be aware of their surroundings, thinking. Unlike New Age meditation, biblical meditation doesn't involve mysticism or emptying the mind. Rather, biblical meditation involves objective contemplation and deep reflection on God's Word as well as His works, not on images or dreams. Christian meditation calls us to look to God, not inward. The purpose is that our minds may be filled with godly wisdom and insight so that our hearts may be filled with comfort, happiness, and joy. To echo the opening words of the psalmist, "Blessed is the man ... [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:1, 2). We think and use our mind to grasp what is being expressed by his word and allow it to affect our heart.

<http://www.letusreason.org/NAM27.htm>

So far we've seen that going into silence, centering prayer, prayer journaling, breath praying; these are all a part of the spiritual formation movement that is sweeping Christendom. Another aspect of spiritual formation is the prayer labyrinth.

In modern times the labyrinth can be traced to Catholic cathedrals of the Middle Ages. In the European cathedrals they were used traditionally as a site of pilgrimage. A promoter and authority on the modern Labyrinth, Rev. Artress, states in her research there were actually 22 Labyrinths in the 80 Gothic cathedrals that went up during the Middle Ages throughout Europe. Some of them were pilgrimage cathedrals. Chartres was one of the major pilgrimage cathedrals. Early Christians took a vow to visit the Holy City of Jerusalem at some point in their lives. During the middle ages the Crusades made travel to Palestine unsafe, so they used other means to honor their commitment. Labyrinths were used as a substitute pilgrimage experience for the holy land. Adopted by the Roman Catholic Church Labyrinths were offered to the congregation as a way of fulfilling their vow to visit the holy land and nicknamed the it, "New Jerusalem." Christians using it as a symbol instead made their pilgrimages to the cathedral cities of Chartres, Rheims or Amiens.

<http://www.fromthelighthouse.com/blog/index.php?m=200503>

Understand, Christians looking for ways to bring in new relevancy within church worship did not "rediscover" the labyrinth as a spiritual tool. As we shall see, it has been part of the esoteric world for a very long time. Which is why, today, labyrinth walks and "prayer journeys" are being promoted by Rosicrucian groups, at New Age festivals and

celebrations, and throughout the neo-pagan world. Not surprisingly, one of America's largest witch, shaman, and neo-pagan assemblies, the 2005 Pagan Spirit Gathering at Wisteria, OH, held a night-time Summer Solstice Labyrinth ritual, which was described as a "transformative, walking meditation through an all night labyrinth formed by 1000 lighted candles".

Hundreds of Christians have taken part in labyrinth prayer walks, and many churches across North America and Europe are embracing this tool as a means to expand their spiritual experience. The Rev. Jill Geoffrion, a "certified labyrinth facilitator" and author of such books as *Christian Prayer and Labyrinths* and *Praying the Labyrinth*, writes:

"We are currently in a period of historic labyrinth revival. Churches, retreat centers and Christian camps are placing these prayer tools inside and outside. Christians all over the world are installing labyrinths in their yards and gardens. Many are using the labyrinths as a ministry tool, bringing portable versions to prisons, national denominational conferences and church group meetings. It is conservatively estimated that there are over 5,000 labyrinths in the United States alone. God is blessing the use of the labyrinth; many are being drawn closer to Jesus, experiencing healing and gaining spiritual clarity as they pray on its path."

"The Labyrinth is an archetype, a divine imprint, found in all religious traditions in various forms around the world. By walking a replica of the Chartres labyrinth, laid in the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France around 1220, we are rediscovering a long-forgotten mystical tradition that is insisting to be reborn. The labyrinth is a shared esoteric tradition; in Native American culture it is called the Medicine Wheel and Man in the Maze. The Celts described it as the Never Ending Circle. It is also called the Kabala in mystical Judaism. One feature they all share is that they have one path which winds in a circuitous way to the center."

