



CONTEMPLATIVE
MYSTICISM
A POWERFUL ECUMENICAL BOND

David Cloud

Contemplative Mysticism: A Powerful Ecumenical Bond

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Contents

What is Mysticism?.....	5
A Definition of Mysticism	6
The Taizé Approach.....	9
Richard Foster: Evangelicalism’s Mystical Sparkplug	11
The Widespread Influence of Mysticism	40
Mysticism Is Found in All Branches of the Emerging Church.....	40
Mysticism Is Spreading Throughout Evangelicalism....	45
A Description of the Contemplative Practices	85
Centering Prayer	85
Visualization or Imaginative Prayer.....	91
The Jesus Prayer	97
The Breath Prayer.....	98
Lectio Divina	99
The Stations of the Cross	106
The Mass.....	106
The Labyrinth	113
A Description of Roman Catholic Monasticism	115
The Error of Roman Catholic Monasticism.....	125
The Error of Contemplative Mysticism	157
A Biographical Catalog of Contemplative Mystics	232
Bibliography	455
Index.....	460

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What is Mysticism?

“There is intoxication in the waters of contemplation”

Thomas Merton

“Mysticism is no longer irrelevant; it is in the air we breathe”

William Johnston

Contemplative mysticism, which originated in the Roman Catholic monastic movement, is permeating every branch of Christianity.

Leonard Sweet says:

“Mysticism, once cast to the sidelines of the Christian tradition, is now situated in postmodernist culture near the center. ... In the words of one of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century, Jesuit philosopher of religion/dogmatist Karl Rahner, “The Christian of tomorrow will be a mystic, one who has experienced something, or he will be nothing” (*Quantum Spirituality*, 1991, pp. 11, 76).

Ursula King observes that “recent years have seen a greater interest and fascination with the mystics of all ages and faiths than any previous period in history” (*Christian Mystics*, p. 22).

The Fruit of Mysticism

I will extensively develop this theme later in the book, but here I want to emphasize the fact that mysticism’s fruit is well demonstrated and plainly unscriptural.

Catholic mysticism leads inevitably to a broadminded ecumenical philosophy and to the adoption of heresies. For many, this path has led to interfaith dialogue, religious syncretism, universalism, pantheism (God is everything), panentheism (God is in everything), goddess theology, and the New Age.

A Definition of Mysticism

I want to emphasize, first, what mysticism is *not*. It is not merely a desire to know Christ intimately and to be filled with the Spirit and to walk in God's perfect will. It is not merely a life of worship and devotion to God and fruitful Bible study. Mysticism goes far beyond this.

Mysticism, as we are using the term, is an attempt to commune with God experientially and to find spiritual understanding beyond the pages of the Bible by means of Roman Catholic monastic practices.

Following are three characteristics of this mysticism:

First, mysticism emphasizes a direct experience of God.

Chamber's Dictionary defines mysticism as "the habit or tendency of religious thought and feeling of those who seek *direct communion with God* or the divine."

Leonard Sweet defines mysticism as an "*experience with God*" in the metaphysical realm that is achieved through "mindbody experiences" (*Quantum Spirituality*, 1991, p. 11).

Anthony de Mello says: "... we are, all of us, endowed with a mystical mind and mystical heart, a faculty which makes it possible for *us to know God directly*, to grasp and intuit him in his very being..." (*Sadhana: A Way to God*, p. 29).

Ursula King says, "Mystics seek *participation in divine life, communion and union with God*" (*Christian Mystics*, p. 4).

Thomas Merton says:

"Meditation is for those who are not satisfied with a merely objective and conceptual knowledge *about* life, *about* God--*about* ultimate realities. They want to enter into an intimate contact with truth itself, with God" (*Spiritual Direction and Meditation*, p. 53).

Second, mysticism emphasizes finding spiritual insight beyond thought and doctrine.

It is focused on experience, feeling, emotion, intuition, and perception.

Leonard Sweet says, "Mysticism begins in experience; it ends in theology" (*Quantum Spirituality*, 1991, p. 76).

Anne Bancroft, author of *Twentieth-Century Mystics and Sages*, defined a mystic as someone who feels “a need to go beyond words and to experience the truth about themselves” (p. vii).

Thomas Merton defined mysticism as an experience with wisdom and God *apart from words*.

Anthony de Mello said:

“The head is not a very good place for prayer. ... You must learn to move out of the area of thinking and talking and move into the area of feeling, sensing, loving, intuiting” (*Sadhana: A Way to God*, p. 17).

“Contemplation for me is communication with God that makes a minimal use of words, images, and concepts or dispenses with words, images, and concepts altogether. This is the sort of prayer that John of the Cross speaks of in his *Dark Night of the Soul* or the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* explains in his admirable book” (p. 29).

Christianity Today says there are many young evangelicals who are tired of “traditional Christianity” and want “a renewed encounter with God” that goes BEYOND “DOCTRINAL DEFINITIONS” (“The Future Lies in the Past,” *Christianity Today*, Feb. 2008).

This is a good definition of mysticism. It is an attempt to experience God beyond the interpretation of Scripture, beyond doctrine, beyond theology.

Spencer Burke of the OOze says: “A move away from intellectual Christianity is essential. We must move to the mystical” (*Emerging Churches*, p. 230).

Observe that he contrasts mysticism with the intellect. Mysticism tries to reach beyond that which can be understood with the mind, beyond the teaching of Scripture.

We realize that the believer does not grasp spiritual truths with his intellect *only*, but the intellect should always be in gear, and this is what the contemplative mystics renounce.

Consider this description of centering prayer, which requires putting aside conscious thoughts:

“For in this darkness we experience an intuitive understanding of everything material and spiritual without giving special attention to anything in particular” (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, chapter 68).

This is pure mysticism, and *The Cloud of Unknowing* is a primary resource for the contemplative movement.

Tony Campolo describes contemplative spirituality as mystical stillness and communing with God *without words*:

“I get up in the morning a half hour before I have to and spend time in absolute stillness. I don’t ask God for anything. I just simply surrender to His presence and yield to the Spirit flowing into my life. ... An interviewer once asked Mother Teresa, ‘When you pray, what do you say to God?’ She said, ‘I don’t say anything. I just listen.’ So the interviewer asked, ‘What does God say to you?’ She replied, ‘God doesn’t say anything. He listens.’ That’s the kind of prayer I do in the morning” (*Outreach Magazine*, July/ August 2004, pp. 88, 89).

Third, mysticism accepts extra-scriptural dreams and visions and insights as revelations from God and, in fact, expects them as a natural product of the contemplative experience.

Richard Foster says, “Christian meditation, very simply is the ability to hear God’s voice and obey his word” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1998, p. 17), and he is not talking here about hearing God’s voice through Scripture alone.

In the book *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, Foster, quoting Thomas Merton, says that contemplative prayer “offers you an understanding and light, which are like nothing you ever found in books or heard in sermons” (p. 160).

The “spiritual insights” that the practitioner obtains through contemplative meditation becomes truth to him that is at least equal in authority to Scripture.

The Catholic “saints” who developed the contemplative practices received countless extra-biblical revelations.

This is the mystical approach that is fast becoming an acceptable means of “spirituality” in all branches of Christianity.

The Taizé Approach

The mystical movement is strongly influenced by Taizé (pronounced teh-zay). This is a religious community that was formed in southeastern France during World War II by Roger Schutz, a Swiss Protestant pastor who went by the name of “Brother Roger” and who led the community until his death in 2005. Its goal is to work for world peace and ecumenical unity.

The Taizé monastic order includes some 100 allegedly “celibate brothers” from different countries and denominations, including Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed.

While the Taizé community itself is very small, the Taizé philosophy has influenced churches throughout the world. Tens of thousands of congregations in the U.S. and elsewhere hold Taizé prayer services and sing Taizé songs.

Taizé is a major force for non-doctrinal ecumenism. Each year tens of thousands of people make a pilgrimage to Taizé. These include Protestants, Baptists, Catholics, Jews, Buddhists, and others. The Roman Catholic connection is very strong. Schutz participated in the Second Vatican Council, and Pope John Paul II visited Taizé in October 1986. In 2006, at John Paul II’s funeral, Schutz was given Eucharistic communion by the hands of Joseph Ratzinger, who a few days later became Pope Benedict XVI. Since Schutz’s death (he was stabbed to death by a deranged woman during a Taizé service), the organization has been led by a Roman Catholic priest named Alois Loeser.

The Taizé services are non-dogmatic and non-authoritative. There is no preaching. “It does not dictate what people must believe. No confessions of faith are required. No sermons are given. No emotional, evangelical-style testimonials are expected. Clergy are not required.” Schutz described the philosophy of Taizé as, “Searching together--not wanting to become spiritual masters who impose; God never imposes. We want to love and listen, we want simplicity” (“Taizé,” *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, Sept. 20, 2002).

Taizé’s non-doctrinal ecumenical Christianity is fueled by mysticism. A “shadowy medieval” atmosphere is created with the use of such things as candles, icons, and incense (*Vancouver Sun*, April 14, 2000). The goal is to bring the “worshipper” into a

meditative state, “to a place beyond words, a place of just being.” There is a lot of repetition, with “one-line Taizé harmonies repeated up to 15 times each.”

Schutz taught that truth is found through mysticism. In 1995 he told a group of 100,000 young people in Paris, “We have come here to search, or to go on searching through silence and prayer, to get in touch with our inner life” (Brother Roger, 90, Dies,” *New York Times*, Aug. 18, 2005).

The Taizé philosophy is spreading quickly throughout evangelicalism.

Richard Foster: Evangelicalism's Mystical Sparkplug

Richard Foster's writings have been at the forefront of the contemplative movement since the 1970s. No one has done more than this man to spread contemplative mysticism throughout Protestant and Baptist churches.

Foster's book *Celebration of Discipline*, which has sold more than two and a half million copies, was selected by *Christianity Today* as one of the top ten books of the 20th century. (For this review I obtained multiple editions of *Celebration of Discipline*, plus three other books by Foster.)

The Quaker Connection

He grew up among the Quakers (the Religious Society of Friends), was trained at George Fox College, has pastored Quaker churches, and has taught theology at Friends University in Wichita, Kansas, and at George Fox. One website calls him "perhaps the best known Quaker in the world today."

The Quaker connection is important, because one of their peculiar doctrines is direct revelation via an "inner light." This is defined in a variety of ways, since Quakerism is very individualistic and non-creedal, but it refers to a divine presence and guidance in every man. There is an emphasis on being still and silent and passive in order to receive guidance from the inner light. Other terms for it are "light of God," "light of Christ," "inward light," "the light," "light within," "Christ within," and "spirit of Christ."

George Fox used the expression "that of God in everyone." In his journal Fox said, "I was glad that I was commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit, and grace, by which all might know their salvation, and their way to God; even that divine Spirit which would lead them into all Truth, and which I infallibly knew would never deceive any" (*The Journal of George Fox*, revised by John Nickalls, 1952, p. 35).

Another prominent Quaker, Robert Barclay, called this “the light of the heart” and said “there is an evangelical and saving Light and grace in all.”

Isaac Pennington said, “There is that near you which will guide you; Oh wait for it, and be sure ye keep to it.”

Anne Riggs, a contemporary Quaker, says:

“In silence which is active, the Inner Light begins to grow ... a tiny spark. For the flame to be kindled and to grow, subtle argument and the clamor of our emotions must be stilled. It is by an attention full of love that we enable the Inner Light to blaze and illuminate our dwelling and to make of our whole being a source from which this Light may shine out” (“The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) as a Religious Community,” <http://www.quaker.org/quest/issue1-3.html>).

Like Foster, Riggs is deeply associated with the contemplative movement. She says that silent meditation kindles the “inner light” and produces revelation, but one must be careful not to test the revelations with “subtle argument.” This is blind mysticism and it will inevitably lead to spiritual delusion.

The inner light teaching is said to be based on John 1:9 -- “*That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*” Yet this verse does not say that there is a divine light in every man. It merely says that Christ gives light to every man. The epistle of Romans tells us more about this. There is the light of creation (Romans 1:20), the light of conscience (Romans 2:14-16), and the light of the Scripture (Romans 3:2). When men respond to the light that they have, they are given more light (Acts 17:26-27).

Because of the fall, man’s heart is darkened and foolish (Rom. 1:21; Eph. 4:18).

The inner light teaching was exalted above reliance on the Bible. Martin Meeker says, “... the early Quakers’ reliance on the Bible as a source of spiritual knowledge and inspiration was secondary to their belief in the Inner Light as the primary path to salvation and communication with God” (*The Doctrine of the Inner Light*).

George Fox would say to his listeners:

“You will say, Christ saith this and the Apostles say this, but what canst *thou* say? Art *thou* a child of Light and hast

thou walked in the Light, and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?"

Fox claimed that he received the doctrine of the inner light without help from the Scriptures (*The Journal of George Fox*, revised by John Nickalls, 1952, pp. 33-35).

This is an unscriptural and very dangerous position that opens the door for every sort of heresy. The Scripture is able to make the man of God *perfect*; obviously, then, nothing more is needed (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The early Quakers misinterpreted 2 Corinthians 3:6, claiming that the "letter" referred to the Scripture in general.

"Along these lines, we might note that early Quakers tended to give an expansive reading of 2 Cor. 3:6, which states that God has made us 'ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.' This verse, if 'letter' is taken to mean 'Scripture,' obviously places strong limits on the use of Scripture while extending preference to Spirit, at the very least. One thus is not surprised that it is a favorite of early Quakers, appearing as an allusion in the postscript of the Letter from the Elders of Balby, cherished by many contemporary Friends" (Stephen Angell, "Opening the Scriptures, Then and Now," QUEST, Fall-Winter 2007-2008).

If the "letter" of 2 Corinthians 3:6 refers to the Scripture in general, it would mean that Paul was exalting "the Spirit" above the Scripture. It would mean that the Scripture is not the sole authority for faith and practice, but it is only one authority and that men are free to follow their inner lights.

This is a gross misinterpretation of the passage. In truth, 2 Corinthians 3 contrasts the Law of Moses with the Gospel of Grace, the Old Covenant with the New.

2 Corinthians 3:7 leaves no doubt about this, which tells us that the "letter" that killeth is "*the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones.*" That refers, of course, to the Law of Moses given on Mt. Sinai. It was a covenant of death because it requires of fallen sinners what they cannot perform, which is perfect holiness.

It was not given to provide a way of salvation but to show men their sinful, lost condition (Romans 3:19-20).

To interpret the “letter” of 2 Corinthians 3:6 as a reference to the Scripture in general also contradicts the fact that verse 11 says the “letter” has been “done away.” Obviously the Scripture has not been done away with, but the Law of Moses has. Its purpose was to act as a “schoolmaster” to lead men to Christ and once it performs that glorious function its work is finished (Galatians 3:24-25).

It is easy to see how the Quaker philosophy paved the way for Foster to accept Catholic mysticism. It did this by its emphasis on an “inner light” and its tendency not to judge things in an exacting manner with the Bible.

Other Quakers have followed the same path, and some, like Mary Conrow Coelho, have followed it all the way to the New Age. Conrow believes in evolution, the oneness of the universe, and the unity of man with God, and she traces her New Age mysticism to deep third generation Quaker roots and its inner light teaching:

“The adults in our Quaker community spoke often of the Inner Light, the seed of God, the indwelling Christ. [Thomas Kelly] said, ‘It is a Light within, a dynamic center, a creative Life that presses to birth within us’” (“Of Leadings and the Inner Light: Quakerism and the New Cosmology,” <http://www.thegreatstory.org/QuakerMetarelig.html>).

(Richard Foster quotes Thomas Kelly favorably and frequently in his books, and the *Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible* quotes Kelly as saying: “Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center.”)

From its inception Quakerism was a heretical movement that downplayed the Bible and exalted personal revelation, and Foster is a product of that heresy even though he is on the “evangelical” side of Quakerism.

In this light it is not surprising to find him promoting Roman Catholic mystics who exalted their tradition and mystical revelations above the Scripture.

Salvation Not Clear

One thing that is glaring in its absence from Foster's books on spiritual living is a clear biblical testimony of salvation and a clear exhortation for his readers to be born again.

When he does mention salvation, he speaks of it in a confused manner.

He says, for example, that reconciliation has already been achieved in Christ.

“In some mysterious way, through shedding his blood Jesus took into himself all the evil and all the hostility of all the ages and redeemed it. He reconciled us to God, restoring the infinitely valuable personal relationship that had been shattered by sin” (*Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, p. 42).

This is not true. Though the redemption price has been paid, sinners are not reconciled until they individually put their faith in the gospel (John 3:16, 18, 36).

Foster also speaks of salvation as a process.

“One more thing is needed, namely, our response of repentance--not just once but again and again. Martin Luther declares that the life of the Christian should be one of daily repentance” (*Prayer*, p. 42).

We must understand that the previous statement is made in the context of a discussion of salvation. Foster makes no clear distinction between the one repentance for salvation (Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9) and continual repentance for sanctification (2 Cor. 12:21). Foster's statement describes either universalism or sacramentalism, but it is not the once-for-all new birth doctrine of the New Testament.

Further, Foster describes salvation in terms of an emotional experience and in association with baptism. In *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, Foster tells of a non-Christian who attended one of his contemplative seminars. Part way through the course the following event transpired.

“Throughout the weekend the Spirit of God rested tenderly upon the entire group, so much so that on Sunday afternoon this same gentleman asked quietly, ‘Would you

pray for me that I might know Jesus the way you know Jesus?' What were we to do? None of the normal responses seemed appropriate. We waited in silence. Finally one young man stood up and gently placed his hands on the man's shoulders. I have never forgotten his prayer. I felt like taking off my shoes--we were on holy ground. Strange as it may seem, he prayed a commercial. He described a popular advertisement of the day for NesTea in which different people, sweltering from the summer sun, would fall into a swimming pool with a thirst-quenching sense of 'ahhh!' on their faces. He then invited this man to fall into the arms of Jesus in the same way. The gentleman suddenly began to weep, heaving deep sighs of sorrow and grief. We watched in reverent wonder as he received the gift of saving faith. It was a tender, grace-filled moment. Later he shared with us how the prayer touched a deep center in his past relating to his baptism as a child" (pp. 48, 49).

While it is true that the Bible describes salvation in terms of drinking and eating of Jesus, the scene described by Foster is confusing at best. What was this man trusting? What was he receiving? He mentions his infant baptism. Had he come to believe that his baptism had brought him into a saving relationship with God that he was only now learning to enjoy? What *Jesus* was he trusting? What *gospel*? What was the nature of his faith? The Bible warns that the devils believe in God. Only a certain kind of faith is saving faith. Foster doesn't clarify any of this. His doctrine of salvation is exceedingly murky at best. When the unbeliever asked the group to pray for him, why didn't they share with him the gospel? They didn't need to pray about what to say. They didn't need to hesitate. Jesus has already commanded us to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). Why did they preach a NesTea commercial rather than the gospel?

And while we are talking about Richard Foster and the gospel, if he believes the true gospel of the grace of Christ without works, why does he constantly and uninhibitedly promote Catholic mystics who hold to a sacramental gospel? If he doesn't believe Rome's gospel of process salvation, why does he never warn about it plainly?

Personal salvation is foundational to prayer and Christian living. It is criminal to write books on these subjects for broad public consumption and not make salvation absolutely clear.

Roman Catholic Mysticism

Foster advocates Roman Catholic mysticism with absolutely no qualms, building his contemplative practices unequivocally upon this heretical foundation.

He recommends Ignatius of Loyola, Francis of Assisi, Benedict of Nursia, Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Genoa, Julian of Norwich, Brother Lawrence, Dominic, Catherine of Siena, John of the Cross, the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Madame Guyon, Thomas à Kempis, Catherine Doherty, Meister Eckhart, Thomas Aquinas, Hildegard of Bingen, Francis de Sales, Alphonsus de Liguori, Bernard of Clairvaux, John Henry Newman, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, G.K. Chesterton, André Louf, Henri Nouwen, Dorothy Day, Karl Rahner, John Main, Mother Teresa, Thomas Merton, Brennan Manning, John Michael Talbot, and many others.

Foster's recommendation of these Roman Catholic mystics is not half-hearted. In the introduction to the 1998 edition of *Celebration of Discipline*, he says that they taught him spiritual depth and substance (pp. xiii, xiv), and he calls them "Devotional Masters of the Christian faith." Of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, Foster says, "... it is a school of prayer for all of us" (*Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, p. 59).

There is no warning of the fact that these mystics trusted in a works gospel, venerated Mary, worshipped Christ as a piece of consecrated bread, believed in purgatory, and scores of other heresies. (For extensive documentation of this see the chapters "A Description of Catholic Monastic Asceticism" and "A Biographical Catalog of Contemplative Mystics.")

Bible Not Sole Authority

Like his Roman Catholic friends, Foster's foundational error is in not exalting the Bible as the sole authority for faith and practice. Nowhere in *Celebration of Discipline* or *Prayer: Finding the Heart's*

True Home does he instruct his readers that the Bible *alone* is God's infallible revelation and that everything must be carefully tested by it. This should be the very starting point for books on Christian spirituality and worship, but it is glaring in its absence. Foster encourages his readers to find revelation beyond Scripture through meditation, dreams, and personal prophecies.

Foster describes how Francis of Assisi found spiritual guidance. When he was puzzled as to whether he should devote himself exclusively to contemplative practices or also to engage in preaching missions (which is plainly answered in Scripture), he sent word to two "trusted friends" and accepted their replies as the very will of God. Foster says that Francis "was seeking a method that would open the gates of heaven to reveal the mind of Christ, and he took it as such" (Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, pp. 154, 155). Nowhere does Foster chide Francis of Assisi for depending on the word of man rather than the Scripture.

Neo-Orthodox Approach to Scripture

Foster's approach to Scripture is a neo-orthodox, existentialist one. It is not by accident that he quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer frequently and non-critically. (He also quotes the other two fathers of neo-orthodoxy, Karl Barth and Emil Brunner.)

"This is not a time for technical word studies, or analysis, or even the gathering of material to share with others. ... Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, '... just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love, but accept them as they are said to you, accept the Word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart, as Mary did. That is all. That is meditation'" (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 26).

Yet the Bible is not merely a love letter. It is much more. It is the infallible Word of God, and we are commanded to "analyze" it. "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Ken Silva of Apprising Ministries exposes the error of Foster's approach:

The idea expressed above by Bonhoeffer of accepting Scripture subjectively as spoken to you is completely in line with the flawed view of the text of the Holy Scripture

spread by neo-orthodox theologian Karl Barth. In neo-orthodoxy the Scripture only becomes the Word of God when the Holy Spirit illuminates it. We can sum up this wrong idea this way: 'The Bible is a divine mailbox in which we receive letters from Heaven.' But no, it isn't. The Bible itself--in full--is the letter, the message, from God.

In his book *Reckless Faith* Dr. John MacArthur hits the target dead on as he shows why neo-orthodoxy is a perfect fit for contemplative mysticism as well as why it's a necessity for it to flourish:

'Neo-orthodoxy is the term used to identify an existentialist variety of Christianity. Because it denies the essential objective basis of truth--the absolute truth and authority of Scripture--neo-orthodoxy must be understood as pseudo-Christianity. ... Neo-orthodoxy's attitude toward Scripture is a microcosm of the entire existentialist philosophy: the Bible itself is not objectively the Word of God, but it becomes the Word of God when it speaks to me individually. ...

'Thus while neo-orthodox theologians often sound as if they are affirming traditional beliefs, ... they relegate all theology to the realm of subjective relativism. ... Mysticism is perfectly suited for religious existentialism; indeed, it is the inevitable consequence. The mystic disdains rational understanding and seeks truth instead through the feelings, the imagination, personal visions, inner voices, private illumination, or other purely subjective means' (MacArthur, *Reckless Faith*) (Ken Silva, "Contemplative Mysticism in the Southern Baptist Convention," April 30, 2008, http://www.apprising.org/archives/2008/04/contemplative_m.html).

Instead of seeing the Scripture as divinely inspired and profitable in every part as 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, and therefore studying it diligently in order to rightly divide it as 2 Timothy 2:15 commands, neo-orthodoxy sees the Scripture as inspired only as it speaks to me experientially through a mystical approach.

Foster's School of Contemplative Mysticism

Foster invites his readers to “enroll as apprentices in the school of contemplative prayer” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 13), promoting thoughtless centering prayer, visualization, guided imagery, the repetition of mantras, silence, walking the labyrinth, even out-of-body experiences.

Foster says, “Christian meditation is an attempt to empty the mind in order to fill it” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 15).

Apparently Foster got some criticism for this statement, because in the next edition of *Celebration of Discipline* he omitted it and tried to contrast Eastern meditation with Christian meditation with the following words:

“Eastern meditation is an attempt to empty the mind; Christian meditation is an attempt to fill the mind. The two ideas are quite different” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1988, p. 20).

This sounds nice and tidy, but it contradicts the practice of Catholic contemplation. In reality, both Eastern meditation and Catholic meditation are an attempt to empty the mind in order to arrive at a transcendental experience. Consider the following quotes from the mystics that Foster heartily recommends:

Thomas Merton: “... the deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. IT IS WORDLESS. IT IS BEYOND WORDS, AND IT IS BEYOND SPEECH, and it is BEYOND CONCEPT” (*The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, 1975 edition, p. 308).

The Cloud of Unknowing: “I URGE YOU TO DISMISS EVERY CLEVER OR SUBTLE THOUGHT no matter how holy or valuable. Cover it with a thick cloud of forgetting because in this life only love can touch God as He is in Himself, never knowledge” (chapter 8).

John Main: “Recite your prayer-phrase [mantra] and gently listen to it as you say it. DO NOT THINK ABOUT ANYTHING. As thoughts come, simply keep returning to your prayer-phrase. In this way, one places everything aside” (*The Teaching of Dom John Main: How to Meditate*, Meditation Group of Saint Patrick's Basilica, Ottawa, Canada).

Teresa of Avila: “All that the soul has to do at these times of quiet is merely to be calm and MAKE NO NOISE. BY NOISE I MEAN WORKING WITH THE INTELLECT to find great numbers of words and reflections with which to thank God. ... in these periods of quiet, the soul should repose in its calm, and learning should be put on one side” (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 15, pp. 106, 107, 108).

Foster’s attempt to set Catholic contemplation apart from pagan mysticism cannot be sustained.

Foster encourages his readers to go deep into their inner world of silence and explore it:

“[W]e must be willing to go down into the recreating 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. They tell us of exciting possibilities for new life and freedom. They call us to the adventure, to be pioneers in this frontier of the Spirit” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 13).

Amazingly, he says that these practices are not only for believers but also for unbelievers.

“We need not be well advanced in matters of theology to practice the Disciplines. Recent converts--for that matter people who have yet to turn their lives over to Jesus Christ--can and should practice them” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 2).

Since the contemplative practices are supposed to enable the practitioner to commune with Christ within himself, how could an unsaved person “practice them”? This is evidence of Foster’s Quaker belief in an “inner light” in every man.

Some might protest that I have only focused on the more controversial parts of Foster’s teaching and have ignored the truth contained therein. I will admit that Foster’s books contain some true insights about traditional biblical prayer that in another context could be helpful, but this is ruined by his promotion of Catholic mysticism, Jungian dream interpretation, healing of

memories, and other heresies. Anyone that uses his writings is in imminent danger of being snared by error.

And though he does give many lessons about traditional biblical prayer, he considers this a shallow level of Christian living. To reach the truly “deep” levels, he urges believers to aspire to move beyond normal conversational prayer. He quotes C.S. Lewis:

“I still think the prayer without words is the best--if one can really achieve it. ... [But to] pray successfully without words one needs to be ‘at the top of one’s form’” (*Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, p. 156).

In reality, contemplative practices are beyond the bounds of Scripture and are completely “off the deep end.”

Visualization

Richard Foster encourages the exceedingly dangerous practice of guided imagery and visualization:

“The inner world of meditation is most easily entered through the door of the imagination. We fail today to appreciate its tremendous power. The imagination is stronger than the conceptual thought and stronger than the will. ... In his autobiography C. G. Jung describes how difficult it was for him to humble himself and once again play imagination games of a child, and the value of that experience. Just as children need to learn to think logically, adults need to REDISCOVER THE MAGICAL REALITY OF THE IMAGINATION. ...

“Ignatius of Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises* constantly encouraged his readers to VISUALIZE THE GOSPEL STORIES. Every contemplation he gave was designed to open the imagination. He even included a meditation entitled ‘application of the senses,’ which is an attempt to help us utilize all five senses as we picture the Gospel events. His thin volume of meditation exercises with its stress on the imagination had tremendous impact for good upon the sixteenth century.’ ...

“Take a single event like the resurrection, or a parable, or a few verses, or even a single word and allow it to take root in you. Seek to live the experience, remembering the

encouragement of Ignatius of Loyola to apply all our senses to our task. ... As you enter the story, not as a 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” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, pp. 22, 23, 26).

Note that Foster recommends Carl Jung, who followed a demonic spirit guide, as well as Ignatius of Loyola, who founded an organization dedicated to blind obedience to the pope at the very height of the murderous Inquisition. The “spirit realm” to which these men connected through meditative practices was the realm of darkness.

Foster recommends Loyola’s practice of visualizing a personal encounter with Jesus, which is presumptuous foolishness. We don’t even know what Jesus looks like and we are not supposed to. Faith is simply believing God’s Word (Romans 10:17). Faith is not putting oneself into the biblical account and letting one’s imagination run wild.

(For more about visualization and the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* see “Ignatius of Loyola” in the chapter “A Biographical Catalog of Contemplative Mystics.”)

Interpretation of Dreams

Foster promotes the interpretation of dreams, which is not surprising in light of his recommendation of Carl Jung.

“In learning to meditate, one good place to begin is with our dreams, since it involves little more than paying attention to something we are already doing. ... If we are convinced that DREAMS CAN BE A KEY TO UNLOCKING THE DOOR TO THE INNER WORLD, we can do three practical things. First, we can specifically pray, inviting God to inform us through our dreams. ... Second, we should begin to record our dreams. ... That

leads to the third consideration--how to interpret dreams. The best way to discover the meaning of dreams is to ask. 'You do not have, because you do not ask' (Jas. 4:2). ... Benedict Pererius, a sixteenth-century Jesuit, suggested that the best interpreter of dreams is the '...person with plenty of experience in the world and the affairs of humanity, with a wide interest in everything human, and who is open to the voice of God'" (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, pp. 23, 24).

Though God did speak from time to time to the prophets of old in dreams, the New Testament does not encourage God's people to seek revelation in dreams nor does it instruct us in how to interpret dreams. Foster takes James 4:2 out of context applying it to the interpretation of dreams, though it has nothing to do with such a thing. He quotes a Jesuit heretic who held a false gospel of sacramentalism. The fact is that we do not need dream revelations for we have the perfect and sufficient "voice of God" in the Scriptures. It is "*a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed*" (2 Peter 1:19).

Dream interpretation is one of the things that led Sue Monk Kidd astray as she pursued the contemplative path. She came to believe that God was speaking to her through weird dreams, and those dreams led to self-deification and goddess worship! (See "Sue Monk Kid" in the chapter "Biographical Catalog of Contemplative Mystics.")

Communing Face to Face with God in Outer Space

Foster even urges the contemplative practitioner to commune face to face with God the Father.

"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" (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 27).

Foster says that this amazing feat can be accomplished via visualized out-of-body experiences.

"In your imagination, picture yourself walking along a lovely forest path. ... When you are able to experience the

scene with all your senses, the path breaks out onto a lovely grassy knoll. Walk out into the lush large meadow encircled by stately pines. After exploring the meadow for a time, lie down on your back looking up at blue sky and white 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. Rest in His presence. Listen quietly, anticipating the unanticipated. NOTE CAREFULLY ANY INSTRUCTION GIVEN ... Do not be disappointed if no words come; like good friends, you are silently enjoying the company of each other. When it is time for you to leave, audibly thank the Lord for His goodness and return to the meadow. Walk joyfully back along the path until you return home FULL OF NEW LIFE AND ENERGY” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, pp. 27, 28).

Foster thus claims that the believer can go into outer space and receive direct revelation from Almighty God! Who needs the Bible and who needs faith when we can actually meet Christ in the center of our being, talk face to face with God the Father, and have personal revelations from Almighty God?

(The previous passage was dropped out of subsequent editions of *Celebration of Discipline*, but to my knowledge Foster has never renounced the practice. My e-mail to him about this was not answered.)

This technique is occultic. It is exactly what I was taught by Hindu gurus in the early 1970s.

In *Out on a Limb* New Ager Shirley MacLaine describes an out-of-body journey to the moon that follows the same playbook!

Consider the following description of what Brian Flynn was taught when he was training to be a psychic before his conversion to Jesus Christ:

“Carolyn then instructed us to lie on the floor, close our eyes and imagine we were lying in a field of wildflowers on a beautiful summer’s day. The wind was calm, and the smell of flowers awakened our senses. As we were lying in the field, she asked us to now leave our bodies and look down upon ourselves. Carolyn then guided us to raise our souls to the heavens and to leave our earthly bodies behind. When we reached what we believed to be the outer edges of the universe she told us to ask for a message from the universe and what we needed to know at this time. ‘Listen to the voice inside you. Ask what it is you need to know to help you release the burdens you carry,’ she said softly” (Flynn, *Running against the Wind*, 2005, p. 50).

There is no significant difference between the psychic practice and Foster’s so-called contemplative practice. When we go outside the realm of the Bible we put ourselves in the way of spiritual harm and deception.

Other Occultic Practices

Foster recommends other occultic practices.

One is **channeling the light of Christ through visualization**. Consider his description of how he taught visualizing prayer to a little boy:

“Imagination opens the door to faith. If we can ‘see’ in our mind’s eye a shattered marriage whole or a sick person well, it is only a short step to believing that it will be so. ... I was once called to a home to pray for a seriously ill baby girl. Her four-year-old brother was in the room and so I told him I needed his help to pray for his baby sister. ... He climbed up into the chair beside me. ‘Let’s play a little game,’ I said. ‘Since we know that Jesus is always with us, let’s imagine that He is sitting over in the chair across from us. He is waiting patiently for us to center our attention on Him. When we see Him, we start thinking more about His love than how sick Julie is. He smiles, gets up, and comes over to us. Then let’s both put our hands on Julie and when we do, Jesus will put His hands on top of ours. WE’LL WATCH AND IMAGINE THAT THE LIGHT FROM JESUS IS FLOWING RIGHT INTO YOUR LITTLE SISTER AND MAKING HER WELL. Let’s

pretend that the light of Christ fights with the bad germs until they are all gone. Okay!’ Seriously the little one nodded. Together we prayed in this childlike way and then thanked the Lord that what we ‘saw’ was the way it was going to be” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 37).

This is not biblical prayer; it is occultism. Mind Science practitioners and New Agers have promoted this type of thing for a century.

Biblical prayer is not the attempt to accomplish something through the power of our minds. It is talking to God and asking Him to accomplish things. There is a vast difference between these two practices, as vast as the difference between God and the Devil.

Foster recommends that parents pray for their sleeping children after this fashion:

“Imagine the light of Christ flowing through your hands and healing every emotional trauma and hurt feeling your child experienced that day. Fill him or her with the peace and joy of the Lord. In sleep the child is very receptive to prayer since the conscious mind which tends to erect barriers to God’s gentle influence is relaxed” (*Celebration of Discipline*, p. 39).

There is not the hint of support in Scripture for this practice. To attempt to bypass “the conscious mind” is occultism.

Foster’s descent into occultism is further evident by his recommendation of “**flash prayers**” and “**swish prayers**”:

“Flashing hard and straight prayers at people is a great thrill and can bring interesting results. I have tried it, inwardly asking the joy of the Lord and a deeper awareness of His presence to rise up within every person I meet. Sometimes people reveal no response, but other times they turn and smile as if addressed. In a bus or plane we can fancy Jesus walking down the aisles touching people on the shoulder and saying, ‘I love you...’ Frank Laubach has suggested that if thousands of us would experiment with ‘swishing prayers’ at everyone we meet and would share the results, we could learn a great deal about how to pray for others. ... ‘Units of prayer combined, like drops of water, make an ocean which defies resistance’” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 39).

This depicts prayer as an occultic entity rather than a simple communication addressed to God.

Foster also recommends a practice called “**palms up, palms down.**” The practitioner is instructed first to hold his palms down in order to “release” his worries and concerns, such as anger, lack of finances, or fear of an upcoming event.

“Whatever it is that weighs on your mind or is a concern to you, just say, ‘palms down.’ Release it. YOU MAY EVEN FEEL A CERTAIN SENSE OF RELEASE IN YOUR HANDS” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1998, p. 31).

Then the practitioner is to turn his palms up in order to “receive from the Lord.”

“Perhaps you will pray silently: ‘Lord, I would like to receive your divine love for John, your peace about the dentist appointment, your patience, your joy.’ Whatever you need, you say, ‘palms up.’”

There is not a hint of support for such a thing in Scripture, but this practice is found in New Age and pagan religions.

Palms up, palms down is used in walking the labyrinth (http://www.lessons4living.com/three_fold_path.htm).

It is used in Nia Technique to channel energy fields (http://www.nianow.com/teachers/continuingedu/sharingthejoy/0606/t_tip.html).

It is used in Tai Chi to manipulate the flow of the occultic chi energy (<http://groups.ku.edu/~kungfu/instructions/instructions.htm>).

Sufi dervishes hold one palm up and one palm down while whirling in order to channel their mystical experiences. I have observed this in Turkey.

Union with God

Foster has adopted the contemplative doctrine of union with God. To the question, “What is the goal of Contemplative Prayer?” Foster answers:

“To this question the old writers answer with one voice: UNION WITH GOD. ... Bonaventure, a follower of Saint Francis, says that our final goal is ‘union with God,’ which

is A PURE RELATIONSHIP WHERE WE SEE
‘NOTHING’” (*Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*,
1992, p. 159).

The “old writers” are old Catholic writers, but the Bible nowhere describes or encourages such a practice. The believer’s *complete* relationship with God is an accomplished fact in Christ.

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:6-10).

We receive Christ by faith in the gospel, and Paul says that we are to walk in Him in the same way. It is a walk of faith. We walk “*from faith to faith*” (Romans 1:17). God gives the believer many wonderful “experiences” along the way, but we are not to seek after experiences; we are to be content with knowing Christ by faith.

The believer is complete in Christ and his “union” with Christ, is an accomplished fact. It is not something we have to pursue through mysticism.

Further, the believer’s relationship with Christ in this world is not an experience of “seeing nothing.” It is, rather, an experience of knowing the Saviour through faith in His written Word and through the power of the indwelling Spirit. It is an objective, mindful experience. As former Catholic priest Richard Bennett says, “Seeing ‘nothing’ [is] just an Evangelical rehashing of Catholic irrational superstitious myth.”

Promoting Heretics

God’s Word commands us to mark and avoid those who cause divisions contrary to the apostolic faith (Romans 16:17), but Foster ignores this and draws his material from a bewildering assortment of heretics.

The following are just a few of the many examples we could give of the man's disturbing, dangerous, and unbiblical habit of quoting heretics in the most recommending manner.

For a starter, as we have noted, he asks his readers to join hands with Catholic "saints" and mystics (all of whom are committed to a gospel of works and many of whom are pantheists, panentheists, and universalists). (See the chapter "A Biographical Catalog of Contemplative Mystics" for studies on Francis of Assisi, Benedict of Nursia, Teresa of Avila, Ignatius of Loyola, Catherine of Genoa, Julian of Norwich, Brother Lawrence, Dominic, Catherine of Siena, John of the Cross, Madame Guyon, Thomas à Kempis, Meister Eckhart, Hildegard of Bingen, Bernard of Clairvaux, Karl Rahner, John Main, Mother Teresa, Thomas Merton, Brennan Manning, John Michael Talbot, and others cited by Foster.)

Foster quotes **ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI** (he spells his name Luguori) at least three times in *Celebration of Discipline* (1978, pp. 132-134). Liguori was one of the greatest worshippers of Mary the Roman Catholic Church has ever produced. His book *The Glories of Mary* (1750) is simply blasphemous. Note the following quotations:

"... though the sinner does not himself merit the graces which he asks, yet he receives them, because this Blessed Virgin asks and obtains them from God, ON ACCOUNT OF HER OWN MERITS" (*The Glories of Mary*, edited by Eugene Grimm, Brooklyn: Redemptorist Fathers, 1931, p. 73).

"IT WAS THEN BY THIS GREAT OFFERING OF MARY THAT WE WERE BORN TO THE LIFE OF GRACE; WE ARE THEREFORE HER VERY DEAR CHILDREN, SINCE WE COST HER SO GREAT SUFFERING" (p. 59).

"This was revealed by our Blessed Lady herself to St. Bridget, saying, 'I am the Queen of heaven and the Mother of Mercy; I AM THE JOY OF THE JUST, AND THE DOOR THROUGH WHICH SINNERS ARE BROUGHT TO GOD'" (p. 43).

"Let us, then, have recourse, and always have recourse, to this most sweet Queen, IF WE WOULD BE CERTAIN OF SALVATION ... LET US REMEMBER THAT IT IS IN ORDER TO SAVE THE GREATEST AND MOST

ABANDONED SINNERS, who recommend themselves to her, that Mary is made the Queen of Mercy” (pp. 43,44).

Foster heavily promotes the Catholic Trappist monk **THOMAS MERTON**, recommending many of his books and quoting from him frequently, at least 15 times in *Celebration of Discipline*, not giving the slightest warning about the man. Foster says that Merton “has done more than any other twentieth century figure to make the life of prayer widely known and understood” (*Spiritual Classics*, pp. 17, 21). He calls Merton’s *Contemplative Prayer* “a must book” and *What Is Contemplation* “an excellent introduction to contemplative prayer for everyone.” In *Meditative Prayer*, Foster gushes that “Merton continues to inspire countless men and women.” Foster includes an entire chapter by Merton in his book *Spiritual Classics*.

Foster does not tell his readers that Merton was at the forefront of interfaith dialogue, that he claimed to be both a Buddhist and a Catholic, that he had powerful mystical experiences while meditating before Buddha idols, and that he was a universalist. Nowhere did Merton say that Buddhists and Hindus and Sufis worship false gods or that they are hell-bound because they do not believe in Jesus. When writing about Zen Buddhists, Merton always assumed that they were communing with the same “ground of Being” that he had found through Catholic monasticism.

Foster recommends the universalist mystic **MEISTER ECKHART**, quoting him at least two times in various editions of *Celebration of Discipline* and saying, “Today Eckhart is widely read and appreciated, not so much for his theological opinions as for his vision of God” (*Spiritual Classics*, p. 206). How can Eckhart have had a proper vision of God when he believed that God is everything and that man is divinity?

Foster recommends the universalist **DOROTHY DAY**. He has an entire chapter by and about her in his book *Spiritual Classics*. Day wrote:

“Going to the people is the purest and best act in Christian tradition and revolutionary tradition [she is referring to Marxism] and is the beginning of world brotherhood. Never to be severed from the people, to set out always from the point of view of serving the people, not serving

the interests of a small group or oneself. ... It is almost another way of saying that we must and will FIND CHRIST IN EACH AND EVERY MAN, when we look on them as brothers” (Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*).

Foster promotes **KARL RAHNER**. There is a chapter by him in *Spiritual Classics*. Yet he believed in evolution and in salvation apart from faith in Christ. He spoke of the “anonymous Christian,” referring to an individual who unconsciously responds to God’s grace operating in the world, though he might even reject the gospel.

Foster promotes Benedictine priest **JOHN MAIN**, saying that he “understood well the value of both silence and solitude” and he “rediscovered meditation while living in the Far East” (*Spiritual Classics*, p. 155). Indeed, he did. Main learned meditation from a Hindu guru! Main combined Catholic contemplative practices with yoga and in 1975 began founding meditation groups in Catholic monasteries based on this syncretism.

Foster recommends **HILDEGARD OF BINGEN**. There is an entire chapter by her in *Spiritual Classics*. She had wild-eyed visions and wrote as the direct mouthpiece of God, yet her prophecies taught Catholic heresies, including the veneration of Mary. One of her songs was entitled “Praise for the Mother.”

Foster recommends **AGNES SANFORD**, saying, “I have discovered her to be an extremely wise and skillful counselor in these matters” and calls her book *The Healing Gifts of the Spirit* “an excellent resource” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 136, footnote 1). Foster includes an entire chapter by Sanford in his book *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home* and another chapter by her in *Spiritual Disciplines*. Sanford delved deeply into New Thought, Jungian psychology, and other dangerous fields. She said that she got her doctrine that there is a “spiritual body” within the physical body from New Thought teacher Emmet Fox (*Sealed Orders*, p. 115), who also believed that man is God. Sanford was a universalist and the founder of the dangerous field of healing of memories. She taught healing through meditation, visualization, and positive confession. She said that if she spilled hot oil on her hand in the kitchen, she would confess: “I’m boss inside of me. And what I say goes. I say that my skin shall not be affected by that boiling fat, and that’s all there is to it. I see my skin well, perfect

and whole, and I say it's to be so" (*The Healing Light*, p. 65). (For more about Sanford see the report "Agnes Sanford" at the Way of Life web site.)

Foster recommends **MARTIN MARTY**, who wrote the foreword to *Streams of Living Water*. Yet Marty is a relativist and a modernist who denies the divine inspiration of the Bible and eternal judgment in hell. Marty supports abortion and the ordination of homosexuals, and in an interview with *Playboy* in 1974 he recommended adultery in some situations.

Foster quotes **HARVEY COX**, who repudiates the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith and has described himself as a fellow traveler of the Hare Krishna movement.

Foster also quotes sympathetically and non-critically from the psychoanalyst **CARL JUNG** who rejected the Bible as mythical and communicated intimately throughout his life with a spirit guide.

Foster even recommends New Age mystics. He quotes **MARTIN BUBER**, who rejected the God of the Bible and the fall of man and believed that God is found through interaction with human society and non-doctrinal mysticism. Buber believed that the Bible is largely mythical.

Foster quotes **ELIZABETH O'CONNOR**, who was a universalist and praised the Hindu guru Krishnamurti. O'Connor believed that Christ has saved all of mankind and is creating a new world through social-justice action. There is no need for individuals to be saved; they are already children of God and merely need to find God's will for their lives and see "the divine life throbbing in the whole of the world" (O'Connor, "Each of Us Has Something Grand to Do," *Faith At Work* magazine, Nov.-Dec. 1979).

Foster recommends the writings of **DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD** (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 62; *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, p. 33; *Spiritual Classics*, p. 156, 251-260). He was a universalist who built the UN Chapel in 1952 as a New Age meditation center. There is a six-and-a-half ton block of iron ore in the center of the room, the polished top of which is lit by a single beam of light from the ceiling. The light depicts "divine wisdom," and the block depicts an empty altar representing "God worshipped in many forms" (<http://www.aquaac.org/un/>

sprtatun.html). The iron ore also represents the metal from which weapons are made and the New Age hope that through the power of meditation world peace can be achieved. Hammarskjöld said, "... we thought we could bless by our thoughts the very material out of which arms are made."

Foster recommends **PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN**. He includes a chapter by him in *Spiritual Disciplines*. Teilhard taught that God is the consciousness of the universe, that everything is one, and that everything is evolving in greater and greater enlightenment toward an ultimate point of perfection. He called this perfection CHRIST and THE OMEGA POINT. Teilhard spoke much of Christ, but his christ is not the Christ of the Bible. For this reason, Teilhard is a favorite with New Agers.

Foster also recommends the writings of pagan mystics **LAO-TSE** of China (founder of Taoism) and **ZARATHUSTRA** of Persia (founder of Zoroastrianism) (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 62).

These are only some of the heretics that Foster quotes and recommends in his books!

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).

Renovaré: Foster's Ecumenical Program

In 1988 Foster founded **RENOVARÉ** (pronounced ren-o-var-ay), which is Latin, meaning "to make new spiritually." This is an ecumenical organization that promotes spiritual renewal through contemplative exercises, charismatic practices, and other things.

Renovaré's ecumenical thrust is radical. Its objective is "to work for the renewal of the Church of Jesus Christ *in all her multifaceted expressions*." Its slogan is "Christian in commitment, international in scope, *ecumenical in breadth*." Renovaré's ministry team represents men and women "from Mennonite to Methodist, Roman Catholic to Church of God in Christ, Assembly of God to American Baptist."

Foster describes the breadth of his ecumenical vision in these words:

“God is gathering his people once again, creating of them an all-inclusive community of loving persons with Jesus Christ as the community’s prime sustainer and most glorious inhabitant. This community is breaking forth in multiplied ways and varied forms. ...

“I see a Catholic monk from the hills of Kentucky standing alongside a Baptist evangelist from the streets of Los Angeles and together offering up a sacrifice of praise. I see a people” (*Streams of Living Water*, 2001, p. 274).

In his book *Streams of Living Water* Foster “celebrates the great traditions of the Christian faith.” These are contemplative, holiness, charismatic, social justice, evangelical, and incarnational, claiming that all are “true streams flowing from the fountain of Jesus Christ.” In emerging church fashion, he believes that these “traditions,” which represent diverse and contradictory doctrines and practices, are “complementary” and needed.

At the October 1991 Renovaré meeting in Pasadena, California, Foster praised Pope John Paul II and called for unity in the Body of Christ” (*CIB Bulletin*, December 1991).

In Renovaré Foster works closely with **Dallas Willard**. Willard attended Foster’s Quaker church in the 1970s, and today he is one of Renovaré’s Ministry Team members. The Renovaré web site in March 2008 advertised an upcoming “conversation” between Willard and Foster.

Willard says that “it is possible for someone who does not know Jesus to be saved” (“Apologetics in Action,” *Cutting Edge* magazine, winter 2001, vol. 5 no. 1, Vineyard USA, <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=14>).

Anti-Dispensationalism/Kingdom Gospel

Foster calls Dispensationalism a “heresy” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 46, footnote). Thus, he believes that Christians are building the kingdom of God today and that Christ’s coming is not imminent.

Dallas Willard believes the same thing. In his book *The Divine Conspiracy* he preaches a “kingdom gospel” that downplays the centrality of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. (He calls it a “theory.”) The apostle Paul said that if anyone preaches a

different gospel than the one given to him by God he is accursed (Galatians 1:6-9). Paul's gospel is plainly stated in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, and it is not a kingdom gospel. It is the gospel of personal salvation through faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

We have refuted the kingdom gospel error in *What Is the Emerging Church*, which is available from Way of Life Literature.

Accepting the Catholic Mass

Foster allows for Rome's abominable doctrine that the consecrated wafer of the Mass is actually the body of Christ. He says it doesn't matter to him what one believes about the "eucharist":

"Christian people of honest heart have long differed over how the life of Christ is mediated to us through the Communion feast. Complicated words are used to make important distinctions: transubstantiation, consubstantiation, memorial, and the like. ... I have no desire to unsettle the convictions of any person, irrespective of the tradition by which he or she is able to enter fully into the Communion service" (*Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, p. 112).

Foster's position sounds sympathetic and kind, but it is blatant disobedience to God's Word, which commands us to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3). The apostle Paul received directly from the Lord the teaching that the Lord's Supper is a memorial (1 Cor. 11:23-25). Christ is not "mediated" through the Lord's Supper in any sense, and we are not authorized to allow heresies and private doctrines not supported by Scripture. Foster refuses to exercise this obligation. He is willing to allow his Catholic readers to believe that a piece of bread becomes Christ through priestly hocus pocus and that it is perfectly acceptable to pray to this piece of bread and to venerate it as Jesus, which is what all of his Catholic mystic friends do.

The Pentecostal-Charismatic Connection

Foster is closely associated with the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement. He believes this movement has wonderful and important things to offer to the “body of Christ” and he accepts some of the most radical charismatic practices, including spirit slaying, holy laughter, and spiritual drunkenness. He calls these things the “prayer of the heart” but they are actually doctrines of devils.

“Another expression of the Prayer of the Heart is what is sometimes referred to as ‘resting in the Spirit.’ It is the experience of being taken up by the Spirit’s power in such a way that the individual loses consciousness for a time. Some enter a trancelike state; others lie quietly on the ground or floor. ...

“‘Holy laughter’ is still another expression of the Prayer of the Heart. The joy of the Spirit seems to simply well up within a person until there is a bursting forth into high, holy, hilarious laughter. It sometimes is given to the individual in personal prayer, but more frequently it comes upon the gathered community. That is as it should be, for laughter is, after all, a communal experience. To the uninitiated it might appear that these people are drunk, and so they are--with the Spirit” (*Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, pp. 138, 139).

See the book *The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements: History and Error* for a biblical refutation of these practices. This is available from Way of Life Literature.

Healing of Memories

Foster believes in the heresy of the “healing of memories,” which he doubtless learned from the aforementioned Agnes Sanford.

“My first experience was with a man who had lived in constant fear and bitterness for twenty-eight years. He would wake up at night, screaming and in a cold sweat. He lived in constant depression, so much so that his wife said that he had not laughed for many years.

“He told me the story of what had happened those many years before that had caused such a deep sadness to hang over him. He was in Italy during the Second World War and was in charge of a mission of thirty-three men. They became trapped by enemy gunfire. With deep sorrow in his eyes, this man related how he had prayed desperately that God would get them out of that mess. It was not to be. He had to send his men out two by two and watch them get killed. Finally in the early hours of the morning he was able to escape with six men--four seriously wounded. He had only a flesh wound. He told me that the experience turned him into an atheist. Certainly, his heart was filled with rage, bitterness, and guilt.

“I said, ‘Don’t you know that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who lives in the eternal now, can enter that old painful memory and heal it so that it will no longer control you?’ He did not know this was possible. I asked if he would mind if I prayed for him--NEVER MIND THAT HE WAS AN ATHEIST; I would have faith for him. He nodded his consent. Sitting beside him with my hand on his shoulder, I invited the Lord Jesus to go back those twenty-eight years and walk through that day with THIS GOOD MAN. ‘Please, Lord,’ I asked, ‘draw out the hurt and the hate and the sorrow and set him free.’ Almost as an afterthought I asked for peaceful sleep to be one of the evidences of this healing work, for he had not slept well for all those years. ‘Amen.’

“The next week he came up to me with a sparkle in his eyes and a brightness on his face I had never seen before. ‘Every night I have slept soundly, and each morning I have awakened with a hymn on my mind. And I am happy ... happy for the first time in twenty-eight years.’ His wife concurred that it was so. That was many years ago, and the wonderful thing is that although this man has had the normal ups and downs of life since then, the old sorrows have never returned. He was totally and instantaneously healed” (*Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, p. 205).

The bottom line is that this experience is strictly and profoundly unscriptural. There is not a hint of such a thing taught in the Bible.

Some are impressed with the results of such practices, but if the only standard for the truth of a practice is its effectiveness, then we

are left with no certain standard, because the devil can imitate many “spiritual” things. Psychics and psychoanalysts have produced the same results that Foster achieved with his “healing of memory prayer.” Note that he does not say that the man was scripturally born again through this experience. He just became happy, and the manipulation of the emotions is easily within the realm of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Foster’s Interfaith Activities

Foster is involved in the **LIVING SPIRITUAL TEACHERS PROJECT**, a group that associates together Roman Catholics, liberal Protestants, Zen Buddhist monks and nuns, universalists, occultists, and New Agers. Members include the Dalai Lama, who claims to be the reincarnation of an advanced spiritual entity; Marianne Williamson, promoter of the occultic *A Course in Miracles*; Marcus Borg, who believes that Jesus was not virgin born and did not rise from the grave; Catholic nun Joan Chittister, who says we must become “in tune with the cosmic voice of God”; Andrew Harvey, who says that men need to “claim their divine humanity”; Matthew Fox, who believes there are many paths to God; Alan Jones, who calls the gospel of the cross a vile doctrine and says there is no absolute authority; and Desmond Tutu, who says, “... because everybody is a God-carrier, all are brothers and sisters.”