<http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/05/teichrib/labyrinth.htm>

Being westerners, we often fail to realize that seemingly harmless 'physical' techniques can have significant questionable spiritual impact on our lives. One of the patterns with the dozens of new-age fads sweeping North America and the West Coast in particular is that they all pop up out of the blue but claim to have rediscovered an ancient secret technique that we all need. Many of them, including the fast-growing Labyrinth fad, even reconstruct a plausible but misleading Christian history used to persuade well-meaning Christians.

http://www3.telus.net/st_simons/arm08.htm

The Rev. Jill Geoffrion states that "God is blessing the use of the labyrinth; many are being drawn closer to Jesus, experiencing healing and gaining spiritual clarity as they pray on its path."

On the surface this sounds great. But is God really blessing this "new thing"? Can God bless something that has its origins in esoteric doctrine and ancient pagan mythologies? Adding to its historical pagan significance is the fact that the labyrinth has never lost its occult meaning. Labyrinths are still being used, and will continue to be used, as an instrument of pagan spirituality.

If God is going to bless labyrinth prayer journeys, how is He going to deal with Deuteronomy 12:1-14, 18:9-13 and Exodus 34:10-17? In each of these Scripture passages God explicitly tells His people to refrain from anything used in pagan practices. Moreover, the entire book of Jeremiah is a warning against involvement in alternative religious practices.

<http://www.crossroad.to/articles2/05/teichrib/labyrinth.htm>

What do prayer labyrinths, contemplative prayer, spiritual formation have to do with the Seventh-day Adventist Church? If these things were to come into our church and be encouraged by our leadership this would be most startling indeed. Because of its spiritualistic/pantheistic overtones this could very well be the omega of apostasy that Ellen White foretold would come into our church.

Adventist News Network Feature:

Church, Congregations Increase Focus on "Spiritual Formation" February 3, 2004, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

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.

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.

"Traditionally the Adventist Church has emphasized intellectual truth and accepting certain facts and ideas about God," Dybdahl says. "At least in many places it has not talked so much about the importance of directly experiencing God. The difference is between knowing about God and knowing God. Sometimes what we teach people is knowing about God ... That's part of the nature of things. It's much easier to communicate a fact than it is to wield people to experience."

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." But, he says, it's mostly "growing more and more tuned to God's movement in my life here and now." And, he says, spiritual formation is not something that happens overnight.

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.

<http://news.adventist.org/data/2004/01/1075843904/index.html.en>

Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

You are looking at an outline of our plan for the next five years. We are the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Christ-centered, Bible-based, interested in the wellbeing of man as a whole, and with an endtime focus. (page 20)

1.5 Spiritual Formation and Nurture

1.5.1 Discipleship and Spiritual Formation - Paul Clee

GOAL: Build widespread awareness and practice of discipleship in all fields, including the disciplines of spiritual formation.

IMPLEMENTATION: Develop and use seminars for local training on the use of spiritual disciplines: Inwardly (meditation, prayer, fasting, study), Outwardly (simplicity, solitude, submission, service) and Corporately (confession, worship, guidance, celebration).

RESOURCES: Literature such as: *The Equipping Church* (Sue Mallory); *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (Richard Foster); *Celebration of Discipline* (Richard Foster)

<http://www.ted-adventist.org/about/files/strategic.pdf>

"When Richard Foster speaks of the silence, he does not mean external silence. In his book, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, Foster recommends the practice of breath prayer; picking a single word or short phrase and repeating it in conjunction with the breath. This is classic contemplative mysticism.

"In the original 1978 edition of *Celebration of Discipline*, he makes his objective clear when he states, 'Christian meditation is an attempt to empty the mind in order to fill it.' In *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, he ties in a quote by one mystic who advised, 'You must bind the mind with one thought.'

<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/breathprayer.htm>

Richard Foster's books are arrayed with quotes and instructions from New Age teachers who are well versed in the beliefs and agenda of the occultists. Although many of his musings and enthusiastic devotions are "pleasant" to read, indeed quite inspiring to those who are unaware of the traps, they either directly contradict the Bible, or lead into demonic possession. When I read "Celebration of Discipline" for the first time, many years ago now, I was strangely moved by it, until my eyes were opened by the Holy Spirit. It seemed "spiritual" and seemed to promise a new way of living. Foster seems to present deep love of Christ in his teaching. Some of the book is just common sense, such as the teaching about living a simpler life-style, being less concerned about material possessions. But, the "good" is vastly out-weighted by the questionable sources and lead-in to the spirituality of the New Age.