God’s Word unequivocally reproves Foster’s activity with the commandment, “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Conclusion

Richard Foster believes he is promoting a true spiritual revival within Christianity, but he is the blind leading the blind. His writings are an exceedingly dangerous mixture of truth and error. Pastors and teachers need to warn their people to stay away from him, for “*a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*” (Galatians 5:9).

The Widespread Influence of Mysticism

As we will see in this chapter, mysticism has spread throughout Christianity.

Mysticism Is Found in All Branches of the Emerging Church

Mysticism is at the very heart and soul of the emerging church.

Roger Oakland observes that “wind is to a sail boat what contemplative prayer is to the emerging church” (*Faith Undone*, p. 81).

The Emergent Village web site makes the following statement:

“We embrace many historic spiritual practices, including prayer, meditation, contemplation, study, solitude, silence, service, and fellowship...” (www.emergentvillage.org/about-information/values-and-practices).

These “historic spiritual practices” come from Rome’s wretched past rather than from the Bible. The liberal emerging church is a rejection of the Protestant and Baptist focus on “Scripture alone” and a return to a Roman Catholic perspective that downgrades Scripture and exalts tradition and mystical revelation.

Mars Hill Graduate School is a proponent of contemplative mysticism. Dan Allender, the president, is described as “an expert in the subject of contemplative prayer.” He draws on the writings of Thomas Merton. Mars Hill’s courses on The Kingdom of God and Spiritual Formation use textbooks by Thomas Keating and “Catholic proponent” Michael Downey (“*Christian Post Says Mark Driscoll ‘Ditches’ Emergent but Evidence Proves Otherwise*,” Lighthouse Trails, Feb. 9, 2008).

Brian McLaren’s 2008 book, *Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices*, is a complete capitulation to Roman Catholic mysticism.

Emerging leader Tony Jones’ *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* explores spiritual practices from Roman

Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy and offers suggestions on how emergents can use them. He recommends *lectio divina*, silence, centering prayer, Stations of the Cross, icons, the sign of the cross, pilgrimages to Catholic shrines, and the labyrinth. He recommends Catholic mystics such as Gregory of Sinai, John of the Cross, Thomas Merton, Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, and Theresa of Lisieux. He promotes the spiritual practices of Benedict, the founder of the Dominican order, and Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. Jones describes visits to the Jesuit Communication Center in Dublin, the Monastery of the Ascension in Idaho, the Ava Maria Center in Minnesota, St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Taizé in France, and a monastery in San Antonio. He recommends putting oneself under the spiritual direction of Catholic nuns.

Fuller Seminary professors Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, in their sympathetic study of the emerging church, say:

“Whereas the Reformation removed many rituals from the worship service, postmodern worship restores these activities. The reformation focused on the spoken word, while postmodern worship embraces the experienced word. Thus, emerging church worshipers may respond with the sign of the cross, more often associated with Catholic worship, and they receive the deep mystical aspects of communion, candles, and incense. They may retrieve ancient rituals and create new ones involving the body; they may dance in different venues” (*Emerging Churches*, p. 78).

Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis, led by Doug Pagitt, uses labyrinths, celebrates Ash Wednesday by putting ashes on the forehead, practices silent prayer and prayer dancing, makes the sign of the cross, and uses the Stations of the Cross (*Church Reimagined*, pp. 86, 101, 102). This emerging church also practices pagan and New Age forms of mysticism such as yoga, acupuncture, and massage therapy (pp. 85, 86, 105, 106). Pagitt endorses yoga in his book *Body Prayer: The Posture of Intimacy with God*. Marlene, the church's message therapist, says, “Now I realize that much of Eastern medicine is closer to the holistic model of faith I believe in than Western medicine” (p. 106). An acupuncturist told one of the church members that he had “a lot of heat” in him and it is “drying

up his blood.” “So the plan is to try to bring the heat down by bringing my ying back into harmony with my yang” (p. 98). This is pagan mystic occultism.

House of Mercy in St. Paul, Minnesota, claims to be “rooted in the Baptist tradition,” but it has confessions, celebrates the Eucharist, uses incense, appoints a thurifer (the person who swings an incense pot), and uses candles (*Emerging Churches*, pp. 224, 225).

Quest in Seattle has retreats at a Catholic priory and is coached by nuns (*Emerging Churches*, p. 231).

Rob Bell, pastor of Mars Hill Bible Church in Michigan, invited a Roman Catholic nun from the Dominican Center at Marywood to speak at a church service in March 2006. Ray Yungen remarks: “The Dominican Center has a Spirituality center, which offers a wide variety of contemplative opportunities, including Reiki, a Spiritual Formation program, a Spiritual Director program, labyrinths, Celtic Spirituality, and more. Bell stated in this service how much this sister had taught him in his spiritual walk” (*A Time of Departing*, p. 178). Reiki involves channeling spiritual energy and communicating with spirit guides.

Tony Campolo claims that Roman Catholic mystics such as Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, and Catherine of Siena are supersaints that we should emulate (*The God of Intimacy and Action*, pp. 9, 10).

The emerging church is at the forefront of a “new monasticism.” *The Boston Globe* reports:

“There is now a growing movement to revive evangelicalism by reclaiming parts of Roman Catholic tradition--including monasticism. Some 100 groups that describe themselves as both evangelical and monastic have sprung up in North America, according to Rutba House’s [Jonathan] Wilson-Hartgrove. Many have appeared within the past five years. Increasing numbers of evangelical congregations have struck up friendships with Catholic monasteries, sending church members to join the monks for spiritual retreats. St. John’s Abbey, a Benedictine monastery in Minnesota, now makes a point of including interested evangelicals in its summer Monastic

Institute” (“The Unexpected Monks,” *The Boston Globe*, Feb. 3, 2008).

Karen Sloan “can often be found praying in Catholic churches” and “hanging around the Dominican order and monastic life” (*An Emergent Manifesto*, p. 260). She authored *Flirting with Monasticism: Finding God on Ancient Paths*.

The late Robert Webber viewed mysticism as a key to the “ancient future” ecumenism that he promoted. He recommended a slew of Catholic mystics, including Thomas à Kempis, Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Avila, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, John of the Cross, and Thomas Merton, calling their works “essential,” “a great treasure,” and “indispensable.” He warned that “we dare not avoid the mystics” and even said that “those who neglect these works do so to their harm” (*Ancient-Future Faith*, p. 135).

The emerging church is even experimenting with *DRUM CIRCLES*.

Mike Perschon is the associate pastor of Holyrood Mennonite Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He teaches contemplative practices at youth retreats. Writing for the Youth Specialties web site in 2004, Perschon described entire nights “devoted to guided meditations, drum circles, and ‘soul labs’” (“Desert Youth Worker: Disciplines, Mystics and the Contemplative Life,” Youth Specialties, www.youthspecialties.com/articles/topics/spirituality/desert.php). This was part of the church’s “alternative spiritual expressions.”

In 2004 the Cameron United Methodist Church in Denver, Colorado, hosted a community drum circle night entitled “drumming up the spirits” (Christine Stevens, “Drumming Up the Spirits,” *Christian Sound & Song*, Issue 9, 2005, http://www.ubdrumcircles.com/article_spirits.html). This was “a kick-off to future church based drumming programs” and since then the women’s spirituality group has taken up drumming. This church is led by a husband-wife pastor team. Stevens says: “Drumming is happening in churches across America. It is being used in children’s programs, worship services, family events, and men’s and women’s groups.”

The group Rhythm Praise is dedicated to hosting drum circles and “rhythm events.” It is said to “open up a dialog within a

community where communication, shared values, self-esteem and unity can be attained” (<http://www.rhythmpraise.org/>). It is “a vehicle to break down barriers between people and to foster healing,” which sounds very emergent.

The Church of the Holy Comforter of Richmond, Virginia, founded by Regena Stith, uses drum circles. Stith first experienced the drums in the late 1990s during a yoga retreat (Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone*, p. 70). She said that during the drumming “you move out of your head.”

Roger Oakland writes:

“Even though some in the emerging church might consider the drumming at the Church of the Holy Comforter in Richmond a bit extreme, it is growing in popularity and use in the postmodern religious scene. And according to proponents, drumming is a doorway for ecumenical harmony” (*Faith Undone*, p. 70).

Oakland quotes Zachary Reid who says drumming “can transcend denominational and cultural boundaries” (“Feeling the Beat: The Spiritual Side of Drum Circles,” *Richmond Times Dispatch*, March 10, 2007).

Oakland also sites an article by Asher Main at the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship web site (March 2005), that says, “It would be to our advantage as worshippers to harness this resource that we see in secular world culture and adapt it and bring it into the church.”

I have a niece who was heavily involved in drum circles when she was using hallucinogenic drugs. The weekly drum circle became her “church.” She would dance for hours in a trance-like state, caught up in the power of rhythm. After she repented and got right with the Lord she realized that she had been communicating with devils.

Can you imagine the Lord Jesus and Peter and John sitting by the Lake of Galilee pounding away on drums in an attempt to have a mystical experience with God!

The “conservative emerging church” has almost the same enthusiasm for contemplative practices as the “liberal” branch.

In his book *The Emerging Church* Dan Kimball says that it is to their hurt that evangelicals “have neglected so many of the

disciplines of the historical church [Catholic Church], including weekly fasting, practicing the silence, and *lectio divina*” (p. 223).

On page 93 Kimball recommends *Soul Shaper: Exploring Spirituality and Contemplative Practices* by Tony Jones. This book advocates many Roman Catholic practices, including silence, stations of the cross, centering prayer, and the labyrinth.

Kimball recommends the Taizé style of worship (*Emerging Worship*, pp. 83, 89). His Vintage Faith Church features candles, incense, crucifixes, artwork, chanting, ambient music, a “multisensory approach,” and liturgy (*Emerging Worship*, pp. 78-85, 92, 93).

In October 2001, Kimball wrote an article entitled “A-maze-ing Prayer: The Labyrinth Offers Ancient Meditation for Today’s Hurried Souls.” He describes how that he and his wife first walked a labyrinth for an hour in a darkened hall at the National Pastors Conference in San Diego, and how that they were so impressed that he led his own church to build a labyrinth for its annual art event that year. They transformed one of the church’s rooms into a “medieval prayer sanctuary,” complete with art on the walls and candles placed “all around the room to create a visual sense of sacred space.”

Mark Driscoll is the president of the Acts 29 church planting network. Its “Recommended Reading List” includes many works promoting Roman Catholic contemplative spirituality, including books by Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, St. John of the Cross, Thomas Merton, Teresa of Avila, and Ignatius of Loyola.

Portland’s Imago Dei’s School of Theology has a course called “Spiritual Formation in the Outdoors,” and the required reading includes Henri Nouwen’s books *Reaching Out* and *The Way of the Heart*.

Mysticism Is Spreading Throughout Evangelicalism

Mysticism is not limited to the emerging church. Everywhere we look evangelicals are turning to Roman Catholic styles of contemplative spirituality.

The cover story for the February 2008 issue of *Christianity Today* was “The Future Lies in the Past: Why Evangelicals Are Connecting with the Early Church as They Move into the 21st Century.” It describes the “lost secrets of the ancient church” that are being rediscovered by evangelicals. The ancient church in question happens to be the Roman Catholic.

The article observes that many young evangelicals dislike “traditional Christianity” and want “a renewed encounter with a God” that goes beyond “doctrinal definitions.” This, of course, refers to mysticism.

Christianity Today recommends that evangelicals “stop debating” and just “embody Christianity.” Toward this end they should “embrace symbols and sacraments” and dialogue with “Catholicism and Orthodoxy”; they should “break out the candles and incense,” pray the “lectio divina,” and learn the Catholic “ascetic disciplines” from “practicing monks and nuns.”

Christianity Today says that this “search for historic roots” will lead “to a deepening ecumenical conversation, and a recognition by evangelicals that the Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox are fellow Christians with much to teach us.”

The article ends with these amazing words:

“This is the road to maturity. That more and more evangelicals have set out upon it is reason for hope for the future of gospel Christianity. That they are receiving good guidance on this road from wise teachers is reason to believe that Christ is guiding the process. And THAT THEY ARE MEETING AND LEARNING FROM FELLOW CHRISTIANS IN THE OTHER TWO GREAT CONFESSIONS, ROMAN CATHOLIC AND EASTERN ORTHODOX, IS REASON TO REJOICE IN THE POWER OF LOVE.”

What *Christianity Today* sees as evidence of spiritual revival, we see as apostasy. This is a no holds barred invitation to Catholic mysticism. It will not lead to light but to the same darkness that has characterized Rome throughout its history, and it will lead beyond Rome to the paganism from which Rome originally borrowed its “contemplative practices.”

Some people and places where the influence of mysticism is heavily seen follows:

Acts 29

See Mark Driscoll.

Biola

J.P. Moreland and Klaus Issler, professors at Biola, have coauthored *The Lost Virtue of Happiness: Discovering the Disciplines of the Good Life* (NavPress, 2006). Consider the following quotes:

“Go to a retreat center that has one of its purposes the provision of a place for individual sojourners. Try to find a center that has gardens, fountains, statues, and other forms of beautiful artwork. In our experience, Catholic retreat centers are usually ideal for solitude retreats. ... We also recommend that you bring photos of your loved ones and a picture of Jesus... Or gaze at a statue of Jesus. Or let some thought, feeling, or memory run through your mind over and over again” (*The Lost Virtue of Happiness*, pp. 54-55).

“We recommend that you begin by saying the Jesus Prayer about three hundred times a day. ... When you first awaken, say the Jesus Prayer twenty to thirty times. As you do, something will begin to happen to you. God will begin to slowly occupy the center of your attention” (*The Lost Virtue of Happiness*, pp. 90, 92).

Tony Campolo

Tony Campolo practices and promotes Catholic contemplative prayer is a big way. He even says that he learned how to be a Christian through these practices.

“When I was a boy growing up in a lower-middle-class neighborhood in West Philadelphia, my mother, a convert to Evangelical Christianity from a Catholic Italian immigrant family, hoped I would have one of those

dramatic 'born-again' experiences. That was the way she had come into a personal relationship with Christ. She took me to hear one evangelist after another, praying that I would go to the altar and come away 'converted.' BUT IT NEVER WORKED FOR ME. I would go down the aisle as the people around me sang 'the invitation hymn,' but I just didn't feel as if anything happened to me. For a while I despaired, wondering if I would ever get 'saved.' It took me quite some time to realize that entering into a personal relationship with Christ DOES NOT ALWAYS HAPPEN THAT WAY. ...

"In my case INTIMACY WITH CHRIST WAS 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. ...

"I learned about this way of having a born-again experience from reading the Catholic mystics, especially *The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola*. ...

"After the Reformation, we Protestants left behind much that was troubling about Roman Catholicism of the fifteenth century. I am convinced that we left too much behind. The methods of praying employed by the likes of Ignatius have become precious to me. With the help of some Catholic saints, my prayer life has deepened" (Campolo, *Letters to a Young Evangelical*, 2006, pp. 25, 26, 30, 31).

This is very frightful testimony. Campolo does not have a biblical testimony of salvation. He admits that he is not "born again" in the way that his mother was, through a dramatic biblical-style conversion. Instead, he describes his "intimacy with Christ" as something that has developed gradually through the practice of Catholic mysticism.

This is to confuse salvation with spiritual growth. The conversions that are recorded in the New Testament are of the instantaneous, dramatic variety. We think of the woman at the well (John 4), Zacchaeus (Luke 19), the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost

(Acts 2:38-42), the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8), Paul (Acts 9), Cornelius (Acts 10), Lydia (Acts 16), and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16), to name a few. The Lord Jesus Christ said that salvation is a birth (John 3:3). That is not a gradual thing that happens throughout one's life; it is a life-changing event!

Further, Catholic mysticism is unscriptural. Jesus forbade repetitious prayers (Mat. 6:7). He taught us to pray in a verbal, conscious manner, talking with God as with a Father, addressing God the Father external to us, not searching for a mystical oneness with God in the center of one's being through thoughtless meditation (Mat. 6:9-13).

Campolo's testimony is more akin to the Roman Catholicism that his mother was *saved out of*. It is repeating mantras and doing good works and progressing in spirituality. Campolo clearly attributes his "spirituality" to Catholic-style mysticism. He even speaks in terms of experiencing "oneness with God" and entering a "thin place" wherein God "is able to break through and envelop the soul."

"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.' The thin place is that spiritual condition wherein the separation between the self and God becomes so thin that God is able to break through and envelop the soul. ... Like most Catholic mystics, [Loyola] developed an intense desire to experience A 'ONENESS' WITH GOD" (*Letters to a Young Evangelical*, pp. 26, 30).

Roger Oakland observes:

"This term 'thin place' originated with Celtic spirituality (i.e., contemplative) and is in line with panentheism. ... Thin places imply that God is in all things, and the gap between God, evil, man, everything thins out and ultimately disappears in meditation" (*Faith Undone*, pp. 114, 115).

I suspect that Campolo's many heresies are largely the product of his unscriptural mystical practices that have brought him into

communion with something other than the Jesus Christ of the Bible.

Campolo denies the infallible inspiration of the Bible, believes in theistic evolution, holds to the divinity of man, believes that non-Christians may go to heaven, calls Muslims his brothers and sisters, rejects the imminent return of Christ, and seeks a unity whereby “theology is left behind.” (For documentation of these statements see the report “Beware of Tony Campolo” at www.wayoflife.org.)

Christian Bookstores

Christian and secular bookstores have begun carrying many books promoting “this pre-Reformation form of spirituality.”

These include *The Cloister Walk*, *Book of Hours*, *The Soul Aflame*, *Evensong*, *A Book of Daily Prayer*, *The Divine Hours*, and *The Prayer Book of the Medieval Era*. There are books by an assortment of Catholic “saints” and mystics, including GREGORY OF SINAI and JOHN OF THE CROSS (early desert monastics who believed salvation is by works), TERESA OF AVILA (who had visions of Mary), JULIAN OF NORWICH (who walled herself off from society for 20 years in a tiny cell), IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA (the founder of the Jesuits who were at the forefront of the brutal Counter-Reformation Inquisition), AUGUSTINE (who claimed that baptism takes away an infant’s sin and claimed that Mary did not commit sin), MADAME GUYON (who experienced what she thought was union with the essence of God), THOMAS MERTON (a Catholic Trappist monk who called himself a Buddhist and died in Thailand on a pilgrimage to Buddhist shrines), BASIL PENNINGTON (who taught that man shares God’s divine nature), THOMAS KEATING (who promotes occultic kundalini yoga), JOHN MICHAEL TALBOT (who prays to Mary and calls Buddhist and Hindu gurus “our brothers and sisters”), and HENRI NOUWEN (who taught that all people can be saved “whether they know Jesus or not”). You will also often find *The Cloud of Unknowing* in Christian bookstores, which was written by an unknown 14th century Catholic monk who taught that the meditation practitioner can find union with God by emptying the mind of thoughts.

Christian Rock Festivals

One of the seminars advertised for the annual Cornerstone Festival in Bushnell, Illinois, June 30 - July 3, 2005, was “Pilgrimage: Creativity & Contemplative Prayer” led by Debra Strahan. The official program said: “Debra will be speaking daily at the Prayer Tent on traditional methods of prayer and the part creativity and art expression plays in breathing life into worship. She will speak on *Lectio Divina*, or praying the Scriptures, with an accompanying workshop using beads as a tool for concentration. Also there will be direction in processing and meditating on the installation pieces in the Pilgrimage.”

Cornerstone University

Cornerstone University has been promoting Roman Catholic contemplative prayer since at least 2005. In 2006, the school's Spiritual Formation resources page and recommended reading list included such dangerous authors as Brian McLaren, Donald Miller, Richard Foster, Jim Wallis, Brennan Manning, Robert Webber, and Dallas Willard.

Brian McLaren was a chapel speaker in 2005, in spite of the fact that he does not believe that the Bible is the infallibly inspired Word of God and does not believe in the traditional biblical doctrine of Christ's blood atonement, among many other heresies.

Cornerstone University was founded in 1941 as the Baptist Bible Institute at Wealthy Street Baptist Church under the pastorate of the fundamentalist leader David Otis Fuller. The school's name was changed to Cornerstone in 1994 in conjunction with a change in direction, though it remained in the orb of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (which was also changing direction in those days).

In the early 2000s, the school's stance on music changed. In 2004, it lifted its 63-year ban on dancing. Ashley Reiman, one of the student leaders who worked to have the ban rescinded, told the Grand Rapids Press, “I'm so pumped. I think it's great. I love dancing.” Ashley got into trouble with the school two years ago when she “went clubbing in Florida” on Spring Break.

Mark Driscoll and Acts 29

Contemplative mysticism also infiltrated the Mars Hill Church of Seattle, Washington, where the senior pastor was Mark Driscoll. It has also infiltrated the Acts 29 church planting network that was co-founded by Driscoll. (He resigned as senior pastor of Mars Hills Church in late 2014, and the various campus churches became autonomous in January 2015.)

In an article entitled “Obedience,” Driscoll recommends *Celebration of Discipline* by contemplative guru Richard Foster and *Sacred Pathways* by Gary Thomas.

Driscoll’s web site also features an article entitled “Meditative Prayer: Filling the Mind” by Winfield Bevins, an Acts 29 pastor. Bevins, too, recommends Foster and claims that “Christian” contemplative practices are different from their “pagan” counterparts in that “Eastern meditation is an attempt to empty the mind,” whereas “Christian meditation is an attempt to fill the mind.” Lighthouse Trails refutes this error as follows:

“Bevins has got this very wrong, as does Richard Foster. Contemplative proponents say that, while the method practiced by Christian contemplatives and eastern-religion mystics may be similar (repeating a word or phrase over and over in order to eliminate distractions and a wandering mind), the Christian variety is ok because the mind isn’t being emptied but rather filled. But in essence, both are emptying the mind (i.e., stopping the normal thought process). That is where the contemplatives say making a space for God to fill” (“Mark Driscoll Is a Contemplative Proponent,” Lighthouse Trails, Dec. 21, 2009).

Focus on the Family

Focus on the Family is a big promoter of contemplative prayer. Its list of “reviewed” and approved authors include some of the most prominent contemplative prayer gurus, including Richard Foster, Gary Thomas, Dallas Willard, Eugene Peterson, Ken Blanchard, Brennan Manning, Leonard Sweet, and Ruth Haley Barton.

Focus on the Family's *Father Gilbert Mysteries* promotes joining a monastery and studying "the classic spiritual disciplines of prayer and meditation" (Introduction to the second CD).

In Focus on the Family's *Adventures in Odyssey*, Eugene goes to a monastery to experience "silence" (episode # 366, "Solitary Refinement"). "Much like the recent Fox Home Video production, *Be Still*, 'Solitary Refinement' is an infomercial for Contemplative Spirituality. Talking about going to monasteries to learn the disciplines of silence and solitude, getting rid of distractions and thoughts in order to hear God, the program makes references throughout that encourage children to practice the "spiritual disciplines," with a particular emphasis on the disciplines of silence and solitude. Anyone who has been researching and studying the contemplative prayer movement will understand the message in this presentation" ("Focus on the Family's *Adventures in Odyssey* has Eugene Going to a Monastery," LighthouseResearch.com, Nov. 23, 2011).

Leighton Ford

Leighton Ford, Billy Graham's brother-in-law, has been traveling deeper and deeper into the waters of contemplative prayer.

In the forward to Ruth Barton's 2008 contemplative book *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, he says he has come to the place in his life where he wants to explore "silence, stillness, reading Scripture not by going through great chunks but by meditating on smaller portions, listening carefully to God and my own heart, having a trusted spiritual companion as a friend on the journey" (p. 14).

Ford recommends *The Music of Silence* by David Steindl-Rast and Sharon Lebell. Steindl-Rast is not only a Catholic monk, laden down with Catholic heresies, he is a religious syncretist. He says, "Envision the great religious traditions arranged on the circumference of a circle. At their mystical core they all say the same thing, but with different emphasis" ("Heroic Virtue," *Gnosis*, Summer 1992). Beginning in 1967, following the Second Vatican Council, Steindl-Rast became heavily involved with Catholic-Buddhist interfaith dialogue and studied under four Zen Buddhist

masters. He came to believe that Catholics and Buddhists are communing with the same God and wrote *The Ground We Share: Buddhist and Christian Practice*. This was co-authored by Zen Buddhist Robert Aitken Roshi. He is involved with the Network for Grateful Living, which is New Age organization dedicated to the goal of creating a new world through such things as contemplative mysticism, visualization, interfaith dialogue, environmentalism, developing an awareness of angels, and the Buddhist concept of flowing gratefully with the moment and being one with the “ground of Being.”

Following is a review of Ford’s own contemplative book *The Attentive Life*:

“[Ford] equates his attentive practices with centering prayer as explained by Roman Catholic mystic Thomas Keating, ‘We wait quietly in God’s presence, perhaps repeating a ‘sacred word,’ [mantra] and let go of our thoughts. ... Centering prayer is not so much an exercise of attention as intention’ (p. 179; cp pp. 11-13, 24, 129, 176, 190).

“Secondly, the methods recommended for the attentive life come primarily from Roman Catholic mysticism: the Benedictine Prayer Hours, monasticism (p. 21), labyrinths (pp. 51-52), lectio divina (pp. 65, 93-96), use of spiritual directors (p. 66), praying the Jesus Prayer (p. 77), centering prayer (pp. 129, 176, 179), the examen (p. 197), Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises (p. 197), with a dose of Quakerism (p. 26, 124) and Celtic ‘thin places and prayers,’ thrown in (pp. 159, 211).

“Finally, virtually all of Ford’s spiritual heroes are mystic: Douglas Steere (a Quaker), G.K. Chesterton, Julian of Norwich, Henri Nouwen, Simone Weil, Gregory Nazianzus, Vincent Donovan, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Mother Teresa, Eugene Peterson, St. Fursey, Lesslie Newbigin, Dallas Willard, Jesuit poet Gerald Manley Hopkins, Anthony Bloom, Kierkegaard, fourth century monk John Cassian, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Keating, Thomas Merton, Alice Fryling, St. Francis, Hilary of Tours, Marcus Loane (Archbishop of Sydney, Australia), Carlo Carletto, David Steindl-Rast, Bishop A. Jack Dain,

Quaker Thomas Kelly, Hwee Hwee Tan and Catherine of Siena.

“In addition, Ford makes strange statements that border on pantheism (p. 91), describes God as ‘pure energy’ (p. 177) rather than Spirit and talks about being able to see Christ in our faces (pp. 194-196).

“To say all of this is disturbing is an understatement. What little value might be contained in *The Attentive Life* is completely negated by the unbiblical practices and teachings found throughout this book. It is astounding that a man who once preached the gospel of Christ could have drifted so far” (Gary Gilley, review of Leighton Ford’s *The Attentive Life*, June 5, 2009, Lighthouse Trails).

Ford is swimming in the most dangerous spiritual waters imaginable, and he is influencing many others to follow his example.

General Baptists

The Regular Baptist (NOT the GARBC) are also strolling on the contemplative bridge. Lighthouse Trails reports that contemplative teachers Jennifer Kennedy Dean and Larry McKain are scheduled to speak at the General Baptist Mission and Ministry Summit, July 28-30, 2008. Dean’s book *Heart’s Cry: Principles of Prayer* promotes silent contemplative practices and visualization. She says that this creates the setting “in which God can reveal to us His secrets” (p. 128). McKain is the founder and Executive Director of New Church Specialties, which is associated with New Church University. “The University is using books by an array of contemplative and or/ emerging authors to train these leaders. Some of these are: Leonard Sweet, Brian McLaren, Steven Covey, leadership guru John Maxwell, mystic proponent Jim Collins, contemplative/emerging proponent Rick Warren, and New Age meditation proponent Ken Blanchard” (“Is General Baptist Ministries Going Toward Contemplative,” Lighthouse Trails, July 11, 2008).

The General Baptist Mission’s web site encourages churches to seek “renewal and refocus through New Church University training.” Lighthouse Trails reports:

“[We] spoke with General Baptist Ministries director, Dr. Steven Gray, and we asked him to describe the relationship between New Church Specialties and GBM. He told us that a ‘partnership’ between the two organizations had been formed. He did state that even though the New Church University is using McLaren and Sweet’s books, the General Baptist Ministries is not. But he did acknowledge that GBM is recommending books by Richard Foster and Dallas Willard. ...

“While GBM may not currently be using the recommended teachings of Leonard Sweet in their training, the General Baptist partnership with McKain and the University gives a green light to GBM churches to explore Sweet’s and Blanchard’s materials. It is Leonard Sweet who has stated that ‘the power of small groups is in their ability to develop the discipline to get people in-phase with the Christ consciousness and connected with one another’ (p. 147). So one can only wonder, is this Christ consciousness what some General Baptists will ultimately find? If they turn to Sweet, the answer is yes. We pray and hope that General Baptist Ministries will reconsider their partnership with New Church Specialties and also their affinity with Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, and other contemplatives. Otherwise they may end up with a kind of thinking that brought Ken Blanchard to say: ‘Buddha points to the path and invites us to begin our journey to enlightenment. I ... invite you to begin your journey to enlightened work’ (*What Would Buddha Do at Work*) or Richard Foster to say, ‘We should all without shame enroll in the school of contemplative prayer’ (*Celebration of Discipline*, p. 13).”

Bill Hybels and Willow Creek

Bill Hybels and the Willow Creek Community Church have jumped onboard the mystical bandwagon, and Willow Creek is not only one megachurch that is located west of Chicago, it is also a network of more than 12,000 churches that hold the same philosophy. The fall 2007 issue of *Willow* magazine featured “Rediscovering Spiritual Formation” by Keri Wyatt Kent. It is a glowing recommendation for mystical practices, including

monastic communities. She cites Richard Foster and other contemplative mystics. While noting that some conservatives are suspect of the new mysticism, she says that the practices have largely become mainstream.

Willow Creek's Leadership Summit in August 2006 introduced Jim Collins to the 70,000 participating Christian leaders. Since 1982 he has been a disciple of New Ager Michael Ray. That year Collins took Ray's *Creativity in Business* course, which "takes much of its inspiration from Eastern philosophy, mysticism and meditation techniques" and promotes tapping into one's inner wisdom. It describes an "inner person" called "your wisdom keeper or spirit guide" that "can be with you in life" ("Willow Creek Leadership Summit Starts Today," Lighthouse Trails, Aug. 10, 2006). Collins wrote the foreword to Ray's 2005 book *The Highest Goal: The Secret that Sustains You in Every Minute*, which claims that man is divine and recommends Hindu mind emptying meditation. The book quotes Hindu gurus Ram Dass, Jiddu Krishnamurti, and Swami Shantananda. Yet Collins calls it "the distillation of years of accumulate wisdom from a great teacher." Following is a quote from the book:

"I attended a meditation-intensive day at an ashram [Hindu spiritual center] to support a friend. As I sat in meditation in what was for me an unfamiliar environment, I suddenly felt and saw a bolt of lightning shoot up from the base of my spine out the top of my head. It forced me to recognize something great within me ... this awareness of my own divinity" (Michael Ray, *The Highest Goal*, p. 28; the foreword is by Jim Collins; quoted from "Willowcreek Leadership Summit Starts Today," Aug, 10, 2006, Lighthouse Trails).

Again we are reminded that the evangelical-emerging church contemplative movement has intimate and growing ties with the New Age.

David Jeremiah

David Jeremiah, in his 2003 book *Life Wide Open: Unleashing the Power of a Passionate Life*, quotes many mystics favorably,

including Sue Monk Kidd (goddess worshipper), Peter Senge (Buddhist), and Catholic “saint” John of the Cross.

Seven years before Jeremiah quoted favorably from Kidd, she published *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, describing her journey from a Southern Baptist Sunday School teacher to a goddess worshipper via the path of contemplative prayer.

“As I grounded myself in feminine spiritual experience, that fall I was initiated into my body in a deeper way. I came to know myself as an embodiment of Goddess. ... The day of my awakening was the day I saw and knew I saw all things in God, and God in all things” (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, 2002 edition, p. 161, 163).

Lighthouse Trails reports: “Jeremiah’s church, Shadow Mountain, encourages their men to become involved with contemplative spirituality. Currently, Pastor John Gillette of Shadow Mountain encourages the use of Richard Foster’s book, *Celebration of Discipline*. In 2006 Jeremiah signed on with Ken Blanchard and Laurie Beth Jones in the *Lead Like Jesus* conference. Jeremiah’s 2006 book, *Captured by Grace*, discusses Henri Nouwen and includes endorsement by Ken Blanchard” (“David Jeremiah Quotes New Ager,” Lighthouse Trails, Nov. 19, 2007).

Tim Keller

Pastor Tim Keller of New York’s Redeemer Presbyterian Church gives the following dangerous contemplative instruction:

“Go into silence, placing yourself in the presence of God with the words, ‘Here I am.’ As distractions come to mind let them go by, imagining they are boats floating down a river. Let the current take the distractions away. Don’t follow the distractions. Gently return to God repeating, ‘Here I am.’ Let the current of God’s Spirit carry you. What is this like for you?” (“Revisiting: Embrace Your Inner Monk,” featuring Tim Keller, August 6, 2010, thereforemedtraveler.wordpress.com).

Liberty University

Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, founded by the late Jerry Falwell and currently led by his son, has been moving into the realm of contemplative prayer for several years.

In February 13, 2007, Lighthouse Trails reported that David Wheeler's course *Foundations in Youth Ministry II* uses Mark Yaconelli's book *Contemplative Youth Ministry*.

"Yaconelli, the son of the late Mike Yaconelli (founder of Youth Specialties), is a strong advocate for contemplative. On Mark Yaconelli's website, under Practices and Processes, Yaconelli lays out some 'guidelines' for centering prayer and recommends Thomas Keating and Basil Pennington, both of whom promote panentheism (God is in all things and people). In another course by Dr. Wheeler, he is using a book by Doug Fields (Saddleback Youth Pastor)" ("Liberty University Uses Contemplative/Emergent Textbooks," *Lighthouse Newsletter*, Feb. 13, 2007).

The course *Evangelism and Christian Life* has a "Course Bibliography" that is "a who's who of contemplative prayer (Foster, Willard, Warren, and Boa, etc.)."

Max Lucado

Max Lucado threw his hat into the contemplative ring with the publication of *Cure for the Common Life*. In this dangerous book he promotes the Buddhist-Catholic monk Thomas Merton who taught panentheism and universalism.

Merton was "a strong builder of bridges between East and West" (*Twentieth-Century Mystics*, p. 39). The *Yoga Journal* made the following observation:

"Merton had encountered Zen Buddhism, Sufism, Taoism and Vedanta [Hinduism] many years prior to his Asian journey. MERTON WAS ABLE TO UNCOVER THE STREAM WHERE THE WISDOM OF EAST AND WEST MERGE AND FLOW TOGETHER, BEYOND DOGMA, IN THE DEPTHS OF INNER EXPERIENCE. ... Merton embraced the spiritual philosophies of the East and integrated this wisdom into [his] own life through direct

practice” (*Yoga Journal*, Jan.-Feb. 1999, quoted from the Lighthouse Trails web site).

Merton was a student of Zen master D.T. Suzuki and Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. The titles of Merton’s books include *Zen and the Birds of the Appetite* and *Mystics and the Zen Masters*. Merton said: “I see no contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity. The future of Zen is in the West. I intend to become as good a Buddhist as I can” (David Steindl-Rast, “Recollection of Thomas Merton’s Last Days in the West,” *Monastic Studies*, 7:10, 1969, http://www.gratefulness.org/readings/dsr_merton_recol2.htm).

Merton adopted the heresy that within every man is a pure spark of divine illumination and that men can know God through a variety of paths:

“At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God. It is like a pure diamond blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody. I have no program for saying this. It is only given, but the gate of heaven is everywhere” (*Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*, 2007, DVD).

Merton said that monks of all religions are “brothers” and are “already one.” At an interfaith meeting in Calcutta, India, in 1968, sponsored by the Temple of Understanding, Merton said:

“I came with the notion of perhaps saying something for monks and to monks of all religions because I am supposed to be a monk. ... My dear brothers, WE ARE ALREADY ONE. BUT WE IMAGINE THAT WE ARE NOT. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are” (“Thomas Merton’s View of Monasticism,” a talk delivered at Calcutta, October 1968, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, 1975 edition, appendix III, p. 308).

Merton used the terms God, Krishna, and Tao interchangeably.

In June 2009 I visited the Abbey of Gethsemani, where Merton lived and where he is buried. Many books were on display that promote interfaith unity. These include *Zen Keys* by Thich Nhat Hanh, *Bhagavad Gita* (Hindu scriptures), *Buddhists Talk about*

Jesus and Christians Talk about Buddha, Meeting Islam: A Guide for Christians, and Jesus in the World's Faiths.

For Lucado to quote Merton and to refer to him in a positive way is inexcusable and is evidence that he has made a total commitment to contemplative mysticism, regardless of what lame excuses he might make.

Lucado also quotes New Age mystic Martin Buber's *The Way of Man*. Lucado promotes Buber's New Age heresy that every man has a "divine spark." He further quotes Catholic "saint" Thomas Aquinas, Eugene Peterson, and Richard Foster, the most prominent popularizer of Catholic mysticism today.

Lucado tries to package Catholic contemplative mysticism as an innocent and Scriptural evangelical practice. He even says it is not "mystical," but this is false as we have proven in our book *Contemplative Mysticism*.

Mennonite

The January 2001 issue of *Christianity Today* contained a lengthy description by Mennonite pastor Arthur Boers of his visit to four ecumenical religious communities--Taizé, Lindisfarne, Iona, and Northumbria--and HIS INCREASING LOVE FOR LITURGICAL PRACTICES. Boers testifies:

"About two decades ago, on a whim, I bought a discontinued book by a famous Catholic priest. As a convinced evangelical Anabaptist, I was skeptical. But I was also curious. As it turned out, this book became the starting point in my recovery of a fuller prayer life through the daily office."

As we have seen, Taizé promotes a non-doctrinal ecumenical mysticism. Letting his "curiosity" get the best of him and not being nearly "skeptical" enough, Boers ignored the Bible's warning that "*evil communications corrupt good manners*" and became corrupted by the writings of a Catholic priest.

Moody Press and Moody Radio

In 2011 Moody Press published *Prayers for Today: A Yearlong Journey of Contemplative Prayer*. It is based on the writings of

Catholic mystics such as Thomas Aquinas, Teresa of Avila, Mother Teresa, and Meister Eckhart, theological modernist Harry Fosdick, and other heretics.

In November 2011, Moody Bible Institute's *Midday Connection* radio program featured Adele Ahlberg Calhoun as a guest, and Moody host Anita Lustrea recommends Calhoun in her book *What Women Tell Me*. "Lustrea tells how she met Calhoun during a course called *Growing Your Soul* (Calhoun is co-director and founder of the program) and how Calhoun taught her some of the contemplative 'spiritual disciplines' p. 125" ("*Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*," Lighthouse Trails, July 2, 2012). Calhoun's *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* is a primer on contemplative mysticism. Calhoun enthusiastically recommends Roman Catholic mystics such as Ignatius Loyola, St. Benedict, Julian of Norwich, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Richard Rohr, Henri Nouwen, Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, David Steindl-Rast, William Meninger, and M. Basil Pennington. In the Acknowledgement's page, she says that "their ideas, voices and examples have shaped my own words and experience of the disciplines." Not only did these mystics hold to a false gospel, which is under the divine curse of Galatians 1, but some of them were panentheists and universalists.

Beth Moore

Beth Moore, a Southern Baptist who is influential with a broad spectrum of evangelical women, is also on the contemplative bandwagon. She joined Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, and other contemplatives on the *Be Still* DVD, which was published in April 2008 by Fox Home Entertainment. Shortly after it was released she issued a retraction of sorts, but she soon retracted her retraction. In a statement published on May 26, 2008, Moore's Living Proof Ministries said: "We believe that once you view the *Be Still* video you will agree that there is no problem with its expression of Truth"

(www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/bethmoorestatement.htm).

To the contrary, the very fact that it features Richard Foster and Dallas Willard are serious problems!

Lighthouse Trails issued the following discerning warning:

“In the DVD, there are countless enticements, references and comments that clearly show its affinity with contemplative spirituality. For instance, Richard Foster says that anyone can practice contemplative prayer and become a ‘portable sanctuary’ for God. This panentheistic view of God is very typical for contemplatives. ... The underlying theme of the *Be Still* DVD is that we cannot truly know God or be intimate with Him without contemplative prayer and the state of silence that it produces. While the DVD is vague and lacking in actual instruction on word or phrase repetition (which lies at the heart of contemplative prayer), it is really quite misleading. What they don’t tell you in the DVD is that this state of stillness or silence is, for the most part, achieved through some method such as mantra-like meditation. THE PURPOSE OF THE DVD, IN ESSENCE, IS NOT TO INSTRUCT YOU IN CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER BUT RATHER TO MAKE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY HUNGRY FOR IT. The DVD even promises that practicing the silence will heal your family problems. ... THIS PROJECT IS AN INFOMERCIAL FOR CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICE, and because of the huge advertising campaign that Fox Home Entertainment has launched, contemplative prayer could be potentially introduced into millions of homes around the world.

“[On the DVD Moore says], ‘... if we are not still before Him [God], we will never truly know to the depths of the marrow of our bones that He is God. There’s got to be a stillness.’ ... [But is] it not true that as believers we come to Him by grace, boldly to His throne, and we call Him our friend? No stillness, no mantra, no breath prayer, no rituals. Our personal relationship with Him is based on His faithfulness and His love and His offer that we have access to Him through the blood of Jesus Christ, and not on the basis of entering an altered state of consciousness or state of bliss or ecstasy as some call it” (“Beth Moore Gives Thumbs Up to *Be Still* DVD,” <http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/bethmoorethumbsup.htm>).

In her book *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things* (2002), Moore recommends contemplative Roman Catholics Brother Lawrence and Brennan Manning.

Of Manning she says that his contribution to our generation “may be a gift without parallel” (p. 72) and calls *Ragamuffin Gospel* “one of the most remarkable books” (p. 290). She does not warn her readers that Manning never gives a clear testimony of salvation or a clear gospel in his writings, that he attends Mass regularly, that he believes it is wrong for churches to require that homosexuals repent before they can be members, that he promotes the use of mantras to create a thoughtless state of silent meditation, that he spent six months in isolation in a cave and spends eight days each year in silent retreat under the direction of a Dominican nun, that he promotes the dangerous practice of visualization, that he quotes very approvingly from New Agers such as Beatrice Bruteau (who says, “We have realized ourselves as the Self that says only I AM ... unlimited, absolute I AM”) and Matthew Fox (who says all religions lead to the same God), and that he believes in universal salvation, that everyone including Hitler will go to heaven. (For documentation see “A Biographical Catalog of Contemplative Mystics” in our new book *Contemplative Mysticism: A Powerful Ecumenical Glue*.)

If Moore truly wants to disassociate herself from the contemplative movement, that would be a simple matter. Let her issue a statement renouncing Richard Foster and Brennan Manning and their Roman Catholic contemplative friends and unscriptural practices. But don’t hold your breath, dear readers. As of 2011, she has done no such thing.

Navigators

The Navigators have been promoting contemplative spirituality since the mid-1980s. The January/February 1984 issue of *Discipleship Journal* featured an article by Richard Foster entitled “Listening to the Great Silence.” It taught Catholic meditative prayer. The May-June 2002 issue of *Discipleship Journal* had an article on *lectio divina* by Catholic Benedictine Monk Luke Dysinger.

These examples only begin to give an idea of how widely the contemplative practices have spread within evangelical and Baptist circles.

Pensacola Christian College

A Beka is the educational publishing arm of Pensacola Christian College in Pensacola, Florida. A Beka's high school *World Literature* course, fourth edition, 2011, features two selections from the writings of Roman Catholic contemplative mystics: "The Practice of the Presence of God" by Brother Lawrence and "The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas À Kempis.

By definition, a world literature course analyzes non-Christian literature, but a literature course intended for Christian young people should give *clear* background warnings about spiritual danger, whereas in this case A Beka does no such thing.

À Kempis and Lawrence represent a rapidly-growing and very dangerous contemplative movement today, and it is unconscionable for A Beka not to mention this.

Consider Brother Lawrence, (real name Nicholas Herman), a Carmelite monk. The Carmelite order is devoted to Mary. It is called the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. I have visited the Carmelite church in Rome, Santa Mari della Vittoria (Church of Our Lady of Victory), which is dedicated to the idolatrous "Queen of Heaven." It contains a fresco depicting *The Virgin Mary Triumphant over Heresy*. Mary is being praised by the choirs of heaven for her victory over such "heresies" as the Bible as the sole authority for faith and practice and salvation by Christ's grace alone without works. Santa Mari della Vittoria also contains a depiction of *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, another deluded Catholic "saint" who is influential in the contemplative movement.

The Carmelite order follows the *Book of the First Monks*, which establishes its doctrine of monasticism on wild-eyed allegorical meanings of Scripture, teaches salvation through sacraments and good works, and promotes blind mysticism.

A century before Lawrence, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross had reformed the Carmelite order with their mystical practices and extreme asceticism.

Teresa of Avila, one of the most prominent of Rome's contemplative mystics, claimed to have seen Mary ascend to heaven and to have seen Jesus in the consecrated host of the mass (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 39, p. 305; chap. 29, page 206). She claimed that she was visited by Mary and Joseph who clothed her in a "robe of great whiteness and clarity" (chap. 33, p. 247). She also claimed to have rescued many souls from purgatory (chap. 39, p. 296).

Teresa inflicted tortures on herself and practiced extreme asceticism. In this state, she experienced visions and heard voices that caused her great fear and anguish and led her friends and some of her confessors to think she was demon possessed. She experienced temporary paralysis so that she had no power over herself, and she would allegedly levitate. She described one occasion in which the nuns tried unsuccessfully to hold her down!

She even described her own mental state in terms of lunacy:

"But this intellect of mine is so wild that it seems like a raving lunatic. Nobody can hold it down, and I have no sufficient control over it myself to keep it quiet for a single moment" (*The Life of Saint Teresa*, chap. 30, p. 219).

Teresa experienced visions and "raptures" through mindless meditation.

"All that the soul has to do at these times of quiet is merely to be calm and make no noise. By noise I mean working with the intellect to find great numbers of words and reflections with which to thank God. ... in these periods of quiet, the soul should repose in its calm, and learning should be put on one side" (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 15, pp. 106, 107, 108).

"The intellect, at any rate, is of no value here" (chap. 16, p. 113).

This is the type of contemplative mysticism that is promoted by Richard Foster and other leaders of the modern "evangelical" contemplative prayer movement. It puts one in danger of communing with demons masquerading as angels of light.

The practice of contemplative prayer almost invariably leads to ecumenical sympathy with Roman Catholicism, and often it leads to heresies of universalism and even pantheism (God is everything)

and panentheism (God is in everything) as we have documented in the book *Contemplative Mysticism: An Ecumenical Bond*.

Brother Lawrence lived in this radically heretical environment. Deceived by Rome, he thought that his own works atoned for sins. He labored under a terrible legalistic bondage of Roman asceticism rather than the wonderful freedom of the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Brother Lawrence's words about abiding in Jesus, which are quoted in A Beka's *World Literature* textbook, are innocuous in themselves, but they must be defined by the context in which he lived and by the heresies that he held.

Either the authors of this textbook are unfamiliar with this context, in which case they should not be writing textbooks, or they know about the context and are hiding it from their students, in which case they are committing a great sin by building bridges to this dangerous world.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Brother Lawrence looked upon sacrifice and suffering as a means of salvation.

In part one of *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Lawrence is quoted as saying, “This made me resolve to give the all for the All: so after having given myself wholly to God, TO MAKE ALL THE SATISFACTION I COULD FOR MY SINS, I renounced, for the love of Him, everything that was not He...”

Priest Joseph de Beauford, who compiled *The Practice and Presence of God* after Lawrence's death, observed: “His one desire was that he might suffer something for the love of God, FOR ALL HIS SINS, and finding in his last illness a favorable occasion for suffering in this life, he embraced it heartily.”

That Lawrence, like Teresa of Avila, was dealing with demons is obvious. When something would take his mind away from God, he would receive “a reminder from God” that moved him to “cry out, singing and dancing violently like a mad man” (Gerald G. May, *The Awakened Heart*, HarperCollins, 1993, p. 134).

Why does Pensacola's A Beka introduce high school students to these very dangerous people, even in the context of world literature, without a *very loud and clear* warning?

It is imperative that parents, teachers, pastors, and missionaries be properly educated about the spiritual dangers that God's people are facing today.

John Piper

John Piper is also on the contemplative bandwagon. At the 2012 Passion Conference in Atlanta, Piper encouraged the use of *Lectio Divina*, or at least something similar and equally dangerous.

“The theme of the conference was ‘Jesus, speak to me.’ In a very dramatic voice, he read slowly from the book of Ephesians. In his slow, breathy manner, he concluded by reading Paul’s final greetings found in chapter 6, verses 21-24. As he concluded, he closed his Bible and his eyes as he softly said, ‘Be quiet, and ask the Lord to speak to you.’ Silence fell over the auditorium as thousands waited to hear God speak to them.

“What was going on is called *Lectio Divina*, which is a mystic Roman Catholic monastic practice of Scripture reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation that supposedly promotes communion with God. The focus is ‘not a theological analysis of biblical passages, but to view them with Christ as the key to their meaning.’ ... Madame Guyon, a 17th century Catholic mystic promoter of *Lectio Divina*, said, ‘The content of what you read is no longer important. The scripture has served its purpose; it has quieted your mind; it has brought you to him ... you are not there to gain an understanding of what you have read; rather you are reading to turn your mind from the outward things to the deep parts of your being’” (Robert Congdon, *New Calvinism's Upside-Down Gospel*, pp. 18, 19).

Prairie Bible Institute

“In *Mosaic* (a Prairie student run paper that shows how the students at Prairie have been very affected by contemplative/emerging spiritualities) in a December 2006 article titled “The

Arrogance of the Evangelical Church,' Morgan Mosselman (listed as the Commissioner of Spiritual Life and officer of the Prairie Student Union in the 2005-2006 Chapel handbook) suggests we can 'learn from our Catholic friends' in the area of spiritual life. Mosselman then favorably refers to a man named Simon Chan. Chan is described as 'the world's most liturgically minded Pentecostal.' His book *Liturgical Theology* is a primer for the Catholic Eucharist and other Catholic means of spirituality. In that same issue of *Mosaic*, there is an article by contemplative writer Lauren Winner (*Girl Meets God*). And in other issues, regular columnists write about and quote from other mysticism proponents such as Erwin McManus. Prairie Bible Institute's textbook lists have authors that include contemplative proponent John Ortberg, mystic promoter Jim Collins, and Richard Foster's colleague, Dallas Willard (*Renovation of the Heart*). They also have textbooks by Ruth Haley Barton (trained at the interspiritual Shalem Institute), as well as Gary Thomas (*Sacred Pathways* where he says to repeat a word or phrase for twenty minutes) and Rick Warren, both whom avidly promote contemplative" ("Will Prairie Bible Institute Ignore Contemplative Problem?" Lighthouse Trails, Nov. 18, 2007).

Radio Bible Class

The June 6, 2006, entry for the Radio Bible Class's *Our Daily Bread* is built around the book *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by the late Roman Catholic Henri Nouwen. Not only was Nouwen a Roman Catholic priest but, as we have already documented, he believed that men could be saved apart from Jesus Christ.

Southern Baptist Convention

Contemplative practices have infiltrated the Southern Baptist Convention at every level.

Contemplative mysticism has spread to its **SEMINARIES**. On a visit to Golden Gate Theological Seminary in February 2000, I noticed that most of the required reading for the course on "Classics of Church Devotion" are books by Roman Catholic authors: *Spiritual Exercises* by Ignatius of Loyola, *The Cloud of Unknowing* by an unknown 14th century Catholic monk, *New*

Seeds of Contemplation by Thomas Merton, *Confessions of Saint Augustine*, *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis, *Selected Works of Bernard of Clairvaux*, and *The Interior Castle* by Teresa of Avila.

Contemplative mysticism is promoted by influential pastors. Consider **RICK WARREN** of Saddleback Church, who is doubtless the most influential of all Southern Baptist pastors. He frequently quotes from Roman Catholics to promote meditation, centering prayer, and other forms of contemplative spirituality. In *The Purpose Driven Church* and *The Purpose Driven Life*, Warren advises his readers to “practice his presence” as per Brother Lawrence (of the Roman Catholic Carmelite Order) and to use “breath prayers” as per the Benedictine monks. Warren quotes from John Main (Catholic monk who believes that Christ “is not limited to Jesus of Nazareth, but remains among us in the monastic leaders, the sick, the guest, the poor”); Madame Guyon (a Roman Catholic who taught that prayer does not involve thinking); John of the Cross (who believed the mountains and forests are God); and Gary Thomas (who defines Centering Prayer as “a contemplative act in which you don’t do anything”). Warren quotes from Mother Teresa and Henri Nouwen, who believed that men can be saved apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ. Nowhere does Warren warn his readers that these were dangerous false teachers.

Warren recommends mystic Richard Foster (*The Purpose Driven Church*, pp. 126-127) and states that the contemplative movement will help bring the church into “full maturity” and that it “has had a valid message.”

Richard Foster builds his contemplative practices unequivocally upon ancient Catholic monasticism. Foster recommends Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, Francis of Assisi, Augustine, Julian of Norwich, Brother Lawrence, Dominic, John of the Cross, the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Madame Guyon, Thomas à Kempis, Catherine Doherty, Meister Eckhart, Thomas Aquinas, Alphonsus de Liguori, Bernard of Blairvaux, Nenri Nouwen, John Main, Thomas Merton, John Michael Talbot, and others. There is no warning of the fact that these Catholic mystics trusted in a works gospel, venerated Mary, worshipped Christ as a

piece of consecrated bread, believed in purgatory, and scores of other heresies.

Consider **ED YOUNG, SR.**, a two-time president of the SBC and pastor of one of the largest Southern Baptist congregations (Second Baptist in Houston). One of his staff members (since October 2010), **GARY THOMAS**, has written a book on contemplative prayer entitled *Thirsting for God: Spiritual Refreshment for the Sacred Journey*, in which he promotes Roman Catholic mystics such as Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Madame Guyon, Brother Lawrence, and Ignatius of Loyola (founder of the Jesuits), calling them “precious Christian brothers and sisters” and “spiritual soul mates.” Ed Young recommends Thomas in the highest manner, saying: “If Gary Thomas writes a book, you need to read it. It’s as simple as that. He has incredible insight into spiritual truths and is able to make those truths graspable for all audiences” (Garythomas.com). (See “Dr. Ed Young Promoting Contemplative Spirituality,” Apprising Ministries, July 14, 2011).

Contemplative mysticism is also promoted by state associations affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

The **Grand Valley Baptist Association** of Grand Junction, Colorado, has the following contemplative books on its recommended list: *Prayerwalking* by Steven Hawthorne and Graham Kendrick, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism* by George Hunter, and *Red Moon Rising* by Peter Greig and Dave Roberts. Greig, the founder of the 24/7 prayer movement, is a strong promoter of Roman Catholic contemplative practices.

SpiritLines Newsletter, a publication of the **Baptist State Convention of North Carolina**, unabashedly promotes Roman Catholic mysticism. The newsletter is the voice of the BSCNC’s Office of Prayer for Evangelization & Spiritual Awakening, which is led by Windy Minton Edwards (a “Spiritual Formation Coach”). Consider the themes of recent issues: November 2007, Christian Meditation; September and October 2007, Spiritual Retreats; March 2007, Silence. The May 2008 issue recommended *With Open Hands* by Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation* by Thomas Merton, *Call to the Center* by Basil Pennington,

Beginning Contemplative Prayer by Kathryn Hermes, and other materials by Roman Catholic contemplatives.

The January 2008 issue of *SpiritLines* recommended a “Five-Day Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat” at St. Francis Springs Prayer Center, Stoneville, NC. Retreat Leaders were Joan Ricci Hurst and Paul Supina. Hurst is on the staff of Contemplative Outreach, an organization committed to the philosophy of Catholic monk and interfaith guru Thomas Keating.

SpiritLines also recommended “The Gathering Pilgrimage” at Living Waters Catholic Reflection Center, Maggie Valley, NC. This June 2008 retreat was led by Liz Ward and promoted a wide variety of Catholic contemplative practices. Ward was formerly on the board of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, which was founded by an Episcopal priest named Tilden Edwards. He was deeply involved in interfaith dialogue and was particularly drawn to Buddhism. He even said that Jesus and Buddha were good friends (“Jesus and Buddha Good Friends,” Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation Newsletter, winter 2000).

In the book *Spiritual Friend* (1980), Edwards said that the contemplative prayer movement is “THE WESTERN BRIDGE TO FAR EASTERN SPIRITUALITY” (p. 18).

That is exactly right, and many Southern Baptists are walking across that bridge.

Charles Stanley

At least three issues of Charles Stanley’s *In Touch* magazine have featured contemplative mysticism.

In the October 2011 issue Stanley promotes meeting God in “the silence,” where the contemplative is to “do nothing but make yourself available to the Lord” and “sense His presence.

“... solitude is a deliberate choice to spend time with God and give Him your undivided attention. ... My first suggestion is to find a silent place that’s free from distractions. Once you’re there, the next step is to **DO NOTHING** but make yourself available to the Lord. In that moment, God is not necessarily expecting you to read through a prayer list or study a devotional. Simply invite Him to meet with you in the stillness and speak to you

through His Word, however He chooses. Depending on your point of need, He may speak words of encouragement or instruction, or simply surround you with His love. Don't be discouraged if **SENSING HIS PRESENCE** doesn't happen right away. With time you'll **EXPERIENCE IT** in ways that are transforming and unforgettable. ... Solitude helps us develop an abiding sense that He's there with us every step of the way, guiding our conversations and activities. ... most importantly through solitude we become intimate with God, and nothing in this world compares with knowing Him deeply" ("Ask Dr. Stanley," *In Touch*, Oct. 2011).

What Stanley is recommending is not biblical meditation; it is blind mysticism that is borrowed from Rome's dark monastic past. Stanley is not explaining how to get alone with God without distractions and study and meditate on Scripture and pray. He is explaining how to sit in silence and DO NOTHING and expect God to meet me in that context. When he mentions God speaking through "His Word," he is not referring to Scripture but through an experience. To seek an "experience" with God is the opposite of walking by faith (which comes only through God's Word, the Bible, Romans 10:17) and is a recipe for spiritual delusion. If I were to follow Charles Stanley's recommendation to seek God in "the silence" and expect Him to reveal Himself to me in some experiential way, how would I know that it is God that is speaking? The Bible warns repeatedly about the danger of being deceived by the devil, who transforms himself into an angel of light (e.g., 2 Corinthians 11; 1 Peter 5:8). God's Word instructs the believer to be sober and vigilant against spiritual deception at all times. Every thought and experience must be carefully tested by Holy Scripture.

A January 2011 *In Touch* article entitled "The Craft of Stability: Discovering the Ancient Art of Staying Put" by Cameron Lawrence recommends the contemplative monastic community Rutba House which is the home of contemplative author Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove. *In Touch* admits that Rutba's principles are borrowed from St. Benedict's "rule of life" ("Contemplative Spirituality Lands on Charles Stanley's *In Touch* Magazine ... Again," Lighthouse Trails Blog, June 20, 2011). That should be reason enough to reject Rutba House, but *In Touch* has only praise. The *In Touch* article

endorses Wilson-Hartgrove even though his books teach Roman Catholic contemplation and are praised by emergent heretics such as Brian McLaren, Phyllis Tickle, Tony Campolo, and Richard Rohr, all of whom deny the traditional Bible doctrine of the blood atonement and believe that it is possible to be saved apart from personal faith in Christ. In his book *The Wisdom of Stability*, Wilson-Hartgrove promotes the Catholic-Buddhist Thomas Merton and New Age Catholics Teilhard de Chardin and Joan Chittister (who says we must become “in tune with the cosmic voice of God”).

In January 2010, *In Touch* published an article by Joseph Bentz about two contemplative proponents, Anne Lamott and Sara Miles, the latter being a practicing lesbian who has lived with her lesbian partner for many years (“Letter to Charles Stanley,” Lighthouse Trails, Jan. 18, 2010). In a 2007 interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Miles said that “the Bible is a collection of documents that is remade every time somebody reads it” and ridiculed the idea that we can say “the Bible says this or that thing is good or bad.”

Joseph Stowell

Joseph Stowell was president of Moody Bible Institute until 2008, when he took the presidency of Cornerstone University. He also works with Radio Bible Class.

Stowell is a promoter of Roman Catholic contemplative prayer. In a February 2012 blog (RenewRefreshRefocus) he recommended Leighton Ford’s *The Attentive Life*.

See Leighton Ford for a review of this book.

Lee Strobel

The following is excerpted from “Veritas Seminary Conference Teacher,” Lighthouse Trails, May 5, 2011:

“Lee Strobel is one of the most well-read Christian authors today. ... Strobel is also a strong supporter of his son’s (Kyle Strobel) very contemplative ministry called Metamorpha. On the Metamorpha website, Lee Strobel is listed as a ‘supporter’ of Metamorpha. Strobel’s public

support of *Metamorphia* will bring much attention to Kyle's ministry and in turn pointing many unsuspecting people toward contemplative spirituality. Certainly having his father listed as a 'supporter' will give much credibility in the eyes of many Christians to Kyle Strobel's work. Incidentally, also on the *Metamorphia* site, it lists InterVarsity Press as a 'sponsor' of *Metamorphia*, and Biola's Institute of Spiritual Formation is named as a "partner." To give even more recognition to his son's organization, Lee Strobel mentions *Metamorphia*, the book by his son, on his own website. ... *Metamorphia* is called 'an online community for Christian spiritual formation' and lists several contemplative practices, including repetitive prayers, lectio divina, and Ignatian exercises. Recommended books on the site are a who's who of contemplative prayer proponents such as Dallas Willard, Thomas Merton, Richard Foster, Henri Nouwen, Adele Calhoun, Thomas Kelly, and several others. ... There is no question that Kyle Strobel is following the contemplative path. He resonates with numerous mystics whom Lighthouse Trails has critiqued in the past, as well as emergents like Leonard Sweet and Dan Kimball. ...

"In his book, *Metamorphia* Kyle gives credit to Biola professor and contemplative advocate John Coe for helping him come to his present spiritual understanding. Coe is the founder of Biola's Institute of Spiritual Formation where contemplative prayer is openly promoted. ...

"It seems a paradox that Lee Strobel is a 'supporter' of an extremely contemplative ministry and yet also a speaker for conferences at Veritas Evangelical Seminary, which carries a statement on its website that states it rejects contemplative spirituality. How can this be? If Lee Strobel supports contemplative spirituality, why is he teaching students on the Calvary Chapel campus at Veritas? Both Veritas and Calvary Chapel have made statements in the past that they reject contemplative mystical spirituality. But by including a contemplative supporter for teaching, doesn't that neutralize those previous statements?" ("Veritas Seminary Conference Teacher," *Lighthouse Trails*, May 5, 2011).

Chuck Swindoll

The very influential Chuck Swindoll is also centering down. In *So, You Want to Be Like Christ?* he promotes contemplative practices, favorably citing Richard Foster, Henri Nouwen, and Dallas Willard. He calls Foster's work *Celebration of Discipline* "meaningful" and has an entire chapter on "Silence and Solitude." There is no warning that Foster builds his contemplative practice upon Catholic monasticism, with its false sacramental gospel, veneration of Mary and the Host, purgatory, outrageous asceticism, extra-scriptural revelations, etc.

Dave and Deborah Dombrowski of Lighthouse Trails describe their efforts to warn Swindoll:

"In September 2005, we were informed that Chuck Swindoll was favorably quoting Henri Nouwen and Richard Foster on his *Insight For Living* program. We contacted *Insight for Living* and spoke with Pastor Graham Lyons. We shared our concerns, then later sent *A Time of Departing* [by Ray Yungen] to him and also a copy to Chuck Swindoll. In a letter dated 10/3/05 from Pastor Lyons, we were told, 'With his schedule I doubt he will read it.' We are sorry that Chuck Swindoll has time to read Henri Nouwen and Richard Foster but no time to read *A Time of Departing*, especially in light of the fact that thousands of people will read Chuck Swindoll's book, listen to his broadcasts and now believe that the contemplative authors are acceptable and good. Incidentally, Swindoll quoted these men, not just a few times, but many times throughout the book."

Vineyard Churches

On August 31, 2003, I made a research visit to the Vineyard Fellowship in Anaheim, California, and the speaker, a Vineyard pastor, preached a message on contemplative prayer. He described it as "gazing at length on something" and as "coming into the presence of God and resting in the presence of God," as lying back and floating "in the river of God's peace." The speaker described sitting on a couch "in the manifest presence of Jesus." He quoted St. John of the Cross, "It is in silence that we hear him." He

recommended the writings of Thomas Merton, who promoted the integration of Zen Buddhism with Christianity. The Vineyard speaker described personal revelations that he has allegedly received from God, claiming that on one occasion Jesus said to him, “Come away, my beloved,” and he obeyed by staying in a monastery. He used several Catholic “saints” as examples of the benefit of contemplative prayer, and there was no warning whatsoever about their false gospel, their blasphemous prayers to Mary, or any other error. In fact, he recommended that his listeners “read the lives of the saints.” He mentioned St. Catherine of Siena and said that Christ appeared to her and placed a ring on her finger signifying her marriage to Him, thus giving credence to this fable. He mentioned “St. Anthony,” one of the fathers of the deeply unscriptural Catholic monasticism. Anthony spent 20 years in isolation, and after that, according to the Vineyard pastor, the “saint’s” ministry was characterized by “signs and wonders.”

Gary Thomas

See Southern Baptist Convention.

Rick Warren

See Southern Baptist Convention.

Donald Whitney

Donald Whitney is a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and his book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* is a bridge to contemplative mysticism.

Though Whitney himself emphasizes the supremacy and authority of Scripture, he favorably and repeatedly quotes mystics Richard Foster and Dallas Willard who have moved far beyond biblical simplicity.

Richard Foster is praised as follows at the very beginning of Whitney’s book by J.I. Packer, author of the Foreword:

“Ever since Richard Foster rang the bell with his *Celebration of Discipline* (1978), discussing the various spiritual disciplines has become a staple element of conservative Christian in-talk in America. This is a happy

thing” (J.I. Packer, Foreword, *Spiritual Disciplines* by Donald Whitney, p. 9).

A happy thing? What a foolish statement by a man who was alleged to be a great biblicist. It reminds us of the terrible deceptiveness of the apostasy of these last days and how that it has permeated “evangelicalism.”

Packer was deceived by his ecumenical affiliations, just as God’s Word warns in 1 Corinthians 15:33. By 1989 he was making statements such as the following:

“[The charismatic movement] must be adjudged a work of God. ... Sharing charismatic experience ... is often declared ... to unify Protestants and Roman Catholics at a deeper level than that at which their doctrine divides them. This, if so, gives charismaticism great ecumenical significance” (*Calvary Contender*, July 15, 1989).

Packer signed the heretical 1994 “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” document. Thus it is no surprise that he thought the spread of Richard Foster’s Catholic mysticism was “a happy thing.”

Apparently Donald Whitney thinks the same thing or he would not have printed Packer’s statement prominently in his book.

Later in his book, Whitney himself praises Richard Foster and his “great contribution,” as follows:

“Richard Foster’s *Celebration of Discipline* has been the most popular book on the subject of the Spiritual Disciplines in the last half of the twentieth century. The great contribution of this work is the reminder that the Spiritual Disciplines, which many see as restrictive and binding, are actually the means to spiritual freedom. He rightly calls the Disciplines the ‘Door to Liberation’” (Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, p. 22).

When one pastor inquired as to why Whitney quoted Foster, he replied that “since it was not an academic book, I didn’t want the emphasis to be critical” and that he wrote the book before Foster founded the ecumenical Renovaré and “tipped his hand on some other matters” (review of *Spiritual Disciplines* on Amazon by Tim Challies, Feb. 7, 2005).

That this is a smokescreen is proven by five facts:

First, Foster founded *Renovaré* in 1988, three years before Whitney published the first edition of *Spiritual Disciplines*. Second, Foster's 1978 book *Celebration of Discipline*, which is repeatedly cited by Whitney, is filled with the promotion of dangerous Roman Catholic mystics--such as Ignatius of Loyola, Francis of Assisi, Benedict of Nursia, Teresa of Avila, Brother Lawrence, Dominic, Catherine of Siena, John of the Cross, Meister Eckhart, Hildegard of Bingen, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Thomas Merton--as well as their heretical practices, such as breath prayer, centering prayer, "entering the silence," even out-of-body experiences. In other words, Foster had "tipped his hand" for all to see by the late 1970s. Third, in later editions of his book (2001, 2012) Whitney has not removed the references to Foster or warned his readers about the man's heresies in spite of the fact that he has been challenged on this point. This is something he could have done if he were truly concerned about this matter and if he cared about the influence his recommendation could have on his readers. Fourth, Whitney hasn't even pretended to justify his recommendation of Dallas Willard, who is at least as dangerous as Richard Foster.

Further, as we have documented in *What Is the Emerging Church?* Willard believes that "it is possible for someone who does not know Jesus to be saved" ("Apologetics in Action," *Cutting Edge* magazine, Winter 2001). He rejects the infallible inspiration of Scripture, saying, "Jesus and his words have never belonged to the categories of dogma or law, and to read them as if they did is simply to miss the point" (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. xiii). Willard is confused about salvation, asking the strange question, "Why is it that we look upon salvation as a moment that began our religious life instead of the daily life we receive from God" (*The Spirit of the Disciplines*). He rejects the traditional gospel of Christ's blood atonement (*The Divine Conspiracy*, pp. 44, 49). In *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, which promotes Roman Catholic-style contemplative mysticism, Willard includes the endorsement of Sue Monk Kidd, a New Age "goddess." (See "From Southern Baptist to Goddess Worship" at the Way of Life web site.) Willard promotes the Catholic-Buddhist-Universalist Thomas Merton and an assortment of heresy-laden mystic "saints." Willard claims that God is not concerned about doctrinal purity. In fact, he says that God loves theologians of all types.

This is a man that Whitney quotes repeatedly and favorably.

Further, Whitney himself recommends the practices of “the medieval [Catholic] mystics,” which is one of the cardinal errors that Foster and Willard are guilty of (p. 65). Consider the following statement that Whitney cites with complete approval from Carl Lundquist:

“The medieval mystics wrote about nine disciplines clustered around three experiences: purgation of sin, enlightenment of the spirit and union with God. ... Today Richard Foster’s book, *Celebration of Discipline*, lists twelve disciplines--all of them relevant to the contemporary Christian...’ If Lundquist is right, as I believe he is...” (Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, pp. 65, 66).

It is unconscionable that Whitney doesn’t warn his readers that these mystics were committed to Rome’s damnable sacramental gospel and venerated Mary and that their “disciplines” were pathetic attempts by spiritually-blind men and women to find light in the midst of gross darkness.

Further, Whitney promotes the practice of silence, journaling, and spiritual direction.

The “silence” recommended by Whitney is not merely to get alone with God and His Word in a quiet place. He writes:

“Other times silence is maintained not only outwardly but also inwardly so that God’s voice might be heard more clearly,” and, “The worship of God does not always require words, sounds, or actions” (Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, p. 184).

Whitney quotes A.W. Tozer as follows:

“Stay in the secret place till the surrounding noises begin to fade out of your heart and a sense of God’s presence envelopes you ... Listen for the inward Voice till you learn to recognize it” (Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, p. 199, quoting from *The Best of A.W. Tozer*, 1978, pp. 151-152).

This is blind and dangerous mysticism, and Whitney misuses Scripture to prove the alleged importance of this “silence,” such as Jesus praying alone and Paul in Arabia and Moses in the desert. None of these cases support the practice of sitting in silence and

trying to hear “God’s voice” internally apart from simply meditating on Scripture.

To be alone with God in a quiet place and to meditate on His Word is NOT the same as sitting in silence and trying to hear God’s voice internally. One is scriptural and profitable; the other is mystical and dangerous.

The great danger of contemplative mysticism, which is sweeping through evangelicalism and the Southern Baptist Convention and is now nearing the borders of independent fundamental Baptist churches, is that it puts the practitioner in danger of being loosed from the anchor of the Bible and put in touch with deceiving spirits. It has often led to a radical ecumenical mindset and even beyond to universalism and panentheism and idolatry.

Willow Creek

See Bill Hybels.

Philip Yancy

Philip Yancy promotes the contemplative movement in his book *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?* (2006, updated 2010) He quotes the Buddhist-Catholic monk Thomas Merton, goddess worshiper Sue Monk Kidd, pantheist Meister Eckhart, David Steindl-Rast (who denies the substitutionary atonement of Christ), and Richard Rohr (who worships a New Age “cosmic” Christ). Yancy also quotes Catholic “saint” Teresa of Avila and the heretical Catholic contemplative text *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which promotes a mindless communion with “God.”

These examples only begin to give an idea of how widely the contemplative practices have spread within evangelical and Baptist circles.

Mysticism Is a Focus of Society in General

It is not surprising that evangelicalism is focused on mysticism, as that is the approach of society in general. Evangelicalism renounced “separatism” 50 years ago with the onset of the New Evangelical movement, and it has become so unpopular that it is almost a dirty word in most churches. And when churches are not

separated biblically from the world, they are corrupted by the world. “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

In 2005 *Newsweek* reported that “Americans are looking for personal, ecstatic experiences of God” (Aug. 29, 2005).

Leonard Sweet calls the lust for mysticism a “spiritual tsunami.” He describes it effectively, though he thinks the churches should ride this wave instead of fleeing from it.

“A spiritual tsunami has hit postmodern culture. This wave will build without breaking for decades to come. The wave is this: People want to *know* God. They want less to *know about* God or *know about* religion than to *know* God. People want to experience the ‘Beyond’ in the ‘Within.’ Post-moderns want something more than new products; THEY WANT NEW EXPERIENCES, ESPECIALLY NEW EXPERIENCES OF THE DIVINE” (*Soul Tsunami*, 1999, p. 34).

Mysticism has spread through every level of modern society, business, education, health care, the military, you name it. We have documented this in *The New Age Tower of Babel*.

Mysticism is the focus of art. In the book *The Treasure of Our Tongue*, Lincoln Barnett says, “The trend in all art forms has been ... in the direction of the undefinable, the liking for the ambiguous and mystical.”

Mysticism is the focus of music. In the book *Sound Effects*, we are told that pop music is concerned with “experience and feeling” and is “emotional rather than technical” (Simon Frith, *Sound Effects*, 1978, pp. 14-17). William Shaeffer says that rock music is “a sharing of consciousness, a connection of sensibility beyond the verbal level”; it is “communication WITHOUT WORDS, WITHOUT VERBAL CONCEPTUALIZATION”; it is a “means of communicating emotion,” a “cult of irrationality,” a “reverence for the visceral and a distrust of reason and logic” (Shaeffer, *Rock Music*, p. 75).

Thus, the very pop music of our day is a channel for the practice of mysticism.

We live in a generation that is “hooked on a feeling.”

Mysticism Permeates the New Age

Mysticism is at the very heart and soul of the New Age. From Alice Bailey to Oprah Winfrey, its gurus have used meditation and other mystical practices to find spiritual enlightenment and power. One of its central teachings is that man is divine and can connect with truth in his inner being through mystical practices, particularly yogic and Zen meditation.

Alice Bailey taught that the practice of meditation is one of the most important means of recognizing one's own divinity and tapping into the wisdom of the universe (Robert Eelwood, *Alternative Altars: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America*, p. 134).

Krishnamurti called meditation "one of the greatest arts in life--perhaps the greatest" (*Freedom from the Known*, p. 116). He described meditation as "the ending of thought" and entering "a different dimension which is beyond time" (*Meditations*, preface).

It was after "years of practicing all-night sessions of meditation, combined with fasting" that Levi Dowling allegedly tapped into the Akashic Records and wrote *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*.

An endless slew of New Age organizations--e.g., the Silva Method, est, TM, psycho-cybernetics--promise personal transformation through mystical practices such as meditation, positive thinking, and visualization.

The New Age believes that its globalistic objectives will be achieved by mindless mystical practices which allegedly take man to a higher level of consciousness and tap into his divinity. This is the philosophy driving the Harmonic Convergence, Global Peace Meditation Day, Embrace the Planet Celebration, the Oneness Movement, the World Peace Prayer Society, The Peace Alliance, Global Renaissance Alliance, and the Alliance for a New Humanity, to name a few.

Eckhart Tolle is typical of New Age gurus everywhere in his teaching that wisdom comes not through thinking or teaching but through an experiential awareness of, and communication with, one's inner self.

“In you, as in each human being, there is a dimension of consciousness FAR DEEPER THAN THOUGHT. It is the very essence of who you are. We may call it presence, awareness, the unconditioned consciousness. In the ancient teachings, it is the Christ within, or your Buddha nature” (*Stillness Speaks*, p. 13).

(For more about mysticism and the New Age see *The New Age Tower of Babel*, available from Way of Life Literature.)

Mysticism is indeed a powerful end-time ecumenical-interfaith glue!

A Description of the Contemplative Practices

Following is a description of some of the popular “Christian” contemplative practices. All of these were borrowed from Rome.

Centering Prayer

Centering prayer involves emptying the mind of conscious thoughts about God with the objective of entering into a non-verbal experiential union with God in the center of one’s being.

Thomas Keating, one of the fathers of the modern centering prayer movement, claims that “the simplest way to come into contact with the living God is to go to one’s center and from there pass into God” (*Finding Grace at the Center*, p. 28).

Here is how he describes it:

“Then we move in faith to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, dwelling in creative love in the depths of our being. This is the whole essence of the prayer. ... All the rest of the method is simply a means to enable us to abide quietly in this center, and to allow our whole being to share in this refreshing contact with its Source” (*Finding Grace at the Center*, 2002, p. 32).

“... savor the silence, the Presence...” (p. 35).

“As soon as we move in love to God present in our depths, we are there ... we simply want to remain there and be what we are” (p. 39).

“We might think of it as if the Lord Himself, present in our depths, were quietly repeating His own name, evoking His presence and very gently summoning us to an attentive response. We are quite passive. We let it happen” (p. 39).

“... to enter into our Christ-being in the depths” (p. 42).

“... we want immediate contact with God Himself, and not some thought, image, or vision of him...” (p. 42).

“... open yourself interiorly to the mystery of God’s enveloping presence” (p. 48).

“... our theme is the center, that is, the place of meeting of the human spirit and the divine Spirit” (p. 80).

The practice is called “this union” (p. 15), this “face-to-face encounter” (p. 15), “passive meditation” (p. 20), “a fourth state of consciousness” (p. 34), “savoring the silence” (p. 35), “this nothing” (p. 49), “the deep waters of silence” (p. 52), “deep tranquility” (p. 54).

Centering prayer requires entering into a non-thinking mode. The 14th century book *The Cloud of Unknowing*, which is quoted extensively in the contemplative movement, describes this at length. The very title refers to the practice of entering a mystical state beyond knowledge. It is called “the blind experience of contemplative love,” “this darkness,” “this nothingness,” “this nowhere.”

Note the following statements:

“Do all in your power to FORGET EVERYTHING ELSE, keeping your thoughts and desires free from involvement with any of God’s creatures or their affairs whether in general or in particular ... pay no attention to them” (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, edited by William Johnston, Image Books, 1973, chapter 3, p. 48).

“Thought cannot comprehend God. And so, I prefer to abandon all I can know, choosing rather to love him whom I cannot know. ... By love he may be touched and embraced, NEVER BY THOUGHT. ... in the real contemplative work you must set all this aside and cover it over with a cloud of forgetting” (chapter 6, pp. 54, 55).

“... DISMISS EVERY CLEVER OR SUBTLE THOUGHT no matter how holy or valuable. Cover it over with a thick cloud of forgetting because in this life only love can touch God as he is in himself, never knowledge” (chapter 8, pp. 59, 60).

“So then, you must reject all clear conceptualizations whenever they arise, as they inevitably will, during the blind work of contemplative love. ... Therefore, FIRMLY

REJECT ALL CLEAR IDEAS, however pious or delightful” (chapter 9, p. 60).

The Book of Privy Counseling, written by the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, says:

“REJECT ALL THOUGHTS, BE THEY GOOD OR BE THEY EVIL” (*The Cloud of Unknowing* and *The Book of Privy Counseling*, edited by William Johnston, Image Books, 1973, chapter 1, p. 149).

A *MANTRA* is the key to entering the non-thinking mode. The practitioner is taught to choose “a sacred word” such as love or God and repeat it until the mind is emptied and carried away into a non-thinking communion with God at the center of one’s being.

“... the little word is used in order to sweep all images and thoughts from the mind, leaving it free to love with the blind stirring that stretches out toward God” (William Johnston, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, introduction, p. 10).

The practitioner is taught that he must not think on the meaning of the word.

“... choose a short word ... a one-syllable word such as ‘God’ or ‘love’ is best. ... Then fix it in your mind so that it will be your defense in conflict and in peace. Use it to beat upon the cloud of darkness above you and to subdue all distractions, consigning them to the cloud of forgetting beneath you. ... If your mind begins to intellectualize over the meaning and connotations of this little word, remind yourself that its value lies in its simplicity. Do this and I assure you these thoughts will vanish” (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, chapter 7, p. 56).

“... focus your attention on a simple word such as sin or God ... and WITHOUT THE INTERVENTION OF ANALYTICAL THOUGHT allow yourself to experience directly the reality it signifies. Do not use clever logic to examine or explain this word to yourself nor allow yourself to ponder its ramifications ... I DO NOT BELIEVE REASONING EVER HELPS IN THE CONTEMPLATIVE WORK. This is why I advise you to leave these words whole, like a lump, as it were” (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, chapter 36, p. 94).

The attempt to achieve a mindless mystical condition through a mantra can produce a hypnotic state and open one to demonic activity. Even if you don't consciously try to lose the meaning of the word, it quickly becomes lost to the mind. Ray Yungen, who has done extensive and excellent research into the New Age, explains:

“When a word or phrase is repeated over and over, after just a few repetitions, those words lose their meaning and become just sounds. ... After three or four times, the word can begin to lose its meaning, and if this repeating of words were continued, normal thought processes could be blocked, making it possible to enter an altered state of consciousness because of the hypnotic effect that begins to take place. It really makes no difference whether the words are ‘You are my God’ or ‘I am calm,’ the results are the same” (*A Time of Departing*, p. 150).

Catholic contemplative master Anthony de Mello agrees. He says:

“A Jesuit friend who loves to dabble in such things ... assures me that, through constantly saying to himself ‘one-two-three-four’ rhythmically, he achieves the same mystical results that his more religious conferees claim to achieve through the devout and rhythmical recitation of some ejaculation. And I believe him” (*Sadhana: A Way to God*, pp. 33, 34).

Centering prayer is so similar to the mystical practice of pagan religions that they recognize it as their own. In his introduction to his edition of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, William Johnston says the Catholic author of this 14th century work “speaks a language that Buddhists understand” (p. 11).

Practitioners of eastern religions recognize the power of the mantra in entering the meditative state. Hindu gurus say, “One thorn is removed by another.” They are referring to the fact that since the mind must be occupied with something, one word or thought can be used to drive away all others.

Deepak Chopra, a New Age Hindu who believes in the divinity of man, recommends *The Cloud of Unknowing*. He considers the Catholic centering prayer techniques to be the same as Hindu yoga.

“There is no doubt that people resist the whole notion of God being an inner phenomenon. ... Yet its importance is stated eloquently in the medieval document known as ‘The Cloud of Unknowing,’ written anonymously in the fourteenth century. ... The writer informs us that ANY THOUGHT IN THE MIND SEPARATES US FROM GOD, because thought sheds light on its object. ... Even though the cloud of unknowing baffles us, it is actually closer to God than even a thought about God and his marvelous creation. We are advised to go into a ‘cloud of forgetting’ about anything other than the silence of the inner world. For centuries this document has seemed utterly mystical, but it makes perfect sense once we realize that the restful awareness response, WHICH CONTAINS NO THOUGHTS, is being advocated. ...

“We aren’t talking about the silence of an empty mind ... But the thought takes place against a background and nonthought. Our writer equates it with KNOWING SOMETHING THAT DOESN’T HAVE TO BE STUDIED. The mind is full of a kind of knowing that could speak to us about anything, yet it has no words; therefore we seek this knowingness in the background” (Chopra, *How to Know God*, 2000, pp. 94, 95, 98).

This Hindu says that to approach God through a mindless “cloud of unknowing” makes perfect sense, and well it should to him, because that is standard Hindu practice; but this should be a loud warning to those who believe that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ and the Bible. It should be a warning that Catholic contemplative prayer is not Christian!

In this same book, Chopra says, “I believe that God has to be known by looking in the mirror” (p. 9). Thus, Chopra is describing meditative methods whereby the individual can allegedly come into contact with his “higher self” or divinity, yet he is using Catholic mysticism to get there!

That the same manual (*The Cloud of Unknowing*) is also popular with contemplative *evangelicals* and Southern Baptists and that they teach the same techniques as this New Age Hindu guru is a loud warning to those who have ears to hear.

Richard Foster says, “Christian meditation is an attempt to empty the mind in order to fill it” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 15). He says, “[W]e must be willing to go down into the recreating silences...” (p. 15). He says the goal of contemplative prayer is “a pure relationship where we see ‘nothing’” (*Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, p. 155).

The result of centering prayer is supposed to be mystical knowledge, obtained through communion with God in one’s being.

“For in this darkness we experience an intuitive understanding of everything material and spiritual without giving special attention to anything in particular” (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, chapter 68, p. 137).

“He will let you glimpse something of the ineffable secrets of his divine wisdom...” (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, chapter 27, p. 84).

“Often meditation will yield insights ... More than once I have received guidance ... it is far more common to be given guidance in dealing with ordinary human problems ... It tells us that God is speaking in the continuous present and wants to address us” (Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, pp. 17, 19).

“... we learn that our willingness to listen in silence opens up a quiet space in which we can hear His voice, a voice that longs to speak and offer us guidance for our next step” (Ruth Barton, “Beyond Words,” *Discipleship Journal*, Sept-Oct. 1999).

Contemplative mystics claim that centering prayer is based on the example of Mary in Luke 10:38-42. William Johnson says:

“Mary turned to Jesus with all the love of her heart, unmoved by what she saw or heard spoken and done about her. She sat there in perfect stillness with her heart’s secret, joyous love intent upon *that cloud of unknowing* between her and her God. ... Jesus is present; he is the divine center to which Mary’s love is directed. But she has no regard for clear cut images of his beautiful mortal body, no ears for the sweetness of his human voice. She has gone beyond all this to a deeper knowledge, a deeper love and a

deeper beauty” (pp. 17, 18; see also *The Cloud of Unknowing*, chapter 17, p. 71).

This is an example of how contemplatives twist the Scripture. In reality, Mary was not practicing mystical contemplation. She did not empty her mind; she was not going beyond words to some sort of deeper knowledge. She simply sat and listened to Christ speak. “*And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word*” (Luke 10:39). She was not trying to achieve union with God through mystical means. She knew that the Son of God was there in human flesh and that she did not have to know anything beyond Him. To know Christ is to know God! Rather than a “cloud of unknowing,” Mary had perfect revelation in the Person of Christ and in His spoken words, and so do we.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Centering prayer is actually a blind leap into the dark.

Visualization or Imaginative Prayer

Visualization or imaginative prayer is becoming popular throughout evangelicalism.

Jesuit priest Anthony de Mello calls it “fantasy prayer” and says that many of the Catholic saints practiced it (*Sadhana: A Way to God*, pp. 79, 82, 93). Francis of Assisi imagined taking Jesus down from the cross; Anthony of Padua imagined holding the baby Jesus in his arms and talking with him; Teresa of Avila imagined herself with Jesus in His agony in the garden.

This type of thing is an integral part of the spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. The practitioner is instructed to walk into biblical and extra-biblical historical scenes through the imagination and bring the scene to life by applying all of the senses: seeing the events, hearing what people are saying, smelling, tasting, and touching things--all within the realm of pure

imagination. The visualizing prayer practitioner is even taught to insert himself into the scene, talking to the biblical characters and serving them. Ignatius encourages practitioners, for example, to imagine themselves present at Jesus' birth and crucifixion.

Consider some excerpts from Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*:

"Imagine Christ our Lord present before you upon the cross, and begin to speak with him ..." (*The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Vintage Books edition, First Week, 53).

"Here it will be to see in imagination the length, breadth, and depth of hell. ... to see in imagination the vast fires, and the souls enclosed ... to hear the wailing ... with the sense of smell to perceive the smoke ... to taste the bitterness ... to touch the flames" (First Week, fifth exercise, 65-70).

"I will see and consider the Three Divine Persons, seated on the royal dais or throne of the Divine Majesty ... I will see our Lady and the angels saluting her. ... [I will see] our Lady, St. Joseph, the maid, and the Child Jesus after His birth. I will make myself a poor little unworthy slave, and as though present, look upon them, contemplate them, and serve them..." (Second Week, 106, 114).

"While one is eating, let him imagine he sees Christ our Lord and His disciples at the table, and consider how He eats and drinks, how He looks, how He speaks, and then strive to imitate Him" (Third Week, 214).

Thomas Merton gave an example of visualization prayer in his book *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*. He suggested that the individual use this technique to communicate with the infant Jesus in His nativity.

"In simple terms, the nativity of Christ the Lord in Bethlehem is not just something that I make present by fantasy. Since He is the eternal Word of God before whom time is entirely and simultaneously present, the Child born at Bethlehem 'sees' me here and now. That is to say, I 'am' present to His mind 'then.' It follows that I can speak to Him as to one present not only in fantasy but in actual reality. This spiritual contact with the Lord is the real purpose of meditation" (p. 96).

Merton claims that this type of thing is not “fantasy,” but it is nothing other than fantasy. It is true that Christ is eternal, but nowhere are we taught by the Lord or His apostles and prophets that we should try to imagine such a conversation. What Merton suggests is gross presumption.

Richard Foster recommends visualizing prayer in his popular book *Celebration of Discipline*:

“Imagination opens the door to faith. If we can ‘see’ in our mind’s eye a shattered marriage whole or a sick person well, it is only a short step to believing that it will be so. ... I was once called to a home to pray for a seriously ill baby girl. Her four-year-old brother was in the room and so I told him I needed his help to pray for his baby sister. ... He climbed up into the chair beside me. ‘Let’s play a little game,’ I said. ‘Since we know that Jesus is always with us, let’s imagine that He is sitting over in the chair across from us. He is waiting patiently for us to center our attention on Him. When we see Him, we start thinking more about His love than how sick Julie is. He smiles, gets up, and comes over to us. Then let’s both put our hands on Julie and when we do, Jesus will put His hands on top of ours. We’ll watch and imagine that the light from Jesus is flowing right into your little sister and making her well. Let’s pretend that the light of Christ fights with the bad germs until they are all gone. Okay!’ Seriously the little one nodded. Together we prayed in this childlike way and then thanked the Lord that what we ‘saw’ was the way it was going to be” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 37).

This is not biblical prayer; it is occultism. New Thought practitioners and New Agers have practiced this type of thing for a century. Biblical prayer is not the attempt to accomplish something through the power of our minds. It is talking to God and asking Him to accomplish things. There is a vast difference between these two practices, as vast as the difference between God and the Devil.

Visualization prayer has become very popular within the modern contemplative movement, but it is heretical. I have already mentioned some reasons for saying this, but let me summarize them as follows:

First of all, visualization prayer is disobedience. The Bible contains everything we need for faith and practice. It is able to make the man of God “*perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible contains everything we need in order to learn how to pray correctly, and it says nothing whatsoever about imagination prayer. This is not the type of prayer that Jesus taught us to pray (Matthew 6:9-15).

Second, visualization prayer is vain and foolish because it is pure fantasy. We can't imagine Jesus' birth beyond the simple facts described in Scripture. We don't know what Mary or Joseph or baby Jesus or the room or the manger or the angels or the shepherds or the wise men looked like. We don't know what they said to one another. We don't know the air temperature or the exact smells and tastes. If I try to imagine such things, I am entering into the realm of vain fantasy.

Third, visualization prayer is not faith. Faith is not based on imagination; it is based on Scripture. “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Romans 10:17). God has given us everything we need in Scripture and our part is to believe what God says. “*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*” (John 20:31). We have everything we need to know about Christ for the present dispensation in the Scripture, and we accept it by faith. “*Whom HAVING NOT SEEN, ye love; in whom, THOUGH NOW YE SEE HIM NOT, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (1 Peter 1:8).

Fourth, visualization prayer is presumptuous because it goes beyond divine revelation. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, “*The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*” By going beyond what the Bible says and trying to delve into history through the imagination, I am leaving the revealed things and entering the secret things.

Fifth, visualization prayer is dangerous. It is dangerous because it adds to Scripture. If I get in the habit of visualizing Bible scenes, I can easily think that my visualizations are authoritative. I can fall into Rome's error of accepting extra-biblical revelation. It is also dangerous because demonic entities can involve themselves in my

vain imaginings. Satan influenced Peter's thinking (Mat. 16:22-23), and he can certainly influence mine if I venture into forbidden realms.

Consider an example given by emerging church leader Tony Jones in his book *The Sacred Way*. His friend Mike King made John 1:37-39 the focus of contemplative practices at a spiritual retreat. While practicing the Ignatian exercise of imaginative prayer, he put himself into the biblical scene. He imagined himself sitting around John's breakfast fire with the disciples, listening as they carried on an imaginative conversation. He imagined seeing Jesus approach and embrace John. He imagined hearing them tell stories of their childhood. He imagined them laughing. Then he imagined Jesus getting up and leaving, with John's two disciples following. He imagined them walking into the desert and coming to a clearing, when suddenly the imagined Jesus turned around and began interacting with him.

“When Jesus turned around, the two disciples of John whom I was following parted like the Red Sea and Jesus came right up to me, face to face. Jesus looked past my eyes into my heart and soul: ‘Mike, what do you want?’ I fell at the feet of Jesus and wept, pouring my heart out” (*The Sacred Way*, p. 79).

Notice that the imaginative prayer practitioner feels at liberty to go far beyond the words of Scripture to fantasize about the passage, creating purely fictional scenes. And observe that the *Jesus* that he imagines (which is certainly *not* the Jesus of the Bible, because we do not know what that Jesus looks like and nowhere are we instructed to imagine seeing him) takes on a life of its own and interacts with him. This is either pure mental fiction and therefore absolutely meaningless, or it is a demonic visitation akin to a vision of Mary.

King says that he was powerfully affected by this imagined event. “That day changed me profoundly and is something I will have for the rest of my life, for Jesus said, ‘Come, and you will see...’”

He thus pretends that Jesus actually said this directly to him, when in fact he only imagined it in a purely fictitious sense. What incredible delusion!

Following is an example from Youth Specialties, a large evangelical youth ministry. They encourage young people to imagine a conversation with Jesus along the following line:

It's a normal day like any other. You're busy doing what you do. But as you go about your daily routine, you sense someone wanting to spend time with you. He wants you to come to him. He wants you to be with him. You definitely recognize his voice, but it's been a while since you've spent any real time together. Doesn't he know how busy your life can be? After all, you've been busy doing what you do.

He sits there, hunkered down in the corner of your room waiting for you. He's certainly not pushing himself on you, but you can definitely tell he longs to spend some time with you. You tell him that you don't think you'll have time to meet with him today as you head out the door again.

When you get back from your day, he's there again, waiting for you. He smiles at you as you come in the door and asks you how your day has been. He invites you to sit down and rest for a while. You can tell he wants to hear about your day and everything else you've got going on in your life. He seems very proud of who you are becoming. He asks you about what seems to be pressing in on you and weighing you down. You can tell he genuinely cares about you. He wants what's best for you. So you finally decide to sit down for a few minutes to talk with him.

You start by telling him that you can't talk long because you still have a lot to do before bedtime. But after a few minutes of talking together, your whole world and all the worries of your day seem to simply melt away. You haven't felt this relaxed in a long time. You find yourself pouring your heart out to him. And then he looks you right in the eyes and tells you how proud he is of you. He tells you how much he loves you and enjoys spending time together.

At that moment you realize this friend who has been waiting to talk with you day after day is Jesus. He has never made you feel guilty about blowing him off day after day. He looks at you and smiles. It's at that moment that you can tell for the first time in your life that you have a true friend who cares about you for who you are. The time

seems to fly by as you continue talking together late into the night (“Something for Your Heart: Guided Meditation,” Youth Specialties Student Newsletter #330, Feb. 25, 2008).

This is heretical foolishness. The Lord Jesus Christ is not hunkered down in someone’s bedroom. He is enthroned in heaven at the right hand of the Father. He is not a non-judgmental Big Buddy who exists to build up my self-esteem. He is the Lord of Glory. He is exceedingly kind and compassionate, but He does not exist to pamper me; I exist to glorify Him!

Observe that this guided meditation mentions nothing about the confession of sin or repentance from sin, nothing about the necessity of obedience and walking in the fear of God and separation from evil in order to maintain fellowship with Christ. The Bible, though, says:

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:6-9).

Calvin Miller claims that “imagination stands at the front of our relationship with Christ.”

“I drink the glory [of Christ’s] hazel eyes ... his auburn hair. ... What? Do you disagree? His hair is black? Eyes brown? Then have it your way. ... His image must be real to you as to me, even if our images differ. The key to vitality, however, is the image” (*The Table of Inwardness*, InterVarsity Press, 1984, p. 93).

Each individual can therefore have the christ of his own making through the amazing power of imagination!

The Jesus Prayer

The Jesus Prayer originated within Eastern Orthodox mysticism.

In its most ancient and simple form it consists of repeating the name “Jesus” with every breath.

In another form it consists of repeating, “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me,” or, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.”

This is to be repeated throughout the day. J.P. Moreland and Klaus Issler of Biola University recommend saying the Jesus Prayer 300 times a day (*The Lost Virtue of Happiness*, p. 90).

The ancient monastic contemplative manuals suggest that it be said from 3,000 to 12,000 times a day (Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way*, p. 60).

This is supposed to keep one’s mind centered on Christ and sensitive to His will.

“As you do, something will begin to happen to you. God will slowly begin to occupy the center of your attention” (*The Lost Virtue of Happiness*, pp. 90, 92, 93).

Commonly the practitioner is taught not to think on the words but to allow them to speak to him “intuitively.” John Michael Talbot says that the practitioner should “go into the heights of contemplation beyond all concepts and knowledge” (*Come to the Quiet*, p. 176). He says further:

“Trying to mentally grasp the meaning of each word of the prayer as we pray it would be mentally confusing. This would be a distraction from prayer. Rather, the full meaning of the Jesus Prayer is best grasped when intuited on the level of spirit BEYOND THE SENSES, THE EMOTIONS, OR THE MIND” (Talbot, *The Way of the Mystics*, p. 192).

This is always the real mystical objective.

The Breath Prayer

The Breath Prayer, which is recommended by Richard Foster in *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, consists of picking a single word or short phrase and repeating it in conjunction with breathing.

John Talbot recommends using the Jesus prayer as a breath prayer. He says his own practice is to say “Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God” as he breathes in and “have mercy on me, a sinner” as he breathes out (*Come to the Quiet*, p. 175).

The Jesus Prayer and the Breath Prayer are clear examples of the vain repetition that the Lord Jesus Christ forbade (Matthew 6:7).

Lectio Divina

The term “lectio divina” is Latin and means divine or sacred reading. It is a Catholic monastic method of reading the Scripture in a mystical way.

At first glance *lectio divina* (pronounced lex-ee-o di-veen-a) might not sound very different from a traditional devotional approach that involves reading and meditating on Scripture in communion with the Holy Spirit. Where it differs is as follows:

First, lectio divina does not refer to “meditation” in a Scriptural sense. Proponents of *lectio divina* point to passages of Scripture that refer to “meditation” (e.g., Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2), and the uninformed reader would be led to believe that they are describing a Scriptural practice. In fact, they are describing something very different.

Consider a description of *lectio divina*. The practitioner is taught to begin with deep breathing exercises and repetition of a “prayer word” *to enter into a contemplative state*. This refers to a mantra. The goal is to “become interiorly silent” (Luke Dysinger, “Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina,” *Valyermo Benedictine*, Spring 1990). Having prepared himself, the practitioner reads a portion of Scripture slowly and repeatedly, three or four times. Choosing a word or phrase that particularly “speaks to him,” he slowly repeats it, allowing it to interact with his “inner world of concerns, memories and ideas.” Next, he converses with God about the text. Finally, he rests in silence before God in thoughtless mysticism.

Catholic priest Luke Dysinger says, “Once again we practice SILENCE, LETTING GO OF OUR OWN WORDS; this time simply enjoying the experience of being in the presence of God.”

Notice how Thomas Merton describes the meditation performed in *lectio divina* and other Catholic contemplative practices:

“Meditation is ... a series of interior activities which prepare us for union with God” (*Spiritual Direction and Meditation*, 1960, p. 54).

“Meditation is more than mere practical thinking” (p. 55).

“... the fruitful silence in which WORDS LOSE THEIR POWER AND CONCEPTS ESCAPE OUR GRASP is perhaps the perfection of meditation” (p. 57).

“More often than not, we can be content to simply rest, and float peacefully with the deep current of love, doing nothing of ourselves, but allowing the Holy Spirit to act in the secret depths of our soul” (pp. 101, 102).

Richard Foster, who has had a far-reaching influence on evangelicalism’s contemplative practices, quotes Catholic mystic Madame Guyon as follows:

“Once you sense the Lord’s presence, THE CONTENT OF WHAT YOU READ IS NO LONGER IMPORTANT. The scripture has served its purpose; it has quieted your mind; it has brought you to him. ... You should always remember that YOU ARE NOT THERE TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT YOU HAVE READ; rather you are reading to turn your mind from the outward things to the deep parts of your being. YOU ARE NOT THERE TO LEARN OR TO READ, BUT YOU ARE THERE TO EXPERIENCE THE PRESENCE OF YOUR LORD!” (*Devotional Classics*).

Thelma Hall’s book on *lectio divina* is entitled *Too Deep for Words*. This describes the ultimate objective of the mystical practice.

Mike Pershon of Youth Specialities says *lectio divina* should take the practitioner to a different level of consciousness (http://www.cellofpeace.com/refl_lectio.htm).

Robert Webber, late Wheaton College professor, confirms the transcendental aspect of *lectio divina*:

“The goal of *Lectio Divina* is union with God through a meditative and contemplative praying of Scripture. ... All such attempts at verbalizing the experience necessarily fail to express the reality for the simple reason that CONTEMPLATION TRANSCENDS THE THINKING

AND REASONING of meditation ... *Contemplatio* shifts praying the Scripture into a new language (SILENCE). This silence does not ask us to do anything, it is a call to being. Thomas Merton says, "THE BEST WAY TO PRAY IS: STOP" (*The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life*, 2006, pp. 209, 210).

John Michael Talbot says that *lectio divina* must move the practitioner "into a Reality BEYOND IMAGE AND FORM" (*Come to the Quiet*, p. 49). He says, "If God grants it, allow the reality of the sacred text to pass over to pure spiritual intuition in his Spirit," and, "... allow yourself to pass over into contemplation BEYOND WORDS" (pp. 53, 62).

Mark Yaconelli, who speaks in evangelical settings, describes *lectio divina* as follows:

"In order to practice *lectio divina*, select a time and place that is peaceful and in which you may be alert and prayer fully attentive. Dispose yourself for prayer in whatever way is natural for you. This may be a spoken prayer to God to open you more fully to the Spirit, a gentle relaxation process that focuses on breathing, singing or chanting, or simply a few minutes of SILENCE TO EMPTY YOURSELF OF THOUGHTS, IMAGES, AND EMOTIONS" (web.archive.org/web/20080724110254/http://www.ymsp.org/resources/practices/lectio_divina.html).

It is obvious that meditation and prayer, after the *lectio divina* fashion, is far removed from simply contemplating on the Scripture before the Lord, seeking better understanding of it, talking with God about it, and applying it to one's life by the wisdom and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Second, *lectio divina* associates the practitioner with centuries-old heresy. *Lectio divina* was invented by the heretic Origen in the third century and was adopted as a Roman Catholic practice in the Dark Ages. Origen is a dangerous man to follow. Among other heresies, he denied the infallible inspiration of Scripture and the literal history of the early chapters of Genesis, taught baptismal regeneration and universal salvation, and believed that Jesus is a created being.

The practice of *lectio divina* was incorporated into the rules of Rome's dark monasticism. It was systematized into four steps in the 12th century by Guido II, a Carthusian monk, in "The Ladder of Four Rungs" or "The Monk's Ladder." The four steps are reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation, which are supposed to be the means by which one "can climb from earth to heaven" and learn "heavenly secrets."

Thus, *lectio divina* is intimately associated with Roman Catholicism and its false gospel. Modern *lectio divina* gurus such as Thomas Merton and Thomas Keating follow in the footsteps of ancient Catholic heretics by intertwining this practice with the heresies of Rome. Merton, for example, associates *lectio divina* with the Mass (which he describes as a "living and supremely efficacious re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice"), baptismal regeneration, meriting union with God, prayers to Mary, and salvation through works (*Spiritual Direction and Meditation*, pp. 62, 71, 72, 74, 108).

Bible believers have maintained rich devotional practices throughout the church age without resorting to something invented by heretics and developed in the bosom of the Harlot Church.

Third, *lectio divina* is typically used as a means of receiving personal revelation and mystical experiences beyond the words of Scripture. Youth Specialties' Youth Worker Journal says of *lectio divina*, "THE GOAL ISN'T EXEGESIS OR ANALYSIS, but allowing God to speak to us through the word" (quoted from Brian Flynn, "Lectio Divina--Sacred Divination").

This refers to a mystical knowing and a transcendental revelation that supposedly exists beyond conscious thought.

Brian Flynn makes an important observation:

“The concept of allowing God to speak through His Word is perfectly legitimate. I experience that when I read or meditate on the Bible. However, in the context of this [Youth Specialties’] article the purpose is not to contemplate the meaning of a Bible verse by thinking about it but is rather meant to gain an experience from it.”

Thomas Keating says: “The early monks ... would sit with that sentence or phrase ... just listening, repeating slowly the same short text over and over again. This receptive disposition enabled the Holy Spirit to expand their capacity to listen” (“The Classical Monastic Practice of *Lectio Divina*”).

The danger of the *lectio divina* method is illustrated by the fact that its practitioners are taught heresy by this means. This is evident in that Catholic mystic saints have been confirmed in their heresies by this practice for the space of more than a millennium.

Consider a revelation that Basil Pennington said he received through *lectio divina*. He said that he chose Christ’s words “I am the way” from John 14:6 and repeated them during his meditation and throughout the day. At the end of the day when he was tired and wasn’t looking forward to singing evening prayers at the monastery he says the Lord spoke to him and said, “Oh yes, you are the way,” so he “went and sang Vespers and had a great time” (interview with Mary NurrieStearns published on the Personal Transformation website, <http://www.personaltransformation.com/Pennington.html>).

Note that “the Lord” allegedly took the declaration that Christ is the way and applied it to Pennington, instructing him that he, too, is the way, which is rank heresy.

We believe strongly in studying Scripture and seeking God’s illumination of it, but this is done through a process of interpretive Bible study and active contemplation (e.g., Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:15), rather than through a mystical process that seeks to go beyond the Bible’s words and is intimately associated with heresy.

Former psychic Brian Flynn warns:

“By taking passages of Scripture, which have an intended meaning, and breaking them down into smaller, separate segments, often for the purpose of chanting over and over,

the true meaning of the passages is lost. Rather a form of occult mysticism is practiced--with the hope and intention of gaining a mystical experience that God never intended when He gave the inspired words to His servants" (*Running against the Wind*, p. 136).

Fourth, the traditional practice of lectio divina involves the search for a "deeper" meaning of Scripture. This refers to Origen's spiritualized meaning that is beyond the literal. Origen claimed that the Scripture has four levels of meaning. He spoke of the letter and the spirit, the exterior and the interior. While acknowledging a historical, literal meaning, he emphasized the "allegorical" sense. He likened the literal meaning of Scripture to water, whereas the deeper allegorical meaning is the wine. Following Origen, Gregory the Great interpreted the "wheel within the wheel" of Ezekiel 1:16 to mean that the allegorical meaning is hidden within the literal meaning of Scripture. This error leaves the interpretation of Scripture up to the imagination of the reader, because if the Bible does not mean what it says when interpreted by the normal-literal method, then we cannot know for certain what it does mean. This is one of the foundational errors of Roman monasticism, and it is being adopted today by evangelicals.

Thomas Keating says: "By 'ruminating' I mean sitting with a sentence, phrase or even one word that emerges from the text, allowing the Spirit to expand our listening capacity and to OPEN US TO ITS DEEPER MEANING; in other words, TO PENETRATE THE SPIRITUAL SENSE of a scripture passage" ("The Classical Monastic Practice of Lectio Divina").

It is obvious that this "deeper meaning" carries one beyond the true meaning of Scripture, since it is a practice that is loved by Roman Catholics. For centuries Catholic monks and nuns have "meditated" on the Scripture via the method of *lectio divina*, but they have never come to the knowledge of the truth! It has only confirmed them in their commitment to Rome's heresies.

Fifth, the practice of lectio divina does not include a strong warning about the potential for spiritual delusion and the danger of receiving “doctrines of devils.” Catholic priest Luke Dysinger says, “Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you in both words and silence, in spiritual activity and inner receptivity” (“Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina”).

If Dysinger, who is a modern monk, would practice biblical devotion in true communion with the Spirit of truth he would recognize that Romanism is heresy and would flee from it, but he is practicing contemplative practices from a position of unregeneracy and spiritual blindness and unknowing openness to deception.

Brian Flynn gives an important warning about this practice when he says:

“I was having a discussion over lunch with a pastor who taught *Lectio Divina* at a local seminary, and he attempted to defend the practice. He stated that in the process of reading a page of scripture over and over again a word will ‘jump out’ at you. He said that the Holy Spirit chooses this word for you. However, how do I know that this concept is true? First, there is no reference to *Lectio Divina* in the Bible. Secondly, how do I know what this word is supposed to mean to me? If it were ‘love’, does that mean I should concentrate on love for self, God, the world, sister, mother, brother? There is no way of knowing other than using my own imagination or desire. ... BY USING THIS PRACTICE, WE ARE TURNING THE BIBLE INTO A MYSTICAL DEVICE FOR PERSONAL REVELATIONS RATHER THAN A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE. By taking passages of Scripture, which have an intended meaning, and breaking them down into smaller, separate segments, often for the purpose of chanting over and over, the true meaning of the passages is lost” (“Lectio Divina-- Sacred Divination”).