Albert James Dager, of "Media Spotlight" writes of the mystical practices Foster teaches and indulges himself in: "Unfortunately, all these exercises serve to do is open the person up to demonic influences that assuage his or her conscience with a feeling of euphoria and even "love" emanating from the presence that has invaded their consciousness. This euphoria is then believed to validate that the person is on the right spiritual path. It may result in visions, out-of body experiences, stigmata, levitation, even healings and other apparent miracles."

Writes Dager: "Like John Wimber of Vineyard International Ministries, it is out of the religious traditions of Quakerism that Foster has come with the message that today's Church is missing out on some wonderful spiritual experiences that can only be found by studying and practicing the meditative and contemplative lifestyle."

Foster's book "Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth" is a book which calls for deeper spirituality than that which the Bible teaches! Foster's teachings are filled with Buddhism, Yoga, T. M., the exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, Eastern religion, and extremely spiritually destructive practices.

http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/Foster_Expose.htm

Steve Muse of *Eastern Regional Watch* writes: "I have been researching the trends in the postmodern church era and I keep coming across the term, spiritual formation. So I spent a few days reading through many web sites, papers, articles and monographs about the subject. I found that for many years, within Christian circles, the term Spiritual Formation has been defined as a shaping process that begins when one becomes a new believer in Christ, as He takes our life, like a piece of clay, and begins to mold it into the image of Himself, through the process of discipleship. This molding and shaping is based upon our willingness to surrender ourselves completely to His hand and will for us. As we deny ourselves and daily take up the cross, He is free to form us into His image. All sounded well and good until I started reading through some articles discussing the disciplines listed for spiritual formation which included references to contemplative, Psychological and Eastern religious techniques, all in the attempt at a deeper relationship to God in Jesus Christ but through occult means. This can and does open doors to experiences that are more than just imagination but are real and very dangerous if we practice these techniques; we then come into contact with other spirits thinking that we are meeting God."

<http://www.erwm.com/FormationOrAdultery.htm>

Things are changing. The goal is honorable, but what's being done to get there is, quite frankly, apostasy. We can put many labels on these people who are pushing for change in the postmodern church: post-conservatives, post-fundamentalists, post-foundationalists, post-propositionalists, post-evangelicals, post-everything, reformists... or the more popularly known "emerging church". Whatever the label, they all have some common characteristics about how to re-do church and become a new kind of Christian. Christianity is being seen as more a narrative rather than doctrines/principles or propositions of truth; tradition, culture and the contemporary experience is being seen as the source of theology rather than just the Bible itself. The shift is towards a spirituality-based experience of God, instead of a creed-based one; and how this spiritual formation should be done is to look to Richard Foster and Dallas Willard for methods that stem from Roman Catholicism and eastern mysticism.

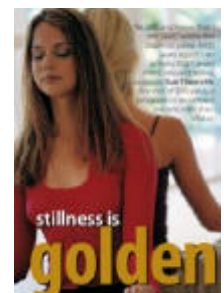
<http://www.sixsteps.org/category/emergent/>

I have spent hundreds of hours and several years studying Richard Foster and other spiritual formation mysticism teachers and psychology which has virtually taken over Evangelical Christianity and the Church. But I mainly have studied the Bible for much of the 50 years I have been a Christian. It has not been difficult to spot error, with this foundation, because I simply immediately see a red flag every time I read a statement or concept which does not line up with the plumb line of Scripture. Well all I can say is that I hope that you are now convinced that it is Richard Foster who possesses and promotes hollow and deceptive philosophies contrary to Scripture.

<http://www.abrahamic-faith.com/James/Richard-Foster.html>

SIGNS
OF THE TIMES

The November, 2004 issue of Signs of the Times Magazine – Australia New Zealand edition, Centering Prayer 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." (See Psalm 139:1-4; Romans 8:26, 27.) Feel your hunger for connection with the Divine and express your adoration. God is waiting to connect with you (Revelation 3:20), 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 "centring" 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."