Sixth, the practice of lectio divina is contrary to the Bible's instruction about Scripture study. The New Testament does not instruct the believer to sit in silence before God or to put himself into a contemplative-receptive state. It does not instruct us to use the Scripture to try to "experience God." It instructs us to study as a workman (2 Timothy 2:15). This is an active process rather than a passive one. In the proper practice of Bible study, the mind is fully in gear; the spirit is aggressively seeking God's wisdom and is wary of deception; one is prayerful, seeking divine help. The wise Bible student knows that it is dangerous to isolate Scripture, so he carefully analyzes the context and compares Scripture with Scripture. He does not depend upon his own intuitions about the meaning of Scripture exclusively but consults trusted men of God and carefully uses godly dictionaries and commentaries.

Lectio Divina is not an innocent means of meditating upon Scripture. It is an unscriptural practice that has the power to draw the practitioner into fellowship with demons.

The Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross is a Roman Catholic practice that combines mysticism and heresy. The 14 Stations allegedly depict Christ's trial and crucifixion, and the practitioner seeks to enter mystically into Christ's passion by meditating on each scene.

Beyond the fact that this is not faith but sight and the pictures of Jesus are fictional and are forbidden by Scripture, several of the Stations are purely legendary. Jesus supposedly falls down three times, meets Mary on the way to the cross, has His face wiped by a woman named Veronica, and is taken down from the cross and laid in Mary's arms. None of this is supported by Scripture.

The Mass

The Mass or Eucharist is the high point of mysticism in the Roman Catholic Church. As we shall see in the chapter on "A Description of Roman Catholic Monasticism," it was the very heart and soul of ancient Catholic monastic mysticism and it remains so today. The monks and nuns center their lives on the Mass.

Because of the widespread ignorance among “evangelicals” and even “fundamentalists” about the nature of the Catholic Mass and the spiritual danger associated with it, many have been deceived.

In 1987, I interviewed a leader in Youth With A Mission (YWAM) at the North American Congress on the Holy Spirit & World Evangelization in New Orleans. When he told me that many of the YWAM short-term missionaries were Roman Catholics and that YWAM associates with Roman Catholics in many places, I asked him about the Mass. He didn’t have clue, thinking that it is merely the Catholic form of the Lord’s Supper.

I suspect that most Baptists are just as ill-informed.

What could be more mystical than touching God with your hands and taking Him into your very being by eating him in the form of a wafer? In the Mass the strangely-clothed, mysterious priest (ordained after the order of Melchisedec) pronounces words that mystically turn a wafer of unleavened bread into the very body of Jesus. The consecrated wafer, called a host (meaning victim) is eaten by the people.

On some occasions one larger host is placed in a gaudy metal holder called a monstrance to be worshipped (“adored”) as God. This is called Eucharistic adoration.

Eventually the host is placed in its own little tabernacle as the focus of worship between Masses. A lamp or a candle is lit to signify the fact that the consecrated host is present.

This highly mystical ritual is multisensory, involving touch (dipping the finger into holy water and touching the wafer), sight (the splendor of the church, the priestly garments, the instruments of the Mass), smell (incense), hearing (reading, chanting, bells), and taste (eating the wafer).

The Mass is even said to bring the participant into “divine union” like other forms of contemplative mysticism (Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, book IV, chap. 15, 4, p. 210).

The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the centrality of the Mass in Catholic life:

“The celebration of the Mass ... is the centre of the whole Christian life for the universal Church, the local Church and for each and every one of the faithful. For therein is the culminating action whereby God sanctifies the world

in Christ and men worship the Father as they adore him through Christ the Son of God” (*Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, edited by Austin Flannery, 1975, “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, General Instruction on the Roman Missal,” chap. 1, 1, p. 159).

The Catholic Mass is not a mere remembrance of Christ’s death; it is a re-sacrifice of Christ, and the consecrated host IS Christ. Consider statements from the authoritative Council of Trent, Second Vatican Council, and the *New Catholic Catechism*.

“There is, therefore, no room for doubt that all the faithful of Christ may, in accordance with a custom always received in the Catholic Church, give to this most holy sacrament in veneration the worship of latria, which is due to the true God” (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, translated by H. J. Schroeder, chap. v, “The Worship and Veneration to be Shown to This Most Holy Sacrament,” p. 76).

“The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different. And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner... this sacrifice is truly propitiatory” (Council of Trent, *Doctrina de ss. Missae sacrificio*, c. 2, quoted in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1367).

“For in the sacrifice of the Mass Our Lord is immolated when ‘he begins to be present sacramentally as the spiritual food of the faithful under the appearances of bread and wine.’ ... For in it Christ perpetuates in an unbloody manner the sacrifice offered on the cross, offering himself to the Father for the world’s salvation through the ministry of priests” (*Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, Introduction, C 1,2, p. 108).

“The faithful should therefore strive to worship Christ our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. ... Pastors [priests] should

exhort them to this, and set them a good example. ... The place in a church or oratory where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle should be truly prominent. It ought to be suitable for private prayer so that the faithful may easily and fruitfully, by private devotion also, continue to honour our Lord in this sacrament” (*Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, Chap. 3, I B, p. 132).

“By the consecration the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is brought about. Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and his divinity” (*New Catholic Catechism*, 1314).

“Because Christ himself is present in the sacrament of the altar he is to be honoured with the worship of adoration” (*New Catholic Catechism*, 1418).

“The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice ... ‘In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner’” (*New Catholic Catechism*, 1367)

“In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. ... reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession” (*New Catholic Catechism*, 1378).

The consecrated host is therefore worshipped as Christ.

It is obvious that the Mass is not a Scriptural practice. The apostle Paul, under divine inspiration, taught the churches the significance of the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34), and he did not say that it is a repetition of Christ’s sacrifice. It is not Christ becoming a piece of bread. It is not an occasion to eat Christ or

partake of him “sacramentally.” It is a simple memorial meal, a time of remembrance and confession and worship.

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do IN REMEMBRANCE OF me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, IN REMEMBRANCE OF me” (1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

Paul said that he received this teaching directly from the Lord. It is authoritative. He is the divinely-chosen apostle of the Gentiles, and he praised the churches for keeping the ordinances as he delivered them (1 Corinthians 11:2).

Speaking for all of the Catholic nuns and priests that are quoted by Richard Foster and others in the contemplative movement, Mother Teresa said that her Jesus is the consecrated wafer of the Mass. In her speech at the Worldwide Retreat for Priests, October 1984, in the Paul VI Audience Hall at Vatican City, she made the following statements:

“At the word of a priest, THAT LITTLE PIECE OF BREAD BECOMES THE BODY OF CHRIST, the Bread of Life. Then you give this living Bread to us, so that we too might live and become holy” (Mother Teresa, cited in *Be Holy: God’s First Call to Priests Today*, edited by Tom Forrest, 1987, p. 108).

“I remember the time a few years back, when the president of Yemen asked us to send some of our sisters to his country. I told him that this was difficult because for so many years no chapel was allowed in Yemen for saying a public mass, and no one was allowed to function there publicly as a priest. I explained that I wanted to give them sisters, but the trouble was that, without a priest, without Jesus going with them, our sisters couldn’t go anywhere. It seems that the president of Yemen had some kind of a consultation, and the answer that came back to us was, ‘Yes, you can send a priest with the sisters!’ I was so struck with the thought that ONLY WHEN THE PRIEST IS THERE CAN WE HAVE OUR ALTAR AND OUR

TABERNACLE AND OUR JESUS. ONLY THE PRIEST CAN PUT JESUS THERE FOR US. ... Jesus wants to go there, but we cannot bring him unless you first give him to us” (Mother Teresa, *Be Holy*, pp. 109, 111).

“One day she [a girl working in Calcutta] came, putting her arms around me, and saying, ‘I have found Jesus.’ ... ‘And just what were you doing when you found him?’ I asked. She answered that after 15 years she had finally gone to confession, and received Holy Communion from the hands of a priest. Her face was changed, and she was smiling. She was a different person because THAT PRIEST HAD GIVEN HER JESUS” (Mother Teresa, *Be Holy*, p. 74).

Some Catholics have charged me with misrepresenting their church, but surely the Second Vatican Council and the *New Catholic Catechism* and Mother Teresa are authentic voices. Mother Teresa plainly stated that her Jesus was the wafer of the Mass.

In the 1990s I visited a cloistered nunnery in Quebec. A pastor friend took me with him when he visited his aunt who had lived there for many decades. He and his wife wanted to show the nun their new baby. She wasn’t allowed to come out into the meeting room to see us; she had to stay behind a metal grill and talk to us from there. The nuns pray in shifts before the consecrated host in the chapel. That is their Jesus and the object of their prayers. At the entrance of the chapel there was a sign that said, “YOU ARE ENTERING TO ADORE THE JESUS-HOST.” Nuns were sitting in the chapel facing the host and praying their rosaries and saying their prayers to Mary and their “Our Fathers” and other repetitive mantras, vainly and sadly whiling away their lives in ascetic apostasy.

In the next chapter we will see that the Catholic saints, who are so exalted today by contemplatives, worshipped the Jesus-host of the Mass.

Many modern converts to Romanism mention the role that the Mass played in their conversion. There is doubtless a true occultic power in this ritual.

The following is the testimony of Marie-Ange Desrosiers of Quebec in which she describes the powerful occultic experience

that she had at a Catholic mass following her conversion to the grace of Jesus Christ. She gave this testimony to me in an e-mail dated November 15, 2008, and I am using it with her permission.

I was raised in a very rigid catholic religion in the 1940-1950 and I learned only about a God of wrath. At the age of twenty, I quit the Catholic Church because I was unable to observe all their laws. For the next 25 years, I forgot about God. But God never forgot me. Through a long, circuitous and painful road, he led me back to Him, the real God. I am a recent convert to the Baptist faith. I was baptized in September and will now be part of a very small French Baptist church. What I want to tell you is about your writings on mysticism. You can take the girl out of the Catholic Church, but it is very hard to take the church out of the girl. Until I started reading your books, I never really re-examined what I was taught with my mother's milk. I did not like the Catholic Church but I could not tell you what was wrong with it. To make a long story short, on August the 9th, 2008, I went to a family wedding in a catholic church. Of course, I remained in my pew and did not partake of Communion because I do not believe in it. But the emotional fervor around me was so strong as to become palpable. And all of a sudden, I was enveloped in a warm sort of embrace that was so powerful and so marvelously pleasant that I was amazed. What is happening? I thought. It got stronger and stronger, and more and more physically enjoyable. My hands, feet, mouth, my whole face started to tingle very pleasurably. I was immensely drawn into that warm, loving, physical feeling. Then I heard myself whisper: Too bad it is not true, it is so pleasant. And then, I came back forcefully to myself and said NO! NO! And the thing left me. I did not know what it was but I had a strong feeling it was wrong. Since then, I happened to read a book by Roger Oakland, 'The Eucharistic Jesus,' where he speaks quite clearly of the end-times delusion of experiential spirituality mentioned in the Bible. And even after it left me, I could feel and almost see that thing around other people in the church who had swallowed their 'wafer god.' It is going to be very hard for people who undergo this experience repeatedly to believe it does not come from God. And only the Holy Spirit protecting me allowed me to refuse it. The Lord has

protected me all my life, even when I did not belong to Him yet. But my poor, poor family. How I weep for them! And I pray daily that the Lord opens their mind and their heart to His word. But this ‘thing’ is so, so seducing. It will take a mighty wind of the Lord to tear it away from my family. By the way, the Catholic Church calls it an anointing of the Lord. I can it the embrace of Satan. Pray for us, please, I will also pray for you.

The Mass is indeed a mystical powerhouse.

The Labyrinth

The labyrinth is a circle with a twisting path that winds its way to the center and is used for prayer and meditation. The International Labyrinth Society says it is a “tool for personal, psychological and spiritual transformation.”

Used by pagan religions for centuries before the coming of Christ, the labyrinth was “Christianized” by the Roman Catholic Church as part of its desperate search for spirituality apart from the Bible.

Native Americans called it the Medicine Wheel; Celts called it the Never Ending Circle; it is called the Kabala in mystical Judaism (<http://www.gracecathedral.org/labyrinth>).

The most famous labyrinth was built into the floor of the Roman Catholic Chartres Cathedral in France in the 13th century. This has been duplicated at the Riverside Church in New York City and Grace Cathedral (Episcopal) in San Francisco, both hotbeds of theological liberalism and New Age philosophy.

Ray Yungen observes that the labyrinth is associated with centering prayer:

“Those walking the labyrinth will generally engage in centering or contemplative prayer by repeating a chosen word or phrase while they walk, with the hope that when they reach the center of the labyrinth, they will have also centered down and reached the divinity within” (*A Time of Departing*, p. 179).

Lauren Artress, a canon at Grace Cathedral, founded Veriditas, The World-Wide Labyrinth Project, with the goal “to facilitate the transformation of the Human Spirit.” Observe that Human Spirit

is capitalized, testifying to the New Age view that man finds divinity within himself. Artress says that she discovered the labyrinth in 1991 through Jean Houston's Mystery School, a New Age organization. The following quote by Houston leaves no doubt as to her philosophy:

“As we encounter the archetypal world within us, a partnership is formed whereby WE GROW AS DO THE GODS AND GODDESSES WITHIN US” (“The Odyssey of the Soul,” <http://www.thinking-allowed.com/2jhouston.html>).

Exercises at her Mystery School Network include psychospiritual exploration, energy resonance, and altered states of consciousness” (<http://www.jeanhouston.org>).

Artress says:

“My passion for the labyrinth has never let up! I think this is because I get so much from it. I also can teach everything I want to teach through the labyrinth: meditation, finding our soul assignments, unleashing our creativity, spiritual practice, psycho-spiritual healing; you name it! IT HAS THE EXACT COSMIC RHYTHMS EMBEDDED WITHIN IT. I sense that this design was created by great masters of Spirit, who knew the pathway to integrating mind, body and spirit” (Interview with Arts and Healing Network, September 2003).

It is obvious that the labyrinth is an effective tool for New Age occultic experience. That the same pagan-derived practice would be adopted by evangelicals is a loud testimony of evangelicalism's apostasy and its frightful communion with “doctrines of devils.”

There is, of course, nothing like a labyrinth in the Bible.

A Description of Roman Catholic Monasticism

Catholic monasticism, as practiced by its monks and nuns since the time of the “desert fathers,” is built upon a foundation of paganism and doctrinal heresy, such as the following: that man contributes to his own salvation; that spiritual purification comes through ascetic practices; that “celibacy” is a holier state than marriage; that Mary can hear and answer prayers; and that the Mass is a transubstantiation of bread into the very Person of Jesus Christ.

The term “ascetic” is from the Greek word “askesis,” meaning training or exercise. It usually refers to self-denial, renunciation of worldly pursuits, and abstinence from sensual pleasures such as food, sleep, marriage, comfortable and clean clothing, human society, and personal possessions.

Monasticism” means solitary. *Monk* means “one who lives alone.”

The objective of Catholic asceticism is to save the soul, to overcome sin and purify the heart and mind, and to encounter God in an experiential way.

It was founded in early centuries after the apostles and was developed particularly in Egypt, which was a hotbed of theological heresy.

The so-called Desert Fathers doubtless borrowed contemplative practices from the pagan east. In *The Religion of Ancient Egypt* (1906), archaeologist William Flinders Petrie said:

“In another direction Egypt was also dominant. From some source--perhaps the Buddhist mission of Asoka--the ascetic life of recluses was established in the Ptolemaic times, and monks of the Serapeum illustrated an ideal to man which had been as yet unknown in the West. This system of monasticism continued, until Pachomios, a monk of Serapis in Upper Egypt, became the first Christian monk in the reign of Constantine. Quickly imitated in Syria, Asia Minor, Gaul, and other provinces, as well as in Italy itself, the system passed into a

fundamental position in mediaeval Christianity, and the reverence of mankind has been for fifteen hundred years bestowed on an Egyptian institution.”

Ray Yungen says:

“The meditation practices and rules for living of these earliest Christian monks bear strong similarity to those of their Hindu and Buddhist renunciate brethren several kingdoms to the East ... the meditative techniques they adopted for finding their God SUGGEST EITHER A BORROWING FROM THE EAST OR A SPONTANEOUS REDISCOVERY” (Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing*, p. 42).

Bede Griffiths, a Benedictine monk who is influential in the contemplative movement today, said the “neoplatonism” of the Desert Fathers “is the nearest equivalent in the West of the Vedantic tradition of Hinduism in the East” (*Christian Mystics*, p. 59).

Ursula King, in her history of Christian mysticism, traces its origin to Alexandria, Egypt, where “members of the new Jesus movement ... desired to combine their faith with the insights of Greek philosophy” (*Christian Mystics*, p. 27). She observes that all of the founders of monastic mysticism synthesized pagan philosophy with the Bible (pp. 27, 30, 31, 54).

The writings of Clement of Alexandria (115-215), Origen (185-254), Jerome (340-420), Augustine (354-430), and Dionysius the Areopagite (c. 500) paved the way for mystical asceticism.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (Titus Flavius Clement), who is called “the first writer on mystical theology” (*Christian Mystics*, p. 29), was “deeply influenced by Greek philosophy” (p. 30). He appropriated mystical themes from Plato. His doctrine of Christ and God was heretical. Clement was one of the fathers of the allegorical method of interpreting the Bible, foisting wild-eyed “spiritual” meanings on the passages. He was one of the fathers of the heresy of purgatory, held to baptismal regeneration, and taught that most men will be saved. He believed that men could become God. He wrote, “I say, the Logos or God became man so that you may learn from man how man may become God” (*Christian Mystics*, p. 32). He also wrote: “That which is true is beautiful; for

it, too, is God. Such a man becomes God because God wills it. Rightly, indeed, did Heraclitus say: ‘Men are gods, and gods are men; for the same reason is in both’” (W.A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*).

ORIGEN taught baptismal regeneration and salvation by works. He believed the Holy Spirit was possibly a created being of some sort. He believed in a form of purgatory and universalism, denying the literal fire of hell and believing that even Satan would be saved eventually. He taught that men’s souls are preexistent and that even stars and planets possibly have souls. He believed that Jesus is a created being and not eternal. He denied the bodily resurrection, claiming that the resurrection body is spherical, non-material, and does not have members. Origen believed in the supremacy of celibacy and even castrated himself. He allegorized the Bible saying, “The Scriptures have little use to those who understand them literally.” (For documentation of these heresies see *Faith vs. the Modern Bible Versions*, which is available from Way of Life Literature.)

JEROME was “a vocal champion of Christian asceticism” and had “a profound influence on the development of clerical celibacy and monasticism in the West” (“Jerome,” VirtualReligion.net). The first work he published was a biography of Paul the Hermit. Jerome himself lived for five years as a hermit in the desert southwest of Antioch doing “ascetic penance,” and he spent the last years of his life in a “hermit’s cell” near Bethlehem. He believed the state of virginity to be spiritually superior to that of marriage and demanded that church leaders be unmarried. He said, “I praise marriage, but it is because they give me virgins” (Jerome’s Letter XXII to Eustochium, section 20). Historian James Heron observed that “no single individual did so much to make monasticism popular in the higher ranks of society” (*The Evolution of Latin Christianity*, 1919, p. 58).

Jerome “took a leading and influential part in ‘opening the floodgates’ for the invocation of saints,” teaching “distinctly and emphatically that the saints in heaven hear the prayers of men on earth, intercede on their behalf and send them help from above (Heron, pp. 287, 88). Jerome promoted veneration of holy relics and bones. He taught that Mary is a perpetual virgin and that she was the counterpart of Eve as Christ was the counterpart of Adam,

so that through her obedience Mary became instrumental in helping to redeem the human race (Heron, p. 294). Jerome was vicious toward those with whom he disagreed (calling them dogs, maniacs, monsters, stupid fools, two-legged asses, madmen). He laid the groundwork for the Catholic inquisition by arguing for “heretics” to be persecuted and even put to death (Heron, p. 323). Historian Philip Schaff said Jerome had “an intolerant and persecuting spirit” (*History of the Christian Church*, III, p. 206).

AUGUSTINE was also a persecutor. The historian Augustus Neander observed that Augustine’s teaching “contains the germ of the whole system of spiritual despotism, intolerance, and persecution, even to the court of the Inquisition” (*General History of the Christian Religion*, 1847). Augustine instigated persecutions against the Bible-believing Donatists who were striving to maintain pure churches. He interpreted Luke 14:23 (“*compel them to come in*”) to mean that Christ requires the churches to use force against heretics.

Augustine was the father of a-millennialism, allegorizing Bible prophecy and teaching that the Catholic Church is the kingdom of God. He taught that the sacraments are the means of saving grace. He was one of the fathers of infant baptism, teaching that baptism took away their sin and calling those who rejected infant baptism “infidels” and “cursed.” He taught that Mary did not commit sin and promoted her veneration. He believed Mary played a vital role in salvation (Augustine, Sermon 289, cited in Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, 1950, IV, p. 69). He believed in purgatory. He accepted the doctrine of “celibacy” for “priests,” supporting the decree of “Pope” Siricius of 387 that ordered that any priest that married or refused to separate from his wife should be disciplined. He exalted the authority of the church over that of the Bible, declaring, “I should not believe the gospel unless I were moved to do so by the authority of the Catholic Church” (quoted by John Paul II, *Augustineum Hyponensem*, Apostolic Letter, Aug. 28, 1986, www.cin.org/jp2.ency/augustin.html). He believed that the true interpretation of Scripture is derived from the declaration of church councils (Augustin, *De Vera Religione*, xxiv, p. 45).

Augustine interpreted the early chapters of Genesis figuratively (*Debating Calvinism: Five Points, Two Views* by Dave Hunt and James White, 2004, p. 230). He taught the heresy of apostolic

succession from Peter. He taught that God has pre-ordained some for salvation and others for damnation and that the grace of God is irresistible for the elect. By his own admission, John Calvin in the 16th century derived his “sovereign election” theology from Augustine. Calvin said: “If I were inclined to compile a whole volume from Augustine, I could easily show my readers, that I need no words but his” (Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, chap. 22).

DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE (also called Pseudo-Dionysius) was an anonymous Syrian monk who lived in the sixth century and whose writings have had a vast influence on Roman Catholic monasticism. His works were translated into Latin in the ninth century. “The influence of his writings--*Celestial Hierarchy, Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, Divine Names, and Mystical Theology*--on Christian mystical thought can hardly be exaggerated. ... Considered as authoritative, his writings greatly stimulated Christian theology and spirituality. They also influenced much of religious life” (*Christian Mystics*, pp. 55, 58).

Like Clement, Origen, Jerome, and Augustine, Dionysius “fused Christian and Greek thought into a synthesis of mystical doctrines” (*Christian Mystics*, p. 54). This illegitimate synthesis created a false Christianity. The apostle Paul, by divine inspiration, had issued a strenuous warning against this error. “*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*” (Colossians 2:8).

Dionysius taught that God cannot be known perfectly through Scripture but must be experienced directly *beyond* Scripture, *beyond* doctrine, through mindless mysticism and a blind leap into the dark.

“According to Dionysius, there are two ways in which man can know God: one is the way of reason; the other is the way of mystical contemplation. ... mystical knowledge is greatly superior ... Dionysius speaks much of the transcendence of God, stressing the fact that by reasoning we know little about him. ... WHEN THE FACULTIES ARE EMPTIED OF ALL HUMAN KNOWLEDGE THERE REIGNS IN THE SOUL A ‘MYSTIC SILENCE’ LEADING IT TO THE CLIMAX THAT IS UNION

WITH GOD AND THE VISION OF HIM as he is in himself” (William Johnston, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, introduction, pp. 25, 27).

“He says that God cannot be known at all in the ordinary sense, but he can be experienced, he can be reached and found if he is sought on the right path. Mystical Theology ... focuses entirely on the utter unity of God, the undivided Ultimate Reality and GODHEAD THAT LIVES IN COMPLETE DARKNESS BEYOND ALL LIGHT. Dionysius writes that the ‘unchangeable mysteries of heavenly Truth lie hidden in the dazzling obscurity of the secret Silence, outshining all brilliance with the intensity of their darkness.’ God is TOTALLY BEYOND THE POWER OF THE INTELLECT; contemplation is the only way to ‘divine darkness,’ which can NEVER BE GRASPED BY THE HUMAN MIND. ... THOSE WHO SEEK THE PATH OF CONTEMPLATION MUST LEAVE ALL ACTIVITIES OF THE SENSE AND THE MIND BEHIND. ... The soul yearns for that ‘union with Him whom neither being nor understanding can contain,’ who is ‘Darkness which is beyond Light,’ and whose vision can only be attained through the loss of all sight and knowledge” (Ursula King, *Christian Mystics*, pp. 55-56).

It is obvious that this is not biblical Christianity, yet it is the Christianity of Catholic monastic mysticism. The true and living God dwells in light not in darkness, and He has revealed Himself in the Scripture, which contains the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-13). God is revealed perfectly in Christ (John 1:18; 14:9; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3). Thank God, we don’t have to try to find Him through blind mysticism or attempt to achieve salvation through works and sacraments; He has already revealed Himself in Scripture and purchased full eternal salvation for us through the blood of His own Son.

The original “Christian” hermits lived solitarily in huts or caves in the Egyptian desert. One of these was **PAUL OF THEBES** (also known as Saint Paul the First Hermit or Paul the Anchorite). He lived in a cave for nearly 100 years.

Another influential early hermit was **ANTHONY** (called St. Anthony the Great by Rome) who spent 20 years in complete solitary, not seeing the face of a man, and 40 or 50 more years in

seclusion and near solitary, part of that time living in a tomb. Anthony lived near Alexandria, Egypt. Much of the surviving record of Anthony's life pertains to his supposed battles with the devil. One account says the devil beat him unconscious, which again shows the heretical foolishness of the Desert Fathers. Nowhere in Scripture do we find that the devil has that kind of power over a true child of God. (I am not assuming that Anthony was a child of God.) At other times the devil is said to have taken the form of wild beasts. Anthony lived in extreme asceticism, subsisting for six months on a small quantity of bread. He allegedly had visions of angels and heard voices. He would perform vain, obsessive rituals such as standing repeatedly to pray while he was weaving mats, claiming that he learned this from a vision.

By the fourth century the hermits formed communities or monasteries, with each monk living in a separate cell. Eventually there were thousands of hermits, both male and female. This developed gradually into the monastic systems of the Middle Ages.

THE MONASTERY RULES were very strict and legalistic. The *Rule of St. Benedict*, for example, directed every aspect of the monk's life: his clothing, relationships, travel, duties, schedule, meals, worship, reading, habitat, sleep. The monks were forbidden to own anything or to associate with anyone except by permission of the abbot.

“We mean that, without an order from the abbot, no one may presume to give, receive or retain anything as his own, nothing at all--not a book, writing tablets or stylus--in short, not a single item, especially since monks may not have the free disposal even of their own bodies and wills. For their needs, they are to look to the father of the monastery, and are not allowed anything which the abbot has not given or permitted. ... But if anyone is caught indulging in this most evil practice, he should be warned a first and a second time. If he does not amend, let him be subjected to punishment” (*The Rule of Saint Benedict*, edited by Timothy Fry, 1981, p. 36).

“A generous pound of bread is enough for a day, whether for only one meal or for both dinner and supper” (p. 41).

“Monks should diligently cultivate silence at all times” (p. 43).

“In no circumstances is a monk allowed, unless the abbot says he may, to exchange letters, blessed tokens or small gifts of any kind with his parents or anyone else, or with a fellow monk. He must not presume to accept gifts sent him even by his parents without previously telling the abbot” (pp. 52, 53).

“To provide for laundering and night wear, every monk will need two cowls and two tunics, but anything more must be taken away as superfluous” (p. 53).

“For bedding the monks will need a mat, a woolen blanket and a light covering, as well as pillow. The beds are to be inspected frequently by the abbot, lest private possessions be found there. A monk discovered with anything not given him by the abbot must be subjected to very severe punishment” (p. 54).

“No one should presume to relate to anyone else what he saw or heard outside the monastery, because that causes the greatest harm. If anyone does so presume, he shall be subjected to the punishment of the rule. So too shall anyone who presumes to leave the enclosure of the monastery, or go anywhere, or do anything at all, however small, without the abbot’s order” (p. 66).

“Every precaution must be taken that one monk does not presume in any circumstance to defend another in the monastery or to be his champion, even if they are related by the closest ties of blood” (p. 67).

This is the type of legalistic Christianity that Paul condemned and refuted in the epistles of Romans, Galatians, and Colossians. The Catholic Desert Fathers and Monastics added works to the grace of Christ (see Galatians 1:6-9) and exalted their own tradition to the same level of authority as Scripture.

This is also the asceticism that Paul condemned in Colossians 2:20-23.

“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility,

and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.”

This is a warning against the gnostic asceticism that was tempting the early churches. These practices are described by Paul as “*the rudiments of the world*” and “*the commandments and doctrines of men.*” In other words, they were man-made traditions without Scriptural authority. They were practices such as “*touch not; taste not; handle not.*”

The Essenes, for example, lived apart from society, enforced celibacy, never ate before sundown, ate nothing that was pleasant to the taste, and drank only water.

“These errorists taught that matter is evil and the body is the source of sin and therefore they treated the body harshly. They denied honor to the body but it was for their own satisfaction of the flesh” (Frank Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*).

This is exactly what the Roman Catholic Desert Fathers believed.

In Colossians 2 Paul shows that Christ is the believer’s justification, life, and spiritual victory.

Asceticism is a path of error that cannot deliver what it promises.

“Asceticism is utterly powerless to effect the object aimed at: it does not, it cannot sanctify the flesh. It has a show of wisdom. It is extravagant in its pretensions and loud in its promises. But it never fulfills them. The apostle here declares that it has no value against the indulgence of the flesh (2:23). It, rather, stimulates the appetites and passions it is meant to extirpate. Asceticism has often proved to be a hotbed of vice. Some of the vilest men have been found among those who advocated the strictest austerities. They denounced the holiest of human associations, and branded as sensual the purest relations. Marriage was degraded, celibacy glorified, the family disparaged, domestic life despised. And some of these foes of truth have been canonized! Asceticism does not touch the seat of sin. All its strength is exerted against the body. Sin is of the soul, has its seat in the soul. So long as the heart is corrupt, no bodily restraints will make the life holy. There is one remedy alone for human sin, one that

reaches to its roots, that ultimately will totally destroy it, viz., the blood of Christ” (1 John 1:7) (W.A. Moorhead).

The Error of Roman Catholic Monasticism

A foundational error of Roman monastic mysticism is its false gospel. According to Rome, salvation is a “treasure” that was purchased by Christ and is increased by the merits of the saints, particularly Mary. This treasure was given to Peter and the Catholic Church to distribute through its sacraments.

According to the Vatican II Council, God the Father “willed that the work of salvation ... should be set in train through the sacrifice and sacraments” (“Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” Chap. 1). The “sacrifice” is the Mass.

Salvation, per the Roman Catholic Church, thus begins with baptism and is fed by participation in the other six sacraments, with the Mass being the heart and soul of the sacramental system.

Note the following official declarations of the authoritative Second Vatican Council. It was held in the mid 1960s and attended by more than 2,400 Catholic bishops under the headship of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI.

The following quotes are from *Vatican Council II--The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (imprimatur: Walter P. Kellenberg, D.D., Bishop of Rockville Centre, Aug. 12, 1975).

“For God’s only-begotten Son ... has won a treasure for the militant Church ... he has entrusted it to blessed Peter, the key-bearer of heaven, and to his successors who are Christ’s vicars on earth, so that they may distribute it to the faithful for their salvation. ... The merits of the Blessed Mother of God and of all the elect ... are known to add further to this treasury” (ellipsis are in the original) (*Vatican Council II*, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” Apostolic Constitution on the Revision of Indulgences, Chap. 4, 7, p. 80).

“For it is the liturgy through which, especially in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, ‘the work of our redemption is accomplished,’ and it is through the liturgy, especially, that the faithful are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real

nature of the true Church” (Vatican II, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” Introduction, para. 2).

The Desert Fathers were not just trying to gain a deeper level of spirituality; they were trying to gain salvation.

When Abba Arsenius, who lived in the desert and was a disciple of Anthony, asked God how he could be saved, a voice answered him, “Arsenius, flee from the world and you will be saved,” and, “Arsenius, flee, be silent, pray always, for these are the source of sinlessness” (Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart*, p. 15).

Consider the vow that was required of novices who entered Shenouda the Archimandrite’s monasteries in the fifth century. Shenouda is one of the most renowned “saints” of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

“I vow before God in His Holy Place, the word which I have spoken with my mouth being my witness; I will not defile my body in any way, I will not steal, I will not bear false witness, I will not lie, I will not do anything deceitful secretly. If I transgressed what I have vowed, I will see the Kingdom of Heaven, but will not enter it. God before whom I made the covenant will destroy my soul and my body in the fiery hell because I transgressed the covenant I made” (Besa, *Life of Shenoute*, translated by D. H. Bell, Cistercian Publications, 1983, pp. 9-10).

This is a gospel of works.

The *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, which was written by John Climacus in the 7th century, depicts the Christian life as a 30-step ladder that reaches to God. This book is still read every year in Orthodox monasteries during Lent and is depicted in icons and paintings. “It shows the spiritual father ushering the monks to the foot of the ladder, with good angels assisting them to ascend, while evil angels are trying to pull them off, dropping them into the gaping jaws of hell” (*Christian Mystics*, pp. 199, 200).

This obviously describes a works gospel.

The Rule of Benedict, which has guided Catholic monasticism since the sixth century, opens with the statement that the monasteries are a “school for the Lord’s service” in which “the way to salvation” is taught (Prologue 45, 48). This way of salvation is works. It says that by persevering in the monastic system until

death the monks “through patience share in the passion of Christ that [they] may deserve also to share in his Kingdom” (Prol. 50). Chapter 7 of Benedict’s Rule presents a 12-step ladder of virtue and asceticism that “leads to heaven.” These steps include repression of self-will, submission to superiors, confession, stifling laughter, and speaking only when asked a question.

Catherine of Siena taught that the bridge to heaven is composed of Christ AND the stones of true and sincere virtues (*Christian Mystics*, p. 85).

The Cloud of Unknowing teaches salvation through the sacraments. The author says that baptism cleanses of original sin (chapter 10, p. 61); that the Sacrament of Penance purifies the conscience and “rubs away the great rust of deadly sin” (chapter 15, p. 68; chapter 28, p. 85); and that the practice of contemplation “will eventually heal you of all the roots of sin” (chapter 12, p. 64).

In his book *The Triple Way*, Bonaventure set out the three-fold path of Catholic contemplation, *purgative* (asceticism), *illuminative*, and *unitive* (mystical union with God). He said: “As soon as the soul has mastered three, it becomes holy ... Upon the proper understanding of these three states are founded both the understanding of all scriptures and THE RIGHT TO ETERNAL LIFE” (Talbot, *Come to the Quiet*, p. 93).

That is a works gospel which Paul condemned as cursed of God (Galatians 1:6-9), and Catholic monasticism is built upon this wretched foundation.

Biblical salvation is not in any wise through one’s efforts and sacrifices and virtuous deeds. All “*our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*” before a thrice holy God (Isaiah 64:6). The biblical gospel is salvation through Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone without works of any kind (Romans 3:21-24; 4:1-8; Ephesians 2:8-10). Christ did everything FOR US. The Bible says that if grace is mixed with works then grace is destroyed, thus Rome’s gospel of grace plus works is impossible. Paul wrote: “*And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work*” (Romans 11:6).

In Christ alone the sinner finds perfection before God, and he receives this full and free salvation directly from Christ without

any intermediary such as a human priest or church or sacramental ritual. The believer has everything in Christ. “*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Through faith in Christ we are cleansed and declared righteous and there is no need to move into a monastery and attempt to purify ourselves through asceticism. We are free to go forth into the world to preach the gospel as Christ commanded and to serve God with a joyful heart.

I have read many books by the Catholic contemplative writers and not once have I read a biblical testimony of salvation.

Ignatius of Loyola was converted through a vision of Mary and the infant Jesus. Angela of Foligno was converted by seeing Francis of Assisi in a dream. John Michael Talbot was converted through a vision of Christ and defines being reborn as a process that includes many things, including contemplative meditation (*Come to the Quiet*, p. 49; also pages 68, 113). This is the heretical Roman Catholic perspective that salvation is a process.

Another foundational error of Rome’s monastic mysticism is its rejection of the Bible as the sole authority for faith and practice. Rome has set up her own tradition as equal in authority to the Bible.

“Sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal ... Thus it comes about that the Church does not draw her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Hence, both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal feelings of devotion and reverence” (*Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, edited by Walter Kellenberg, “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,” Chap. 2, 9, p. 682).

“As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be

accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence” (*New Catholic Catechism*, 82).

Catholic mystics operate in an atmosphere in which the Bible is encrusted with Rome’s tradition and interpreted by Rome’s authority.

The author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* warned about those who “reject the common doctrine and guidance of the Church” (chapter 56, p. 120). He calls them “the disciples of Anti-Christ” (p. 121). He says that using references from Scripture to prove a doctrine is “a vain fad in conceited intellectual circles” (chapter 70, p. 139).

Teresa of Avila said:

“The soul always tries to act in conformity with the Church’s teaching ... no imaginable revelation, even if it saw the heavens open, would cause it to swerve an inch from the doctrine of the Church” (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 25, p. 178).

In describing the practice of *lectio divina*, John Michael Talbot urges his readers to lean on the official teaching of the Catholic Church and not to try to interpret Scripture apart from this. He only recommends that the student study the Bible for himself if he is grounded in “its proper interpretation through the Fathers and magisterium of the Church” (*Come to the Quiet*, p. 48). He even says, “If we ignore the authority of the Church, then we destroy the authority of scripture” (p. 45).

In reality, the authority of Scripture is destroyed when it is submitted to Rome’s tradition.

Not only is Catholic mysticism encrusted with the darkness of Rome’s tradition and dogma, but it is also open to extra-scriptural revelation. The writings of the mystic saints are absolutely filled with descriptions of how God allegedly spoke to them in visions and voices.

The Bible is used by Rome. It is quoted in the Mass and chanted throughout the day in her monasteries, but it is so encrusted with human tradition that its light does not shine in clarity.

The same situation existed in ancient Israel.

“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away” (2 Corinthians 3:14-16)

Though the Bible is read in the Catholic Church, it is read through the thick veil of tradition and sacerdotalism (priestcraft) and papalism and sacramentalism and saint worship.

The Bible cannot be understood properly apart from the new birth whereby the sinner repents of his sin and puts his faith in Jesus' blood and is consequently cleansed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but Rome teaches men to trust in baptism and the other sacraments.

In fact, when discussing the Catholic mystics' rejection of the Bible as the sole authority for faith in practice, we should not forget to document the fact that **typically they didn't even have a personal Bible**. Very few Christians today are aware of this.

John Talbot describes how that Francis of Assisi gave the monks' *only Bible* to a poor woman because he believed “the gift of it will be more pleasing to God than our reading from it” (*The Lover and the Beloved*, p. 15).

At the height of her power from the 13th to the 18th century, Rome did not allow “the laity” to have the Bible, particularly in their own common languages. The Council of Toulouse, in 1229, forbade the laity to possess the books of the Old and New Testaments in their languages.

“We prohibit the permission of the books of the Old and New Testament to laymen, except perhaps they might desire to have the Psalter, or some Breviary for the divine service, or the Hours of the blessed Virgin Mary, for devotion; expressly forbidding their having the other parts of the Bible translated into the vulgar tongue” (Pierre Allix, *Ecclesiastical History*, II, 1821, p. 213).

The Catholic authorities at Toulouse specifically condemned the Waldensian translation known as the Romaunt version (P. Marion Simms, *The Bible from the Beginning*, 1929, p. 153). The Waldensians were persecuted so fiercely and their Scriptures

destroyed so thoroughly by Catholic authorities that only seven copies of their New Testaments have survived from the 13th to the 16th centuries. (I have had the privilege of examining two of these, one at Trinity College Dublin and one at Cambridge University.)

Referring to the Inquisition that was permanently established by the Council of Toulouse, William Blackburn says:

“No legalized institution has ever done more to crush intellectual and religious liberty, or added more to the unspoken miseries of the human race. EVERY LAYMAN DARING TO POSSESS A BIBLE, NOW FIRST FORBIDDEN TO THE LAITY BY THIS COUNCIL, WAS IN PERIL OF THE RACK, THE DUNGEON, AND THE STAKE” (*History of the Christian Church*, 1880, p. 309).

What Rome allowed were only small portions of Scripture, usually from the Psalms and Gospels but not from Paul’s Epistles.

Further, Catholic Scripture portions were published together with apocryphal and legendary stories in which Mary was exalted higher than Jesus Christ.

Consider, for example, the rightly named *GOLDEN LEGEND*. This was written in the late 13th century by Jacopo of Varazze, a Dominican, and published widely in Europe and England prior to the Reformation. Alleged to be excerpts from the Bible, it was actually filled with legends about the “saints,” and the few scraps of the Bible were “lost in a sea of fiction” (David Daniell, *The Bible in English*, p. 108).

Consider the *MIRROR OF THE BLESSED LIFE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST*. This Latin work was translated into English by Nicholas Love and went through eight editions from 1484 to 1530. Alleged to be an “expanded gospel harmony,” it was actually filled with Catholic legend and had little to do with the Bible. “The book is not long, but it is padded out with long meditations by and about the Blessed Virgin Mary, who has the overwhelming presence. Although half the book is on the Crucifixion, the Gospels’ narrative is only just visible, overtaken by the Virgin Mary’s long accounts of her own suffering at that event” (Daniell, p. 161).

It sounds like the original for Mel Gibson’s movie *The Passion of the Christ!*

This was the type of “Scripture” that Rome allowed people to have in their own languages.

Wherever the Bible appeared in the common tongue of the people, wherever it was proclaimed unencumbered with Rome’s traditions, Rome sought to extinguish the light it brought to benighted men. The Catholic authorities did not mind so much when the Scripture was available in Latin, as this language had ceased to be spoken by the common people. It was the translation of Scripture into the native tongues that particularly raised their ire. We have documented this extensively in the book *Rome and the Bible*, which is available from Way of Life Literature.

For example, in England Rome did everything possible to keep the Bible from being translated into the English language, and after it was translated she did everything possible to keep it out of the hands of the people. Rome bitterly persecuted John Wycliffe, the translator of the first English Bible from Latin at the end of the 14th century, and tried to have him arrested and put to death, but failing in that (partially because the papal schism was in full swing and the popes were too busy hurling curses at one another to give their full attention to the Bible translator) Wycliffe was formally condemned at the Council of Constance and his bones were dug up and burned. When William Tyndale translated the first English Bible from Greek and Hebrew in the early 1500s, he had to do it while on the run from the Catholic authorities. Before he was able to complete the Old Testament he was arrested and after a long imprisonment burned at the stake. Rome put to death many other Bible translators, as we have documented in *Rome and the Bible*.

Even the priests and monks and nuns in the monasteries had personal Bibles only in exceedingly rare circumstances. They had breviaries and portions of Scripture selected for them by Rome for use in their repetitious devotions and masses, but typically they did not have their own Bibles and they did not pursue systematic Bible study.

As late as the 19th century, priests in Italy did not have their own Bibles. Alexander Robertson, who long resided in Italy, made the following observation:

On May 18, 1849, some three thousand copies of the New Testament, according to the Martini version, were seized

and destroyed in Tuscany. Priests have told me that even they were not allowed to possess a Martini Bible without the Papal consent, and that the very fact of applying for such consent would bring them under suspicion, and so damage their prospects in the Church. Therefore, they said, 'WE HAVE NO BIBLES.'

A daily newspaper in giving an account of a discussion being carried on between a layman and a clerical in regard to the falsification of the Ten Commandments by the Church, which omits the Second Commandment entirely, and divides the Tenth Commandment into two to make up the number [relates that] 'IN A VILLAGE OF THREE THOUSAND INHABITANTS NO BIBLE COULD BE FOUND'

Students are not taught the Bible in the Papal seminaries. They have many text-books--Alfonso de Liguori's especially--but no Bible. Count Campello, ex-Canon of St. Peter's, was trained in the Academy of Noble Ecclesiastics, the highest training college in Rome (to which once only men of noble birth were admitted, but into which now not one such can be induced to enter), and yet DURING ALL HIS YEARS OF STUDY HE NEVER EVEN SAW A BIBLE (Alexander Robertson, *The Roman Catholic Church in Italy*, 1903, pp. 211-215).

This is the benighted condition in which the Catholic mystic "saints" lived. To say that they were not Bible-centered Christians is a gross understatement, and any possible exception does not disprove the rule.

Another foundational error of Roman monastic mysticism is its adoration of the host of the Mass. At the heart of monastic mysticism is the Catholic Eucharist or Mass. The "saints" centered their lives around it. Catherine of Siena lived at times only on the wine and wafer of the Mass. Catherine of Genoa was so devoted to the Mass that she received it daily. Julian of Norwich could observe only one thing from the lone little window in her cell, and that was the Mass.

Many of the mystics claimed to have had wonderful experiences during the Mass. Beatrijs of Nazareth, a 13th century Cistercian

nun, claims that she saw Jesus on the altar with His arms outstretched and was united with Him, “heart to heart.”

Teresa of Avila was also devoted to the Mass, calling it the “Most Holy Sacrament” and believing that the consecrated wafer is Christ. Many of her visions and raptures occurred during Mass.

As we have seen, the Catholic Mass is not a mere remembrance of Christ’s death; it is a re-sacrifice of Christ, and the consecrated host of the Mass IS Christ. Christ is therefore worshipped as the host, and this forms a major part of Catholic monastic spirituality.

In the influential book *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis said of the Mass:

“But, You, my God, the Holy of Holies, the Creator of all things and Lord of angels, are here present before me on this altar!” (*The Imitation of Christ*, Vintage Spiritual Classics, 1998, Book IV, chap. 1, 8, p. 181).

Consider the following quotes from Thomas Merton’s autobiography

“And I saw the raised Host--the silence and simplicity with which Christ once again triumphed, raised up, drawing all things to Himself ... Christ, hidden in the small Host, was giving Himself for me, and to me, and, with Himself, the entire Godhead and Trinity...” (*The Seven Storey Mountain*, 1998 edition, pp. 245, 246).

“I fixed my eyes on the monstrance, on the white Host. ... I looked straight at the Host, and I knew, now, Who it was that I was looking at, and I said: ‘Yes, I want to be a priest, with all my heart I want it. If it is Your will, make me a priest’...” (pp. 279, 280).

“Then ... there formed in my mind an awareness, an understanding, a realization of what had just taken place on the altar, at the Consecration: a realization of God made present by the words of Consecration in a way that made Him belong to me. ... a sudden and immediate contact had been established between my intellect and the Truth Who was now physically really and substantially before me on the altar” (pp. 310, 311).

Another great error of Roman monastic mysticism is its veneration of Mary. The ancient Catholic spirituality that is praised so widely today in evangelical and Baptist circles is intimately associated with rank idolatry and gross heresy. According to Rome, Mary was conceived immaculately (without sin), participated in Christ's suffering for man's sin, ascended to heaven bodily, was crowned Queen of Heaven, and intercedes for mankind. Consider some statements from the Second Vatican Council:

“Joined to Christ the head and in communion with all his saints, the faithful must in the first place reverence the memory of the glorious ever Virgin Mary, Mother of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ ... Because of the gift of sublime grace she far surpasses all creatures, both in heaven and on earth. ... The Immaculate Virgin preserved free from all stain of original sin, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, when her earthly life was over, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things” (*Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, edited by Walter Kellenberg, “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” chap. 8, I, 52,53; II, 59, pp. 378,381- 382).

“As St. Irenaeus says, she being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race. Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert with him in their preaching ... ‘death through Eve, life through Mary’ ... This union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to his death” (“Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” chap. 8, II, 56, pp. 380-381).

“Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and difficulties, until they are led into their blessed home. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix [Mediator]” (“Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” chap. 8, II, 62, pp. 382-383).

The book *Saints Who Saw Mary* by Raphael Brown describes the centrality of Mary worship among the Catholic saints. The author documents the Mary visitations experienced by Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Ignatius of Loyola, and Bernard of Clairvaux.

Francis of Assisi said:

“I therefore command all my Brothers, those living now and those to come in the future, to venerate the Holy Mother of God, whom we always implore to be our Protectress, to praise her at all times, in all circumstances of life, with all the means in their power and with the greatest devotion and submission” (*Rule of the Friars Minor*).

The Franciscans have a special mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Angels which opens with the words:

“O God, who hast wished to dispense all favors to men through thy most holy Mother...”

Bonaventure said:

“No one can enter into heaven except through Mary, as entering through a gate” (*On St. Luke’s Gospel*).

“We believe that Mary opens the abyss of God’s mercy to whomsoever she wills, when she wills, and as she wills; so that there is no sinner however great who is lost if Mary protects him” (<http://www.tldm.org/news5/mediatrix1.htm>).

Bernard of Clairvaux authored *Homilies in Praise of the Virgin Mother*. He called her the Queen of Heaven, the Star, the ladder on which sinners may climb to God, the royal road to God, the channel through whom divine life flows to the whole creation. A Catholic legend even says that Bernard took milk from Mary’s breast.

Bernard’s illegitimate veneration of Mary is obvious in the following quotations:

“When the storms to temptation burst upon you, when you see yourself driven upon the rocks of tribulation, look at the star, call upon Mary. When swallowed by pride or ambition, or hatred, or jealousy, look at the star, call upon

Mary. Should anger, or avarice, or fleshly desire violently assail the frail vessel of your soul, look at the star, call upon Mary. If troubled on account of the heinousness of your sins, distressed at the filthy state of your conscience, and terrified at the thought of the awful judgment to come, you are beginning to sink into the bottomless gulf of sadness and to be swallowed in the abyss of despair, then think of Mary. In dangers, in doubts, in difficulties, think of Mary, call upon Mary. Let not her name leave thy lips, never suffer it to leave your heart” (*Doctor Mellifluus*, an encyclical on Bernard by Pope Pius XII).

“God Has willed that we should have nothing which would not pass through the hands of Mary” (*Hom. III in vig. nativit.*, n. 10, PL 183, 100, quoted from <http://www.tldm.org/news5/mediatrix1.htm>).

“God has placed in Mary the plenitude of every good, in order to have us understand that if there is any trace of hope in us, any trace of grace, any trace of salvation, it flows from her” (<http://www.tldm.org/news5/mediatrix1.htm>).

The anonymous author of the 14th century contemplative prayer manual *The Cloud of Unknowing* said that “our Lady, St. Mary, was full of grace at every moment” (chapter 3, p. 51). This is a blasphemous statement, since the Bible uses the description “full of grace” only for the Son of God (John 1:14).

Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* are filled with Mary veneration. The practitioner is instructed to pray the *Hail Mary* many times and to ask Mary for grace. Ignatius also recommended praying *Hail Holy Queen* (“Three Methods of Prayer,” 258). This blasphemous prayer addresses Mary as holy Queen, the Mother of Mercy, our life, our love, our hope, and most gracious advocate.

John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, whose writings have a powerful influence on the modern contemplative movement, were members of the Carmelites, an order dedicated to Mary, and a zeal for Mary characterized their lives. John of the Cross is said to have lived “in intimate union with God AND HIS MOTHER” (“St. John of the Cross,” Doctors of the Catholic Church web site).

Teresa of Avila even claimed to have seen Mary ascend to heaven.

“Once, on the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, the Queen of the Angels, the Lord was pleased to grant me this favour. In a rapture, I saw a representation of her ascent from heaven, of the joy and solemnity with which she was received, and of the place where she now is” (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 39, p. 305).

Teresa was also devoted to Joseph, and she claimed that Mary was so pleased by this that both of them appeared and clothed her in a “robe of great whiteness and clarity,” after which Mary took her by the hands and “told me that I was giving her great pleasure by serving the glorious St. Joseph, and promised me that my plans for the convent would be fulfilled” (*The Life of Saint Teresa*, chap. 33, p. 247).

Hildegard of Bigen was deeply committed to devotion to Mary and dedicated many songs to her, including one entitled “Praise for the Mother.”

Gethsemane Abby in Kentucky, where Thomas Merton lived, is dedicated to Mary. Every evening at 7 pm, seven days a week, the monks and priests pray the Rosary.

Merton was a great venerator of Mary. His autobiography is filled with passionate statements about her. He calls her Our Lady, Glorious Mother of God, Queen of Angels, Holy Queen of Heaven, Most High Queen of Heaven, Mediatrix of All Grace, Our Lady of Solitude, Immaculate Virgin, Blessed Virgin, and Holy Queen of souls and refuge of sinners. He dedicated himself to her and prayed to her continually.

“People do not realize the tremendous power of the Blessed Virgin. They do not know who she is: that it is through her hands all graces come because God has willed that she thus participate in His work for the salvation of men. ... She is the Mother of the supernatural life in us. Sanctity comes to us through her intercession. God has willed that there be no other way” (*The Seven Storey Mountain*, p. 251).

Anthony de Mello dedicated his book on contemplation to “the Blessed Virgin Mary,” urging his readers to “seek her patronage and ask for her intercession before you start out on this way” (*Sadhana: A Way to God*, pp. 8, 9).

John Michael Talbot said: "I am also feeling the presence of Mary becoming important in my life. ... I feel that she really does love me and intercedes to God on my behalf" (*Contemporary Christian Music Magazine*, November 1984, p. 47). He says that praying the Rosary is one of the most powerful meditative tools.

Another error of monastic mysticism is its idolatry. Not only is Roman mysticism permeated with the idolatry pertaining to Mary but with all sorts of other idolatrous practices, as well. There are crucifixes, Sacred Hearts, paintings of Jesus, statues of the saints, the host of the Mass, and holy relics.

The Catholic mystics were dedicated to these things. They adored the wafer of the Mass as Almighty God. They prayed to crucifixes. They bowed before and burned candles to statues and paintings. They venerated bones and other relics. Bonaventure was devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Theresa of the Child Jesus scourged herself while meditating on a crucifix. Teresa of Avila contemplated a picture of Christ within her.

Another error of Roman monastic mysticism is its belief in purgatory. The Catholic doctrine of purgatory says that believers must suffer for their sins after death in a place of purgation or purifying, and all of the mystic saints believed in it. Some, such as Catherine of Siena and Hildegard of Bingen, had visions of it. They believed that the living could help the dead escape purgatory through purchasing masses and indulgences, through the worship of saints, even through contemplative practices.

The author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* claimed that through mystical contemplation "the souls in purgatory are touched, for their suffering is eased by the effects of this work" (chapter 3, p. 48).

Catherine of Genoa wrote a *Treatise on Purgatory*. She said that purgatory is a place where souls are separated from God (chapter III), and where they "endure a pain so extreme that no tongue can be found to tell it" (chapter II), and where the stain of sins are removed before the soul can approach God (chapter VIII).

Hildegard of Bingen described purgatory as a place of fire, a stinking marsh, punishing spirits, fiery thorns, spikes, toads, horrible worms, vipers, and scorpions. She believed that souls

could be rescued from purgatory through “the recitation of psalms for the dead, almsgiving, prayers, and other holy works.”

The doctrine of purgatory denies the perfect sufficiency of Christ’s atonement. The one and only place where sin is purged is the cross of Jesus Christ. “*Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us*” (Hebrews 9:12). He obtained full redemption through His own blood for those who believe. The Bible teaches that as soon as the believer is absent from the body he is present with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8). The fire of the judgment seat of Christ does not touch the believer himself; it tests his works (1 Corinthians 3:13).

Another error of Roman monastic mysticism is its rejection of Christ’s Great Commission. The Desert Fathers in the fourth and fifth centuries were blatantly disobeying the Bible in their pursuit of “spirituality.” The Lord Jesus Christ had commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8), and that is the example that is given in the book of Acts; but the mystic hermits typically ignored this and lived in caves in the desert and built monasteries to isolate themselves from society. “St. Paul the Hermit” spent nearly 100 years in a cave while “St. Anthony” spent 20 years in complete isolation and 40 or 50 in near isolation.

The hermits said they were following the call of Christ to the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:21--“*If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*” But there are two essential errors to this interpretation. First, Christ was not telling the young man that self-denial is the way of salvation. Christ was exposing his sin of covetousness. Christ was using the Law to reveal sin, which is its intended purpose (Rom. 3:19-31). The Bible plainly teaches that salvation is a free gift of God’s grace and that works follow (Ephesians 2:8-10). The Law is a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ by showing them their need for salvation (Galatians 3:24). Second, Christ didn’t tell the young man to go off and live in isolation or to live a life of asceticism. He said, “Follow me.” To follow Christ means to follow Him into the world of men to preach the gospel, which is what He did (Luke 19:10) and what His

apostles did as recorded in the book of Acts. Christ went apart to pray at times, but only for a few hours. He was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days, but that was unique to His work as the Saviour and Messiah, proving that He was incapable of sin and exhibiting His qualification to be the sinless sacrifice. Further, He was away from human society for 40 days not 40 years! Christ was not a hermit, and there were no hermits in the apostolic churches.

It is true that some of the monastic mystics preached to people, but multitudes of others were content to remain cloistered. This is a great error.

Another error of Roman monastic mysticism is its attempt to participate in Christ's atonement. The Catholic saints thought that they and others could participate with Christ in His suffering and death.

Some of them, such as Francis of Assisi and Catherine of Siena, claimed to have received the "stigmata," which is the impression of the crucifixion wounds of Christ (pierced hands and feet, crown of thorns) on their own bodies.

These things are heretical and blasphemous upon their very face, because the Bible says that Christ died alone and suffered by Himself ONCE for the sins of mankind.

"... when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12).

"... but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

"And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5).

Catherine of Siena asked Christ "to let her bear the punishment for all the sins of the world, and to receive the sacrifice of her body for the unity and renovation of the Church" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1917).

In thinking that they could participate in Christ's atonement, the Catholic "saints" were only following in the footsteps of Rome's Mary. This heresy is depicted in the Stations of the Cross,

which show Mary participating in Jesus' suffering. It is depicted in Roman art by paintings and statues such as Michelangelo's *Pieta*, which is located in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. It describes an apocryphal scene of Mary holding Jesus after his death. In reality, Jesus' body was taken down by Joseph of Arimathaea and there is no mention in the Bible of Mary even being present at that scene (Matthew 27:57-60). Michelangelo's *Pieta* depicts Mary as larger than Jesus, which is symbolic of Rome's mis-emphasis and heretical exaltation of Mary. She is supposed to be participating in Christ's suffering for man's sin and is called Mediatrix. The Second Vatican Council said: "This union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to his death" ("Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," chap. 8, II, 56, pp. 380-381).

Another error of Roman monastic mysticism is its search for union with God. Mysticism is the attempt to experience God and become one with Him.

Beginning with John Cassian (360-435), Catholic monastics taught that this is achieved through a three-step path. The first stage is *Purgatio*, the struggle to overcome the flesh through ascetic practices. The second stage is *Illuminatio*, in which the ascetic is enlightened and can assist others. The third stage is *Unitio*, which is the supposed bonding of the soul with God in mystical union and contemplative bliss.

Eastern Orthodox mystics called this "ingodded" (*Christian Mystics*, p. 194). They believed that God became incarnate in humankind so that humans might be ingodded. This is allegedly achieved through contemplative prayer.

Teresa of Avila's famous *Interior Castle* is an image of the soul attaining union with God through spiritual betrothal. She describes a journey through seven mansions, the final being mystical union.

John of the Cross's *Ascent of Mount Carmel* attempts to lead the soul "to Divine union with God."

The term "sleep of God" describes the mystical experience of achieving oneness with God and having a personal glimpse of His glory. It is the ultimate mystical experience and is the object of the Roman mystic's ascetic devotion.

The 17th century statue “Ecstasy of St. Teresa,” located in the Carmelite church in Rome (Santa Maria della Vittori), depicts the mystic in this state. Her face shows the most exquisite delight as an angel prepares to pierce her heart again with a fiery spear.

The Bible says that the born again believer is a son of God, is indwelt by God, and becomes “*partaker of the divine nature*” (Romans 8:9, 11; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2). But this is not something that the believer must try to attain through monasticism; it is something he has the moment he is born again through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. It is purely a gift of God’s grace and not a product of mystical works. The believer is instructed to “grow in grace” but this is not described in the New Testament epistles as a process of asceticism and contemplative mysticism.

In some cases, the Catholic mystics taught the heresy that they were God.

Catherine of Genoa described her mystical experiences in these words: “My being is God, not by simple participation but by a true transformation of my being” (Ursula King, *Christian Mystics*, p. 87).

Johann Tauler said that the individual is “reformed in the form of God, clothed with His divinity” and “led into another Heaven which is the divine Essence itself” (Tauler, *Sermons*, Paulist Press, pp. 172, 177).

Another error of Roman monastic mysticism is its asceticism. Rome’s Desert Fathers and mystic “saints” practiced extreme asceticism. Many doubtless put themselves into an early grave. Hildegard’s “strict practices of fasting and self-punishment, resulted in a lifetime of health problems and migraine headaches” (Talbot, *The Way of the Mystics*, p. 55). John of the Cross so abused his body that, according to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, “twice he was saved from certain death by the intervention of the Blessed Virgin.”

After a study of the desert monastics, we tend to agree with Edward Gibbon, the famous historian of the Roman Empire. He described the typical desert monk as a “distorted and emaciated maniac ... spending his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghastly phantoms of

his delirious brain.” Gibbon said, “They were sunk under the painful weight of crosses and chains; and their emaciated limbs were confined by collars, bracelets, gauntlets, and greaves of massy and rigid iron” (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*).

The ascetic practices have many purposes, but none of them are scriptural.

They were thought to be necessary for salvation and sanctification. Pio of Pietrelcina said: “Let us now consider what we must do to ensure that the Holy Spirit may dwell in our souls. ... The mortification must be constant and steady, not intermittent, and it must last for one’s whole life. Moreover, the perfect Christian must not be satisfied with a kind of mortification which merely appears to be severe. He must make sure that it hurts” (“Mortification of the Flesh,” *Wikipedia*).

Ascetic practices are also thought to be necessary as part of the path to ecstatic union with God. We have seen that self-denial and self-injury composed the first step in the three-step path to mystical union.

Ascetic practices are also thought to be necessary as penance for sin. In his *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius of Loyola taught that penance requires “chastising the body by inflicting sensible pain on it” through “wearing hairshirts, cords, or iron chains on the body, or by scourging or wounding oneself, and by other kinds of austerities” (*The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, First Week, Vintage Spiritual Classics, p. 31). Pope John XXIII wrote: “But the faithful must be encouraged to do outward acts of penance, both to keep their bodies under the strict control of reason and faith, and to make amends for their own and other people’s sins” (*Paenitentiam Agere*, July 1, 1962). Yet we know that the believer’s sin is forgiven through the blood of Christ and not through his own self-effort and sacrifice (1 John 1:9).

Ascetic practices are further thought to be necessary because the body and its physical pleasures are evil. John of the Cross, one of the most acclaimed of the Catholic mystical theologians, considered physical existence, with all its attendant needs and desires, as inherently sinful (Talbot, *The Way of the Mystics*, p. 148). Francis of Assisi called his own body “Brother Ass.” This

error goes back to the Platonic and gnostic philosophy that was imbibed by the Desert Fathers and Church Fathers.

Some of the common ascetic practices of the monastic mystics were as follows:

Extreme fasting - For part of her life Catherine of Siena lived exclusively on the wine and wafer of the Mass. Peter of Alcantara, who was Teresa of Avila's spiritual director, ate only once in three days at the most. The diet in many monasteries is meager. Consider the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance. The monks subsist on a small amount of food for part of the year and are never allowed to eat meat, fish, or eggs.

Self-flagellation - Dominic Loricatus (995-1060), a Benedictine monk, lashed himself 300,000 times with a whip in one six-day period (Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. V). He did this while reciting the Psalms, 100 lashes for each psalm. Catherine of Siena scourged herself three times a day with an iron chain. Theresa of the Child Jesus "scourged herself with all the strength and speed of which she was capable, smiling at the crucifix through her tears." Hildegard of Bingen recommended "maceration of the flesh, and heavy beatings" to ward off lascivious lusts.

Hairshirts - A hairshirt was something uncomfortable worn next to the skin. Commonly it was made of some uncomfortable fabric such as horsehair, but some were made of metal. Henry Suso's loins were covered with scars from his horsehair shirt. He also devised an undergarment studded with 150 sharp brass nails that pierced his skin. Dominic Loricatus and Ignatius of Loyola wore hairshirts of chain mail.

Bindings - Ignatius had the habit of binding a cord below the knee. The seers of Fatima wore tight cords around their waists. Catherine of Siena wrapped a chain with crosses around her body so tightly that it caused her to bleed; it is described as an "iron spiked girdle." "Her self-punishment left her body covered with gaping wounds, which she blithely referred to as her 'flowers'" (Talbot, *The Way of the Mystics*, p. 81).

Foregoing hygiene - Anthony never bathed his body nor even washed his feet. Henry Suso didn't take a bath in 25 years. For a while Ignatius of Loyola didn't bathe, wore rags, and let his hair

and nails grow “wildly out of control.” In the Order of Cistercians of Strict Observance, Thomas Merton’s order, monks are allowed to wash their robes only once a month and they can take showers only by permission of the abbot. It should be called the order of stinky.

Sleep depravation - Catherine of Siena allowed herself only one-half hour of sleep every other day on a hard board. No wonder she had strange visions! Peter of Alcantara slept only one and a half hours a day for 40 years. Catherine of Genoa slept as little as possible and then on a bed covered with briars and thistles.

Silence and solitude - Silence and solitude is a big part of Catholic monastic asceticism. The hermit Theon, one of the “desert fathers,” kept silent for thirty years. Abbot Moses told a young man who asked for guidance, “Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything” (*The Way of the Mystics*, p. 24). Romuald, the founder of the Camaldolese order, says the hermit must “sit in his cell like a chick, and destroy himself completely” (Talbot, *Come to the Quiet*, p. 22). Cistercian monks take vows of silence and communicate among themselves only by sign language. Teresa of Avila demanded that the nuns in her order not talk to each other or be together except when eating and worshipping. She said, “Each one should be alone in her cell” (*The Way of Perfection*, chap. 4, p. 29).

Separation from relatives - Many of the monasteries and convents disallowed the monks and nuns to associate with their relatives. Teresa of Lisieux and her four sisters were nuns in Carmelite convents, and when their father had a series of strokes that left him severely handicapped, they were not allowed to visit him. This is contrary to God’s command to honor and care for one’s own near relations (1 Tim. 5:8).

Paul warned that some would turn from the faith and teach the doctrines of demons, and he identified two of these doctrines as “*forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats...*” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

A plainer description of Catholic monastic asceticism has never been written!

Paul warned about asceticism in Colossians 2:20-23.

The ascetics find biblical support for their practices in Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 9:27 -- "*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*"

But nowhere does Paul say that he performed the type of asceticism that is practiced by the Catholic monastics. He listed many things that he suffered, but for the most part they were things that he was subjected to *by outside forces* and by dint of the performance of his preaching ministry (2 Corinthians 11:23-27). Paul was not punishing his body and ruining his health through mindless asceticism.

In the New Testament, fasting is not a way of punishing oneself; it is a matter of spiritual warfare (Matthew 17:19-21).

Further, Paul was not talking about his salvation or his sanctification but about his ministry. Paul was concerned that he would be a castaway in the sense that he would be put on a shelf in this life so that he could no longer exercise his ministry and/or that his service would be rejected, disapproved at the judgment seat of Christ. The same Greek word is translated "rejected." Paul was not afraid that he would be lost. In the same epistle he taught that Christ preserves the believer (1 Cor. 1:7-9). What Paul feared was falling short of God's high calling for his life. The context makes this plain. He is talking about running a race and winning a prize.

To confuse 1 Corinthians 9:27 with salvation is to misunderstand the gospel of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a reward for faithful service. The Bible plainly states that salvation is by grace, and grace is the free, unmerited mercy of God (Eph. 2:8-9). Anything that is merited or earned, is not grace (Romans 11:6). On the other hand, after we are saved by the marvelous grace of God, we are called to serve Jesus Christ. We are created in Christ Jesus "*unto good works*" (Eph. 2:10). If a believer is lazy and carnal, he will be chastened by the Lord (Heb. 12:6-8), and if he does not respond, God will take him home (Rom. 8:13; 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16).

Another error of Roman monastic mysticism is its practice of mindless meditation. Dionysius the Areopagite taught that God cannot be known intellectually but only experienced. “God is totally beyond the power of the intellect” and “can never be grasped by the human mind” (*Christian Mystics*, p. 55).

The “desert father” Anthony told a group of disciples that books are unnecessary. “To one whose mind is sound, letters are needless” (Talbot, *The Way of the Mystics*, p. 24).

This is contrary to what Paul believed. Even in his old age he said to Timothy, “*The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments*” (2 Timothy 4:13). Even though he had great mystical experiences, seeing Jesus in vision and being taken up to the third heaven and writing Scripture by divine revelation, the apostle was studying books to the very end of his life.

Bonaventure’s fourth stage of knowing God is an experience of “entering into a wisdom beyond all knowledge ... above anything perceptible, imaginable, or conceivable” (Talbot, *Come to the Quiet*, p. 93).

Hadewijch of Brabant, a Flemish mystic of the 13th century, urged practitioners to shed “all images and forms” in order to attain “pure and naked Nothingness.” She described union with God as a plunge into boundless unknowing (*Christian Mystics*, p. 101).

The Eastern Orthodox contemplative practice called **HESYCHASM** (heh-zee-kazm), which means “stillness,” has the objective of entering “a place of the heart” that is “*free from all images and discursive thinking*” (*Christian Mystics*, p. 205). It involves repetitive prayer, ritualistic bodily postures (resting one’s chin on the chest), and meditating on the heart. Gregory of Sinai said Hesychasm can transport the soul into “the nonmaterial realm of *inconceivable* divine light” wherein it is “*dissolved in its thoughts*” (p. 207).

Meister Eckhart taught that God’s “radiance” begins “where understanding” ends.

Johannes Tauler taught that God is far above “every thought” and is found only where “no word is spoken” and there is “no image.”

Jan van Ruusbroec, another of the Rhineland Mystics, taught that God is “far above reason and understanding.”

The Cloud of Unknowing claims that God is beyond all description. “He cannot be known by reason ... he can certainly be loved but not thought. He can be taken and held by love, but not by thought.” The practitioner is taught to use a one-word mantra to “strike down every kind of thought under the cloud of forgetting.”

This is a blatant denial of the inspiration and sufficiency of Scripture as divine revelation. God cannot be known by man through his own powers of intellect and observation and God cannot be known by man in an absolute sense, because God is infinite and eternal (1 Timothy 6:16), but God has revealed Himself perfectly in Scripture and in the Person of Jesus Christ. We, therefore, do not need to try to pursue God by mysticism through a “cloud of unknowing.”

Another error of Roman monastic mysticism is its doctrine of celibacy. The idea behind Rome’s celibacy requirement for priests and nuns is the doctrine that the state of celibacy is more spiritual than marriage and that the priests and nuns are married to Christ. The Catholic Church attempts to find support for this doctrine in Paul’s teaching in 1 Corinthians 7, but he never forbade marriage (1 Cor. 7:9, 28, 35). In fact, Paul required that pastors and deacons be married men (1 Timothy 3:2, 5, 11). And the needy women that are supported by the churches are women that have been married (1 Timothy 5:9-10).

There is not a hint in the New Testament of a Catholic-style monastic system with an enforced celibacy.

To the contrary, Paul identified this teaching as a doctrine of devils.

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

The “desert fathers” were so zealous for this heresy that some of them castrated themselves. Origen, one of the fathers of the monastic system, was of this number. Many others abandoned wives and husbands, in direct disobedience to the Bible, in order to live “celibate” as monks and nuns.

The Council of Elvira (300-306) and the Council of Carthage (390) demanded that married bishops and priests “keep away from their wives.” This was in brazen contradiction to the Bible’s exhortation in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5.

“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.”

Bernard of Clairvaux’s married sister got permission from her husband so she could leave him and become a nun in a Benedictine convent.

Catherine of Genoa got her husband to promise to live with her “as a brother,” abstaining from marital relations, while she pursued a mystical union with God through extreme asceticism.

Another error of Roman monastic mysticism is its moral corruption. The Roman Catholic Church’s priesthood and monastic system is deeply polluted. Its “celibacy” has been exceedingly lascivious! By ignoring the apostolic injunction in 1 Corinthians 7:2, 8-9 and forcing men and women to make vows of celibacy, pretending that this state is more holy than marriage, they have created a situation in which the flesh and the devil have had a field day.

Rome has tried to whitewash this problem but the stain cannot be removed.

Church historian John Christian writes:

“The purest spirits in the hierarchy blush to tell the hard narrative of monastic life in the sixteenth century, although it made pretension to spotless virtue. Archbishop Morton, 1490, accused the Abbot of St. Albans with

emptying the nunneries of Pray and Sapnell of modest women and filling them with vile females” (*A History of the Baptists*, vol. 1).

This problem did not exist only in the 15th and 16th centuries, and there are plenty of references to it in Rome’s own writings, including the *Catholic Encyclopedia*. Even her saints talk about it. Consider the following damning statement by Hildegard of Bingen, for example:

“But there are MANY to be found both among the spirituals and the seculars, who pollute themselves not only in fornicating with women, but even place on themselves the most heavy burden of condign judgment, by contaminating themselves in perverse fornication. How? A man, who sins with another man according to the manner of women, sins bitterly against God and against that conjunction by which God joined man and woman. (*Scivias*, II, vision, 6, chapt. 78).

Hildegard warned that the homosexuality was rampant among both male and female monastics.

The “celibate” popes themselves, who headed up the monastic system, were often filthy, some of them turning the papal palaces into little less than a brothel.

When Luther visited Rome in the late 15th century, he expected to find a holy place, but that was not his experience. Instead of a city of prayers and alms, of contrite hearts and holy lives, Rome was full of mocking hypocrisy, defiant skepticism, jeering impiety, and shameless revelry. He commented, “If there be a hell, Rome is built over it.”

The following are just a few of the many examples that could be given of the immorality of the popes:

Pope Sergius III (904-911) had two of his predecessors put to death and fathered an illegitimate son.

Pope John XII (955-63) is described by the *Catholic Encyclopedia* as “a course, immoral man, whose life was such that the Lateran was spoken of as a brothel.” (The Lateran is a palace that Emperor Constantine donated to the bishop of Rome.)

Pope Benedict IX (1032-1045) was made pope at the age of 20. He was a murderer and an adulterer and the *Catholic Encyclopedia*

admits he lived a “dissolute life.” He was driven from Rome in 1044 and Sylvester III was crowned pope. Benedict returned to Rome the same year, expelled Sylvester, and regained the papacy. Then he sold the papacy for a large sum of money to John Gratian, who named himself Gregory VI in 1045. Benedict regained the papacy in 1047, and was again driven out of Rome in 1048 to make way for Pope Damasus II. Thus, in four years, there were six popes, and three of them were the same adulterer!

John XXIII (1410-15) made his brother’s wife his mistress and had many other immoral relations with women. He frequently consulted a magician named Abremelin. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* admits “he was utterly worldly-minded, ambitious, crafty, unscrupulous, and immoral.” He was convicted by the Council of Constance of some 55 crimes, including the murder of his predecessor, Pope Alexander V, rape, sodomy, and incest. He was deposed from the papacy but retained a position as cardinal and later became dean of the Sacred College in Rome. (Because he was deposed, he is not on the official list of Catholic popes, and a modern pope took the name John XXIII.)

Pope Sixtus IV (1471-84) erected a house of prostitution in Rome, the inmates of which, according to Dr. Jortin, “paid his holiness a weekly tax, which amounted sometimes to 20,000 ducats a year.” Even the *Catholic Encyclopedia* admits that “his wars and treachery, his promotion to the highest offices in the Church of such men as Pietro and Girolamo are blots upon his career.”

Before he assumed the papacy, Pope Pius II (1458-64) wrote pornographic literature for a living. Even the *Catholic Encyclopedia* admits that he “freely indulged his passions” and that he had two illegitimate children.

Pope Innocent VIII (1484-92) had at least two illegitimate children that he raised to positions of authority and wealth in the Catholic Church. He gained the papacy through bribery. He created new ecclesiastical offices and sold them to the highest bidder.

Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) was a vile man. Before he bribed or otherwise cheated his way to the papacy, he had at least four illegitimate children, and he made them rich through appointments after he was pope. He made his son, Cesare Borgia, a

cardinal when he was only 18 years old. Cesare was an immoral and violent man who had his brother put to death as well as his sister Lucrezia's husband. Alexander held unspeakable orgies in his palace and kept mistresses who were married women. He died of syphilis.

Pope Julius II (1503-13) was another of the drunken, immoral popes. He had immoral relations with women that produced at least three illegitimate children, and it is said that he had homosexual relations, as well. He gained the papacy through bribes. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* describes him as "impatient, irascible, ambitious, and warlike."

The immorality that has so deeply corrupted Rome's monastic system is not something that is limited to the past. It is a very present problem. The Roman Catholic Church in America has spent over \$2 billion in the last few decades to settle lawsuits brought about by immoral priests. A conservative Catholic organization documented this wretched business in the fall/winter 2002 issue of the magazine *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*, observing:

"... the overwhelming majority of sexual abuse cases in the Catholic Church--about 90%--involve homosexual priests preying on teenage boys. The major media and the U.S. culture at large want to deny or spin the homosexual factor out of the scandal."

Many books have documented the immorality that has plagued the Roman Catholic priesthood and its monastic systems. The following are some of the books in my own library that describe this sad state of affairs:

AmChurch Comes Out: The U.S. Bishops, Pedophile Scandals and Homosexual Priests by Paul Likoudis (Oxford University Press, 1996)

Auricular Confession and Popish Nunneries by William Hogan (Boston: American Citizen Co., 1893)

Convent Cruelties or My Life in the Convent: Awful Revelations by Helen Jackson (Toledo, OH: Helen Jackson, 1926)

The Devil in Robes, or the Sin of Priests by J. Scott Carr (St. Louis, MO: Continental Bible House, 1899)

Fifty Years in the Church of Rome by Charles Chiniquy
(New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1886)

A Gospel of Shame: Children, Sexual Abuse, and the Catholic Church by Frank Bruni (Perennial, 2002)

Illustrations of Popery: The Mystery of Iniquity Unveiled by J.P. Callender (New York: J.P. Callender, 1838)

Lead Us Not into Temptation: Catholic Priests and the Sexual Abuse of Children by Jason Berry (University of Illinois Press, 2000)

Maria Monk: Secrets of the Black Nunnery Revealed (The Menace Publishing Company, nd.)

The Martyr in Black: The Saddest Bride on Earth: The Life Story of Sister Justina, for Twenty Years a Nun in the Shadow of Convent Walls by Anna Lowry (Ritzville, WA: Miss Anna M. Lowry, 1913)

The Mysteries of the Neapolitan Convents by Henrietta Caracciolo (Hartford: A. S. Hale & Co., 1867)

The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional by Charles Chiniquy (Strand: The Marshall Press, nd.)

Six Years in the Monasteries of Italy by S.I. Mahoney (Philadelphia: Edward C. Biddle, 1836)

Another error of Roman monastic mysticism is its allegorical interpretation of Scripture. One of the ways that the Roman Catholic Church gets around the plain meaning of Scripture is by the allegorical method of interpretation. This began with the “church fathers” such as Origen.

William Johnston, a modern Catholic mystic who edited an edition of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, admits that the mystics, from Origen to John of the Cross, twisted the Scripture. Yet he claims that their wild-eyed allegoricalism is “legitimate, and even helpful to the modern exegete” (p. 20). He calls this “the contemplative approach to Scripture” and says, “Growth in understanding comes from the mystics who, so to speak, live the Scriptures from within” (p. 20). Thus, we are supposed to accept their strange interpretations of Scripture because they were, allegedly, so close to God that they had private spiritual insight. This is the blind leading the blind.

Consider the *Book of the First Monks*, which is a foundational document for Rome's hermits. It is followed by the Carmelite order, which was the order of Brother Lawrence, Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross, all of which are influential in today's evangelical contemplative movement. The *Book of the First Monks* claims that Elijah inspired the early hermits who settled near Mt. Carmel. Elijah's experiences when he was hiding from Jezebel are allegorized to represent stages in contemplative mysticism.

When the Bible says that Elijah was instructed by God to hide himself by the brook Cherith (1 Kings 17:3), this is taken to mean that a monk, through his "efforts and virtuous works," comes to the place where he can "offer God a pure heart, free from all stain of actual sin" (*Collected Works of St. John*, translation by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, 1991).

This is called "hiding in Cherith." It is an attempt to purify oneself morally and spiritually through asceticism.

When Elijah was told to drink of the brook, this is taken to mean that the monk learns to "experience in the soul ... the intensity of the divine presence."

This is called "drinking of Cherith" and supposedly describes a direct mystical experience of God.

Another example is "The Ladder of Divine Ascent" or "the Ladder of Paradise," which was written in the seventh century by John Climacus, the abbot of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai monastery. He took the fact that Jesus was 30 years old when He was baptized and allegorized it to signify 30 monastic steps to union with God.

Bonaventure allegorized the three pairs of seraph wings described in Isaiah 6:2. He taught that these are symbolic of the three phases of the soul's mystical ascent to God.

The author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* allegorized Proverbs 3:9-10 to turn it into a promise that God will bless blind mystical practices. The verse says, "*Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.*"

The Cloud of Unknowing gives "the hidden meaning" as follows:

"These presses are your interior spiritual faculties. Formerly you forced and constrained them in all kinds of

meditations and rational inquiry in an effort to gain some spiritual understanding of God and yourself ... But now they are filled and overflow with wine. This wine ... is accurately and mystically understood to be that spiritual wisdom distilled in the deep contemplation and high savoring of the transcendent God” (chapter 5, p. 159).

The allegorical method allows the Catholic ascetic movement to replace the plain meaning of Scripture with hidden meanings that are foisted on Scripture. The emerging church is also very adept at this type of “interpretation.”

It is obvious to the Bible believer that Roman Catholic monasticism is a false Christianity. Any seeming good that it offers is corrupted by its heresies.

The very sobering reality is that Rome’s saints and mystics did not know even the ABCs of salvation and spirituality.

That evangelicals and Baptists are “discovering” this “ancient spirituality” is a loud testimony to the apostasy that flows so widely today.

The Error of Contemplative Mysticism

Having looked at many aspects of the contemplative movement, including the history and errors of Catholic monasticism, we will now consider the errors of contemplative mysticism in general and its current incarnation within evangelicalism and the emerging church.

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

Contemplative Spirituality Error #1: It was invented by heretics.

Contemplative prayer is not found in the New Testament. It was invented by heretics who came after the apostles and who built on the foundation of Greek philosophy and even Hinduism and Buddhism.

Plato and Philo

In the four centuries before Christ, Jewish heretics borrowed from Greek philosophy to create a corruption of the Jewish faith. This unholy mixing continued to be practiced by Christian heretics after the death of the apostles. Bernard McGinn says that the tradition of contemplation has “roots deep in the soil of Greek religious philosophy” (*The Presence of God*, Vol. 2, p. 50).

“The [Jewish] apocalypses (beginning at least as early as the third century B.C.E.) ... and the philosophical-religious tradition begun by Plato were major components of the background of Christian mysticism... The major influence of Plato and the Platonic tradition on the history of Christian mysticism cannot be denied...” (Bernard McGinn, *The Presence of God*, Vol. 1, pp. 5, 24).

Friedrich Heiler said that contemplative prayer as practiced by the Catholic mystics was “the fusion of Biblical Christianity and Hellenism.” (Hellenism refers to Greek philosophy and culture.)

Philo, a Jew, was a major figure in mixing Greek philosophy with Old Testament Judaism. He “was the first figure in Western

history to wed the Greek contemplative ideal to the monotheistic faith of the Bible.” He “sought to meld Jewish and Greek approaches to the holy books.”

Greek philosophy and the Jewish heretics who borrowed from it taught a path to God that ascended through various types of heavenly realms. The objective of the philosophy was to help the soul make this journey.

“[There were] two basic types of heavenly ascents of the soul (i.e., nonbodily journeys): the Greek type, in which the soul ascends through the seven planetary spheres, and the Jewish type, in which the soul ascends through seven (or sometimes three) heavens” (McGinn, *The Presence of God*, Vol. 1, p. 15).

Plato taught that the merging of the soul with God is achieved through “contemplation, which is the fruit of an ascending purification of both love and knowledge and which reaches its goal when *nous*, the divine element in the soul, is assimilated to its supernal source” (McGinn, Vol. 1, p. 25).

Plato’s work “Allegory of the Cave” is an “account of the spiritual path that begins with awakening ... and proceeds through painful purification and gradual illumination to end in vision.”

The Greek/Jewish mystical path to “God” involves asceticism, contemplation, and a special *gnosis* or secret knowledge. It is a works salvation.

This concept, which is similar to Hinduism (the divine element of the soul being assimilated into God through asceticism, contemplation, good deeds, etc.), was held by the Gnostic cults in the early centuries after Christ and had a great influence on the doctrine and practice of Rome’s contemplative “saints” in the darkest ages of monasticism. Today it has been recovered and dusted off and refined for evangelicals by men such as Richard Foster. See, for example, the description of centering prayer in the chapter “A Description of Contemplative Practices,” and the biography of Teresa of Avila in the section entitled “A Biographical Catalog of Contemplative Mystics.”

That there was a borrowing from Hinduism and Buddhism is admitted by contemplative prayer proponents.

“It was a time of great experimentation with spiritual methods. Many different kinds of disciplines were tried ... many different methods of prayer were created and explored by them” (Ken Kaisch, *Finding God*, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994, p. 191).

One of the things that was borrowed from paganism was **the practice of meditation.**

“The meditation practices and rules for living of these earliest Christian monks bear strong similarity to those of their Hindu and Buddhist renunciate brethren several kingdoms to the East . . . the meditative techniques they adopted for finding their God suggest either a borrowing from the East or a spontaneous rediscovery” (Daniel Goleman, *The Meditative Mind*, Los Angeles, CA: Tarcher/Putnam Inc., 1988, p. 53).

“The fourth-century Desert Fathers understood that a simple device was needed to keep the ‘monkey mind’ from wandering. Thus, the mantra method of prayer, which had been introduced centuries before by Buddhists and Hindus, came to be a stable form of Christian prayer, not only for the Desert Fathers and Mothers but for Christians down through the ages” (Frank X. Tuoti, *The Dawn of the Mystical Age*, New York, NY: Crossroad, 1997, p. 137).

Another thing that was borrowed from Jewish mysticism, Greek philosophy, and other realms of paganism was **the allegorizing method of interpretation.**

Philo used the allegorizing principle “to draw out the inner meaning of the biblical narratives and ritual practices that formed the heart of Judaism.” Philo was trying to prove that Judaism was the true religion, but by borrowing from pagan philosophy, he destroyed the truth of his own “religion.”

For example, Philo interpreted Genesis 3 allegorically rather than as the literal fall of man. Eve stands for man’s senses; the serpent stands for pleasure which tempts man’s thoughts away from higher realities and makes it forget “its true nature as image of the Logos.” Ascetic self-denial is the path of salvation back to the self-understanding that man is one with God or “the Supreme Good.”

Philo's allegorizing was adopted by Christian heretics and applied both to the Old and New Testaments, destroying the literal meaning of Scripture and opening the door to every sort of heresy.

"By the second century C.W. [before Christ], Christian exegetes would be referring to such deeper meanings of the Old Testament as 'mystical.' ... [Philo's] status as a pioneer in Western mystical thought cannot be doubted" (McGinn, Vol. 1, pp. 12, 37).

Greek and Jewish mysticism was not only a denial of the divine inspiration of Scripture, it was a denial of the God revealed in Scripture. The God of Greek/Jewish mysticism is not the Supreme Creator who made all things but who is not a part of the creation. He is not a Person who can be known. He is not a Person who made man in His own image and gave man His laws. He is not a Person against whom man can offend by his sin. And He is not a Person who paid the price of that offense by His own sacrifice.

The God of Greek/Jewish mysticism is a gnostic god who is more akin to the god of Hinduism. He is the "Beautiful," the "Absolute," into which man's soul can be dissolved and made one through the path of mysticism.

The New Testament era Plato philosopher Plotinus (c. 204–270 A.D.), who has been called "the greatest of pagan mystics," taught that "all things are one" and "we are all and one" (cited from McGinn, *The Presence of God*, Vol. 1, p. 51). Plotinus had a powerful effect on many contemplatives in the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches (McGinn, p. 54).

Evagrius Ponticus, a fourth-century "desert father" who is "one of the major figures in the history of Christian mysticism," taught that man can become one mind with God. "And as in the fusion of rivers with the sea no addition in its nature or variation in its color or taste is to be found, so also in the fusion of minds with the Father no duality of natures or quaternity of persons [group of four] comes about" (McGinn, Vol. 1, p. 154). Ponticus had the goal of "the freeing of *nous* from its fallenness and its absorption in the intelligible sea of divinity." That is Hinduism.

Pseudo-Dionysius, who is so called because he wrote under the pseudonym of Dionysius but his actual identity is unknown, was a monastic writer of the early 6th century who has had a major

influence on contemplative prayer. He, too, taught a pantheistic doctrine. Calling God “the Good,” Dionysius wrote that God is “preexistent in the Good, flowing out from the Good onto all that is and returning once again to the Good” (McGinn, p. 168). That is Hinduism.

With men such as this providing its foundation, it is no surprise that contemplative prayer often leads to the demon-taught concepts of pantheism (God is everything) or panentheism (God is in everything). See later in this chapter “The Error of Contemplative Mysticism, “Error # 11: It produces rotten fruit.”

In fact, Adolf von Harnack, after extensive research into the history of contemplative prayer and its influence on Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy, concluded that it always “ends in pantheism and self-deification” (Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Vol. 6, pp. 103-106).

The Greek/Jewish mystics and the Christian heretics who followed them used the allegorizing method to find **the “unknowable” God beyond the pages of Scripture.**

Philo believed that God is “beyond all the predicates of human language.” God is “beyond knowing ... beyond intellect.”

Pseudo-Dionysius said not only that God is unknowable but that he is “more than unknowable.” He taught that God lies beyond all images and names and “therefore cannot be spoken or written about” (McGinn, Vol. 1, p. 175).

This is a bold denial both of the God of the Bible and of the divine inspiration of the Bible. To say that God is unknowable and that he lies beyond every human comprehension is to deny that the Bible as God’s perfect and sufficient revelation to man.

According to Philo and the “Christian” desert fathers, one has to go beyond the words and literal meaning of the Bible to find God, which is the very essence of contemplative prayer.

Pseudo-Dionysius claimed that God is found in the “dazzling darkness of hidden silence,” but the Bible says He is found in the glorious light of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Origin, Clement, Jerome, Augustine

Origen was one of the chief fathers of “Christian” contemplative prayer, building on earlier Greek and Jewish mysticism. Bernard McGinn begins his four-volume work on contemplative mysticism with the following statement:

“... the first great tradition of explicit mysticism came to birth when a theory of mysticism first fully laid out by Origen in the third century found institutional embodiment in the new phenomenon of monasticism in the fourth century” (McGinn, *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism*, Vol. 1: “The Foundations of Mysticism - Origins to the Fifth Century,” p. xvi).

No serious historian would try to dispute this. Contemplative prayer can be traced back to men like Origen, Clement, Jerome, and Augustine who were the fathers of monasticism and who laid the foundations for the creation of the apostate Roman Catholic Church. These men were laden down with heresies, such as Mary veneration, sacramental salvation, infant baptism, and worse.

“In their lives and teachings we find the seed plot of almost all that arose later. In germ form appear the dogmas of purgatory, transubstantiation, priestly mediation, baptismal regeneration, and the whole sacramental system” (Howard Vos, *Exploring Church History*, p. 25).

Consider **ORIGEN** (185-254).

Though he endured persecution and torture for the cause of Christ under the Roman emperor Decius in 250, and though he defended Christianity against certain heretics, he rejected the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3) and taught many gross heresies. Origen founded in a school in Caesarea from which he expounded his errors far and wide through his students and his writings.

Origen “disbelieved the full inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, holding that the inspired men apprehended and stated many things obscurely” (*Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney*, I, p. 383).

He rejected the literal history of the early chapters in Genesis and of Satan taking the Lord Jesus up to a high mountain and offering him the kingdoms of the world (Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. III, p. 614). Durant quotes Origen: "Who is so foolish as to believe that God, like a husbandman, planted a garden in Eden, and placed in it a tree of life ... so that one who tasted of the fruit obtained life?" Origen denied the literal creation described in Genesis 1-2 and the literal fall of Genesis 3.

He denied the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. Origen's "opinions on the Trinity veered between Sabellianism and Arianism. He expressly denied the consubstantial unity of the Persons and the proper incarnation of the Godhead" (Dabney, I, p. 384).

He believed the Holy Spirit was the first creature made by the Father through the Son.

He taught that Jesus is a created being and not the eternal Son of God. "He held an aberrant view on the nature of Christ, which gave rise to the later Arian heresy" ("Origen," *Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*). That Origen believed Jesus Christ had an origin is evident from this statement: "Secondly, that Jesus Christ Himself, who came, was born of the Father before all creatures; and after He had ministered to the Father in the creation of all things,--for through Him were all things made" (Origen, quoted by W.A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*).

He taught that man can become divine as Jesus is divine. "For Christians see that with Jesus human and divine nature begin to be woven together, so that by fellowship with divinity human nature might become divine, not only in Jesus, but also in all those who believe and go on to undertake the life which Jesus taught..." (*Against Celsus*, 3:28). This statement is grossly heretical on three counts: It teaches that Jesus' Deity is not unique but is a model for all men, that salvation is achieved by following Jesus' teaching, and that man can become divine like Jesus.

Origen taught baptismal regeneration and salvation by works. "After these points, it is taught also that the soul, having a substance and life proper to itself, shall, after its departure from this world, be rewarded according to its merits. It is destined to obtain either an inheritance of eternal life and blessedness, if its

deeds shall have procured this for it, or to be delivered up to eternal fire and punishment, if the guilt of its crimes shall have brought it down to this” (Origen, cited by W.A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*). “[He] evidently had no clear conception of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith” (Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, p. 65). This is an important fact, because it means that the gospel Origen taught was a false gospel, and he therefore was under God’s curse (Galatians 1:6-8).

He believed in a form of purgatory and universalism (all men will be saved), believing that even Satan would be saved. “Now let us see what is meant by the threatening with eternal fire. ... It seems to be indicated by these words that every sinner kindles for himself the flame of his own fire and is not plunged into some fire which was kindled beforehand by someone else or which already existed before him. ... And when this dissolution and tearing asunder of the soul shall have been accomplished by means of the application of fire, no doubt it will afterwards be solidified into a firmer structure and into a restoration of itself” (Origen, cited by W.A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*).

He denied the literal fire of hell.

He believed that men’s souls are preexistent and that stars and planets possibly have souls. “In regard to the sun, however, and the moon and the stars, as to whether they are living beings or are without life, there is not clear tradition” (Origen, cited by W.A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*).

He denied the bodily resurrection, claiming that the resurrection body is spherical, non-material, and does not have members. “He denied the tangible, physical nature of the resurrection body in clear contrast to the teaching of Scripture” (*Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, “Origen”). He was condemned by the Council of Constantinople on this count.

Origen rejected the testimony of the apostle Paul in Colossians 2:16-23 and lived as an ascetic. He even castrated himself in his foolish zeal for the alleged superior holiness of “celibacy” over marriage.

Origen was also one of the chief fathers of the allegorical method of Bible interpretation, which turns the Bible into a nose of wax to be twisted as the reader sees fit. He claimed that “the

Scriptures have little use to those who understand them literally.” He described the literal meaning of Scripture as “bread” and encouraged the student to go beyond this to the “wine” of allegoricalism, whereby one can become intoxicated and transported to heavenly realms. Origen’s commentaries contained a wealth of fanciful interpretations, abounding in “heretical revisals of Scripture” (Frederick Nolan, *Inquiry into the Integrity of the Greek Vulgate*, p. 367).

As for Origen’s character, he was “evidently dishonest and tricky, and his judgment most erratic. ... As a controversialist, he was wholly unscrupulous (*Discussions of Robert Lewis Dabney*, I, p. 383).

Consider **CLEMENT OF ALEXANDER** (c. 150 – c. 230), who has been called “the founder of Christian mysticism” (Arrigo Levasti, cited from McGinn, Vol. 1, p. 101).

From 190 to 202, Clement headed the heretical school of Alexandria, Egypt, founded by Pantaenus, which intermingled the Greek philosophy of Plato with Christianity.

Clement helped develop the false doctrine of purgatory and believed that most men would eventually be saved.

He denied the unique Deity of Jesus and His atonement, saying, “The Logos of God became man so that you may learn from man how man may become God.” Jesus was, therefore, merely the supreme model toward the path of divinity.

Consider **JEROME** (Sophronius Eusebius Hieronymus) (340-420).

Jerome was deeply committed to the heresy of asceticism, believing the state of virginity to be spiritually superior to that of marriage and demanding that church leaders be unmarried. “... no single individual did so much to make monasticism popular in the higher ranks of society” (James Heron, *The Evolution of Latin Christianity*, 1919, p. 58). He lived a hermetic life in disobedience to the Bible’s command to go forth and preach the gospel to every creature (Mk. 16:15).

Jerome believed in the veneration of “holy relics” and the bones of dead Christians (Heron, pp. 276, 77).

Jerome “took a leading and influential part in ‘opening the floodgates’ for the invocation of saints,” teaching “that the saints in

heaven hear the prayers of men on earth, intercede on their behalf and send them help from above (Heron, pp. 287, 88).

Jerome taught that Mary is the counterpart of Eve, as Christ was the counterpart of Adam, and that through her obedience Mary became instrumental in helping to redeem the human race (Heron, p. 294). He taught that Mary is a perpetual virgin.

Jerome believed in the blessing of “holy water,” which became a major practice in the Roman Catholic Church (Heron, p. 306).

Jerome justified the death penalty for “heretics” (Heron, p. 323).

As for his spirit and character, Jerome is described, even by an unwise historian who had high respect for him, with these words: “such irritability and bitterness of temper, such vehemence of uncontrolled passion, such an intolerant and persecuting spirit, and such inconstancy of conduct” (Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, III, p. 206).

Jerome had a particularly hateful attitude toward those that followed the simple New Testament faith and refused to accept the heresies that he and his fellows were preaching. His writings against these men were characterized by the most hateful, vicious sort of language. Vigilantius, Jovinian, and Helvidius were some of the men upon whom Jerome railed. These men rejected the false traditions that were being added by the early leaders of the Roman Church, including infant baptism, enforced celibacy, worship of martyrs and relics, and the sinlessness and perpetual virginity of Mary. Jerome heaped abuse upon these men, calling them dogs, maniacs, monsters, asses, stupid fools, two-legged asses, gluttons, servants of the devil, madmen, “useless vessels which should be shivered by the iron rod of apostolic authority.” He said Helvidius had a “fetid mouth, fraught with a putrid stench, against the relics and ashes of the martyrs.” Baptist historian Thomas Armitage observed, “The pen of Jerome was rendered very offensive by his grinding tyranny and crabbed temper. No matter how wrong he was, he could not brook contradiction” (*A History of the Baptists*, I, p. 207).

Consider **AUGUSTINE** (354-430). He was a persecutor and one of the fathers of Rome’s Inquisition. He instigated persecutions against the Bible-believing Donatists who were striving to maintain

biblical churches and require that church members give evidence of repentance and regeneration.

Augustine was one of the fathers of a-millennialism, allegorizing Bible prophecy and teaching that the Catholic Church is the new Israel and the kingdom of God.

He taught that the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are means of salvation.

The 'council' of Mela, in Numidia, A.D. 416, composed of merely fifteen persons and presided over by Augustine, decreed: "Also, it is the pleasure of the bishops in order that whoever denies that infants newly born of their mothers, are to be baptized or says that baptism is administered for the remission of their own sins, but not on account of original sin, delivered from Adam, and to be expiated by the laver of regeneration, BE ACCURSED" (Wall, *The History of Infant Baptism*, I, 265). Augustine thus taught that infants should be baptized and that the baptism took away their sin. He called all who rejected infant baptism "infidels" and "cursed."

He taught that Mary did not commit sin and promoted her "veneration." He believed that Mary played a vital role in salvation (Augustine, Sermon 289, cited in Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, IV, p. 69).

He promoted the myth of purgatory.

He accepted the doctrine of "celibacy" for "priests," supporting the decree of "Pope" Siricius of 387 which required that any priest that married or refused to separate from his wife should be disciplined.

He exalted the authority of the church over that of the Bible, declaring, "I should not believe the gospel unless I were moved to do so by the authority of the Catholic Church" (quoted by John Paul II, *Augustineum Hyponensem*, Apostolic Letter, Aug. 28, 1986, www.cin.org/jp2.ency/augustin.html).

He believed that the true interpretation of Scripture is derived from the declaration of church councils (Augustine, *De Vera Religione*, xxiv, p. 45).

He interpreted the early chapters of Genesis figuratively (Dave Hunt, "Calvin and Augustine: Two Jonahs Who Sink the Ship,"

Debating Calvinism: Five Points, Two Views by Dave Hunt and James White, 2004, p. 230).

He taught the heresy of sovereign election, in that God has pre-ordained some for salvation and others for damnation and that the grace of God is irresistible for the true elect. By his own admission, John Calvin in the 16th century derived his TULIP theology on the “sovereignty of God” from Augustine. Calvin said: “If I were inclined to compile a whole volume from Augustine, I could easily show my readers, that I need no words but his” (Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, chap. 22).

He taught the heresy of apostolic succession from Peter (Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides the Beast*, p. 230).

It is not difficult to see why Rome honored Augustine as one of the “doctors of the church.”

Origen, Jerome, Augustine, and their associates are the roots of contemplative prayer, and it is impossible for pure fruit to come from a rotten root.

Contemplative Spirituality Error # 2: It downplays the centrality of the Bible in the Christian life.

Contemplative spirituality is supposed to be a way to commune with God, but the proper way to do this is not by sitting in silence or repeating a mantra or trying to reach an altered state of consciousness or by visualizing an encounter with biblical characters. The proper way to commune with God is to first hear His voice through careful, prayerful Bible study and thoughtful meditation on Scripture and then to communicate with Him in verbal worship and prayer.

I have read dozens of books on contemplative spirituality, and most of them make no mention whatsoever that the Bible is to be central to the Christian life and ministry.

The Catholic mystics had no such belief. As we have seen, they were committed to Rome’s heresy that the Bible is only one of many authorities, including Catholic tradition, official councils, the voice of the pope speaking *ex-cathedra*, its doctors, and extra-biblical visions and revelations.

Emerging church leader Tony Jones admits that Catholic practices were rejected by the Protestant Reformation because they are contrary to the doctrine of the primacy of Scripture (p. 81). That is reason enough to reject them!

Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, in their study of the emerging church, say, “THE REFORMATION FOCUSED ON THE SPOKEN WORD, WHILE POSTMODERN WORSHIP EMBRACES THE EXPERIENCED WORD” (*Emerging Churches*, p. 78).

Tony Campolo co-authored a book with Mary Darling that promotes contemplative spirituality. Observe how that he downplays and ridicules traditional “piety” and biblical absolutes and exalts mysticism as a way to move beyond the pages of Scripture.

“We finally decided to use the term ‘mystical Christianity’ to distinguish the kind of spirituality we are advocating from other forms known in the Christian community. For instance, using the word mystical makes it clear that the Christian spirituality that we are discussing here is not to be confused with the kind used as a synonym for personal piety, which too often comes with destructive legalism, or scholastic Christianity, WHICH CAN REDUCE FAITH TO THEOLOGICAL PROPOSITIONS. ... This book is about tapping into the love and reality that GOES BEYOND WHAT RULES AND REASON ALONE CAN APPREHEND. We want to show how daily moments marked by mystical revelations of God’s love reveal the limits of propositional truth” (*The God of Intimacy and Action*, pp. 3, 4).

This, my friends, is pure and dangerous heresy. The business about “destructive legalism” and “scholastic Christianity” is a smokescreen. An emphasis upon the Scripture is neither legalism nor scholasticism. It is the emphasis of the New Testament itself. There is no instruction there about pursuing some mystical experience beyond the written Word. Jesus said that those who are His true disciples are those who continue in His Word (John 8:31-32). He prayed that His disciples would be sanctified with the Word (John 17:17).

We are taught that the Scripture is infallibly inspired (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21), living and powerful (Hebrews 4:12), and that it is able to build us up (Acts 20:32), grow us up (1 Pet. 2:2), protect us from the devil (Eph. 6:17), and make us “*perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Tim. 3:17).

If the Bible is able to provide spiritual PERFECTION, which it boldly claims, what more could we need? The answer is that we don’t need anything else. Peter described his own amazing experience when he saw Jesus glorified and heard God’s voice speaking from heaven, but he proceeded to say that we have “*a more sure word of prophecy*” in the Scripture (2 Peter 1:16-21). The apostle exalted the Scripture above all “mystical” experiences.

The Lord Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they put their tradition on the same level of authority as Scripture (Mark 7:6-7).

God has given us a complete revelation in Scripture and we must honor it by making it the sole authority for faith and practice. *And to emphasize the sole authority of Scripture refutes every type of mysticism, whether pagan, New Age, Catholic, Orthodox, charismatic, evangelical, or emerging.*

The mystic of every variety rejects the sole authority of Scripture. He doesn’t want to be bound by it. He wants to go beyond it. He doesn’t want to put God “in a box.” And therein lies mysticism’s foundational error.

Contemplative Spirituality Error # 3: It is not found in the Bible.

There is no biblical authority for the sign of the cross, the Stations of the Cross, pilgrimages, centering prayer, Jesus prayer, breath prayer, imagining conversations with biblical characters, chanting, labyrinths, meditating before icons, statues, and crucifixes, and other such things that lie at the heart of the contemplative movement.

Biblical prayer is not mystical contemplation. Biblical prayer is always verbal, conscious communion with God. Jesus gave the model prayer not as something to be repeated by rote but as a lesson on how to pray, and His prayer is distinctly NOT contemplative (Matthew 6:6-13). Jesus condemned vain repetitions

and taught us to pray verbally. He did not even hint at contemplative practices such as centering prayer or visualization prayer. Further, Christ taught us to pray to the Father. This is contrary to centering prayer that directs one's attention to "Christ within."

The apostle Paul taught the same thing. His doctrine and practice of prayer can be found in the following passages: Romans 1:8-10; Ephesians 1:15-19; 6:18-20; Philippians 1:3-4,8-11; 4:6-7; Colossians 1:9-12; 2:1-2; 4:2-4; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; 5:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; 3:1-2; 1 Timothy 2:1-6.

According to Paul, prayer is composed of supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks (1 Timothy 2:1). This is the example he demonstrates in his own prayers (Romans 1:8-10).

New Testament prayer consists of verbal praise, verbal petition, and verbal intercession. Such prayer is the means of obtaining mercy and finding grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). It is the means of achieving spiritual victory and fruitfulness (Ephesians 6:18-19).

Bible-believing Christians have communed sweetly and effectively with God by the Scripture method for 2,000 years without the help of Catholic practices. Hymns such as "Sweet Hour of Prayer" describe this communion.

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer/
That calls me from a world of care/
And bids me at my Father's throne/
Make all my wants and wishes known!/
In seasons of distress and grief/
My soul has often found relief/
And oft escaped the tempter's snare/
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, thy wings shall
my petitions bear/
To Him whose truth and faithfulness/
Engage the waiting soul to bless/
In seasons of distress and grief/
My soul has often found relief/
I'll cast on Him my ev'ry care/
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer.

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer/
May I thy consolation share/
Till from Mount Pisgah's lofty height/
I view my home and take my flight/
This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise/
To seize the everlasting prize/
And shout, while passing thru the air/
"Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer."

Rome replaced New Testament spirituality--which is a living relationship with Jesus Christ through the new birth and the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the study of Scripture--with its sacraments, false tradition, and sensual worship. It is sad to see men who profess to be Baptists and evangelical Protestants going back to this vain ritualism.

The attempt by contemplatives to find a biblical basis for their practices is truly pathetic.

We have seen that they use the example of Mary sitting at Jesus' feet in Luke 10, but Mary didn't sit in silence; she wasn't practicing thoughtless contemplation; she was listening to Christ speak words and the believer can do the same thing today by reading the Bible in communion with the indwelling Spirit.

They point to Christ arising early and going apart to a solitary place to pray (Mark 1:35), but the Bible does *not* say that He went to a solitary place to practice centering prayer or silent meditation or chanting a mantra or some such thing! We must assume, rather, that He was practicing the same type of prayer that He taught the disciples (Matthew 6:6-13).

Contemplatives point to Psalm 46:10, "*Be still, and know that I am God,*" but the psalm does *not* say, "Be silent and seek God in your innermost being"! It simply exhorts the believer to meditate on the fact that God is God and that He is exalted and will be exalted. The rest of the verse says, "*I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*" The psalmist was simply saying, "Be patient and know that God is in charge; trust Him; don't fret."

Contemplatives point to Psalm 62:1, "*Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation,*" but this simply refers to trusting in the Lord and has nothing to do with meditating in silence and looking within oneself for union with God.

Contemplatives also point to 1 Kings 19:11-12.

"And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but

the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire A STILL SMALL VOICE” (1 Kings 19:11-12).

Again, this passage does *not* describe Catholic contemplative practices. Elijah was not meditating in silence. He was not sitting in a cave controlling his breathing and chanting mantras to put himself into a mindless contemplative mode in order to enter the “cloud of unknowing.” Observe that God spoke to Elijah in a clear VOICE, not by some transcendental means that is “beyond words, beyond thought.” To hear that blessed Voice today, we need only go to the Scripture.

We agree with the following statement:

“If God had wanted us to encounter Him through mystical practices such as contemplative prayer, why did He not say so? Why did He not give examples and instructions? How could the Holy Spirit inspire the writing of the Scriptures yet forget to include a chapter or two on mysticism, spiritual exercises and mediation of the Eastern variety? Are we to believe that all of this is a great oversight, a huge ‘oops’ on God’s part to have left out such vital instructions on an indispensable experience that is absolutely essential to Christian spirituality? Then, having realized what He had done, are we to believe God, centuries later, revealed this missing ingredient of Christian living to Roman Catholic monks, where it was rejected by the Reformers, only to have Richard Foster reintroduce it all to the twentieth century? This is a bit hard to swallow, but apparently is being accepted by many today” (Gary Gilley, “Mysticism”).

God has given His people many “mystical” experiences (e.g., Moses on Mount Sinai, Peter on the Mt. of Transfiguration, Paul on the road to Damascus), but in each case God gave the experience according to His sovereign will and nowhere does the Bible instruct men to seek after such things. Jesus warned, “*An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign*” (Mat. 12:29).

Contemplative Spirituality Error # 4: It ignores the Bible's definition of faith.