At the end of the article an online prayer labyrinth is promoted: **The Labyrinth** - This is a spiritual experience that invites you to be still and silent as you participate in progressive experiences integral to the spiritual journey. <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/paradigm>
<http://www.signsofthetimes.org.au/archives/2004/november/article5.shtm>

The Crosswalk SDA Church in Redlands, CA also links to The Labyrinth: <http://www.fishfeed.net/cw/prayer/index.html>

In a letter to pastors regarding HeartQuest Mike Tucker writes: "HeartQuest is a different approach to NET evangelism designed to reach a younger, more secular audience. As you can tell from the artwork, this series of meetings is different. . . . Here are some of the details: . . . Doctrines are presented as tools for knowing God better (more of a spiritual discipline approach to genuine spiritual formation)."



There are specific warning signs that are symptomatic that a church may be headed down the emergent/contemplative road. In some cases a pastor may not be aware that he is on this road nor understand where the road ends up. Here are some of the warning signs: Ideas are promoted teaching that Christianity needs to be reinvented in order to provide meaning for this generation. While the authority of the Word of God is undermined, images and sensual experiences are promoted as the key to experiencing and knowing God. These experiences include icons, candles, incense, liturgy, labyrinths, prayer stations, contemplative prayer, experiencing the sacraments, particularly the sacrament of the Eucharist. http://compass.org/php/files/articles/files/48_Rog%20Oak%20Em%20Church%20adobe.pdf

Forest Lake Academy 24/7 Prayer Room

This is a radical call for the next generation to rise up in passionate, persistent and powerful prayer to change lives, families, communities and nations. There will be music, art, worship and interactive prayer stations to help make your prayer time enjoyable. Prepare to experience God!
<http://www.mysignup.com/cgi-bin/view.cgi?datafile=fla>

PRAYER STATIONS are places around Andrews' campus where students can stop and pray together at specified times during school days. It is a spiritual awakening, a way to connect to God and to fellow students; a jump-start for your day and a testimony for those who witness it.

<http://www.andrews.edu/CM/ministry/ministries/prayerstations.htm>

<http://www.inministry.info/article.php?id=40> (Andrews University Spiritual Formation Class)

The prayer station concept was promoted in The Pastor's DVD vol. 10

http://www.adventsource.org/dvdvideo_2.aspx?ID=34924

Evidence that the emergent/spiritual formation philosophy is making inroads into our church is found in what is happening with Faith House Manhattan, Partners in Innovation, Kaiser, Dr. William Loveless:

http://samirselmanovic.typepad.com/faith_house/

<http://www.sdapartnersininnovation.org/>

<http://www.kaiser.net/index.cfm>

http://www.sdayouth.net/a_transcript_of_a_majority_of_dr.htm

"Please pray for me (Wayne Anderson) as I will be speaking to a group of Seventh day Adventist pastors from the Los Angeles area on Saturday afternoon, November 8, 2003. Most of the work we have done with Adventists has been with those from Orange County, San Diego County, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. This group from the LA area will be new to the process. We are planning eight monthly meetings beginning with the one in November. The meetings will be held at the Hollywood Adventist Church and will go from 3 PM to 6 PM." Wayne Anderson is one of the founders of The Leadership Institute – Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development. He is also the Spiritual director at the Institute for Spiritual Formation at Talbot School of Theology.

<http://www.westgate-church.org/missions/missionaries/anderson/index.htm>

<http://www.theleadershipinstitute.org/journey/index.htm>

<http://www.theleadershipinstitute.org/journey/JourneyBrochure.pdf>

Many of the people implicated in this paper certainly mean well and would not intentionally engage in spiritualistic activities. My point is not to condemn anyone but rather to warn away from any involvement with new age ideas. It would be better to not even use spiritual formation terminology to express Christian growth concepts because of its association with the evangelical spiritual formation movement which is decidedly spiritualistic.

“We need not the **mysticism** that is in this book (Living Temple). Those who entertain these sophistries will soon find themselves in a position where **the enemy can talk with them**, and lead them away from God.” 1SM p. 202

John Witcombe
pastorjcw@gmail.com