Mysticism makes much of faith, but it is a blind faith, a leap in the dark. The words "blind" and "darkness" are used dozens of times in *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

True faith is simply believing and obeying the Scripture.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

Hebrews 11 is God's Hall of Faith. Noah believed God's warning and built the ark (Heb. 11:7). Abraham believed God's promise and "*obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went*" (Heb. 11:8). The same was true for all of the people mentioned in Hebrews 11. Their faith consisted of believing God's Word and acting on it, nothing more and nothing less.

True faith does not seek after an experience; it is content to believe God's Word regardless of what its experience happens to be. Contemplative spirituality, on the other hand, lusts after an experience. This is the very definition of mysticism.

Centering prayer, for example, is all about achieving an experiential communion with God in the depths of one's being. Basil Pennington says, "... we want immediate contact with God Himself, and not some thought, image, or vision of him" (*Finding Grace at the Center*, p. 42).

John Caddock rightly warns:

"The result of this mystical practice is that the practitioner becomes less interested in objective spiritual knowledge found in the Bible and more interested in the subjective experience which is found through centering prayer" ("What Is Contemplative Spirituality?" *Grace Evangelical Society Journal*, Autumn 1997).

Contemplative Spirituality Error # 5: It ignores Jesus' warning against vain repetition.

The Lord Jesus Christ warned against repetitious prayer.

“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” (Matthew 6:7-8).

Yet repetitious prayer and chanting forms a large part of mystical spirituality.

As we have seen, the Jesus Prayer and the Breath Prayer consist of saying one word or one short phrase repeatedly, even hundreds and thousands of times per day.

Centering prayer also involves repeating a mantra such as “God” or “love,” and the practitioner is even instructed not to think about the meaning of the word. If that is not “vain repetition,” it is difficult to know what it could be.

Those who chant pagan mantras describe the same spiritual benefits as Christian contemplatives: unity with God, spiritual power, enlightenment, bliss. In a 1982 interview, George Harrison, the late Beatle, described how that he once chanted the Hare Krishna mantra (*Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare*) for 23 hours, from France to Portugal, nonstop. He claimed that this practice empowered his life. He said that he found his way even though he couldn't speak French, Spanish, or Portuguese, because “once you get chanting, then things start to happen transcendently” (“Hare Krishna Mantra--There's Nothing Higher,” George Harrison Interview, 1982, <http://www.krishna.org/Articles/2000/08/00066.html>).

Contemplative Spirituality Error # 6: It ignores the fact that multitudes of professing Christians are not born again.

Contemplative practices are recommended for Christians indiscriminately, without regard to genuine salvation. I have read

dozens of books on contemplative spirituality, and none of them include a clear exhortation to biblical salvation.

In fact, these are Roman Catholic practices and Rome teaches that salvation is through baptism and the sacraments. As we have seen, the Catholic saints who developed contemplative mysticism did not have a biblical testimony of salvation.

Basil Pennington is typical when he says, "We have been made sharers in the divine nature by baptism" (*Finding Grace at the Center*, p. 34).

In *What Is the Emerging Church?* we have documented the fact that the participants in the liberal emerging church rarely have a biblical testimony of salvation, yet they are deeply involved with contemplative practices.

Centering prayer is the practice of supposedly communing with God in the center of one's being, but how can that be possible if the individual has never been born again and is not, therefore, indwelt by the Holy Spirit? It is impossible, of course. The only thing that the unbeliever can commune with in the center of his being is sinful darkness and deception. "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (Jeremiah 17:9).

No wonder they describe centering prayer as "darkness"!

Contemplative Spirituality Error # 7: It exchanges the God of the Bible for a blind idol.

To reject conscious thinking and biblical reasoning with the objective of finding God beyond a "cloud of unknowing" in "darkness" and "nothingness" -- which is how they describe their own practice -- is to exchange the God of the Bible for a blind idol.

God is not hidden behind a cloud of unknowing. He has revealed Himself in the Bible and in the incarnate Son of God.

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18).

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath

appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

To say that the Divine Revelation is insufficient and to try to go beyond it is presumption. It is to trade the light for darkness. It is to turn one’s back on the truth to enter a lie. It creates space for the invention of a false god that is not defined by Scripture but is perceived and “intuited” through blind mystical experience.

Benedictine priest Willigis Jager says the aim of Christian prayer is transcendental contemplation in which the practitioner enters a deeper level of consciousness. This requires emptying the mind, which is achieved by focusing on the breathing and repeating a mantra. This “quiets the rational mind,” “empties the mind,” and “frustrates our ordinary discursive thinking” (James Conner, “Contemplative Retreat for Monastics,” *Monastic Interreligious Dialogue Bulletin*, Oct. 1985). Jager draws particularly from Johannes Tauler, Meister Eckhart, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, and *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

He says that as the rational thinking is emptied and transformed, one “SEEMS TO LOSE ORIENTATION” and must “go on in blind faith and trust.” He says that there is “nothing to do but surrender” to “this pure blackness” where “NO IMAGE OR THOUGHT OF GOD REMAINS.”

This is idolatry. To be dissatisfied with the revelation God has given of Himself and to attempt to find Him beyond this revelation through mysticism is to trade the true and living God for an idol.

In *The New Seeds of Contemplation*, Thomas Merton made the following statement:

“In the end the contemplative suffers the anguish of realizing that HE NO LONGER KNOWS WHAT GOD IS. He may or may not mercifully realize that, after all, this is a great gain, because ‘God is not a what,’ not a ‘thing.’ This is precisely one of the essential characteristics of contemplative experience. It sees that there is no ‘what’ that can be called God” (p. 13).

This is a blatant denial of the Bible as divine revelation. Though it is true that God is not a *thing* in the sense that He is a part of creation, He *is* a *thing* in the sense that He is a Being that can be understood and known by His own revelation.

Merton says further:

“Let us never forget that the fruitful silence in which words lose their power and concepts escape our grasp is perhaps the perfection of meditation” (*Spiritual Direction and Meditation*, p. 57).

Seeking God beyond the Bible in thoughtless mysticism opens the practitioner to demonic delusion. He is left with no divinely-revealed authority by which he can test his mystical experiences and intuitions. He is left with an idol of his own vain imagination (Jeremiah 17:9) and a doctrine of devils.

No wonder that pagan mystic practitioners such as Hindu yogis and Zen Buddhists recognize Catholic contemplatives as fellow travelers.

Contemplative Spirituality Error # 8: It ignores the Bible’s warnings against associating with heresy and paganism.

To practice contemplative spirituality is to ignore the Bible’s warnings about separation because it puts one into intimate contact with Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and beyond that with pagan religions.

Though separation is repudiated by the contemplative movement, it is a doctrine that is clearly taught in Scripture.

“Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:31).

“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of

these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

“But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them” (Psalms 106:35-36).

“Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers” (Isaiah 2:6).

“Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen...” (Jeremiah 10:2).

“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking” (Matthew 6:7).

“For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:29-31).

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17).

“Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:14).

“Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?” (1 Cor. 10:21-22).

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33).

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and

walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11).

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Philippians 3:17-19).

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:5).

“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen” (1 John 5:19-21).

“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 10-11).

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4).

We see that the doctrine of separation is not based on one or two verses, but it is woven throughout the fabric of Scripture. Israel was forbidden to associate with her idolatrous neighbors and when she disobeyed she was corrupted by idolatry and lost her holy place and favor with God. Likewise, believers in the New Testament

dispensation are forbidden to associate with evil and idolatry. By such associations we become confused in our thinking and corrupt in our ways, and we come under God's judgment.

Yet the contemplative practices that are used by the emerging church come from Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy, and the fact that these "churches" preach a sacramental gospel that mixes grace with works and are loaded down with other heresies and idolatry is ignored. (We document these heresies in the chapters "The Error of Catholic Monasticism" and "A Biographical Catalog of Contemplative Mystics.")

Further, many are using Christian contemplative practices as an interfaith bridge to eastern religions, openly promoting the integration of pagan practices such as Hindu yoga.

In the book *Spiritual Friend* (which is highly recommended by the "evangelical" Richard Foster), Tilden Edwards says:

"This mystical stream is THE WESTERN BRIDGE TO FAR EASTERN SPIRITUALITY" (*Spiritual Friend*, 1980, pp. 18, 19).

Since Eastern "spirituality" is idol worship and the worship of self and thus is communion with devils, what Edwards is unwittingly saying is that contemplative practices are a bridge to demonic realms.

The Roman Catholic contemplative gurus that the evangelicals and emergents are following have developed intimate relationships with pagan mystics.

Jesuit priest **Thomas Clarke** admits that the Catholic contemplative movement has "BEEN INFLUENCED BY ZEN BUDDHISM, TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION, OR OTHER CURRENTS OF EASTERN SPIRITUALITY" (*Finding Grace at the Center*, pp. 79, 80).

Thomas Merton, who is highly recommended by Richard Foster, is "a strong builder of bridges between East and West" (*Twentieth-Century Mystics*, p. 39). The *Yoga Journal* makes the following observation:

"Merton had encountered Zen Buddhism, Sufism, Taoism and Vedanta [Hinduism] many years prior to his Asian journey. MERTON WAS ABLE TO UNCOVER THE STREAM WHERE THE WISDOM OF EAST AND WEST

MERGE AND FLOW TOGETHER, BEYOND DOGMA, IN THE DEPTHS OF INNER EXPERIENCE. ... Merton embraced the spiritual philosophies of the East and integrated this wisdom into [his] own life through direct practice” (*Yoga Journal*, Jan.-Feb. 1999, quoted from the Lighthouse Trails web site).

Merton was a student of Zen master D.T. Suzuki and Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. In fact, he claimed to be both a Buddhist and a Christian. The titles of Merton’s books include *Zen and the Birds of the Appetite* and *Mystics and the Zen Masters*.

Merton said: “I see no contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity. The future of Zen is in the West. I intend to become as good a Buddhist as I can” (David Steindl-Rast, “Recollection of Thomas Merton’s Last Days in the West,” *Monastic Studies*, 7:10, 1969, http://www.gratefulness.org/readings/dsr_merton_recol2.htm).

Merton defined mysticism as an experience beyond words. In a speech to monks of eastern religions in Calcutta in October 1968 he said: “... the deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. IT IS WORDLESS. IT IS BEYOND WORDS, and it is BEYOND SPEECH, and it is BEYOND CONCEPT” (*The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, 1975 edition, p. 308).

What Merton actually found in meditation was the same thing that Mother Teresa found: darkness. He said:

“God, my God, God who I meet in darkness, with you it is always the same thing, always the same question that nobody knows how to answer. I’ve prayed to you in the daytime with thoughts and reasons, and in the nighttime. I’ve explained to you a hundred times my motives for entering the monastery, and you have listened and said nothing. And I have turned away and wept with shame. Perhaps the most urgent and practical renunciation is the renunciation of all questions, because I have begun to realize that you never answer when I expect” (*Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*, 2007, DVD).

The Bible warns that “*evil communications corrupt good manners*” (1 Cor. 15:33), and it is not surprising, then, that Merton was deeply and negatively influenced by his intimate association

with pagan religions. Eventually he denied the God of the Bible, the reality of sin, the separation of man from God because of sin, the necessity of Christ's Atonement, the bodily resurrection, and hell.

He adopted the belief that within every man is a pure spark of divine illumination and that men can know God through a variety of paths:

“At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God. It is like a pure diamond blazing with the invisible light of heaven. It is in everybody. I have no program for saying this. It is only given, but the gate of heaven is everywhere” (*Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*, 2007, DVD).

In 1969 Merton took the trip of his dreams, to visit India, Ceylon, Singapore, and Thailand, to experience the places where his beloved eastern religions were born. He said he was “going home.”

In Sri Lanka he visited a Buddhist shrine by the ocean and contemplated before the idols barefoot. He described this as an experience of great illumination, a vision of “inner clearness.” He said, “I don't know when in my life I have ever had such a sense of beauty and spiritual validity running together in one aesthetic illumination” (*The Asian Journal*, p. 235).

Actually it was a demonic delusion.

Six days later Merton was electrocuted in a cottage in Bangkok by a faulty fan switch. He was there to attend a dialogue of contemplative mystics, both Catholic and Buddhist. He was fifty-three years old.

Merton has many disciples in the Roman Catholic Church, including David Steindl-Rast, William Johnston, Henri Nouwen, Philip St. Romain, William Shannon, and James Finley. There are entire societies dedicated to the man's memory and philosophy.

Benedictine monk **John Main**, who is a pioneer in the field of contemplative spirituality, studied under a Hindu guru. Main combined Catholic contemplative practices with yoga and in 1975 began founding meditation groups in Catholic monasteries on this principle. These spread outside of the Catholic Church and grew

into an ecumenical network called the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM). He taught the following method:

“Sit still and upright, close your eyes and repeat your prayer-phrase (mantra). Recite your prayer-phrase and gently listen to it as you say it. DO NOT THINK ABOUT ANYTHING. As thoughts come, simply keep returning to your prayer-phrase. In this way, one places everything aside: INSTEAD OF TALKING TO GOD, ONE IS JUST BEING WITH GOD, allowing God’s presence to fill his heart, thus transforming his inner being” (*The Teaching of Dom John Main: How to Meditate*, Meditation Group of Saint Patrick’s Basilica, Ottawa, Canada).

Thomas Keating is heavily involved in interfaith dialogue and promotes the use of contemplative practices as a tool for creating interfaith unity. He says, “It is important for us to appreciate the values that are present in the genuine teachings of the great religions of the world” (*Finding Grace at the Center*, 2002, p. 76).

Keating is past president of the **Monastic Interreligious Dialogue** (MID), which is sponsored by the Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries of North America. Founded in 1977, it is “committed to fostering interreligious and intermonastic dialogue AT THE LEVEL OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE.” They are using contemplative practices and yoga as the glue for interfaith unity to help create world peace. MID works in association with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Consider one of the objectives of the MID:

“The methods of concentration used in other religious traditions can be useful for removing obstacles to a deep contact with God. THEY CAN GIVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ONENESS OF CHRIST AS EXPRESSED IN THE VARIOUS TRADITIONS and CONTRIBUTE TO THE FORMATION OF A NEW WORLD RELIGIOUS CULTURE. They can also be helpful in the development of certain potencies in the individual, for THERE ARE SOME ZEN-HINDU-SUFI-ETC. DIMENSIONS IN EACH HEART” (Mary L. O’Hara, “Report on Monastic Meeting at Petersham,” *MID Bulletin* 1, October 1977).

The Monastic Interreligious Dialogue is associated with the **North American Board for East-West Dialogue** (NABEWD). Beginning in 1982 the NABEWD has sponsored exchanges between Catholic and Buddhist monks and nuns. The Buddhists tour Catholic monasteries in North America, while the Catholics tour Buddhist monasteries in Asia. This was done with the approval of the Dalai Lama, who was approached in 1981 while he was participating in a Buddhist-Catholic interfaith symposium at the Naropa Buddhist Institute in Boulder, Colorado. Keating and David Steindl-Rast were also involved in the symposium. When the Catholics asked the Dalai Lama if he and his monks would be willing to participate in the exchange, he replied, “Yes, but I have no money” (Pascaline Coff, *Ibid.*). The Catholics volunteered to pay the expenses, and the exchanges began the following year.

Basil Pennington, a Roman Catholic Trappist monk and co-author of the influential contemplative book *Finding Grace at the Center*, calls Hindu swamis “our wise friends from the East” and says, “Many Christians who take their prayer life seriously have been greatly helped by Yoga, Zen, TM, and similar practices...” (25th anniversary edition, p. 23). He claimed that the meditative practices of all religions bring one into the experience of the same God:

“It is my sense, from having meditated with persons from many different [non-Christian] traditions, that in the silence we experience a deep unity. When we go beyond the portals of the rational mind into the experience, there is only one God to be experienced” (Pennington, *Centered Living*, p. 192).

In his foreword to **Thomas Ryan’s** book *Disciplines for Christian Living*, Henri Nouwen says:

“[T]he author shows A WONDERFUL OPENNESS TO THE GIFTS OF BUDDHISM, HINDUISM, AND MOSLEM RELIGION.”

Anthony de Mello readily admitted to borrowing from Buddhist Zen masters and Hindu gurus. He even taught that God is everything:

“Think of the air as of an immense ocean that surrounds you ... an ocean heavily colored with God’s presence and

God's being. ... While you draw the air into your lungs you are drawing God in" (*Sadhana: A Way to God*, p. 36).

De Mello suggested chanting the Hindu word "om" (p. 49) and even instructed his students to communicate with inanimate objects:

"Choose some object that you use frequently: a pen, a cup ... Now gently place the object in front of you or on your lap and speak to it. Begin by asking it questions about itself, its life, its origins, its future. And listen while it unfolds to you the secret of its being and of its destiny. Listen while it explains to you what existence means to it. Your object has some hidden wisdom to reveal to you about yourself. Ask for this and listen to what it has to say. There is something that you can give this object. What is it? What does it want from you?" (p. 55).

In this section we have seen that the contemplative movement ignores the Bible's warnings against association with heresy and paganism. Those who dabble with the movement are ignoring these warnings and they do so only at great spiritual peril.

Contemplative Spirituality Error # 9: It does not test everything carefully by Scripture.

The Bible warns repeatedly about the possibility of spiritual delusion, and the only sure way to avoid deception is by carefully testing everything with Scripture, yet this is a principle that is grossly neglected in contemplative writings.

We are to "*prove all things*" (1 Thess. 5:21). We are to "*try the spirits*" (1 John 4:1). We are to judge all preaching (1 Cor. 14:29). We are to beware of false prophets which cloak themselves in sheep's clothing (Mat. 7:15-17).

The Bereans were commended for doing this (Acts 17:11), but contemplatives think they have found a better way.

Emerging church leader Spencer Burke tells how he was led into Roman Catholic mysticism:

"I remember going on a three-day silent retreat with Brennan Manning while I was still at Mariners. To my horror, BRENNAN TOLD US WE SHOULD NOT READ

ANY BOOKS DURING THIS TIME--EVEN THE BIBLE. Instead, we should just sit and let God speak to us.

“I remember going to Brennan and telling him I felt like a phony. I even wrote a poem about it--how I was a mockingbird that didn't have any authentic voice. He nodded then asked why I was so angry at God. Angry? Was I angry? You know, I was. Lisa and I had just lost two kids early in pregnancy and nothing seemed to be going right. I was angry that God had robbed me of being a dad and mad that the evangelical program hadn't worked for me. I mean, I'd done everything I was supposed to and this is what I got? Brennan encouraged me to go back outside and meet Jesus. I was incensed. And yet as I sat there fuming, a strange thing happened. I felt like I could see Jesus standing there asking to come and be with me. In my anger, I refused. I could barely even look at him. Still, there he stood. When I finally relented, he sat down next to me and gently wrapped his arms around me. He didn't say anything, he just held me in my pain. In that moment, I think I realized that God could handle severe honesty. Authenticity, in all its messiness, was not offensive to him. There was room for doubt and anger and confusion. ...

“THAT EXPERIENCE SEEMED TO MARK A TURNING POINT IN MY FAITH. SHORTLY AFTERWARD, I stopped reading from the approved evangelical reading list and BEGAN TO DISTANCE MYSELF FROM THE EVANGELICAL AGENDA. I DISCOVERED new authors and NEW VOICES at the bookstore--Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen and St. Teresa of Avila. The more I read, the more intrigued I became. Contemplative spirituality seemed to open up a whole new way for me to understand and experience God. I was deeply moved by works like *The Cloud of Unknowing*, *The Dark Night of the Soul* and the *Early Writings of the Desert Fathers*” (“From the Third Floor of the Garage: The Story of TheOOze,” <http://www.spencerburke.com/pdf/presskit.pdf>).

Observe that Brennan Manning taught Burke that he should try to communicate with God WITHOUT THE BIBLE and should accept the experiences that came by this method as authentic. This is blind mysticism.

Manning mocks those who are Bible-oriented. In *The Signature of Jesus* he says:

“I am deeply distressed by what I only can call in our Christian culture THE IDOLATRY OF THE SCRIPTURES. For many Christians, the Bible is not a pointer to God but God himself. In a word--bibliolatry. God cannot be confined within the covers of a leather-bound book. I develop a nasty rash around people who speak as if mere scrutiny of its pages will reveal precisely how God thinks and precisely what God wants” (pp. 188-89).

This is a ridiculous and false statement. It is also a strawman. I don't know any Bible-believing Christians who consider the Bible their God. We do not worship the Bible; we worship the God of the Bible; but we honor the God of the Bible by accepting the Bible for what it claims to be, His very Word, an infallible light in a dark world (2 Peter 1:19-20). The Bible *DOES* tell us precisely how God thinks and what He wants. Jesus said, “*He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God*” (John 8:47).

Manning's heretical thinking is right at home in the contemplative spirituality movement.

The practice of centering prayer requires being non-judgmental about one's experience.

“Take everything that happens during the periods of centering prayer peacefully and gratefully, WITHOUT PUTTING A JUDGMENT ON ANYTHING, and just let the thoughts go by” (Pennington and Keating, *Finding Grace at the Center*, pp. 58, 59).

“YOU MUST BE NON-JUDGMENTAL about particular experiences of this prayer” (p. 60).

To the contrary, if things are not carefully tested by Scripture there is no way to know if they are true or authentically from God. False teachers hide themselves in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15). The devil is very subtle, transforming himself into an angel of light, and his ministers appear as ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

Contemplatives give lip service to honoring the Bible, *but in practice they do not*. Consider Tony Campolo. On the one hand he says we should exercise discernment, but in true emerging church fashion he contradicts this on the other hand:

“We must pay serious attention to mystical happenings, and discern, in the context of biblical understanding in Christian community, whether or not we believe they are of God. Discernment is crucial to mystical spirituality. Without it, anything goes. On the other hand, WE MUST LEARN TO DOUBT OUR DOUBTS if we are going to be open to the work of the Spirit in our lives” (*The God of Intimacy and Action*, p. 11).

To “doubt our doubts” cancels out effective biblical discernment!

Contemplative Spirituality Error # 10: It downplays the danger of spiritual delusion.

The Bible repeatedly warns about the danger of spiritual delusion and exhorts believers to be very careful. Consider the following:

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:4-5).

“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24).

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him” (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Ephesians 4:14).

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thessalonians 5:6).

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1).

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13).

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

To be sober means to be in control of one’s mind, to be spiritually and mentally alert. It means to be on guard against danger. It is the opposite of emptying one’s mind and letting one’s imagination run wild and using a mantra to keep one’s thoughts at bay.

The Bible warns that demons transform themselves into angels of light (2 Cor. 11:13-15). It warns of false christs and false spirits (Mat. 24:4-5; 2 Cor. 11:3-4).

When contemplatives see “Jesus,” how can they be certain that it is the Jesus of the Bible and not a false christ or a demonic

delusion? Such things cannot be tested by feelings, because feelings are subjective and undependable. The only way to be certain that I am being led by God is by making the Bible my central authority and carefully testing everything by it. Mysticism does not provide such certainty.

In Scripture, error is often referred to in terms of cunning deception.

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many” (Mat. 24:11).

“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if *it were* possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Mat. 24:24).

“For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

“That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14).

“And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words” (Col. 2:4).

“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thess. 2:9-10).

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13).

In light of these warnings, we see the danger and folly of the contemplative practices.

Some of them, such as Centering Prayer, attempt to shut down the mind. The very title of the popular 14th century meditative book *The Cloud of Unknowing* refers to the practice of blotting out

conscious thoughts in an attempt to enter into the depths of mindless meditation and transcendental communion with God.

“I urge you to dismiss every clever or subtle thought no matter how holy or valuable. Cover it with a thick cloud of forgetting because in this life only love can touch God as He is in Himself, never knowledge” (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, chapter 8).

The *Cloud of Unknowing* instructs the contemplative practitioner to choose a one-syllable word and to repeat it as a mantra to “beat down every kind of thought under the cloud of forgetting” (chapter 7, p. 56).

The practitioner is instructed NOT to focus his attention on the meaning of the word or to use “logic to examine or explain this word ... nor allow yourself to ponder its ramifications” (chapter 36, p. 94).

It also says, “Have no fear of the evil one, for he will not dare come near you” (chapter 34, p. 92).

Centering Prayer involves “moving beyond thinking into a place of utter stillness” (*The Sacred Way*, p. 71).

Note the following excerpts from *Finding Grace at the Center* by Basil Pennington and Thomas Keating, which emphasize the unthinking aspect of centering prayer:

“It is best when this word is wholly interior without a definite thought or actual sound” (p. 39).

“We are quite passive. We let it happen” (p. 39).

“As it goes beyond thought, beyond image, there is nothing left by which to judge it” (p. 43).

“By turning off the ordinary flow of thoughts ... one’s world begins to change” (p. 48).

“Go on with this nothing, moved only by your love for God” (p. 49).

“The important thing is not to pay any attention to them [thoughts]. They are like the noise in the street...” (p. 51).

“Any thought will bring you out [of the deep waters of silence]” (p. 52).

“[Centering prayer] leads you to a silence beyond thought and words...” (p. 53).

“Firmly reject all clear ideas, however pious or delightful” (p. 54).

“As soon as you start to reflect, the experience is over” (p. 56).

In light of the Bible’s warnings about the great potential for spiritual deception and the necessity of constant sobermindedness, I cannot imagine a more dangerous spiritual practice than centering prayer.

When asked if it is possible for meditation to be “inviting the devil in,” James Finley replies:

“Sometimes I will tell people who express that--well why not try it? Why not try to just quietly and sincerely and silently open your heart to God and see for yourself if you sense something dangerous or bad or dark. And you might discover that the opposite’s the case” (“Experiencing God through Meditation: Interview with James Finley,” Beliefnet.com).

This counsel is unbelievably dangerous and unscriptural. The Bible warns that the devil takes on the persona of an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14-16). The only way to discern the difference between true and false spirits is to be born again and walking in the Spirit and to carefully test them by the Bible. Catholic mystics such as Finley, Thomas Merton, and William Johnston don’t do that and, in fact, don’t know how to do that.

Some of the contemplatives do give warnings about the potential for spiritual delusion, but their warnings are ineffectual.

Richard Foster warns that contemplative prayer is “entering deeply into the spiritual realm,” and he says that not everyone is ready and equipped to enter into the “all embracing silence” of contemplative prayer (p. 156). He admits that there is the possibility of meeting dark powers, but his suggested solution to this danger is exceedingly shallow and unscriptural. He recommends that practitioners ask “God to surround us with the light of His protection” (*Celebration of Discipline*, 1978, p. 23). He suggests the following prayer: “All dark and evil spirits must now leave” (*Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, 1992, p. 157).

It is not enough to pray that God will protect us from spiritual danger; we must obey His Word. If we pursue practices that are contrary to Scripture, all the prayer mantras in the world will not keep us from the evil that we will experience there! To pray for protection and then walk in disobedience is not faith but presumption. In such a situation, a prayer of protection is no more effective than holding a crucifix or fingering prayer beads.

Roger Oakland wisely observes:

“I wonder if all these Christians who now practice contemplative prayer are following Foster’s advice. Whether they are or not, they have put themselves in spiritual harm’s way. Nowhere in Scripture are we required to pray a prayer of protection before we pray. The fact that Foster recognizes contemplative prayer is dangerous and opens the door to the fallen spirit world is very revealing. What is this--praying to the God of the Bible but instead reaching demons? Maybe contemplative prayer should be renamed contemplative terror. ... Foster admits that contemplative prayer is dangerous and will possibly take the participant into demonic realms, but he gives a disclaimer saying not everyone is ready for it. My question is, *who* is ready, and how will they know they *are* ready? What about all the young people in the emerging church movement? Are they ready? Or are they going into demonic altered states of consciousness completely unaware?” (*Faith Undone*, pp. 99, 100).

The Roman Catholic contemplative monk John Michael Talbot gives an even stronger warning about the potential danger of contemplative prayer. He says:

“IT CAN BE MOST DESTRUCTIVE IF USED UNWISELY. I CAN ALMOST PROMISE THAT THOSE WHO UNDERTAKE THIS STUDY ALONE WITHOUT PROPER GUIDANCE, AND GROUNDING IN CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY, WILL FIND THEMSELVES QUESTIONING THEIR OWN FAITH TO THE POINT OF LOSING IT. SOME MAY FIND THEMSELVES SPIRITUALLY LOST. IT HAS HAPPENED TO MANY. For this reason, we do not take the newer members of The Brothers and Sisters of Charity through this material in any depth as part of their

formation, but stick squarely to overt Catholic spirituality and prayer teachings. I would not recommend too much integration of these things without proper guidance for those newer to the Catholic or Christian faith” (Talbot, “Many Religions, One God,” Oct. 22, 1999, <http://www.johnmichaeltalbot.com/Reflections/index.asp?id=135>).

Talbot thus recognizes the extreme danger of contemplative practices, yet he thinks he is capable of using them without being harmed by them. He should listen to the words of Scripture: “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

I am convinced that those who participate in such things open themselves up to demonic influence.

David Hunt sounds an important warning about visualizing prayer. He gives the example of a man who visualized Jesus and was surprised when “Jesus” began to interact with him.

“I began to visualize myself as a boy of eight. ‘Now see if you can imagine Jesus appearing,’ [the seminar leader] instructed. ‘Let Him walk toward you.’ Much to my amazement Jesus moved slowly toward me out of that dark playground. He began to extend His hands toward me in a loving, accepting manner. I NO LONGER WAS CREATING THE SCENE. The figure of Christ reached over and lifted the bundle from my back. And He did so with such forcefulness that I literally sprang from the pew” (Robert L. Wise, “Healing of the Memories: A Prayer Therapy for You,” *Christian Life*, July 1984, pp. 63-64, quoted from Hunt, *The Occult Invasion*).

Hunt observes:

“That this was more than imagination is clear. The one who originally visualized the image of ‘Jesus’ was surprised when it suddenly took on a character of its own and he realized that he was no longer creating the image. This ‘Jesus’ had its own life and personality. There can be no doubt that real contact had been made with the spirit world. We may be equally certain that this being was not the real Jesus Christ. No one can call Him from the right hand of the Father in heaven to put in a personal

appearance. The entity could only have been a demonic spirit masquerading as ‘Jesus’” (*The Occult Invasion*, “Imagination and Visualization”).

Morton Kelsey taught the use of visualization and exhorted his readers not to fear when the visualizations took on a life of their own! He quoted from Carl Jung, who communicated with a spirit guide throughout his life:

“In the same way, when you concentrate on a mental picture, IT BEGINS TO STIR, the image becomes enriched by details, it moves and develops. Each time, naturally, you mistrust it and have the idea that you have just made it up, that it is merely your own invention” (Jung, *Analytical Psychology*, quoted in Kelsey, *The Other Side of Silence*, p. 226).

Kelsey then comments:

“It is usually not too difficult for most people to start the process by concentrating on something graphic. The hard part comes in realizing THAT SOMETHING COULD MOVE UNEXPECTEDLY INSIDE US WITHOUT OUR CONSCIOUS DIRECTION. That is why it is so vital in developing imagination, meditation, or contemplation TO REALIZE THAT OUR EGO IS NOT THE ONLY FORCE OPERATING WITHIN US” (*The Other Side of Silence*, p. 227).

Since Kelsey didn’t believe the Bible, viewing it largely as myth, he didn’t understand that when images “stir” and “move unexpectedly” and take on a life of their own it is because one has entered the realm of the demonic.

Consider the practice of guided visualization. A leader instructs the practitioners to get comfortable and then to do something like the following:

Imagine yourself walking down a road. It’s the path of your life. Imagine what the path looks like. Is it curvy? Or straight? Hilly? Flat? Is it wide or narrow, surrounded by trees or by fields? You look down. Is the path rocky? Sandy? Is it dirt? Maybe it’s paved. What does it feel like under your feet? And up ahead, what’s in your path? Does it look clear or are there hurdles in your way? Something is in your hands. You’ve been carrying it a long time--it’s

something you brought with you, in your spirit, up to camp. Look at it. What does it look like? What does it feel like in your hands? Is it hot? Cold? Warm? Is it smooth? Prickly? Sharp? Rough? Is it heavy or light?

Now look up ahead. A figure is moving toward you. You can't quite make out who it is, but he seems to know you and his pace quickens as he recognizes you. Now you can see--it's Jesus! He's coming closer. What's the expression on his face as he walks toward you? How do you feel? He says a word of greeting to you. What does he say? How do you feel? Do you say anything back?

Now Jesus is standing in front of you. What does he say? Now he's holding his hands out--he wants you to put what's in your hands into his hands. How does it feel as the object leaves your hands? Do you say anything to Jesus?

Now you and Jesus start to walk together--he's holding the object of yours. As the two of you walk along, what do you talk about? Imagine the conversation (Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way*, pp. 83, 84).

This is either pure fantasy and therefore of no value, or it moves into the realm of the occult. Tony Jones describes how that Jesus allegedly appeared to him during one such episode and spoke to him face to face (*The Sacred Way*, p. 79).

Al Dager of Media Spotlight gives a discerning warning about the extreme danger of contemplative practices:

“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.”

The guided prayer techniques are exactly the same as the techniques I was taught by disciples of the Hindu guru Paramahansa Yogananda before I was converted. We were supposed to use these techniques to view events in our past lives. The yogic meditation led me into dark realms farther and farther

from the holy God of the Bible, the God who is light and in whom “*is no darkness at all*” (1 John 1:5). I repented of it completely after I came to Christ. I wrote to the Self-Realization Fellowship Society, testified to them of my Christian conversion, and asked them to drop my name from their rolls.

Emergent leader Nanette Sawyer unwittingly gives a frightful testimony along this line. She said that she is a Christian (of the liberal brand) because she was taught meditation techniques by a Hindu. She said that while “sitting in meditation, in a technique similar to what Christians call Centering Prayer, I encountered love that is unconditional, yet it called me to responsible action in my life” (*An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, p. 44). This occurred AFTER she had rejected biblical Christianity and the gospel that Jesus died for our sins (p. 43). She said that she found love and Jesus through Hindu meditation, but it was not the Jesus of the Bible nor was it the love of God as described in the Bible. It was another gospel, another Jesus, and another spirit (2 Cor. 11:4). John warned, “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (1 John 4:1), and the only sure way to try the spirits is to test them by the Bible. As for true love, John defined that, too. “*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous*” (1 John 5:3).

The fact that its practitioners call contemplative spirituality “darkness” is a loud warning to those who have ears to hear.

Brennan Manning calls centering prayer a “GREAT DARKNESS” (*The Signature of Jesus*, p. 145) and an entire chapter of his book is devoted to “Celebrate the Darkness.” He claims that the darkness of centering prayer is caused by the human ego being broken and spiritual healing being achieved, but since the practice is not supported by Scripture that is presumption and not faith.

The sixth century Syrian monk called Dionysius the Areopagite said that asceticism and mystical practices can penetrate the mystery of God’s “DARK NO-THINGNESS.” This man has had a major influence on Catholic mysticism.

The Cloud of Unknowing uses the terms “BLIND” and “DARKNESS” and “NOTHING” repeatedly.

Jesuit priest Anthony de Mello calls centering prayer “DARK CONTEMPLATION” and descending “into THE DARKNESS” (*Sadhana: A Way to God*, pp. 32, 33). He says those who practice centering prayer “expose themselves, in BLIND FAITH, to THE EMPTINESS, the DARKNESS, the idleness, THE NOTHINGNESS” (p. 31).

Catholic monk William Johnston says that meditation is the art of passing from one layer to the next in an inner or downward journey to the core of the personality where dwells the great mystery called God ... WHO DWELLS IN THICK DARKNESS” (*The Inner Eye of Love: Mysticism and Religion*, 1981, p. 127).

God did hide Himself in thick darkness in the Old Testament era because of man’s sin and the fact that Christ’s atonement had not yet been made (Exodus 20:21), but in reality God is light and not darkness. “*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*” (1 John 1:5). It is sin that separates the sinner from God and His glorious light. The people in Moses’ day had to stand away from Mt. Sinai when God gave the Law and God wrapped Himself in darkness, because the Law of Moses can only reveal sin and cannot justify the sinner (Romans 3:19-20). The Old Testament temple signified this separation. God dwelt in the holy of holies, and no man could enter therein except the high priest and that only one time a year, on the Day of Atonement. There was a thick veil that barred the way into the holy of holies.

But when Jesus Christ came and died on the cross and shed His blood to make the perfect atonement for man’s sin, the veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom, signifying that man now has free entrance into God’s very presence if he comes through faith in Christ (Mat. 27:50-51).

If a contemplative encounters darkness in his mystical journey, that darkness is not God; it is sin and the devil. The darkness of this world is the devil’s domain, but God has turned the believer “*from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God*” (Acts 26:18). He has “*delivered us from the power of darkness*” (Col. 1:13) and called us “*out of darkness into his marvellous light*” (1 Pet. 2:9).

Now we are “*children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness*” (1 Thess. 5:5).

Pierre Teilhard described his practice of meditation as “going down into my innermost self, to THE DEEP ABYSS” (*The Divine Milieu*, p. 76). He said: “At each step of the descent a new person was disclosed within me of whose name I was no longer sure, and who no longer obeyed me.” At the end of the journey he found “a bottomless abyss at my feet.”

This is a loud warning to those who have ears to hear. Though the mystic believes that he is touching light and truth through contemplative practices, in reality he is fellowshipping with darkness and lies and demons. Who were these “persons” who were distinct from Teilhard himself and who did not obey him? From a biblical perspective, we have to conclude that the man was communicating with demons. This is why he taught such demonic doctrines as evolution and a “cosmic” christ that is something different than the person of Jesus.

John Michael Talbot, the popular Roman Catholic CCM musician and contemplative promoter, recommends the use of eastern religious practices such as yoga but, as we have seen, he admits that such experiences “can be most destructive if used unwisely.” He even says: “SOME MAY FIND THEMSELVES SPIRITUALLY LOST. IT HAS HAPPENED TO MANY” (Talbot, “Many Religions, One God,” Oct. 22, 1999, <http://www.johnmichaeltalbot.com/Reflections/index.asp?id=135>).

Anything with that type of power for evil and spiritual destruction should be avoided like the plague!

Philip St. Romain, the Catholic lay minister who wrote *Kundalini Energy and Christian Spirituality* (1990), has experienced many strange things while practicing centering prayer. After “centering down” into silence, gold lights would appear and swirl in his mind, forming themselves into captivating patterns. He felt prickly sensations that would continue for days. “Wise sayings” popped into his mind as if he were “receiving messages from another.” After studying eastern religions he came to the conclusion that he was dealing with kundalini energy, and we have no doubt that he was, because mindless centering prayer brings

one into the same dark realm as Hinduism's yoga. The "inner adviser" that one encounters through centering prayer is demonic.

Even the heathen practitioners of kundalini warn about its dangers. *The Ayurveda Encyclopedia* says, "Those who awaken their kundalini without a guru can lose their direction in life ... they can become confused or mentally imbalanced ... more harm than good can arise" (p. 336). The book *Aghora II: Kundalini* warns many times that "indiscriminate awakening of the Kundalini is very dangerous" (p. 61). It says, "Once aroused and unboxed Kundalini is not 'derousable'; the genie will not fit back into the bottle. 'After the awakening the devotee lives always at the mercy of Kundalini'" (p. 20). In fact, the book says that "some die of shock when Kundalini is awakened, and others become severely ill" (p. 61).

St. Romain is communing with demons and he got there, not through Hindu yoga, but through Catholic contemplative mysticism, the same kind of mysticism promoted by the Quaker Richard Foster and the Southern Baptist Rick Warren.

St. Romain has come to depend on the voice that he hears in contemplative prayer.

"I cannot make any decisions for myself without the approbation of THE INNER ADVISER, whose voice speaks so clearly in times of need" (*Kundalini Energy*, p. 39).

The Ayurveda Encyclopedia explains that one can encounter internal voices through yogic mediation, and the practitioner is instructed to listen to the voices and follow their counsel.

"Just as with all spiritual experiences that are out of the norm of supposed societal acceptance, THE HEARING OF INNER SOUNDS OR VOICES (nada) has generally been associated with mental illness. Spiritual counseling reassures a person that their experiences and feelings are spiritual--not abnormal. Understanding nada helps persons feel comfortable when hearing any inner sounds. ... If a sound is heard, listen to it. If many sounds exist, listen to those in the right ear. The first sound heard is to be followed. Then, the next sound heard is also to be followed" (p. 343).

I have never read a more effective formula for demon possession and spiritual delusion, and “contemplative” practices such as centering prayer and visualization and guided imagery are no different in character than Hindu yoga. In fact, many contemplative practitioners admit this.

John Michael Talbot says:

“For myself, after the moving meditations of Hinduism and Taoism, and the breath, bone-marrow, and organ-cleansing of Taoism, I move into a Buddhist seated meditation, including the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. I do all of this from my own Christian perspective...” (*Come to the Quiet*, p. 237).

Meditation practitioner W.E. Butler, in *Lords of Light*, says that mystical contemplation “brings with it a curious kind of knowing that there is somebody else there with you; you are not alone” (p. 164).

Indeed, but that “somebody else” that the unsaved meditation practitioner encounters is certainly not Almighty God.

Tony Jones admits that the practice of silence often results in spiritual oppression. He mentions “the dark night of the soul” which comes through meditation and says, “It seems one cannot pursue true silence without rather quickly coming to a place of deep, dark doubt” (*The Sacred Way*, pp. 41, 82). He quotes Thomas Merton as follows: “The hermit, all day and all night, beats his head against a wall of doubt. That is his contemplation” (p. 41).

We are reminded of Mother Teresa, who was called a living saint by Catholics and Protestants alike during her lifetime and is on a fast track for canonization in the Catholic Church. She practiced a very serious level of contemplative spirituality all her life, but she found only darkness. This is documented in the shocking book *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light, the Private Writings of the Saint of Calcutta* (2007), which contains statements made by the nun to her Catholic confessors and superiors over a period of more than 65 years.

In March 1953 she wrote to her confessor: “... THERE IS SUCH TERRIBLE DARKNESS WITHIN ME, as if everything was dead. It has been like this more or less from the time I started ‘the work.’”

Over the years she had many confessors, and she continually referred to her spiritual condition as “my darkness” and to Jesus as “the Absent One.”

In 1962 she wrote: “IF I EVER BECOME A SAINT -- I WILL SURELY BE ONE OF ‘DARKNESS,’” and again, “How cold -- how empty -- how painful is my heart. -- Holy communion -- Holy Mass -- all the holy things of spiritual life -- of the life of Christ in me -- are all so empty -- so cold -- so un-wanted” (*Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light*, p. 232).

In 1979 she wrote: “THE SILENCE AND THE EMPTINESS IS SO GREAT -- that I look and do not see, -- Listen and do not hear.”

Her private statements about the spiritual darkness she encountered in contemplative prayer continued in this vein until her death, and they are the loudest possible warning about the danger of contemplative mysticism.

Contemplative practices are vehicles to bring the practitioners into contact with demons.

Contemplative Spirituality Error # 11: It produces rotten fruit.

Those who practice contemplative spirituality claim that it should be tested by its fruit, assuring us that the fruit is good, but from a biblical perspective it is demonically rotten.

First, the fruit of contemplative spirituality is heretical doctrine. That contemplative spirituality produces heretical fruit is obvious from its very history. It came from Rome and it nurtured Rome’s heresies. Never did contemplative spirituality teach the Catholic “saints” and mystics to reject Rome’s errors. Never did it lead them to the true grace of Christ apart from sacramentalism and priestcraft. Never did it reveal to them the blasphemy of venerating Mary. Never did it enlighten their minds so they could see and accept the “faith which was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

In the 25th anniversary edition of *Finding Grace at the Center*, which promotes centering prayer, Jesuit priest Thomas Clarke says:

“Bringing theology to the center [referring to contemplative mysticism] is like dipping a fabric in a liquid which restores and transfigures its inherent beauty. This is the place where the great doctors of the [Roman Catholic] Church carried on their pondering of the mystery. Only to the degree that theology takes place in the stillness of the Center will it be capable of nourishing the Church” (pp. 92, 93).

Thus, Clarke recognizes that Catholic theology was nurtured by Catholic contemplative practices, and we know that Rome’s monastic theology is the doctrine of devils (1 Timothy 4:1-5).

Second, the fruit of contemplative spirituality is ecumenical unity. In fact, together with contemporary praise music, contemplative mysticism is one of the most powerful glues of the ecumenical movement.

Larry Crabb, in the foreword to David Benner’s *Sacred Companions*, which has been described as “a who’s who of mystical and pantheistic writings,” says:

“The spiritual climate is ripe. Jesus seekers across the world are being prepared to abandon the old way of the written code for the new way of the Spirit” (p. 9).

The term “Jesus seekers” refers to all sorts of professing Christians. Crabb tells us that because of this “new way of the Spirit,” referring to contemplative mysticism, all sorts of Christians are giving up the “old way of the written code,” referring to the Bible! Crabb says that Christians of all doctrinal persuasions are being drawn together and instructed by Rome’s mystical practices. What a powerful warning to those who have ears to hear!

Consider what is happening within “evangelicalism” in general and the emerging church in particular. Contemplative practices are bringing evangelicals into association with the doctrines of devils that Paul warned of in 1 Timothy 4.

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which

God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Observe that the doctrines of devils are intimately associated with religious legalism and asceticism, forbidding to marry and requiring abstinence from meats. This is at the very heart of Catholic monastic mysticism. The Gethsemani Cistercian monastery where Thomas Merton lived requires the monks to take a vow of celibacy and forbids them to eat meat! To commune with the Catholic monastics is to commune with demons!

The back-to-Rome movement within evangelicalism is being fed by and hastened along by these contemplative practices. It is one of the important factors in the ongoing blending process. We have already given many examples of this.

Consider the book *The Way of the Mystics*. It was coauthored by a Roman Catholic (John Talbot) and an evangelical Protestant (Steve Rabey) and one of the recommendations on the back cover is by a Pentecostal (Jack Hayford). The force drawing these three “streams” of Christianity together is mysticism.

The Roman Catholic Church is becoming more “evangelical” and the evangelicals are becoming more Catholic. In the 376-page book *Evangelicals and Rome*, first published in 1999, we warned:

“Most popular evangelical men and organizations have strong and growing sympathies toward the Roman Catholic Church. In the following chapters we give thorough documentation of this. *Christianity Today*, founded by Billy Graham and other New Evangelical leaders, now has three Roman Catholic editors. Evangelical publishers are busy putting out books sympathetic to Rome and calling for ecumenical relationships.”

Zach Roberts, a Baptist pastor and founder of the Dogwood Abbey in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, meets regularly with a Catholic Trappist monk to discuss contemplation. The fruit of his contemplative activities is evident by his own testimony. He has come to see Roman Catholicism as authentic Christianity. He says, “I grew up in a tradition [Southern Baptist] that believes Catholics are pagans. I never really understood that. Now I’d argue against

that wholeheartedly” (“The Unexpected Monks,” *The Boston Globe*, Feb. 3, 2008).

Consider Richard Foster’s ecumenical vision, which is nourished by his contemplative mysticism:

“I see a Catholic monk from the hills of Kentucky standing alongside a Baptist evangelist from the streets of Los Angeles and together offering up a sacrifice of praise. I see a people” (*Streams of Living Water*, 2001, p. 274).

This ecumenical philosophy is not scriptural. God’s Word exalts truth far above unity. We are to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), and it is impossible to be faithful to this calling and also downplay doctrine after the ecumenical fashion.

Another heretical fruit of contemplative spirituality is interfaith syncretism. We have already documented this, but we want to repeat it here by way of emphasis. Contemplative mysticism is a powerful glue for uniting Christianity with paganism. It has been called the “Western bridge to Far Eastern spirituality” (Tilden Edwards, *Spiritual Friends*, p. 18).

In a 2005 interview Tony Campolo said:

“I got to meet the head of the Franciscan order. I met him in Washington. He said let me tell you an interesting story. He told me about one of their gatherings, where they bring the brothers of the Franciscan order together for a time of fellowship. About eight years ago they held it in Thailand and out of courtesy, they really felt they needed to show some graciousness to the Buddhists, because they were in a Buddhist country. So they got Buddhist theologians together and Franciscan theologians together and sent them off for three days to talk and see if they could find common ground. They also took Buddhist and Franciscan monastics and sent them off together to pray with each other. On the fourth day they all reassembled. The theologians were fighting with each other, arguing with each other, contending there was no common ground between them. The monastics that had gone off praying together, came back hugging each other. IN A MYSTICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, THERE IS A COMING TOGETHER OF PEOPLE WHERE THEOLOGY IS LEFT

BEHIND AND IN THIS SPIRITUALITY THEY FOUND
A COMMONALITY” (“On Evangelicals and Interfaith
Cooperation,” *Cross Currents*, Spring 2005).

Mystical experience is exalted over doctrine and is seen as a key to radical ecumenical and interfaith unity. But if you turn your back to Bible doctrine and try to reach beyond it through mysticism, you are entering the realm of spiritual delusion with no sure light to lighten your path.

Catholic priest Basil Pennington describes how that an unsaved Hindu monk found great satisfaction in the practice of centering prayer.

“I presented the Centering Prayer in my usual way, wondering what chords of response this call to faith and love might be striking in the Hindu monk. We soon entered into the prayer and enjoyed that beautiful fullness of silence. As we came out of the experience I shot a concerned glance in the direction of our Eastern friend. He had--or, I could almost say, was--a most beautiful smile, a deep, radiant expression of peaceful joy. Gently he gave his witness: ‘This has been the most beautiful experience I have ever had.’ This was for me on many levels a very affirming experience” (*Centering Prayer*).

That an idol worshipper would find Catholic centering prayer a beautiful experience was “affirming” to Pennington, but to the Bible believer it is a loud warning that the practice is pagan to the core.

We have shown how that there is an intimate relationship today between Roman Catholic monastics and pagan religionists. Some Roman Catholic monks have even become Buddhist or Hindu priests.

Another heretical fruit of contemplative spirituality is that it is a path to Hinduism and Buddhism. Some of the Catholic contemplatives have pursued their interfaith venture so far that they have actually become Hindu and Zen Buddhist monks. Following are just a few of the many examples that could be given:

Jules Monchanin and **Henri Le Saux**, Benedictine priests, founded a Hindu-Christian ashram in India called Shantivanam (Forest of Peace). They took the names of Hindu holy men, with le

Saux calling himself Swami Abhishiktananda (bliss of the anointed one). He stayed in Hindu ashrams and learned from Hindu gurus, wearing the orange robe, going barefoot, practicing yoga, taking the tika, and abstaining from meat. In 1968 le Saux became a hermit in the Himalayas, living there until his death in 1973. His books *Prayer: Hindu-Christian Meeting Point* and *Saccidananda: A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience* continue to be published.

Through his silent meditation Le Saux concluded that there is a “point of unity between not simply Hinduism and Christianity, but among all authentic traditions of spiritual depth” (Wayne Teasdale, “Interreligious Dialogue Since Vatican II,” *Spirituality Today*, Summer 1991).

The Shantivanam Ashram was subsequently led by **Alan Griffiths** (1906-93). He called himself Swami Dayananda (bliss of compassion). Through his books and lecture tours Griffiths had a large influence in promoting the interfaith philosophy in Roman Catholic monasteries in America, England, Australia, and Germany. He wrote 12 books on interfaith dialogue, the most popular being *Marriage of East and West*.

Wayne Teasdale (1945-2004) was a Roman Catholic lay monk whose writings are influential in the contemplative movement. As a student in a Catholic college in Massachusetts, he began visiting St. Joseph’s Abbey near Spencer and came under the direction of Thomas Keating. This led to an intimate association with pagan religions and the adoption of Hinduism. Teasdale visited Shantivanam Ashram and lived in a nearby Hindu ashram for two years, following in Alan Griffiths’ footsteps. In 1989 he became a “Christian” *sanyassa* or a Hindu monk. Teasdale was deeply involved in interfaith activities, believing that what the religions hold in common can be the basis for creating a new world, which he called the “Interspiritual Age” -- a “global culture based on common spiritual values.” He believed that mystics of all religions are in touch with the same God. He helped found the Interspiritual Dialogue in Action (ISDnA), one of the many New Age organizations affiliated with the United Nations. (Its NGO sponsor is the National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union.) It is committed “to actively serve in the evolution of human consciousness and global transformation.”

Willigis Jager, a well-known German Benedictine priest who has published contemplative books in German and English, spent six years studying Zen Buddhism under Yamada Koun Roshi. (*Roshi* is the title of a Zen master.) In 1981 he was authorized as a Zen teacher and took the name Ko-un Roshi. He moved back to Germany and began teaching Zen at the Munsterschwarzach Abbey, drawing as many as 150 people a day.

Jager denies the creation and fall of man as taught in the Bible. He denies the unique divinity of Christ, as well as His substitutionary atonement and bodily resurrection. He believes that the universe is evolving and that the evolving universe is God. He believes that man has reached a major milestone in evolution, that he is entering an era in which his consciousness will be transformed. Jager believes in the divinity of man, that what Christ is every man can become. He believes that all religions point to the same God and promotes interfaith dialogue as the key to unifying mankind.

Jager learned these heretical pagan doctrines from his close association with Zen Buddhism and his blind mysticism. He says that the aim of Christian prayer is transcendental contemplation in which the practitioner enters a deeper level of consciousness. This requires emptying the mind, which is achieved by focusing on the breathing and repeating a mantra. This “quiets the rational mind,” “empties the mind,” and “frustrates our ordinary discursive thinking” (James Conner, “Contemplative Retreat for Monastics,” *Monastic Interreligious Dialogue Bulletin*, Oct. 1985).

Paulist priest **Thomas Ryan** took a sabbatical in India in 1991 and was initiated into yoga and Buddhist meditation. Today he is a certified teacher of Kripalu yoga. In his book *Prayer of Heart and Body: Meditation and Yoga as Christian Spiritual Practice* (1995) and his DVD *Yoga Prayer* (2004) he combines Catholic contemplative practices with Hindu yoga.

These are just a few examples of the many that could be given of how that Roman Catholic contemplative practices can lead to paganism. (For more about these individuals see the chapter “A Biographical Catalog of Contemplative Mystics.”)

Another heretical fruit of contemplative spirituality is that it is a path to the New Age. There is an intimate and growing relationship between the contemplative movement and the New Age.

Thomas Keating, one of the most influential voices in the contemplative movement, is past president of the **Temple of Understanding**, a New Age organization founded in 1960 by Juliet Hollister. The mission of this organization is to “create a more just and peaceful world” and its tools are New Age instruments such as interfaith dialogue, visualization, and community building.

Thomas Merton spoke at a Temple of Understanding conference in Calcutta, India, in 1968. He praised the interfaith atmosphere and his fellow pagan religionists.

Shambhala Publications, a publisher that specializes in Occultic, Jungian, New Age, Buddhist, and Hindu writings, also publishes the writings of Catholic mystics, including *The Wisdom of the Desert* by Thomas Merton, *The Writings of Hildegard of Bingen*, and *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence.

The Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, which is sponsored by the Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries of North America, is associated with the **North American Board for East-West Dialogue** (NABEWD). At the NABEWD’s first meeting in January 1978 at a monastery in Clyde, Missouri, **Robert Muller**, a New Age leader at the United Nations, was selected as the organization’s advisor. Muller believes in the divinity of all men.

New Ager **Caroline Myss** (pronounced mace) has written a book based on Teresa of Avila’s visions. It is entitled *Entering the Castle: Finding the Inner Path to God and Your Soul’s Purpose*. Myss says, “For me, the spirit is the vessel of divinity” (“Caroline Myss’ Journey,” *Conscious Choice*, September 2003).

Mary Coelho, a third generation Quaker, pursued contemplative mysticism from the Quaker inner light through Catholic contemplative practices all the way to the New Age. Today she believes that man is a product of billions of years of evolution, a process that is reaching a new stage in our day. She denies the Bible’s teaching on creation, the fall of man, and

salvation only through faith in the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ.

On April 15, 2008, emerging church leaders and contemplatives **Rob Bell** and **Doug Pagitt** joined the Dalai Lama for the New Ager **Seeds of Compassion InterSpiritual Event** in Seattle. It brought together Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, Buddhists, Sikhs, Muslims, and others. The event featured a dialogue on “the themes common to all spiritual traditions.” The Dalai Lama said, “I think everyone, ultimately, deep inside [has] some kind of goodness” (“Emergent Church Leaders’ InterSpirituality,” *Christian Post*, April 17, 2008).

New Ager **Ken Wilber**, who believes that man is divinity, is intimately associated with the contemplative movement.

In his book *Velvet Elvis*, Rob Bell recommends that his readers sit at Wilber’s feet for three months!

“For a mind-blowing introduction to emergence theory and divine creativity, set aside three months and read Ken Wilber’s *A Brief History of Everything*” (*Velvet Elvis*, p. 192).

Wilber was invited to write the foreword to *The Common Heart*, a book that describes the interfaith dialogues conducted at St. Benedict’s Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado, under the direction of Thomas Keating.

Wilber also conducted a *Mystic Heart* seminar series with Catholic contemplative monk **Wayne Teasdale**. In the first seminar in this series Teasdale said, “You are God; I am God; they are God; it is God” (“The Mystic Heart: The Supreme Identity,” <http://video.google.com/videoplaydocid=-7652038071112490301&q=ken+Wilber>).

In *Up from Eden: A Transpersonal View of Human Evolution* (1981, 2004), Ken Wilber calls the Garden of Eden “a fable” and the biblical view of history “amusing” (pp. xix, 3). He describes his “perennial philosophy” as follows:

“... it is true that there is some sort of Infinite, some type of Absolute Godhead, but it cannot properly be conceived as a colossal Being, a great Daddy, or a big Creator set apart from its creations, from things and events and human beings themselves. Rather, it is best conceived

(metaphorically) as the ground or suchness or condition of all things and events. It is not a Big Thing set apart from finite things, but rather the reality or suchness or ground of all things. ... the perennial philosophy declares that the absolute is One, Whole, and Undivided” (p. 6).

Wilber says that this perennial philosophy “forms the esoteric core of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Sufism, AND CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM” (p. 5).

Thus, this New Ager recognizes that Roman Catholic mysticism, which spawned the contemplative movement within Protestantism, has the same esoteric core faith as pagan idolatry! And there is no doubt that this true. It is a blind leap into the dark.

Thomas Keating and **Richard Foster** are involved in the **Living Spiritual Teachers Project**, a group that associates together Christians of various stripes, Zen Buddhist monks and nuns, universalists, occultists, and New Agers. Members include the Dalai Lama, who claims to be the reincarnation of an advanced spiritual entity; Marianne Williamson, promoter of the occultic *A Course in Miracles*; Marcus Borg, who believes that Jesus was not virgin born and did not rise from the grave; Catholic nun Joan Chittister, who says we must become “in tune with the cosmic voice of God”; Andrew Harvey, who says that men need to “claim their divine humanity”; Matthew Fox, who believes there are many paths to God; Alan Jones, who calls the gospel of the cross a vile doctrine and says there is no absolute authority; and Desmond Tutu, who says, “... because everybody is a God-carrier, all are brothers and sisters.”

Rick Warren has yoked up with mystic **Ken Blanchard** on various occasions, and Blanchard is intimately associated with New Age paganism. Blanchard visited Saddleback in 2003 and Warren told the church that he had “signed on to help with the P.E.A.C.E. Plan, and he’s going to be helping train us in leadership and in how to train others to be leaders all around the world” (Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing*, pp. 162, 163). Warren teamed up with Blanchard in the *Lead Like Jesus* conferences and audio series. Warren used Blanchard’s materials in a Preaching and Purpose Driven Life Training Workshop for Chaplains at Saddleback in 2004 (*A Time of Departing*, p. 167). Warren also endorsed Blanchard’s book *Lead Like Jesus*.

Blanchard, in turn, has strong New Age associations. He wrote the foreword to the 2007 edition of Ballard's book *Little Wave and Old Swell*, which is inspired by Hindu guru Paramahansa Yogananda. This book is designed to teach children that God is all and man is one with God. In the foreword Blanchard makes the following amazing statement: "Yogananda loved Jesus, and Jesus would have loved Yogananda." I was a disciple of Yogananda before I was saved, and there is no doubt that he did NOT love the Jesus of the Bible!

Blanchard's recommendation appears on the back cover of Deepak Chopra's *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*. He wrote the foreword to Ellen Ladd's book *Death and Letting God*, which promotes clairvoyance. He endorsed the 2005 book *Zen of Business Administration*, which is subtitled "How Zen practice can transform your work and your life."

Blanchard joined members of the New Age occultic project The Secret in January 2008 for a one-day seminar entitled "Your Best Year Ever" ("Ken Blanchard Joins 'The Secret' Team," Lighthouse Trails, Jan. 14, 2008). Rhonda Byrne, the author of *The Secret*, thanked "Esther Hicks and the teachings of Abraham." Abraham refers to a group of spirit guides that Hicks channels. The Secret teaches the New Age doctrines that man is god. "You are God in a physical body ... You are all power ... You are all intelligence ... You are the creator" (p. 164).

Lighthouse Trails wisely observes:

"Did Rick Warren know of Blanchard's sympathies when he brought him in to help at Saddleback? Of course he did. And do you think that Rick Warren and Ken Blanchard are going to train their 'billion' soldiers for Christ how to practice New Age mysticism and learn how to go into altered states of consciousness? You bet. And that is definitely something to be concerned about" ("Rick Warren Teams up with New Age Guru," Lighthouse Trails, April 19, 2005).

Warren is also closely associated with New Age mystic **Leonard Sweet**. He teamed up with Sweet in 1994 to produce the *Tides of Change* audio set published by Zondervan. A photo of Warren and Sweet are pictured on the cover. Warren endorsed Sweet's book *Soul Tsunami*, the endorsement appearing on both the front and

back covers. Warren invited Sweet to speak at the 2008 Saddleback Small Groups Conference called Wired.

Sweet promotes a New Age spirituality that he calls New Light and “the Christ consciousness.” He describes it in terms of “the union of the human with the divine” which is the “center feature of all the world’s religions” (*Quantum Spirituality*, p. 235). He says it was experienced by Mohammed, Moses, and Krishna. He says that some of the “New Light leaders” that have led him into this thinking are New Agers Matthew Fox, M. Scott Peck, Willis Harman, and Ken Wilber, plus the Catholic-Buddhist Thomas Merton. In his book *Quantum Spirituality* Sweet defines the New Light as “a structure of human becoming, a channeling of Christ energies through mindbody experience” (*Quantum Spirituality*, p. 70). He says humanity needs to learn the truth of the words of Thomas Merton, “We are already one” (*Quantum Spirituality*, p. 13). Sweet draws heavily from Catholic mysticism. He says:

“Mysticism, once cast to the sidelines of the Christian tradition, is now situated in postmodernist culture near the center. ... In the words of one of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century, Jesuit philosopher of religion/dogmatist Karl Rahner, ‘The Christian of tomorrow will be a mystic, one who has experienced something, or he will be nothing’” (*Quantum Spirituality*, 1991, p. 11).

Observe, then, how close are the ties between contemplatives and the New Age! And contemplative spirituality is the bridge.

This is only a tiny glimpse into this frightful matter. Rick Warren does not believe that all religions worship the same God or that man is God, but his enthusiasm for contemplative practices and his lust for the newest thing have brought him and his followers into close association with those who do. He is promoting the same type of “spiritual” practices that are nurturing the New Age and his thinking is being corrupted by this illicit association.

Evangelicals who are reading and recommending books by mystics would be wise to take heed to this warning. If they delve into Catholic contemplative practices they are in great danger of being corrupted by this illicit endeavor.

Another rotten fruit of contemplative spirituality is universalism. Basil Pennington says that through centering prayer we “experience the presence of Christ in each person we meet” and “sense a oneness with them” (*Finding Grace at the Center*, p. 44).

This is obviously a demon-taught experience, because the presence of Christ is most definitely NOT in every person we meet and the believer does not have oneness with the unbeliever. The apostle John wrote, “*And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness*” (1 John 5:19). Paul asks, “*what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*” (2 Cor. 6:15).

Yet this false thinking is the fruit of Roman Catholic mysticism.

Pennington says that, having meditated with persons from many religions, he has concluded, “When we go beyond the portals of the rational mind into the experience, there is only one God to be experienced” (Pennington, *Centered Living*, p. 192).

Mother Teresa, who was a very serious contemplative practitioner, was taught in her spirit that all men are children of God. Speaking of AIDS sufferers she said, “Each one of them is Jesus in a distressing disguise” (*Time*, Jan. 13, 1986). When she died, her longtime friend and biographer Naveen Chawla said that he once asked her bluntly, “Do you convert?” She replied: “Of course I convert. I convert you to be a better Hindu or a better Muslim or a better Protestant. Once you’ve found God, it’s up to you to decide how to worship him” (“Mother Teresa Touched other Faiths,” Associated Press, Sept. 7, 1997).

The liberal emerging church’s universalistic tendencies are doubtless coming from the dark self and the demons that they are fellowshipping with through mystical practices.

Tony Campolo says that the emergent church, which is devoted to contemplative spirituality, tends “to reject the exclusivistic claims that many evangelicals make about salvation. They are not about to damn the likes of Gandhi or the Dalai Lama to hell simply because they have not embraced Christianity” (“Growing: Movement is new form of evangelism,” *Winston-Salem Journal*, Dec. 6, 2004).

Dallas Willard says, “It is possible for someone who does not know Jesus to be saved” (*Apologetics in Action*).

Thomas Merton wrote:

“There can be no absolutely solid grounds for denying the possibility of supernatural (private) revelation and of supernatural mystical graces to individuals, NO MATTER WHERE THEY MAY BE OR WHAT MAY BE THEIR RELIGIOUS TRADITION, provided that they sincerely seek God and His truth” (*Mystics and Zen Masters*, p. 207).

Spencer Burke says, “I don’t believe you have to convert to any particular religion to find God” (*A Heretic’s Guide to Eternity*, p. 197).

Wayne Teasdale believed that all mystics attune to the same God, even though he is called by different names, defined in different ways, and approached in different ways.

“Mysticism is direct, or unmediated experience of Ultimate Reality, whether we mean by that term God, Spirit, the Tao, the Wakan Tanka of the Lakota Native Americans, the One, the Absolute, and Unmoved Mover, the Divine, or Infinite Consciousness. WHATEVER WORD WE EMPLOY, THE GROUND OF ALL BEING AND EXISTENCE IS WHAT IS MEANT. This reality is experientially accessible to us in the mystical, contemplative, or fully actualized spiritual states of the mind, in the depths of consciousness itself” (Teasdale, *The Mystic Heart*).

Thomas Keating and the Snowmass Interreligious Conference say: “The potential for human wholeness--or in other frames of reference, enlightenment, SALVATION, transformation, blessedness, nirvana--IS PRESENT IN EVERY HUMAN PERSON” (“Guidelines for Interreligious Understanding,” *Fellowship in Prayer*, April 1996).

Bede Griffiths said: “All self-understanding arises from understanding ourselves as spiritual beings, and it is only contact with the UNIVERSAL HOLY SPIRIT that can give us the depth and the breadth to understanding our own experience” (quoted by Thomas Ryan, *Prayer of Heart and Body*, p. 15).

Though we know that the Holy Spirit, as God, is infinite and omnipresent, He is not “universal” in the sense that He is in all men. This statement denies the Bible’s teaching of the fall of man and salvation only through personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Karl Rahner spoke of the “anonymous Christian,” referring to an individual that unconsciously responds to God’s grace operating in the world, though he might even reject the gospel of Christ.

David Steindl-Rast’s universalistic doctrine is evident in the following statement:

“Envision the great religious traditions arranged on the circumference of a circle. AT THEIR MYSTICAL CORE THEY ALL SAY THE SAME THING, but with different emphasis” (“Heroic Virtue,” *Gnosis*, Summer 1992).

In a 2006 interview with Tom Fox for the *National Catholic Reporter*, Steindl-Rast said that the notion that we are separated from God because of sin and that God demands certain things from us and punishes us when we don’t live up to His standards is fast disappearing “because DEEP DOWN IN OUR HEARTS WE KNOW GOD IS NOT SEPARATE FROM US” (<http://www.ncrcafe.org/node/443>).

Through his contemplative practices John Michael Talbot has come to believe that Christianity and other religions find common ground through mystically “experiencing the Ultimate Reality.” He says:

“It is on the level of spirit that we find mystical common ground. THE REALM OF SPIRIT, OR PURE SPIRITUAL INTUITION BEYOND ALL IMAGES, FORMS, OR CONCEPTS, IS WHERE WE ALL BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE THE ULTIMATE REALITY BEYOND ALL THOUGHT, EMOTION, OR SENSUAL PERCEPTION. Yet, this ultimate experience completes all else in a way that enlivens them all. We may call this Reality by different objective names, but the Reality does not change. This realm of spirit is found in breakthrough through the use of paradoxes beyond all logic, image, or form” (“The Many Paths of Religion, and the One God of Faith” Part 2).

This is a pagan concept of God. The born again believer in Jesus Christ does not experience the same spiritual “Reality” as those who are not born again. And the born again Bible believer does not try to encounter God apart from thinking and concepts. Our knowledge of God is taught in the Scripture, and apart from this

divine revelation we know nothing certain about God. What Talbot is describing is the pagan mysticism that foolishly and blindly tries to “experience” and “know” God directly apart from doctrine.

Brennan Manning says:

“[T]he god whose moods alternate between graciousness and fierce anger ... the god who exacts the last drop of blood from his Son so that his just anger, evoked by sin, may be appeased, is not the God revealed by and in Jesus Christ. ... HE DOES NOT EXIST” (Brennan Manning, *Above All*, p. 58-59; the foreword to this book is written by Contemporary Christian Music artist Michael W. Smith).

William Shannon, another Roman Catholic contemplative, said almost the same thing:

“This is a typical patriarchal notion of God. He is the God of Noah who sees people deep in sin, repents that He made them and resolves to destroy them. He is the God of the desert who sends snakes to bite His people because they murmured against Him. ... He is the God who exacts the last drop of blood from His Son, so that His just anger, evoked by sin, may be appeased. This God whose moods alternate between graciousness and fierce anger ... THIS GOD DOES NOT EXIST” (*Silence on Fire*, pp. 109, 110)

Shannon counseled an atheist as follows:

“You will never find God by looking outside yourself. You will only find God within” (p. 99).

This is the universalistic view that God is already in every man. It denies the fall and salvation only through faith in Christ.

Please understand that we have only given a few of the many examples that could be given of how that contemplative spirituality can lead to a universalistic position. This one fact should be warning enough for those who have ears to hear.

Another rotten fruit of contemplative spirituality is pantheism and panentheism. Pantheism is the doctrine that God *is* everything, whereas panentheism is the doctrine that God is *in* all things.

“With panentheism you still have a personal God (theism) coupled with God’s pervasive presence in all creation (pantheism). ... At the mystical level, they experience this *God-force* that seems to flow through everything and everybody. All creation has God in it as a living, vital presence” (Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing*, pp. 29, 30).

Contemplative spirituality often leads either to panentheism or even to pantheism, which is clear evidence that the practitioners are communing with demons masquerading as angels of light.

John Yungblut said that all mystics, regardless of religious belief, come to the same perception that all is one.

“The core of the mystical experience is the apprehension of unity, and the perception of relatedness. For the mystics the world is one” (*Rediscovering the Christ*, p. 142).

Agnes Sanford, in her biography, describes three experiences she had in childhood that prepared her to accept the mystical approach to Christianity. In the first she “entered into a state of indescribable dreamy bliss wherein I was one with the tall crisp grass, and with the tiny creatures that lived within it, and with the high blue sky...” (*Sealed Orders*, p. 33). In the second experience she “entered into a state of high ecstasy” and sensed God “flowing into me from bamboo and from rock, from ferns and moss and tiny orchids hiding in the grass” (p. 33). She said, “I did not know this at the time, for I had no idea that sentient life of any kind could be in things inanimate.” In the third experience she was lying on a ship’s deck at night. “I was one with the stars--I was one with the universe. I felt in me the life of the strange creatures within the sea and beneath the waves and flying above the waves” (p. 40).

William Johnson says, “For God is the core of my being and the core of all things” (*The Mystical Way*, 1993, p. 224).

Ken Blanchard is a board member of the Hoffman Institute, which holds to the Hindu principle that the universe is one and man is God. “I am you and you are me. We are all parts of the

whole. ... When you are open to life, you start noticing the divine in everything” (Tim Laurence, *The Hoffman Process*, pp. 206, 209).

Anthony De Mello says: “Think of the air as of an immense ocean that surrounds you ... an ocean heavily colored with God’s presence and God’s being. ... While you draw the air into your lungs you are drawing God in” (*Sadhana: A Way to God*, p. 36).

Meister Eckhart said: “Therefore God is free of all things and therefore he is all things.”

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin believed that the universe is God evolving toward a point of perfection.

Matthew Fox says, “We need to become aware of the Cosmic Christ, which means recognizing that every being has within it the light of Christ” (Steve Turner interview with Matthew Fox, “Natural Mystic?” *Nine O Clock Service*, March 1995).

Francis of Assisi preached to animals and flowers, believing them to be his sisters and brothers. In his poem *The Canticle of the Sun* he spoke of Brother Sun, Sister Moon, and Mother Earth.

Henri Nouwen said: “Prayer is ‘soul work’ because our souls are those sacred centers WHERE ALL IS ONE ... It is in the heart of God that we can come to the full realization of THE UNITY OF ALL THAT IS” (*Bread for the Journey*, 1997, Jan. 15 and Nov. 16).

Episcopalian priest Ken Kaisch says, “Meditation is a process through which we quiet the mind and the emotions and enter directly into the experience of the Divine ... there is a deep connection between us ... God is in each of us” (*Finding God*, p. 283).

Willigis Jager says, “Does Christ not further say there, that there is no difference between God and his creation?” (“This Is My Body,” *Monastic Interreligious Dialogue Bulletin*, Oct. 1982). Jager also says, “The physical world, human beings, and everything that is are all forms of the Ultimate Reality, all expressions of God, all ‘one with the Father’” (*Contemplation: A Christian Path*, p. 93).

Sue Monk Kidd says: “... the Divine *coinheres* all that is. ... To *coinhere* means to exist together, to be included in the same thing or substance” (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, p. 159).

John of the Cross said, “My beloved [God] is the high mountains, and the lovely valley forests, unexplored islands,

rushing rivers” (Timothy Freke, *The Spiritual Canticle: The Wisdom of the Christian Mystics*, p. 60).

Julian of Norwich said, “I saw that God is in all things” (quoted by Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 1988, p. 123), and, “And I saw no difference between God and our Substance: but as it were all God” (“Julian of Norwich,” Lighthouse Trails Research).

Thomas Merton experienced panentheism while meditating before Buddha statues in Sri Lanka a few days before he was electrocuted. He said, “The rock, all matter, all life, is charged with dharmakaya” (*The Asian Journal*, p. 235). Dharmakaya refers to the eternal aspect of Buddha. Merton was expressing the panentheistic belief that God permeates everything.

Leonard Sweet promotes a pagan panentheistic doctrine:

“Quantum spirituality bonds us to all creation as well as to other members of the human family. New Light pastors are what Arthur Peacocke calls ‘priests of creation’--earth ministers WHO CAN RELATE THE REALM OF NATURE TO GOD, who can help nurture a brother-sister relationship with THE LIVING ORGANISM CALLED PLANET EARTH. This entails a radical doctrine of EMBODIMENT OF GOD IN THE VERY SUBSTANCE OF CREATION” (*Quantum Spirituality*, p. 124).

“New Light embodiment means to be ‘in connection’ and ‘information’ with all of creation. New Light communities extend the sense of connectionalism to creation and see themselves as members of an ecological community encompassing the whole of creation. ‘This is my body’ is not an anthropocentric metaphor. Theologian/feminist critic Sallie McFague has argued persuasively for SEEING EARTH, IN A VERY REAL SENSE, AS MUCH AS A PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST AS HUMANS. We are all earthlings. ... WE CONSTITUTE TOGETHER A COSMIC BODY OF CHRIST” (*Carpe Mañana*, p. 124).

Wayne Teasdale said, “You are God; I am God; they are God; it is God” (“The Mystic Heart: The Supreme Identity,” <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=7652038071112490301>).

Michael Gungor, head of the Gungor contemporary worship band, came to a pantheistic concept of God on a contemplative

retreat in Italy in 2010. First, visiting Rome and hearing the pope speak, he showed his spiritual blindness by saying that this “was not a bad way to start a spiritual journey” and that it made him “want to be a Catholic” (“Pilgrimage: Meditation,” gungormusic.com, cited from “Tens of Thousands Introduced to Contemplative Advocates,” Lighthouse Trails, Aug. 28, 2012).

Gungor then spent time at an interfaith retreat center in Assisi which had statues of Mary, Buddha, and Hindu idols. In that pagan atmosphere during “non-judgmental” contemplative meditation he learned that “God is something to be experienced, not to believe in” and that “God is the basic Reality of the universe,” that “whatever is, that is God.” He said that he felt so close to God through meditation “that ‘You’ almost seems funny.” In other words, he came to believe that God is not something “out there” but the essence of everything. He said, “I was going to say some sort of defensive, fearful statement clarifying that I’m not talking about pantheism. But I don’t need to be afraid [because God is] “light and essence and love of the purest kind.” This is a foolish statement in light of the Bible’s many warnings about the danger of false gods and false christs and false spirits.

Gungor came to this understanding through “just being with God,” through “not judging yourself or your thoughts,” through imagining that “you are breathing the very presence of God in and out of your lungs,” through imagining that “you are inhaling light into any darkness inside, and then breathing out ever more light into the world.” He says, “there are no rules ... you can try anything.” What a perfect recipe for spiritual disaster!

Nowhere does the Bible say that God is all things or that God is in all things. He created all things; He is aware of all things; He is in ultimate control of all things; He cares and provides for all things; all things consist by him (Col. 1:17); there is nowhere we can flee from His Spirit (Psa. 139:7). But He is not IN all things after the fashion indicated in the previous statements. The believer sees the glory of God in the creation (Rom. 1:20), but God does not flow into us from the creation nor is God in the creation itself. That is heresy and the essence of idolatry.

When God appeared to Elijah He brought a great wind and an earthquake and a fire, but the Bible plainly says that *the Lord was not in these things* (1 Kings 19:11-12).

Another rotten fruit of contemplative spirituality is goddess worship. Contemplative practices have even led some to goddess worship.

This is what happened to **Sue Monk Kidd** (b. 1948), and her experience is a loud warning about flirting with Catholic mysticism.

She was raised in a Southern Baptist congregation in southwest Georgia. Her grandfather and father were Baptist deacons. Her grandmother gave devotionals at the Women's Missionary Union, and her mother was a Sunday School teacher. Her husband was a minister who taught religion and a chaplain at a Baptist college. She was very involved in church, teaching Sunday School and attending services Sunday morning and evening and Wednesday. She describes herself as the person who would have won a contest for "Least Likely to Become a Feminist." She was even inducted into a group of women called the Gracious Ladies, the criterion for which was that "one needed to portray certain ideals of womanhood, which included being gracious and giving of oneself unselfishly."

But for years she had felt a spiritual emptiness and lack of contentment. Prayer was "a fairly boring mental activity" (Kidd's foreword to Henri Nouwen's *With Open Hands*, 2006, p. 10). She says,

"I had been struggling to come to terms with my life as a woman--in my culture, my marriage, my faith, my church, and deep inside myself" (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, p. 8).

She was thirty years old, had been married about 12 years, and had two children.

Instead of learning how to fill the emptiness and uncertainty with a know-so salvation and a sweet walk with Christ in the Spirit and a deeper knowledge of the Bible, she began dabbling in Catholic mysticism. A Sunday School co-worker gave her a book by the Roman Catholic monk Thomas Merton. She should have known better than to study such a book and should have been

warned by the brethren, but the New Evangelical philosophy that controls the vast majority of Southern Baptist churches created an atmosphere in which the reading of a Catholic monk's book by a Sunday School teacher was acceptable. Their thinking goes like this: Who are we to judge what other people read, and who is to say that a Roman Catholic priest might not love the Lord?

Kidd began to practice Catholic forms of contemplative spirituality and to visit Catholic retreat centers and monasteries.

“... beginning in my early thirties I'd become immersed in a journey that was rooted in contemplative spirituality. It was the spirituality of the 'church fathers,' of the monks I'd come to know as I made regular retreats in their monasteries. ... I thrived on solitude, routinely practicing silent meditation as taught by the monks Basil Pennington and Thomas Keating. ... For years, I'd studied Thomas Merton, John of the Cross, Augustine, Bernard, Bonaventure, Ignatius, Eckhart, Luther, Teilhard de Chardin, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and others” (pp. 14, 15).

Of Merton's autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, which she read in 1978 for the first of many times, she says,

“My experience of reading it initiated me into my first real awareness of the interior life, igniting an impulse toward being ... it caused something hidden at the core of me to flare up and become known” (Kidd's introduction to *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 2007, pp. xiii, xi).

Merton communicated intimately with and was deeply affected by Mary veneration, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sufism, so it is not surprising that his writings would create an appetite that could lead to goddess worship.

In *The New Seeds of Contemplation*, Merton made the following frightening statement that shows the great danger of Catholic mysticism:

“In the end the contemplative suffers the anguish of realizing that HE NO LONGER KNOWS WHAT GOD IS” (p. 13).

What Catholic mysticism does is reject the Bible as the sole and sufficient and perfect revelation of God and tries to delve beyond

the Bible, even beyond thought of any kind, and find God through mystical “intuition.” In other words, it is a rejection of the God of the Bible. It claims that God cannot be known by doctrine and cannot be described in words. He can only be experienced through mysticism. This is a blatant denial of the Bible’s claim to be the very Word of God.

This opens the practitioner to demonic delusion. He is left with no perfect objective revelation of God, no divinely-revealed authority by which he can test his mystical experiences and intuitions. He is left with an idol of his own vain imagination (Jeremiah 17:9) and a doctrine of devils.

Kidd’s own first two books were on contemplative spirituality-- *God’s Joyful Surprise* (1988) and *When the Heart Waits* (1990).

The involvement in Catholic contemplative practices led her to the Mass and to other sacramental associations.

She learned dream analysis from a Jungian perspective and believed that her dreams were revelations. One recurring dream featured an old woman. Kidd concluded that this is “the Feminine Self or the voice of the feminine soul” and she was encouraged in her feminist studies by these visitations.

She rejected the doctrine that the Bible is the sole authority. In church one day the pastor proclaimed this truth, and she describes the frightful thing that happened in her heart at that moment:

“I remember a feeling rising up from a place about two inches below my navel. ... It was the purest inner knowing I had experienced, and it was shouting in me no, no, no! The ultimate authority of my life is not the Bible; it is not confined between the covers of a book. It is not something written by men and frozen in time. It is not from a source outside myself. My ultimate authority is the divine voice in my own soul. Period. ... That day sitting in church, I believed the voice in my belly. ... The voice in my belly was the voice of the wise old woman. It was my female soul talking. And it had challenged the assumption that the Baptist Church would get me where I needed to go” (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, pp. 76, 77, 78).

She began to think that the Bible is wrong in its teaching about women and that women should not take the subordinate position described therein. She came to believe that Eve might have been a

hero instead of a sinner, that eating the forbidden fruit had actually opened Eve's eyes to her true self. Kidd came to the conclusion that the snake was not evil but "symbolized female wisdom, power, and regeneration" (p. 71). She was surprised and pleased to learn that the snake is depicted as the companion of ancient goddesses, concluding that this is evidence that the Bible is wrong.

She began to delve into the worship of ancient goddesses. She traveled with a group of women to Crete where they met in a cave and sang prayers to "the Goddess Skoteini, Goddess of the Dark." She says, "... something inside me was calling on the Goddess of the Dark, even though I didn't know her name" (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, p. 93).

Soon she was praying to God as Mother.

"I ran my finger around the rim of the circle on the page and prayed my first prayer to a Divine Feminine presence. I said, 'Mothergod, I have nothing to hold me. No place to be, inside or out. I need to find a container of support, a space where my journey can unfold'" (p. 94).

She came to the place where she believed that she is a goddess.

"Divine Feminine love came, wiping out all my puny ideas about love in one driving sweep. Today I remember that event for the radiant mystery it was, how I felt myself embraced by Goddess, how I felt myself in touch with the deepest thing I am. It was the moment when, as playwright and poet Ntozake Shange put it, 'I found god in myself/ and I loved her/ I loved her fiercely'" (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, p. 136).

"I came to know myself as an embodiment of Goddess" (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, p. 163).

"When I woke, my thought was that I was finally being reunited with the snake in myself--that lost and defiled symbol of feminine instinct" (p. 107).

She came to believe in the New Age doctrine that God is in all things and is the sum total of all things, that God is the evolving universe and we are a part of God.

"I thought: Maybe the Divine One is like an old African woman, carving creation out of one vast, beautiful piece of Herself. She is making a universal totem spanning fifteen

billion years, an extension of her life and being, an evolutionary carving of sacred art containing humans, animals, plants, indeed, everything that is. And all of it is joined, blended, and connected, its destiny intertwined. ... In other words, the Divine *coinheres* all that is. ... To *coinhere* means to exist together, to be included in the same thing or substance” (pp. 158, 159).

She built an altar in her study and populated it with statues of goddesses, of Jesus, of a Black Madonna -- and a mirror to reflect her own image.

“Over the altar in my study I hung a lovely mirror sculpted in the shape of a crescent moon. It reminded me to honor the Divine Feminine presence in myself, the wisdom in my own soul” (p. 181).

Her book ends with the words, “She is in us.”

Sue Monk Kidd is quoted by evangelicals such as David Jeremiah (*Life Wide Open*), Beth Moore (*When Godly People Do Ungodly Things*), and Richard Foster (*Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*). Kidd's endorsement is printed on the back of Dallas Willard's book *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. She wrote the foreword to the 2006 edition of Henri Nouwen's *With Open Hands* and the introduction to the 2007 edition of Thomas Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation*.

(For more about Sue Monk Kidd see the chapter “A Biographical Catalog of Contemplative Mystics.”)

Another example of how Catholic contemplative spirituality has led to goddess worship is the sad story of **Alan “Bede” Griffiths**.

He was born in England and studied at Oxford under C.S. Lewis, who became a lifelong friend. In 1931, while at Oxford he converted from Anglicanism to Catholicism. The next year he joined the Benedictine monastery of Prinknash Abbey near Gloucester and was ordained a priest in 1940. The name *Bede*, meaning prayer, was given to him when he entered the Benedictine order.

He moved to India and became a Hindu monk (while remaining a Catholic priest), calling himself Swami Dayananda (bliss of compassion), going barefoot, wearing an orange-colored robe, practicing yoga, taking the tika, and refusing to eat meat.

He accepted the Hindu concept of the interrelatedness of everything and the unity of man with God.

“He loved to quote the Chandogya Upanishad (8,3) [Hindu scriptures] to show that while our body takes up only a small space on this planet, OUR MIND ENCOMPASSES THE WHOLE UNIVERSE: ‘There is this city of Brahman (the human body) and in it there is a small shrine in the form of a lotus, and within can be found a small space. This little space within the heart is as great as this vast universe. The heavens and the earth are there, and the sun and the moon and the stars; fire and lightning and wind are there, and all that now is and is not yet--all that is contained within it’ (Pascaline Coff, “Man, Monk, Mystic,” <http://www.bedegriffiths.com/bio.htm>).

He rejected the Bible’s doctrine that there is good and evil:

“I saw God in the earth, in trees, in mountains. IT LED ME TO THE CONVICTION THAT THERE IS NO ABSOLUTE GOOD OR EVIL IN THIS WORLD. We have to let go of all concepts which divide the world into good and evil, right and wrong, and begin to see the complementarity of opposites which Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa called the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the ‘coincidence of opposites’” (1991, <http://www.bedegriffiths.com/bio.htm>).

At the end of his life he came to believe in the validity of mother goddess worship. This was the fruit of his communion with idolatry through contemplative spirituality. In 1990, after a stroke, he began to speak of the awakening of his repressed feminine.

“When he first spoke about THE BLACK MADONNA, he said his experience of her was deeply connected to the Earth-Mother, to the forms of the ancient feminine found in rocks and caves and in the different forms in nature. HE LIKENED IT TO THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FEMININE EXPRESSED IN THE HINDU CONCEPT OF SHAKTI--THE POWER OF THE DIVINE FEMININE. Later Father wrote these reflections on the Black Madonna: “The Black Madonna symbolizes for me the Black Power in Nature and Life, the hidden power in the womb. ... I feel it was this Power which struck me. She is

cruel and destructive, but also deeply loving and nourishing” (<http://www.bedegriffiths.com/bio.htm>).

Griffiths had a large influence in promoting interfaith philosophy in Roman Catholic monasteries in America, England, Australia, and Germany through his books and lectures. He wrote 12 books on interfaith dialogue, the most popular being *Marriage of East and West*.

Griffiths’ love for the Black Madonna is interesting. Sue Monk Kidd, too, as she traveled from Catholic contemplative practices to goddess worship, experienced a great love for the Black Madonna. Thomas Merton did the same thing in his journey into Roman Catholic mysticism and beyond to Zen Buddhism.

This is not surprising because the Madonna was originally borrowed from pagan idolatry, from the ancient mother goddess mystery religions that stemmed from Babel.

Contemplative practices are encouraging the spread of such heresies, and this is a loud warning to those who have ears to hear.

I would urge my readers in the strongest possible way not to dabble in contemplative practices. There really is no telling where it might lead. It can lead to Rome or Buddha or even to Artemis.

Contemplative Spirituality Error # 12: It is not necessary.

For two millennia Bible-believing Christians have walked in sweet fellowship with God and lived victorious spiritual lives and done God’s will without contemplative practices.

The Waldenses did not need such practices to send missionaries out across Europe in the face of Rome’s Holy Office of the Inquisition. I own most of the histories of the Waldenses, and they did not practice Catholic mysticism.

Baptists have not needed contemplative practices to preach the gospel to multitudes and to establish New Testament churches across the world. I own most of the histories of the Baptists, and they did not practice Catholic mysticism.

William Tyndale, Matthew Henry, Charles Spurgeon, Adoniram Judson, Harry Ironside, and countless other men and women of

God have lived spiritually rich and fruitful lives without contemplative practices.

We conclude with the following very important statement by former Catholic priest Richard Bennett:

As Mediator, Christ Jesus is the only means of union between God and man, *'that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; in him'* (Eph. 1:10). Christ Jesus is exalted to *'the right hand of the Majesty on high'* (Heb. 1:3) as the One Savior. He and His Gospel are objective and real! This Gospel is not an idle tale, nor a piece of incomprehensible mysticism; rather it is the proclamation of the awesome historical work of redemption accomplished by God Himself. The Father appointed Christ Jesus as the guarantee of real salvation. Christ Jesus was glorified in finishing the Father's mightiest work. In Christ's own words, *'I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do'* (Jn. 17:4). He had fulfilled all the Father's will and so gloriously honored the Father.

As Savior He is exalted high above *'all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come'* (Eph. 1:21). He alone, and not some mystic charm of Rome or Buddha, has been given all authority in heaven and in earth. He has been given power over all flesh that He should in His own words, *'give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him'* (Jn. 17:2). He alone has been given a name, which is above every name, *'that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'* (Phil. 2:10-11). It is God's commandment that we trust on Christ, *'This is His command, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ'* (1 John 3:23).

TRUE FAITH INVOLVES A REPUDIATION OF THE SELF-DECEIT OF EXPERIENTIAL MYSTICAL MEANS OF REACHING GOD, *'for there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.'* (1 Tim. 2:5). The Lord Jesus stands ready to receive every

sinner who will throw away his rebellion and pride and trust in Him alone for salvation! Preaching the real historical Christ and His Gospel is the answer to the mindless adumbrations of Rome and the ecumenical mystics. Thus alone can the true Church, God's People '*go forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners*' (Song of Solomon 6:10).

The Gospel is a mighty deliverance from the groveling religious subjectivism of Rome and her pagan mistresses. To know God is life itself to a Christian, in the words of the Lord Himself, '*this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*' (John 17:3). Knowledge of God, and faith in Him, are the means whereby all spiritual supports and comforts are conveyed to the true believers. '*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue*' (2 Pet. 1:3) (Bennett, "The Mystic Plague: Catholicism Sets a Spiritualist Agenda," nd., <http://www.bereanbeacon.org/MysticPlague.html>).

A Biographical Catalog of Contemplative Mystics

This section looks at the lives and beliefs of dozens of the major figures in the contemplative movement. These include not only the current-day promoters but also the ancient “saints” and mystics that are being resurrected in the contemplative movement.

We have listed them in alphabetical order.

Angela of Foligno

Angela of Foligno (1248-1309) was an Italian nun of the Franciscan order. Her home, Foligno, was near Assisi and she was “converted” in her late 30s by seeing Francis of Assisi in a dream and making a confession of her sins to a Franciscan priest. She was declared a saint in 1693 by Pope Innocent XII.

Her visions were dictated to her confessor and published under the title *Memorial*.

In this book she described the mystical ascent to union with God in terms of 30 steps. Like many of the Catholic saints, she claimed to have entered into union with Christ in His sufferings on the cross.

“She experienced the cross from within as she entered into the experience of Christ, his absolute poverty and helplessness on the cross, which led her into a ‘most horrible darkness’ and suffering. Through following and embracing Christ crucified, she participated in the complete self-emptying of Christ on the cross and *thereby found a radically new experience of God, touching the uncreated All-Good, which is darkness to the limited human mind*” (King, *Christian Mystics*, p. 79).

Anthony

Anthony (c. 251-356) (called St. Anthony the Great by Rome) was one of the founders of Roman Catholic monasticism. He was declared a saint by Pope Gregory IX in 1232.

He spent 20 years in complete solitary, not seeing the face of a man, and another 40 or 50 years in seclusion and near solitary, part of that time living in a tomb. Anthony lived near Alexandria, Egypt.

Much of the surviving record of Anthony's life pertains to his battles against the devil. One account says the devil beat him unconscious, which shows the heretical foolishness surrounding the Desert Fathers. Nowhere in Scripture do we find that the devil has that kind of power over a true child of God (not that we are assuming he was a child of God). At other times the devil is said to have taken the form of wild beasts.

Anthony lived in extreme asceticism, living for six months on a small quantity of bread. He allegedly had visions of angels and heard voices speaking to him. He would perform vain, obsessive rituals such as standing repeatedly to pray while he was weaving mats, claiming that he learned this from a vision.

Assisi, Francis Of

See Francis of Assisi.

Augustine and the Church Fathers

The so-called Church Fathers, that are often recommended by evangelical and emerging leaders, are not our authority and, in fact, were loaded down with heresies. Most of them were more the fathers of the Roman Catholic Church than the fathers of true churches. We have documented this in *Way of Life's Advanced Bible Studies Series* course entitled *A History of the Church from a Baptist Perspective*.

The following is an excellent brief warning about the church fathers:

“[I]t takes very little scrutiny of men like Origen, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Justin Martyr, Athanasius, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem, Augustine, and others, to see their flaws, let alone their heresies. For example, Origen taught that God would save everyone and that Mary was a perpetual virgin; Irenaeus believed that the bread and wine became the body and

blood of Jesus when consecrated, as did John Chrysostom and Cyril of Jerusalem; Athanasius taught salvation through baptism; Tertullian became a supporter of the Montanist heresies, and a promoter of a New Testament clergy class, as did his disciple Cyprian; Augustine was the principal architect of Catholic dogma that included his support of purgatory, baptismal regeneration, and infant baptism, mortal and venial sins, prayers to the dead, penance for sins, absolution from a priest, the sinlessness of Mary, the Apocrypha as Scripture, etc. It's not that these men got everything wrong; some, on certain doctrines, upheld Scripture against the developing unbiblical dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church. Nevertheless, overall they are a heretical minefield. So why seek them out?" (T.A. MaMahon, "Ancient-Future Heresies," *The Berean Call*, March 1, 2008).

Augustine (354-430) was a persecutor and the father of the doctrine of persecution in the Catholic Church. The historian Augustus Neander observed that Augustine's teaching "contains the germ of the whole system of spiritual despotism, intolerance, and persecution, even to the court of the Inquisition" (*General History of the Christian Religion*, 1847). Augustine instigated persecutions against the Bible-believing Donatists who were striving to maintain pure churches after the apostolic faith. He interpreted Luke 14:23 ("*compel them to come in*") to mean that Christ required the churches to use force against heretics.

Augustine was the father of amillennialism, allegorizing Bible prophecy and teaching that the church is the kingdom of God.

He taught that the sacraments are the means of saving grace.

He was one of the fathers of infant baptism. The 'council' of Mela, in Numidia, A.D. 416, composed of a mere fifteen persons and presided over by Augustine, decreed:

*"Also, it is the pleasure of the bishops in order that whoever denies that infants newly born of their mothers, are to be baptized or says that baptism is administered for the remission of their own sins, but not on account of original sin, delivered from Adam, and to be expiated by the laver of regeneration, BE ACCURSED" (William Wall, *The History of Infant Baptism*, I, 265).*

Augustine thus taught that infants should be baptized and that baptism took away their sin. He called all who rejected infant baptism “infidels” and “cursed.”

He taught that Mary did not commit sin and promoted her veneration. He believed Mary played a vital role in salvation (Augustine, Sermon 289, cited in Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, 1950, IV, p. 69).

He believed in purgatory.

He accepted the doctrine of “celibacy” for “priests,” supporting the decree of “Pope” Siricius of 387 A.D. that ordered that any priest that married or refused to separate from his wife should be disciplined.

He exalted the authority of the church over that of the Bible, declaring, “I should not believe the gospel unless I were moved to do so by the authority of the Catholic Church” (quoted by John Paul II, *Augustineum Hyponensem*, Apostolic Letter, Aug. 28, 1986, www.cin.org/jp2.ency/augustin.html).

He believed that the true interpretation of Scripture was derived from the declaration of church councils (Augustin, *De Vera Religione*, xxiv, p. 45).

He interpreted the early chapters of Genesis figuratively (Dave Hunt, “Calvin and Augustine: Two Jonahs Who Sink the Ship,” *Debating Calvinism: Five Points, Two Views* by Dave Hunt and James White, 2004, p. 230).

He taught the heresy of apostolic succession from Peter (Hunt, *ibid.*, p. 230).

He taught that God has pre-ordained some for salvation and others for damnation and that the grace of God is irresistible for the elect. By his own admission, John Calvin in the 16th century derived his “sovereign election” theology from Augustine. Calvin said: “If I were inclined to compile a whole volume from Augustine, I could easily show my readers, that I need no words but his” (Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, chap. 22).

Benedict of Nursia

Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-547), called the “father of the Western monks,” was one of the founders of Catholic monasticism with its unscriptural and unholy doctrine that “celibacy” is preferred to marriage. He was declared a saint in 1220 by Pope Honorius III and was named patron protector of Europe by Pope Paul VI in 1964.

He lived for three years in isolation in a cave a few miles from Rome and later founded many monasteries, including one at Monte Cassino in southern Italy.

His law for monastic life, called *The Rule of St. Benedict*, has been a major influence on Catholic monasticism and is still used widely today.

Benedict believed in a works salvation. He called monasticism “the road that leads to salvation” and wrote:

“If we wish to dwell in the tent of this kingdom, we will never arrive unless we run there by doing good deeds” (*The Rule of Saint Benedict*, edited by Timothy Fry, 1981, pp. 4, 5).

“Never swerving from his instructions, then, but faithfully observing his teaching in the monastery until death, we shall through patience share in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve also to share in his kingdom” (p. 6).

“... there is a good zeal which separates from evil and leads to God and everlasting life” (p. 69).

The Rule of St. Benedict directed every aspect of the monk’s life, his clothing, relationships, travel, duties, daily schedule, meals, worship, habitat, sleep. The monks were forbidden to own anything or to associate with anyone except by permission of the abbot. We quoted some of the details of these rules earlier in these studies on contemplative mysticism. See the chapter “The Error of Catholic Monasticism.”

The Rule of St. Benedict is the same legalistic Christianity that Paul condemned and refuted in the epistles of Romans, Galatians, and Colossians.

According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Benedict did many miracles, prophesied, and even astral projected his spirit so that he accompanied monks on their journeys.

His first miracle was alleged to have been the “healing” of an earthenware sieve that his nurse had broken. It is said that on one occasion when some monks tried to poison Benedict, the cup “miraculously shattered as he made the Sign of the Cross over the vessel prior to raising it to his lips.”

Bernard of Clairvaux

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) was a French Cistercian monk and abbot. He was canonized as a saint by Pope Alexander III in 1174 and proclaimed a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius VIII in 1830.

His name comes from the Cistercian monastic community he established in Clairvaux, France, but he also founded 65 other monasteries in different parts of Europe. By the time of Clairvaux’s death the number of Cistercian (also called Trappist) monasteries numbered 343. He has been called the second founder of the Cistercians because of his reforms.

Bernard supposedly had many visions, beginning as a child when he saw God becoming man and being born to Mary. This was the beginning of his deep devotion to Rome’s unscriptural Mary.

In Bernard’s book *Homilies in Praise of the Virgin Mother*, he called Mary the Queen of Heaven, the Star, the ladder on which sinners may climb to God, the royal road to God, the channel through whom divine life flows to the whole creation. A Catholic legend even says that Bernard took milk from Mary’s breast.

“Bernard played the leading role in the development of the Virgin cult, which is one of the most important manifestations of the popular piety of the twelfth century” (Norman Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, 1993, p. 341).

Bernard’s illegitimate veneration of Mary is obvious in the following quotations:

“When the storms to temptation burst upon you, when you see yourself driven upon the rocks of tribulation, look at the star, call upon Mary. When swallowed by pride or ambition, or hatred, or jealousy, look at the star, call upon Mary. Should anger, or avarice, or fleshly desire violently assail the frail vessel of your soul, look at the star, call upon Mary. If troubled on account of the heinousness of your sins, distressed at the filthy state of your conscience, and terrified at the thought of the awful judgment to come, you are beginning to sink into the bottomless gulf of sadness and to be swallowed in the abyss of despair, then think of Mary. In dangers, in doubts, in difficulties, think of Mary, call upon Mary. Let not her name leave thy lips, never suffer it to leave your heart” (*Doctor Mellifluus*, an encyclical on Bernard by Pope Pius XII).

“God Has willed that we should have nothing which would not pass through the hands of Mary” (*Hom. III in vig. nativit.*, n. 10, PL 183, 100, quoted from <http://www.tldm.org/news5/mediatrix1.htm>).

“God has placed in Mary the plenitude of every good, in order to have us understand that if there is any trace of hope in us, any trace of grace, any trace of salvation, it flows from her” (<http://www.tldm.org/news5/mediatrix1.htm>).

Bernard was a fierce opponent of the Bible believers who refused to submit to the pope, persecuting them in southern France. These separatist Christians were called Petrobrusians and Henricians after the name of two of their leaders, Peter of Bruys (Peter de Bruis) and Henry of Lausanne. Peter was arrested, brutally imprisoned, and burned at the stake in 1126 during Bernard’s lifetime. Henry preached the gospel of the grace of Christ and warned of Rome’s heresies (such as Bernard’s exaltation of Mary). Baptist historian Thomas Armitage says, “His peculiar attraction lay in his contempt for the applauded traditions of the [Catholic] Fathers and in his appeal to the neglected Bible” (Armitage, I, p. 288). Henry of Lausanne was arrested in 1134 and condemned to imprisonment in Bernard’s monastery of Clairvaux. He escaped and preached another 14 years before being re-captured and imprisoned by Pope Eugene III in 1148. Condemned as a heretic, he was either burned alive at Toulouse or ended his days under

harsh imprisonment (George Faber, *The History of the Ancient Vallenses*, 1838, p. 165). Pope Eugene was one of Bernard's disciples and Bernard was his adviser.

Known as “doctor mellifluous” or “honey-sweet doctor” for his eloquence and emphasis on the positive, Bernard preached sermons to rally support for the Second Crusade to the Holy Land (1146-49) and promised the crusaders indulgences from the pope that would provide the forgiveness of sins. Supposed miracles accompanied his preaching, even though his doctrine was heretical and his promises were lies.

Bernard drew up the rules for the Knights Templar (the Poor Knights of Christ), a monastic order of Catholic knights formed to help win and hold the Holy Land for Rome and to protect Catholic pilgrims. They were under the direct control of the popes.

Bernard practiced an asceticism that was so radical (intense fasting, sleep deprivation, etc.) that he was emaciated and often ill.

The unscriptural nature of the Catholic monastic “celibacy,” which exalted virginity above marriage, is evident in Bernard's life. Roughly thirty members of his family joined monasteries, including his married sister. She got permission from her husband to leave him and become a nun in a Benedictine convent. This is in direct disobedience to God's Word (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).

Blanchard, Ken

Ken Blanchard (b. 1939) is a popular author and “management expert.” His book *The One Minute Manager* has sold over 13 million copies and been translated into 37 languages (Blanchard's web site).

Blanchard has strong New Age ties and his “contemplative spirituality” is adapted from eastern religion.

(Much of the following information on Blanchard is from the Lighthouse Trails web site.)

Blanchard says:

“I look for inspirational messages from a variety of sources besides Jesus. Our folks get to hear words of wisdom from great prophets and spiritual leaders like Buddha,

Mohammed ... Yogananda and the Dalai Lama” (foreword to *What Would Buddha Do at Work?* 2001).

Blanchard says that he and his wife encourage the practice of yoga and mantra meditation (George Mair, *A Life with Purpose*, p. 11).

One of the board members of Blanchard’s Lead Like Jesus organization is Laurie Beth Jones, the author of *Jesus CEO* (1995). Jones says:

“My personal mission and vision is to Recognize, Promote and Inspire Divine Connection in Myself and Others” (mission statement at Jones’ web site).

“Jesus was full of self-knowledge and self-love. His ‘I am’ statements were what he became” (*Jesus CEO*, p. 7).

In her book *The Path*, Jones promotes both Buddhist and Sufi meditative practices.

Blanchard is a board member of the Hoffman Institute, which holds the Hindu principle the universe is one and man is God.

“I am you and you are me. We are all parts of the whole. ... When you are open to life, you start noticing the divine in everything” (Tim Laurence, *The Hoffman Process*, pp. 206, 209).

Blanchard wrote the foreword to Jim Ballard’s *What Would Buddha Do at Work?*

“Buddha points to the path and invites us to begin our journey to enlightenment. I ... invite you to begin (or continue) your journey to enlightened work” (Blanchard’s foreword to *What Would Buddha Do at Work?*).

Blanchard’s recommendation appears on the back cover of Deepak Chopra’s *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*. In this book Chopra says, “In reality, we are divinity in disguise, and the gods and goddesses in embryo that are contained within us seek to be fully materialized” (p. 3).

Blanchard wrote the foreword to Jim Ballard’s *Mind Like Water*, which promotes the use of Hindu yoga to achieve god-consciousness. Ballard, who is a trainer for Blanchard’s organization, says:

“I signed up for the yoga meditation lessons ... founded by Paramahansa Yogananda. ... I had evidently reached a level of consciousness beyond the usual. ... I continue to consider meditation far and away the most important thing I do.”

Paramahansa Yogananda was my guru before I was saved. His yoga is the path to Self-Realization that the self is God.

Blanchard calls this very dangerous book “wonderful” and says, “I hope that you and countless other readers will find in *Mind Like Water* some ways to calm your mind and uplift your consciousness.” Blanchard gives no warning about the idolatrous and demonic nature of Hindu yoga.

Blanchard endorsed Vijay Eswaran’s *In the Sphere of Silence*. This describes yogic mind-emptying meditation. Eswaran says: “It is not just oriented to any one religion, it is universally accepted and practiced by almost all faiths on the planet. It is through silence that you find your inner being.” At his web site Blanchard says, “This book is a wonderful guide on how to enter the realm of silence and draw closer to God.”

Blanchard wrote the foreword to Ellen Ladd’s book *Death and Letting God*, which promotes clairvoyance.

Blanchard’s endorsement appeared on the back cover of *Zen of Business Administration* (2005), which is subtitled “How Zen practice can transform your work and your life.”

Blanchard joined members of the New Age occultic project *The Secret* in January 2008 for a one-day seminar entitled “Your Best Year Ever” (“Ken Blanchard Joins ‘The Secret’ Team,” Lighthouse Trails, Jan. 14, 2008). In her acknowledgements, Rhonda Byrne, the author of *The Secret*, thanked “Esther Hicks and the teachings of Abraham.” Abraham refers to a group of spirit guides that Hicks channels. *The Secret* teaches the New Age doctrine that man is god and has the power to create his own reality. “You are God in a physical body ... You are all power ... You are all intelligence ... You are the creator” (*The Secret*, p. 164).

Bonaventure

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1221-74), born John of Fidanza, was a Frenchman who was the head, or minister general, of the

Franciscans (the Order of the Friars Minor). He was also a bishop and a cardinal. He was made a saint in 1482 by Pope Sixtus IV. In 1588 he was declared a Doctor of the Church.

Bonaventure's book *The Mind's Journey to God* has been influential in promoting mysticism. In this book he describes his visionary experiences. After climbing Mount Alvernia to meditate in the place where Francis of Assisi had his supposed vision of a crucified seraph angel, Bonaventure allegedly experienced the same vision. Because of this he has been called "The Seraphic Doctor."

He allegorized the seraph angel's three pairs of wings as symbolic of the three phases of the soul's mystical ascent to God. The first pair signifies meditating on the physical world and learning of God through creation. The second pair signifies meditating on our own minds and learning of God through reflecting on one's own memory, intellect, and will. The third pair signifies meditating on God Himself. The final goal, which is beyond these three stages, is a mindless, experiential union with God. It is a "stage of mental and mystical elevation in which all intellectual operations cease, a unifying experience of divine illumination that is 'mystical and most secret, which no man knows but he that has received it' (King, *Christian Mystics*, p. 78).

Bonaventure taught that this experience is achieved by "grace, NOT DOCTRINE; desire, NOT UNDERSTANDING; prayerful groaning, NOT STUDIOUS READING; the spouse, NOT THE TEACHER ... darkness, NOT CLARITY."

This, of course, is purest mysticism, which is not content with God's revelation of Himself in Scripture but instead attempts to reach beyond divine revelation.

Bonaventure was devoted to the idolatrous Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Bonaventure was a great venerator of Mary. He said:

"No one can enter into heaven except through Mary, as entering through a gate" (*On St. Luke's Gospel*).

"We believe that Mary opens the abyss of God's mercy to whomsoever she wills, when she wills, and as she wills; so that there is no sinner however great who is lost if Mary protects him" (<http://www.tldm.org/news5/mediatrix1.htm>).

He taught the gross heresy that the believer is a “spiritual Mary” that can conceive Christ:

“Remember first that you must be Mary ... From such a Mary, Jesus Christ does not disdain to be spiritually born. ... In the secret of my mind, I saw that, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, a soul devoted to God could conceive the blessed Word, the only-begotten Son of God the Father; that it could give birth to Him...” (*On the Five Feasts of the Child Jesus*, quoted by John Talbot, *The Lover and the Beloved*, p. 43).

Brother Lawrence

Nicholas Herman, who is called Brother Lawrence (c. 1611-1691), lived in France and was a Catholic monk and a devotee of Mary. He fought in the Thirty Years War and served as a valet before entering a monastery in Paris called the Discalced Carmelite Priory. (*Discalced* means unlaced and refers to the fact that the monks and nuns went barefoot.) Serving as a “lay brother” rather than a priest, not having enough education for the latter, he took the name “Lawrence of the Resurrection.”

He entered the monastery to “suffer for his failures,” thus demonstrating the pathetic spiritual ignorance that stemmed from Rome’s influence. He repaired sandals and served in the kitchen. He labored under a terrible legalistic bondage and a heretical asceticism rather than the wonderful freedom that is in the true gospel of Jesus Christ, and instead of being imitated he should be pitied.

The Carmelite order is devoted to Mary. It is called the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The Discalced Carmelite church in Rome, Santa Mari della Vittoria, is dedicated to Mary. It contains a fresco depicting “*The Virgin Mary Triumphant over Heresy*.” The “heresy” was Protestantism. The church was dedicated to Mary in 1620 after Rome’s armies gained victory over the Protestants in the Battle of White Mountain in Bohemia.

As we have seen in the section on “Catholic Asceticism,” the Carmelite order follows the *Book of the First Monks*, which establishes its doctrine of monasticism on allegorical or hidden

meanings of Scripture, teaches salvation through works, and promotes blind mysticism.

A century before Brother Lawrence, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross had reformed the Carmelite order with their mystical practices and extreme asceticism.

Lawrence thought that his own works atoned for sins and he tried to maintain communion with God through meditative practices. He said:

“This made me resolve to give the all for the All: so after having given myself wholly to GOD, to make all the satisfaction I could for my sins, I renounced, for the love of Him, everything that was not He; and I began to live as if there was none but He and I in the world ... I worshipped Him the oftenest that I could, keeping my mind in His holy Presence, and recalling it as often as I found it wandered from Him” (*The Practice of the Presence of God*, First Letter).

He looked upon suffering as a means of salvation. Priest Joseph de Beauford, who compiled *The Practice and Presence of God* after Lawrence’s death, observed:

“His one desire was that he might suffer something for the love of God, for all his sins, and finding in his last illness a favorable occasion for suffering in this life, he embraced it heartily.”

Lawrence taught that the mind must be emptied of all other things if one is to be in proper communion with God (*A Time of Departing*, pp. 146-147). The Bible, to the contrary, instructs the believer to be sober-minded and vigilant, which means to be in full control of one’s mind. Emptying the mind is a dangerous occultic practice that enables demons to influence one’s thinking and allows error to run unchecked.

That Lawrence was dealing with demons is obvious from his own experience. When something would take his mind away from God he would receive “a reminder from God” that moved him to “cry out, singing and dancing violently like a mad man” (Gerald G. May, *The Awakened Heart*, HarperCollins, 1993, p. 134, http://www.amazon.com/gp/reader/0060654732/ref=sib_dp_ptu#).

Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun's *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* is a widely-used primer on contemplative mysticism. Calhoun enthusiastically recommends Roman Catholic mystics such as Ignatius Loyola, St. Benedict, Julian of Norwich, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Richard Rohr, Henri Nouwen, Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, David Steindl-Rast, William Meninger, and M. Basil Pennington. In the Acknowledgement's page, she says that "their ideas, voices and examples have shaped my own words and experience of the disciplines." Not only did these mystics hold to a false gospel, which is under the divine curse of Galatians 1, but some of them were pantheists and universalists.

Calhoun's book has been recommended by Rick Warren, Willow Creek (in their Establishing Life Giving Rhythm class), Reformed Theological Seminary, Olivet Nazarene University, and Biola. In November 2011, Moody Bible Institute's *Midday Connection* radio program featured Calhoun as a guest, and Moody host Anita Lustrea recommends Calhoun in her book *What Women Tell Me*. "Lustrea tells how she met Calhoun during a course called *Growing Your Soul* (Calhoun is co-director and founder of the program) and how Calhoun taught her some of the contemplative 'spiritual disciplines' p. 125" ("*Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*," Lighthouse Trails, July 2, 2012).

Catherine of Genoa

Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510), born Catherine Fieschi, was an Italian Roman Catholic saint and mystic. She was declared a saint in 1737 by Pope Clement XII and declared the patroness of the hospitals in Italy by Pope Pius XII.

She practiced asceticism from age eight and wanted to become a nun at age 13, but she was forbidden by her parents and was married at age sixteen. She devoted herself to mystical contemplation and lived like a hermit even as a married woman. She got her husband to promise to live with her "as a brother," abstaining from marital relations, while she pursued a mystical union with God through extreme asceticism. This, of course, is

disobedience to the plain command of God in 1 Corinthians 7:2-5. She ate only what was necessary to keep her alive, slept as little as possible and then on a bed covered with briars and thistles, and wore a rough hairshirt.

She had a visionary experience at age 26 during confession to a priest.

She had an intense devotion to the Mass and took it almost daily, even though she did not live in a monastery. This was “a practice extremely rare in the Middle Ages except for priests” (King, *Christian Saints*, p. 86).

The accounts of her mystical experiences were published posthumously as *Dialogues on the Soul and the Body* and *Treatise on Purgatory*.

She was deceived by Rome’s heresy of purgatory and thought that she actually experienced it as part of “her search for salvation and purification” (*Christian Saints*, p. 87). The doctrine of purgatory says that believers must suffer for their sins in a place of purgation or purifying. In the *Treatise on Purgatory*, Catherine said that purgatory is a place where souls are separated from God (chapter III), where they “endure a pain so extreme that no tongue can be found to tell it” (chapter II), and where the stain of sins are removed before the soul can approach God (chapter VIII).

The doctrine of purgatory denies the perfect sufficiency of Christ’s atonement. The place where sin is purged is the cross of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:12). He obtained eternal redemption through His own blood for those who believe. The Bible teaches that as soon as the believer is absent from the body he is present with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Catherine claimed to have experienced unity with God. “My being is God, not by simple participation but by a true transformation of my being” (Ursula King, *Christian Saints*, p. 87).

Catherine of Siena

Catherine of Siena (1347-80) was born Catherine Benincasa, in Siena, Italy. She was declared a saint in 1461 by Pope Pius II and a Doctor of the Church in 1970 by Pope Paul VI. Pope John Paul II declared her one of the patron saints of Europe.

Her body is reserved in the Saint Mary Minerva Church in Rome, while her head is enshrined in the basilica of St. Dominic in Bologna, Italy.

She took a vow of virginity to Christ at age seven and lived in near solitude, refusing her mother's attempts to encourage her to live a normal childhood. When her mother tried to get her to dress in an attractive manner, she shaved off her hair. When her mother took her to a spa, she scalded her skin by exposing herself to the hottest geothermal vents. Biographer Kathryn Harrison says, "She allowed herself not one mortal pleasure."

At age 16 she took the black habit of the Dominican Third Order. She claimed to have received her habit personally from Dominic, though he had been dead for a century.

She spent three years in solitary prayer in a little room, nine by three feet, speaking only to her Catholic confessor. She lived long periods of time with no food or water except the wine and wafers of the Mass. She scourged herself three times a day with an iron chain. She allowed herself only one-half hour of sleep every other day on a hard board. She wore a hairshirt and an iron-spiked girdle. "... her self-punishment left her body covered with gaping wounds, which she blithely referred to as her 'flowers'" (*The Way of the Mystics*, p. 81).

She started having mystical experiences at age six when she allegedly saw a vision of Christ seated with Peter, Paul, and John. She could see "guardian angels" (Catholicsaints.org). She allegedly saw Jesus often in vision and talked face to face with Him. She claimed that he personally gave her the elements of the Mass and a new robe.

She even claimed to have exchanged hearts with Jesus and in about 1366 she experienced a "mystical marriage" with Him in which He appeared with "his mother and the heavenly host" and told her that she was his bride. Mary took her by the hand and led her to Christ, who placed a ring upon her finger and "espoused her to Himself."

Later she "besought her Divine Bridegroom to let her bear the punishment for all the sins of the world, and to receive the sacrifice of her body for the unity and renovation of the Church" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1917).

In 1370 she supposedly had intense visions of heaven, hell, and purgatory. That she saw “purgatory” is evidence of her unquestioning devotion to Catholic myths and heresies and of the fact that she was dealing with demons and not with the Spirit of God. “During the summer of 1370 she received a series of special manifestations of Divine mysteries, which culminated in a prolonged trance, a kind of mystical death, in which she had a vision of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven...” (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1908).

She depended upon these visions and voices for personal guidance rather than the Bible. After a long time of feeling abandoned by God she asked him, “O Lord, where wert Thou when my heart was so sorely vexed with foul and hateful temptations,” and allegedly a voice replied, “Daughter, I was in thy heart, fortifying thee by grace” (“Saint Catherine of Siena,” EWTN Library).

Her book *The Dialogue* contains alleged intimate conversations she had with God, asking Him questions and receiving His answers. John Talbot says, “For anyone who has ever wanted to sit down and have a chat with God, the resulting book provides fascinating insights into Christian faith” (*The Way of the Mystics*, p. 89).

In fact, Catherine was deluded by Satan posing as an angel of light. We have the complete revelation of God in the Bible, and it ends with a solemn warning not to add to it (Revelation 22:18-19). Further, Catherine’s visions contradict the Bible. For example, her God instructed her to honor the Catholic priesthood and to respect the sacraments, but neither of these are New Testament institutions.

In 1375 she allegedly received the “stigmata,” which was the impression of the crucifixion wounds of Christ (pierced hands and feet, crown of thorns) in her own body. This occurred while she was meditating on a crucifix during Mass. She described it as follows:

“I saw the crucified Lord coming down to me in a great light. ... Then from the marks of His most sacred wounds I saw five blood-red rays coming down upon me, which were directed towards the hands and feet and heart of my

body. Wherefore, perceiving the mystery, I straightway exclaimed, ‘Ah! Lord, my God, I beseech Thee, let not the marks appear outwardly on the body.’ ... So great is the pain that I endure sensibly in all those five places, but especially within my heart, that unless the Lord does a new miracle, it seems not possible to me that the life of my body can stay with such agony” (King, *Christian Mystics*, p. 85).

“She used to levitate off the floor several times a day and speak in unknown tongues. (It is actually said that when she wanted an early breakfast, the angel used to come and cook it for her)” (*The Charismatic Phenomenon in the Church of Rome*, by Hugh Farrell, former Catholic priest).

She also claimed that when she was too sick to move that the wafer and wine would supernaturally travel to her (*The Way of the Mystics*).

She was dedicated to the unscriptural papacy and was allegedly instrumental in getting it returned to Rome from Avignon, France. She carried on correspondence with Pope Gregory XI and had an audience with him. She also had an audience with Pope Urban VI in Rome. She taught blind obedience to the pope.

“Even if the Pope were Satan incarnate, we ought not to raise up our heads against him, but calmly lie down to rest on his bosom. He who rebels against our Father is condemned to death, for that which we do to him we do to Christ: we honor Christ if we honor the Pope; we dishonor Christ if we dishonor the Pope. I know very well that many defend themselves by boasting, ‘They are so corrupt, and work all manner of evil!’ But God has commanded that, even if the priests, the pastors, and Christ-on-earth were incarnate devils, we be obedient and subject to them, not for their sakes, but for the sake of God, and out of obedience to Him” (St. Catherine of Siena, quoted in *Apostolic Digest*, by Michael Malone, Book 5: “The Book of Obedience,” Chapter 1: “There is No Salvation Without Personal Submission to the Pope”).

She died at age 33 “after a prolonged and mysterious agony of three months.”

A Catholic myth says that the people of Siena took her head from Rome to Siena, and that when the Roman guards demanded that they open the bag it was miraculously full of rose petals, but once they got to Siena her head reappeared. Thus in Catholic art she is sometimes depicted holding a rose.

Coelho, Mary Conrow

Mary Conrow Coelho (b. c. 1942) is a third generation Quaker who has pursued contemplative mysticism into the New Age.

She is the author of *Awakening Universe, Emerging Personhood: The Power of Contemplation in an Evolving Universe* (2002). The thesis is that the universe has reached a dramatic new stage in evolutionary progress wherein man, if he wishes, can recognize his oneness with God and create a new world. The book is described as “integrating the new story of the evolutionary universe with the contemplative/mystical tradition and the depth psychology of C.G. Jung.”

“By becoming conscious of our full identity we find it highly possible to choose ways of transforming our relationships with the earth and all its peoples, with our close human and other than human companions, and with the institutions that govern and teach about these relationships” (*Awakening Universe*, p. 378).

In the article “Of Leadings and the Inner Light: Quakerism and the New Cosmology,” Coelho describes how that Quakerism’s emphasis on an “inner light” and personal revelation laid the foundation for her dramatic theological explorations.

She says, “The adults in our Quaker community spoke often of the Inner Light, the seed of God, the indwelling Christ,” and she quotes Quaker leader Thomas Kelly, “It is a Light within, a dynamic center, a creative Life that presses to birth within us.”

She describes a Quaker service, wherein the participants speak as they were led by the inner light or are completely silent and says, “Both the speaking and the silence can provide those gathered with an experience of inward divine presence and guidance” (Coelho, “Of Leadings and the Inner Light: Quakerism and the New Cosmology,” www.thegreatstory.org/QuakerMetarelig.html).

She says: “As well, those gathered know to avoid slipping into rational argumentation and discussion. Rather, we stay ‘close to the root.’ That is, we keep close to the fount of divine creativity.” Thus, they were taught not to analyze the personal revelations by Scripture. To do this would be to leave the “fount of divine creativity.”

This non-judgmental Quaker mysticism prepared the way for Catholic mysticism. While pursuing her doctorate at Fordham University, a Jesuit institution, she “delved into the western contemplative tradition, particularly as experienced by Teresa of Avila, Bonaventure, and Meister Eckhart.”

This, in turn, prepared the way for her leap into New Age philosophy.

She describes a monistic mystical experience that she had while watching Brian Swimme’s evolutionary videos entitled *Canticle to the Cosmos*. (Swimme is a student of Pierre Teilhard and Matthew Fox. He wrote the foreword to Sarah Appleton-Weber’s translation of *The Human Phenomenon* and a recommendation for Fox’s book *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*.)

“I was seated in a darkened room with perhaps fifteen others, viewing the sixth program of the *Canticle to the Cosmos* video series. Brian Swimme was saying, ‘The same dynamics that formed the mountains and formed the continents are the dynamics that eventuated into humans. We don’t live on the planet, but in and as this bio-spiritual planet.’

“The words Brian spoke brought a knowing that connected deeply to my being. ... I imagined known and unknown forces within my body that were sustaining and forming my identity--all this, far beneath conscious awareness. It was a kind of illumination. I KNEW HOW DEEPLY AND FULLY I BELONGED TO THE UNIVERSE AND TO THE EARTH.

“The ecstasy lasted for several days, during which I painted a large tree of life, filled with diverse creatures against a background of enfolded Mystery. This thought came again and again: ‘Everyone has to hear this story.’...

“... it was the new story of the evolutionary universe--specifically, the scientific story as translated by Brian

Swimme--that enabled me to integrate the manifest, physical world into a dynamic, sacred whole.

“The insights and wisdom potentially available to all of us as participants in the great epic story, when integrated with religious experience and the wisdom of religious traditions, has the power to awaken our sleeping souls. Entering into the integration involves a profound transformation: a letting go of long-held assumptions, assumptions so deep we may be unaware of them. For me personally it has taken a great deal of reading, thought, and meditation to begin to actually enter into the story, to see myself as a participant in the vast unfolding, a unique expression of a universe billions of years old” (Coelho, “Of Leadings and the Inner Light: Quakerism and the New Cosmology,” <http://www.thegreatstory.org/QuakerMetarelig.html>).

Coelho denies the Bible’s teaching on creation, the fall of man, and salvation only through faith in the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ. She believes that man is a product of billions of years of evolution, a process that is reaching a new stage in our day.

Coelho is another loud warning of the danger of contemplative spirituality. It can lead to Rome, to Buddha, even to Isis.

Crabb, Larry

Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr. (b. 1944), is a psychologist, conference speaker, and author.

He went through a period of religious skepticism during graduate school and was “renewed in his faith” through reading C.S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer.

Crabb has been one of the influential voices in bringing humanistic psychology into churches. In the early 1980s he established the Institute of Biblical Counseling to promote his particular hybrid of psychology and theology. He taught the “Spoiling the Egyptians” approach, which incorporates the “spoils” from secular psychology into biblical counseling.

This is disobedience to the Lord’s command to “*walk not in the counsel of the ungodly*” (Psalm 1:1), to “*learn not the ways of the*

heathen” (Jeremiah 10:2), to “beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy” (Colossians 2:8), and to “come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

The Institute of Biblical Counseling morphed into the School of Spiritual Direction and the SoulCare conferences. In 2001 Crabb established New Way Ministries to run his school and conferences.

Biblical Discernment Ministries says:

“Crabb’s doctrine of a powerful unconscious is based on the Freudian unconscious as modified by Alfred Adler. We do not deny that Crabb confronts sin, but rather Crabb confronts sin with a Freudian/Adlerian psychological model. It is not a matter of whether Crabb confronts sin; it’s a matter of how he confronts sin and how he even psychologically represents sinful behavior, which requires him to have a psychological answer. Psychoheresy is a most subtle and devious spectre haunting the church, because it is perceived and received as a scientific salve for the sick soul rather than as what it truly is: a pseudoscientific substitute system of religious belief” (“Larry Crabb,” January 2004, <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/crabb/crabb.htm>).

The PsychoHeresy Awareness Ministries has documented Crabb’s promotion of secular psychology, and in 2004 they warned that he hasn’t changed.

“In the 1978 article titled ‘Moving the Couch into the Church,’ which was published in the September 22, 1978 issue of *Christianity Today*, Crabb wrote about three levels of counseling ministry: encouragement, exhortation, and enlightenment, with enlightenment at the top. By examining Crabb’s books one can see that the enlightenment to which he was referring is heavily dependent on psychological theories devised by Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Albert Ellis, and Abraham Maslow. ... Crabb’s doctrine of a powerful unconscious is based on the Freudian unconscious as modified by Alfred Adler. Crabb says in *Understanding People*: Freud is rightly credited with introducing the whole idea of *psychodynamics* to the modern mind. The term refers to psychological forces within the personality (usually unconscious) that have the

power to cause behavioral and emotional disturbance. He taught us to regard problems as *symptoms* of--underlying *dynamic processes* in the psyche (p. 59, italics his). ... In spite of Freud's strong criticism of Christianity, Crabb says, 'I believe that [Freud's] psychodynamic theory is both provocative and valuable in recognizing elements in the human personality that many theologians have failed to see' (pp. 215-216). ...

"In a radio interview, Crabb was asked if his views had changed since he had written a number of his books, including his earliest (very psychological) books on biblical counseling. In response, Crabb said: "There is nothing in those books I would renounce, but what I would say is there has been a lot of movement, a lot of maturing that has led me to a position that says something I would not have said five years ago and what I am saying today is not something I said five years ago. I think it's something I thought, but I hadn't put it into words.' Thus Crabb renounced nothing in his earlier books, but refers to 'movement' and 'maturing.' Further in the interview he referred to a 'shift in my thinking.' Because of his doublespeaking, both the radio interviewer and the callers admitted being confused about what Crabb was truly saying. ... Crabb has not repented of any of his past teachings, which would be necessary if he has truly changed, as some have reported" ("Larry Crabb: Dr. Doublespeak," *PsychoHeresy Alert*, July-August 2004, PsychoHeresy Awareness Ministries, http://www.psychoheresy-aware.org/crabb12_4.html).

In recent years Crabb has begun promoting the contemplative movement in a big way. In 2003 *Christianity Today* said that though Crabb has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, "now he believes that in today's church, therapy should be replaced by another, more ancient practice--*spiritual direction*. This is one of the classical Christian spiritual disciplines Crabb and others from a wide variety of Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox backgrounds are examining and recommending anew in a biannual journal, *Conversations: A Forum for Authentic Transformation*, just launched this Spring" (Chris Armstrong and Steven Gertz, "Christian History Corner: Got Your 'Spiritual Director' Yet?" *Christianity Today*, April 1, 2003).

Spiritual direction is “a voluntary relationship between a person who seeks to grow in the Christian life and a director.” The director “helps the directee both to discern what the Holy Spirit is doing and saying and to act on that discernment, drawing nearer to God in Christ.”

This has been a part of the Catholic monastic system since the days of John Cassian in the fifth century. It is used by the Benedictines, the Dominicans, and the Jesuits, among others. Ignatius of Loyola’s “spiritual exercises” were designed to be performed under the oversight of directors.

There is a subtle but important line between the Bible’s call for believers to edify one another and the Catholic concept of a spiritual director. Rome has always put intermediaries between the individual and Christ. The Catholic does not come directly to Christ, but comes through the priesthood, the sacraments, Mary and the saints. A “spiritual director” is just another of these intermediaries.

For “evangelicals” to borrow from Rome’s polluted practices instead of going directly and ONLY to the Bible is clear evidence of their apostasy.

“Spiritual direction” tends to make the individual dependent upon the arm of flesh rather than a direct relationship with Christ.

Further, for a second party to help the individual “discern what the Holy Spirit is saying” has the potential for massive and fearful abuse.

Crabb is blithely leading evangelicals into the arms of Rome. He has developed his contemplative approach from Catholic priests such as Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, Brennan Manning, John of the Cross, Peter Kreeft, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. (According to *Christianity Today*, April 1, 2003, Crabb recommends Teilhard’s book *The Divine Milieu*.)

Merton was a Catholic Trappist monk and a Buddhist. Kreeft is a Catholic apologist who believes that Mary will ultimately conquer Satan and that even Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists will probably go to Heaven. Teilhard taught that all men’s souls constitute the “soul of the world” that is evolving toward the “ultimate convergence in perfection on Omega and the Christ.”

Crabb's book *The Papa Prayer* (2006) promotes contemplative and centering prayer (p. 22). Lighthouse Trails says: "*The Papa Prayer* is nothing more than a union of mysticism and psychology, and the insights of this 'revolutionary' prayer spring from Crabb's contemplative experiences."

Crabb wrote the foreword to David Benner's book *Sacred Companions*, saying: "The spiritual climate is ripe. Jesus seekers across the world are being prepared to abandon the old way of the written code for the new way of the spirit." Lighthouse Trails Research remarks:

"Benner's book is clear about what that 'new way' is when he talks about a 'Transformational Journey' needed in the Christian's life, which includes the teachings of Meister Eckhart, Thomas Merton, Martin Buber, Richard Foster, Henri Nouwen, Basil Pennington and several others, all of whom promote a panentheistic, New Age view of God. For Crabb to write the foreword of Benner's book, leaves no speculation of his affinity towards this same spirituality" ("Larry Crabb and the American Association of Christian Counselors," Lighthouse Trails web site).

Crabb is the spiritual director for the American Association of Christian Counselors. The AACC's Code of Ethics says it is "influenced by the "contemplative traditions."

Desert Fathers

See Anthony and Benedict of Nursia.

De Mello, Anthony

Anthony de Mello (1931-87) was an Indian Jesuit priest and psychotherapist whose writings are influential in the contemplative movement. By 1998 more than two million copies of his books had been sold in 35 languages.

He was the director of the Sadhana Institute of Pastoral Counseling in Poona, India. *Sadhana* is a Hindu term that refers to the practices of a sadhu or one who is seeking spiritual enlightenment (through yoga, chanting, pooja or idol worship, asceticism, etc.).

De Mello defined mysticism as a spiritual experience that goes beyond thinking. Consider some of his statements:

“... revelation is not knowledge. Revelation is power; a mysterious power that brings transformation. ... The head is not a very good place for prayer. ... YOU MUST LEARN TO MOVE OUT OF THE AREA OF THINKING and talking and move into the area of feeling, sensing, loving, intuiting” (*Sadhana: A Way to God*, pp. 15, 17).

“DON’T ASK QUESTIONS. Do what you are asked to and you will discover the answer for yourself. Truth is found less in words and explanations than in action and experience” (p. 20).

“Contemplation for me is communication with God that makes a minimal use of words, images, and concepts or DISPENSES WITH WORDS, IMAGES, AND CONCEPTS ALTOGETHER. This is the sort of prayer that John of the Cross speaks of in his *Dark Night of the Soul* or the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* explains in his admirable book” (p. 29).

“... we are, all of us, endowed with a mystical mind and mystical heart, a faculty which makes it possible for us to know God directly, to grasp and intuit him in his very being, though in a dark manner, APART FROM ALL THOUGHTS and concepts and images” (p. 29).

“As long as your mind machine keeps spinning out millions of thoughts and words, your mystical mind or Heart will remain underdeveloped” (p. 30).

This is a sure recipe for spiritual delusion! The Bible warns, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). We are exhorted to “*prove all things*” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

De Mello’s teaching is an interfaith mixture of Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Sufism.

His book *Sadhana: A Way to God* is subtitled “Christian Exercises in Eastern Form,” referring to pagan influence from eastern religions. He readily admits to borrowing from Buddhist Zen masters and Hindu gurus. One of the exercises he

recommends is based on Hindu monism, the doctrine that God is everything:

“Think of the air as of an immense ocean that surrounds you ... an ocean heavily colored with God’s presence and God’s being. ... While you draw the air into your lungs you are drawing God in” (*Sadhana: A Way to God*, p. 36).

He recommends the Hindu lotus posture as the most ideal (p. 24) and suggests chanting the Hindu word “om” (p. 49).

He even instructs his students to communicate with inanimate objects:

“Choose some object that you use frequently: a pen, a cup ... Now gently place the object in front of you or on your lap and speak to it. Begin by asking it questions about itself, its life, its origins, its future. And listen while it unfolds to you the secret of its being and of its destiny. Listen while it explains to you what existence means to it. Your object has some hidden wisdom to reveal to you about yourself. Ask for this and listen to what it has to say. There is something that you can give this object. What is it? What does it want from you?” (p. 55).

Though some of De Mello’s doctrine was condemned by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he remained a Jesuit priest in good standing and his books are sold in Catholic bookstores. His biography was published in 2005 by Jesuit J. Francis Stroud.

Dominic

Dominic (c. 1170-1221) (also known as Dominic of Osma and Dominic de Guzman) was the founder of the Dominican order. He was declared a saint in 1234 by Pope Innocent IV. His head is enshrined in a golden reliquary in the basilica of St. Dominic in Bologna, Italy.

The official name for the Dominicans is the Order of Preachers and they are also called friars preachers. In England they were called Blackfriars because of their black cloaks. In France they were called Jacobins after the name of their first convent in Paris, St. Jacques (Jacobus in Latin).

Dominic was born in Spain, in Castile near the abbey of St. Dominic of Silos, after whom he was named.

He practiced extreme asceticism, wearing a hairshirt, going barefoot, and keeping an iron chain around his waist even while sleeping. He abstained from meat, kept long fasts and periods of silence. He never slept in a bed and wore the most common clothes.

One of the objectives Dominic set for his order was “the extinction of heresy” and the Dominicans were soon at the forefront of the inquisition.

It was in Spain during the lifetime of Dominic and the reign of Pope Innocent III that the inquisition began to be formed into a brutal, all-pervading mechanism. It was only left for Innocent III’s nephew, Gregory IX, to expand the inquisition to all “Catholic” countries and to “fine tune” its barbarities. Though he preferred preaching over persecution, Dominic nevertheless was one of the pope’s chief agents.

“Before his time every bishop was a sort of inquisitor in his own diocese: but it was his [Dominick’s] invention to incorporate a body of men, independent of every human being except the pope, for the express purpose of ensnaring and destroying Christians. ... at the beginning of the thirteenth century, about the year twelve hundred fifteen, Dominick broke down the dam, and covered Toulouse with a tide of despotism stained with human blood. Posterity will hardly believe that this enemy of mankind, after he had formed a race like himself, called first preaching, and then friars, died in his bed, was canonized for a saint ... and proposed as a model of piety and virtue to succeeding generations” (Robert Robinson, *Ecclesiastical Researches*, 1792, pp. 321-22).

Papal bulls were issued in 1233 and 1258 appointing the Dominicans as the directors of the inquisition. In the ensuing centuries countless Bible believers were hounded, imprisoned, tortured, and put to death by a variety of cruel methods, including burning alive.

The Dominicans wreaked havoc upon the Albigensians, the Waldenses, the Anabaptists, the Lollards, and anyone else that refused to bow to the pope’s authority and submit to his heresies.

“The blood-thirst of the Dominicans earned for them the stigma of ‘Domini Canes,’ or the ‘Lord’s Dogs’” (Thomas Armitage, *A History of the Baptists*, I, pp. 311-112).

The Dominicans walked in the front of the *auto de fe* ceremonies in Spain at which the “heretics” were burned to death in public spectacles (James Heron, *The Evolution of Latin Christianity*, 1919, p. 326).

The Dominicans were at the forefront of the attempt to stop the translation of the Bible into common languages. At the Council of Toulouse in 1229 the Catholic hierarchy “forbade the laity [anyone other than priests] to possess the books of the Bible in any language. Special condemnation was hurled at the Scriptures sent forth by Peter Waldo, in the Romance tongue; these must be burnt” (William Blackburn, *History of the Christian Church*, 1880, pp. 314-15).

The Dominicans headquartered at the Blackfriars’ monastery in London called a Synod against John Wycliffe, translator of the first Bible into English, and made every effort to stop his preaching and translation work. Failing in this, countless copies of the Wycliffe Scriptures were confiscated and burned and many of those who read them were likewise burned. Even Wycliffe’s bones were dug up and burned!

In the book *Rome and the Bible* we have described the horror of the inquisition and Rome’s efforts to keep the Bible out of the hands of the people.

The unscriptural and blasphemous “devotion of the Rosary” has often been attributed to a vision that Dominic had of Mary, who revealed herself as “Our Lady of the Rosary.” The practice of the Rosary involves saying prayers to Mary that should be addressed only to Almighty God.

Whether or not Dominic invented the Rosary, it is certain that he revered Mary in an unscriptural fashion and that the Dominican Order has been at the forefront of promoting the Rosary.

“Either way, the Rosary has for centuries been at the heart of the Dominican Order. Pope Pius XI stated that: ‘The Rosary of Mary is the principle and foundation on which the very Order of Saint Dominic rests for making perfect

the life of its members and obtaining the salvation of others' (Robert Feeney, *The Rosary: "The Little Summa"*). For centuries, Dominicans have been instrumental in spreading the rosary and emphasizing the Catholic belief in the power of the rosary. Patrick Cardinal Hayes of New York provided his imprimatur in support of the fifteen rosary promises attributed to Saint Dominic and Alan de Rupe. In this attribution, based on some Catholic beliefs on the power of prayer the Blessed Virgin Mary reportedly made fifteen specific promises regarding the power of the rosary to Christians who pray the rosary. The fifteen rosary promises range from heavenly protection from misfortune to assurance of sanctification, and to meriting a high degree of glory in heaven" ("Saint Dominic," *Wikipedia*).

The 15 promises to the individual who recites the rosary faithfully include the following:

- He will have Mary's special protection.
- He will not perish.
- He will never be conquered by misfortune.
- He will be worthy of eternal life.
- He will be delivered from purgatory.
- He will obtain everything he asks of Mary.

Eckhart, Meister

Meister Eckhart (Eckhart von Hochheim) (1260-1327) was a German Dominican priest who taught complex gnostic and pagan doctrines. The name "meister" means master and derives from the fact that he was a master of theology.

He was tried as a heretic by Pope John XXII and is said to have recanted. It is probable that he died before a formal condemnation was issued, but 17 of his doctrines were posthumously condemned as heretical. Since the 1980s the Dominicans have pressed for confirmation of his theological orthodoxy, and "the late Pope John Paul II voiced favorable opinion on this initiative" ("Meister Eckhart," *Wikipedia*).

Eckhart's theology was akin to Hinduism.

He taught that God, which he called "the absolute principle" and "the ground of the soul," is "pure intellect and not being," and that

man at his highest level is one with God. Eckhart said: “Here, God’s ground is my ground and my ground God’s ground.”

He said that in every man there is divinity and spiritual wisdom. He called this the “divine ground,” “divine spark,” “divine image,” “holy self,” “inner light.”

In order to be united with God, “the soul must be purified by practicing asceticism, detachment, silence and withdrawal, by forgetting ideas and concepts, and by not loving anything that is created” (Ursula King, *Christian Mystics*, p. 109).

He taught that Christ can be born in the individual’s soul through a process of mysticism and sacramentalism. “In the soul, the Father procreates the Son. This takes place during the life of the soul in time; and, too, not merely at a particular moment, but rather continuously and repeatedly” (“Doctrines of Meister Eckhart,” *Wikipedia*).

He taught evolution and reincarnation.

He denied Christ’s substitutionary atonement and taught that Christ came to earth not so much to die for man’s sin but to become a pattern that can be repeated in all men through him.

In his book *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, D. T. Suzuki compared Eckhart’s teaching favorably with Zen Buddhism. Suzuki was one of the first Buddhist authorities to publish Zen doctrine in English.

Following are some quotes from Eckhart’s writings:

“The being and the nature of God are mine. Jesus enters the castle of the soul; the spark of the soul is beyond time and space; the soul’s light is uncreated and cannot be created; it takes possession of God with no mediation; the core of the soul and the core of God are one.”

“God’s ground and the soul’s ground is one ground.”

“The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me.”

“When I preach, I usually speak of detachment and say that a man should be empty of self and all things; and secondly, that he should be reconstructed in the simple good that God is; and thirdly, that he should consider the great aristocracy which God has set up in the soul, such

that by means of it man may wonderfully attain to God; and fourthly, of the purity of the divine nature.”

“Whoever possesses God in their being, has him in a divine manner, and he shines out to them in all things; for them all things taste of God and in all things it is God’s image that they see.”

“It is a fair trade and an equal exchange: to the extent that you depart from things, thus far, no more and no less, God enters into you with all that is his, as far as you have stripped yourself of yourself in all things. It is here that you should begin, whatever the cost, for it is here that you will find true peace, and nowhere else.”

“The authorities say that God is a being, and a rational one, and that he knows all things. I say that God is neither being nor rational, and that he knows that he does not know this or that (particular things). Therefore God is free of all things and therefore he is all things.”

“Thus in this poverty man pursues that everlasting being which he was and which he is now, and which he will evermore remain.”

“Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctum of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, ... the Light within, ... It is the Shekinah of the soul, the Presence in the midst. 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.”

Eckhart was one of the “Rhineland Mystics.” This refers to a small group of contemplatives that lived in Germany in the 14th century. See also Henry Suso and Johannes Tauler.

Edwards, Tilden

Tilden Edwards (1940-2005), an Episcopal priest, was the founder of the Shalem Institute in Washington, D.C., which trains spiritual directors. Ray Yungen says: “The Shalem Institute is one of the bastions of contemplative prayer in this country and has trained thousands of spiritual directors since its inception in 1972” (*A Time of Departing*, p. 65).

In the book *Spiritual Friend* (1980), Edwards said that the contemplative prayer movement is “THE WESTERN BRIDGE TO FAR EASTERN SPIRITUALITY” (p. 18).

Edwards urged the adoption of eastern pagan practices and called interfaith dialogue the “wider ecumenism.”

“In the wider ecumenism of the Spirit being opened for us today, we need to humbly accept the learnings of particular Eastern religions. ... What makes a particular practice Christian is not its source, but its intent. ... If we view the human family as one in God’s spirit, then this historical cross-fertilization is not surprising. ... selective attention to Eastern spiritual practices can be of great assistance to a fully embodied Christian life” (*Living in the Presence*, 1987, acknowledgements page).

“The new ecumenism involved here is not between Christian and Christian, but between Christians and the grace of other intuitively deep religious traditions” (*Living in the Presence*, p. 172).

Edwards was wrong about what makes a practice legitimately Christian. It is not the intent and good will of the practitioner; it is the scripturalness of the practice. David was sincere and filled with good will toward God when he had the ark placed on a cart to transport it to the tabernacle, and Uzzah was sincere and filled with good will when he reached out to stabilize the ark so it would not fall, but God spoiled David’s happy occasion and killed Uzzah because they were not following the Scripture (1 Chronicles 13:1-12; 15:1-2).

Observe, too, that Edwards believed that the human family is one in God’s spirit. That is a pagan concept and is contrary to the Bible’s teaching that men are estranged from God because of sin and can only be reconciled through faith in Jesus Christ. Edwards thought that paganism has much to offer the Christian life, whereas the Bible informs us that the Scripture itself is able to make the man of God “*perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Further, the Bible warns God’s people not to learn the way of the heathen (Jeremiah 10:2).

Of Buddhism Edwards said:

“Some Buddhist traditions have developed very practical ways of doing things that many Christians have found helpful ... offering participants new perspectives and possibilities for living more fully in the radiant gracious Presence through the day” (Edwards, The Center for Spiritual Development, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, Fall 2004 - Spring 2005, p. 4).

In fact, Edwards said that Buddha and Jesus are friends:

“For many years, I have kept in my office an ink drawing of two smiling figures with their arms around each other: Jesus Christ and Gautama Buddha, with the caption: ‘Jesus and Buddha must be very good friends.’ They are not the same, but they are friends, not enemies, and they are not indifferent to one another. From the very beginning of Shalem, I have been moved to affirm that statement. ... Particular Buddhist practices that I have experienced in the last 26 years have, with grace, shown me such an ‘inclusive’ mind” (Edwards, “Jesus and Buddha Good Friends,” Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation newsletter, winter 2000, http://www.shalem.org/resources/publication/newsletter/archives/2000/2000_winter/article_05).

In *Spiritual Friend*, Edwards recommends the book *Psychosynthesis* by Robert Assagioli, an occultist.

Finley, James

James Finley (b. 1943) is a Roman Catholic clinical psychologist and former Cistercian or Trappist monk. He spent six years at the Trappist monastery of the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani in Kentucky, two of those years under the direction of Thomas Merton. He has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the Graduate School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary.

He conducts contemplative retreats and is affiliated with The Contemplative Way community at the Roman Catholic parish of St. Monica, California.

He is the author of *Merton’s Palace of Nowhere*, *Christian Meditation: Experiencing the Presence of God*, *The Awakening Call*, and *The Contemplative Heart*.

Two of his retreat lectures are “Meister Eckhart: Living in Union with God” and “The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism.”

Finley says that meditation is entering experientially, beyond thought, into the divine oneness that exists between God the Father and Son.

“At the heart of the Gospel is Jesus saying ‘I and the Father are one.’ The early Christians understood this as a call to enter into Christ’s divine oneness with the Father. They felt they could respond to that call by entering into that oneness experientially; even on this earth they could realize something of this eternal oneness with God that Christ came to reveal and proclaim. And they sought to experience this through meditation and prayer. Christian meditation is way of experiencing God beyond what the ego can grasp or attain. IT’S BEYOND THOUGHT, BEYOND MEMORY, BEYOND THE WILL, BEYOND FEELING” (Lisa Schneider interview with James Finley, “Experiencing God through Meditation,” Beliefnet.com).

“Be present, open and awake, neither clinging to nor rejecting anything. IN MEDITATION, THE GOAL IS NEITHER TO THINK OUR THOUGHTS NOR TRY TO HAVE ANY THOUGHTS. Rather the goal is to sit still and straight, meditatively aware of each thought as it arises, endures, and passes away. In meditation we are not seeking to have thoughts of God, but to know God ‘in his naked existence” (Finley, *Christian Meditation*, p. 27).

When asked if it is possible for meditation to be “inviting the devil in,” Finley replies:

“Sometimes I will tell people who express that--well why not try it? Why not try to just quietly and sincerely and silently open your heart to God and see for yourself if you sense something dangerous or bad or dark. And you might discover that the opposite’s the case” (“Experiencing God through Meditation: Interview with James Finley,” Beliefnet.com).

This counsel is unbelievably dangerous and unscriptural. The Bible warns that the devil takes on the persona of an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14-16). The only way to discern the difference between true and false spirits is to be born again and walk in the Spirit and

to carefully test them by the Bible. The Catholic mystics such as Finley and Thomas Merton don't do that and, in fact, don't know how to do that.

It appears that Finley believes in universal salvation. He does not teach contemplative practitioners how to be born again. He teaches then, rather, that God is already present.

“The dawning of contemplation is the realization that in some mysterious way, GOD HAS ALREADY TAKEN US PERFECTLY TO HIMSELF. In some mysterious way, we are already living out our lives in God; and in Christ, God is already taking us to himself. ... I think contemplative prayer helps the process of spiritual formation by grounding the entire process of AWAKENING TO GOD, ALREADY PERFECTLY PRESENT, already perfectly given to us in life itself. In contemplative prayer we seek to discover at deeper and deeper levels of awareness that everything we could possibly attain from God--that God himself--has already been given by God in Christ. All is being given in the ongoing, moment-by-moment mystery of creation itself, in which God is giving himself to us in and as the miracle of our very existence as persons. Contemplative prayer is a way of opening ourselves to the intimate experience Jesus spoke of in proclaiming that the coming of the Kingdom has already occurred: the kingdom of God is within us” (Gary Moon, “Christian Meditation: A Conversation with James Finley,” *Pathways Magazine*, April-June 2000).

Ford, Leighton

Leighton Ford, brother-in-law to Billy Graham, has been promoting contemplative prayer in a big way since the publication of his 2008 book *The Attentive Life*. Following is a review of this dangerous book:

“[Ford] equates his attentive practices with centering prayer as explained by Roman Catholic mystic Thomas Keating, ‘We wait quietly in God’s presence, perhaps repeating a ‘sacred word,’ [mantra] and let go of our thoughts. ... Centering prayer is not so much an exercise of attention as intention’ (p. 179; cp pp. 11-13, 24, 129, 176, 190).

“Secondly, the methods recommended for the attentive life come primarily from Roman Catholic mysticism: the Benedictine Prayer Hours, monasticism (p. 21), labyrinths (pp. 51-52), *lectio divina* (pp. 65, 93-96), use of spiritual directors (p. 66), praying the Jesus Prayer (p. 77), centering prayer (pp. 129, 176, 179), the examen (p. 197), Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises* (p. 197), with a dose of Quakerism (pp. 26, 124) and Celtic ‘thin places and prayers’ thrown in (pp. 159, 211).

“Finally, virtually all of Ford’s spiritual heroes are mystic: Douglas Steere (a Quaker), G.K. Chesterton, Julian of Norwich, Henri Nouwen, Simone Weil, Gregory Nazianzus, Vincent Donovan, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Mother Teresa, Eugene Peterson, St. Fursey, Lesslie Newbigin, Dallas Willard, Jesuit poet Gerald Manley Hopkins, Anthony Bloom, Kierkegaard, fourth century monk John Cassian, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Keating, Thomas Merton, Alice Fryling, St. Francis, Hilary of Tours, Marcus Loane (Archbishop of Sydney, Australia), Carlo Carletto, David Steindl-Rast, Bishop A. Jack Dain, Quaker Thomas Kelly, Hwee Hwee Tan and Catherine of Siena.

“In addition, Ford makes strange statements that border on pantheism (p. 91), describes God as ‘pure energy’ (p. 177) rather than Spirit and talks about being able to see Christ in our faces (pp. 194-196).

“To say all of this is disturbing is an understatement. What little value might be contained in *The Attentive Life* is completely negated by the unbiblical practices and teachings found throughout this book. It is astounding that a man who once preached the gospel of Christ could have drifted so far” (Gary Gilley, review of Leighton Ford’s *The Attentive Life*, June 5, 2009, Lighthouse Trails).

Leighton Ford also wrote the forward to Ruth Barton’s 2008 contemplative book *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*.

He says he has come to the place in his life in which he wants to explore “silence, stillness, reading Scripture not by going through great chunks but by meditating on smaller portions, listening carefully to God and my own heart, having a trusted spiritual companion as a friend on the journey” (p. 14).

Ford recommends *The Music of Silence* by David Steindl-Rast and Sharon Lebell. Steindl-Rast is not only a Catholic monk, laden down with Catholic heresies, he is a religious syncretist. He says, “Envision the great religious traditions arranged on the circumference of a circle. At their mystical core they all say the same thing, but with different emphasis” (“Heroic Virtue,” *Gnosis*, Summer 1992). Beginning in 1967, following the Second Vatican Council, Steindl-Rast became heavily involved with Catholic-Buddhist interfaith dialogue and studied under four Zen Buddhist masters. He came to believe that Catholics and Buddhists are communing with the same God and wrote *The Ground We Share: Buddhist and Christian Practice*. This was co-authored by Zen Buddhist Robert Aitken Roshi. He is involved with the Network for Grateful Living, which is New Age organization dedicated to the goal of creating a new world through such things as contemplative mysticism, visualization, interfaith dialogue, environmentalism, developing an awareness of angels, and the Buddhist concept of flowing gratefully with the moment and being one with the “ground of Being.”

Ford is swimming in the most dangerous spiritual waters imaginable, and he is influencing many others to follow his example.

Foster, Richard

See the chapter “Richard Foster: Evangelicalism’s Mystical Sparkplug.”

Fox, Matthew

Matthew Fox (b. 1940) is a former Roman Catholic priest who joined the Episcopal Church. His birth name was Timothy James. He took the name Matthew in 1967 when he was ordained into the Dominican priesthood. In 1992 he was dismissed from the Dominican order for heresy and two years later was received into the Episcopal Church of America by Bishop William Swing of southern California.

Fox promotes what is called “creation spirituality,” which identifies God with creation (pantheism and panentheism) and is a

syncretistic blend of Christianity and pagan religion. In fact, it is pure New Age. He believes in evolution, denies the fall of man and the unique Deity, substitutionary atonement, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, and calls God “Mother.” He promotes astrology, wicca, shamanism, goddess worship, and the “intelligent” use of drugs.

In 1984 he founded the Friends of Creation Spirituality and in 1996 the University of Creation Spirituality, which was renamed Wisdom University in 2005. He combines Catholic ritual with Native American and pagan rituals such as sweat lodges, circle dances, and moon rituals. He has worked closely with Starhawk (Miriam Simos), a self-described witch and the author of *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (1979) and *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics* (1982).

Fox’s 1999 book *One River, Many Wells* describes his radical interfaith philosophy.

“Isn’t it time that instead of trying to convert one another we delved into one another’s spiritual riches? ... There is one underground river--but there are many wells into that river: an African well, a Taoist well, a Buddhist well, a Jewish well, a Muslim well, a goddess well, a Christian well, and aboriginal wells. ... Many wells, one river. That is deep ecumenism.”

Ray Yungen observes:

“Fox has a sizable following in both Catholic and mainline Protestant circles, although he has not generated near the enthusiasm or respect of Thomas Merton or Henri Nouwen. Yet Fox manifests the same God-in-everything view and aligns with Eastern religion as did Merton and Nouwen” (*A Time of Departing*, p. 68).

Fox sees contemplative mysticism as the key to interfaith unity and global transformation.

“Without mysticism there will be no ‘deep ecumenism,’ no unleashing of the power of wisdom from all the world’s religious traditions. Without this I am convinced there will never be global peace or justice since the human race needs spiritual depths and disciplines, celebrations and

rituals to awaken its better selves” (*The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, p. 65).

Fox’s gross heresy is evident in the following quotes:

“[Jesus] shows us how to embrace our own divinity” (*The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, p. 232).

“Divinity is found in all creatures ... The Cosmic Christ is the ‘I am’ in every creature” (*The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 1980, p. 154).

“We need to become aware of the Cosmic Christ, which means recognizing that every being has within it the light of Christ” (Steve Turner interviewing Matthew Fox, “Natural Mystic?” *Nine O Clock Service*, March 1995, <http://members.tripod.com/nineoclockservice/mattiefx.htm>).

In his book *A New Reformation*, Fox exhorts his readers to reject “an angry exclusionary god” who is a “punitive Father” for a “Mother/Father God” and “the loving open path.” This is idolatrous god of *The Shack*.

Francis De Sales

Francis de Sales (1567-1622) was a French Jesuit priest. He was declared a saint in 1665 and a Doctor of the church in 1877. In 1923 he was proclaimed the patron saint of writers.

He was a fierce opponent of the Protestants and was instrumental in reconverting an entire region of France back to Romanism. With Jeanne de Chantal he cofounded the Order of the Visitation. It was entrusted to the protection of Mary.

Two of his books promoted mysticism. *Introduction to the Devout Life* was published in 1609 and *Treatise on the Love of God* in 1616.

He taught silent contemplation whereby the soul is drawn into a quiet “so deep in its tranquility that the whole soul and all its power remain as if sunk in sleep” (*Christian Mystics*, p. 162).

His own mystical spirituality was nurtured through an experience in praying to Mary. After a period of mental torment, haunted by the fear that God had predestined him to hell, he was praying to Mary in a Catholic church when his fear left and “he

became deeply assured that God has friendship, love and salvation for all, and extends his abundance of grace to every single person” (*Christian Mystics*, p. 161).

This is true, of course, as far as it goes, but what his Mary failed to teach him was that to partake of God’s grace one must be born again in a biblical fashion by repenting and putting his trust in Jesus Christ. She also failed to warn him of Rome’s heresies.

De Sale believed that man is inherently good and naturally inclined to love God.

Francis of Assisi

Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) was the founder of the Order of Friars Minor, commonly known as the Franciscans. He was canonized in 1228 by Pope Gregory IX and is the patron saint of animals, merchants, and the environment. Some Catholic churches hold ceremonies honoring animals on “the saint’s feast day,” which is October 4.

Born to the family of a wealthy nobleman, he was named Giovanni di Bernardone by his mother but Francesco by his father. When in his twenties Francis allegedly saw Jesus looking at him through the eyes of a crucifix, telling him to repair a ruined church. Absconding with a load of expensive colored drapery from his father’s shop, he sold it for gold and tried to give it to the church. His father was not pleased, and Francis, after returning the gold, renounced his father and his patrimony. He dedicated himself to celibacy and married “the Lady Poverty.”

Francis founded his religious order on the command of Christ in Matthew 10:9-10, but this is not a command for believers in this present time: Jesus said: “*Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.*” Francis ignored the fact that this command pertained only to the preaching of the kingdom in Israel. Jesus instructed them, “*Go not into the way of the Gentiles ... But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Mat. 10:5-6). They were to preach, “*The kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Mat. 10:7). This is not the preaching of the gospel; it is the proclamation that the Jews should repent because their King

and Messiah was in their midst! Israel rejected the preaching of the kingdom and Christ turned His attention to making the Sacrifice on Calvary that would provide salvation for all that believe. After He died and rose from the dead, Christ gave a different commandment to the disciples, instructing them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, not just Israelites (Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8). The command of Matthew 10:9-10 was rescinded in Luke 22:35-36. (For more on this see “The Kingdom of God” at the Way of Life Literature web site -- <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/kingdom-of-god.html>.)

Francis’ “friars” took vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity, and traveled two by two preaching and begging. This is contrary to the Bible’s witness, “*I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread*” (Psa. 37:25).

Francis spent much time in solitude and contemplative practices, in which he was confirmed in his heretical doctrine. He supposedly saw a vision of a seraph angel crucified, which is blasphemous because an angel did not die for our sins. Francis received from this “angel” the “stigmata” or visible wounds of Jesus in his own body. “Suddenly he saw a vision of a seraph, a six-winged angel on a cross. This angel gave him the gift of the five wounds of Christ” (Gilbert Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi*, 1924, p. 131).

Francis was a great venerator of the Catholic Mary. His favorite place of abode was St. Mary of the Angels chapel in the Benedictine monastery Monte Subasio just outside of Assisi. He said:

“I therefore command all my Brothers, those living now and those to come in the future, to venerate the Holy Mother of God, whom we always implore to be our Protectress, to praise her at all times, in all circumstances of life, with all the means in their power and with the greatest devotion and submission” (*Rule of the Friars Minor*).

The Franciscans have a special Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Angels which opens with the words: “O God, who hast wished to dispense all favors to men through thy most holy Mother...”

Francis was the first one to set up a living nativity scene. This was at Christmas time in Greccio, near Assisi, in about 1220. He

used real animals “to create a living scene so that the worshipers could contemplate the birth of the child Jesus in a direct way, making use of the senses, especially sight” (“Francis of Assisi,” Wikipedia, quoting Bonaventure and Manning, *The Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, 1988 edition, p. 178). The straw-filled manger was used as the altar for the Christmas Mass. This reminds us of the heretical heritage of Christmas rituals. Instead of urging the people to accept the Bible by faith, Francis urged them to believe the witness of their eyes, and instead of preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, he preached his birth.

Many stories are told in Catholic literature of Francis’ strange relationship with animals. On one occasion he addressed a wolf as “brother” and supposedly talked him into living in harmony with the townspeople. On another occasion he preached to “my sisters the birds.” Afterwards, “He began to blame himself for negligence in not having preached to the birds before, and from that day on, he solicitously admonished all birds, all animals and reptiles” (Thomas of Celano’s biography of Francis, quoted by John Talbot, *The Way of the Mystics*, p. 65).

Francis also preached to the flowers.

On his death bed Francis supposedly thanked his donkey for carrying him around, and the donkey wept.

In his poem *The Canticle of the Sun*, he expressed love for the creation by calling it Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Mother Earth, Brother Fire, etc.

Francis received the blessing of Pope Innocent III, the founder of the brutal Inquisition. The Franciscans and the Dominicans were appointed to head up the Inquisition by one of Innocent’s successors, Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241). Gregory was a personal friend of Francis. The Franciscans and Dominicans were granted papal authority to punish Bible-believing Christians wherever they were found. They did a good job of it for half a millennium, developing a massive spy network (citizens from about age 14 and older throughout all Catholic territories were sworn in as spies of the Inquisition and were required to reveal all offenders), capturing and imprisoning and impoverishing and torturing and burning men and women whose only crime was refusing to bow to the pope’s false doctrine.

Griffiths, Alan Richard

See Shantivanam Ashram.

Guyon, Madame

Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte-Guyon (1648-1717), commonly known as Madame Guyon, was a Roman Catholic mystic who lived in France.

Guyon wanted to enter a convent when she was a girl but her parents would not allow it and arranged her marriage to a 37-year-old man when she was only 15. It was an unhappy marriage and she turned increasingly to her mystical experiences in a search for “union with God.”

After her husband died when she was 28 years old, she gave herself wholly to her mystical pursuits. She joined a group of ascetic Catholics led by a Barnabite monk named Francios La Combe. For five years (1681-86) she toured parts of France, Switzerland, and Italy with La Combe.

La Combe taught that meditation of God requires a passive state of contemplation that goes beyond the level of the conscious thinking process.

It was an extreme type of mysticism that became known as Quietism:

“The school of mysticism that Guyon adhered to, sometimes called Quietism, was an extreme form of Roman Catholic mysticism that emphasized the cleansing of one’s inner life and included the belief that one could see Christ visibly. Before Guyon’s day, in the Middle Ages, this took strange forms in erotic ‘bride mysticism’ with some visionaries believing they were married to Jesus. Guyon and the Quietists went further, into something called essence mysticism. They believed that their being was merged with God’s being and the two became one. This unbiblical idea survives today in the New Age and other non-Christian religions. ... She taught that we can know of God by ‘passing forward into God,’ going into a mindless, meditative state where we can get in touch with the Christ within the self, merge with that Christ and be lifted into ecstasy” (G. Richard Foster, *The Mindless*

Mysticism of Madame Guyon, <http://www.solcon.nl/apgeelhoed/htmldoc/guyon.htm>).

Guyon claimed that she went through a series of spiritual states by means of her ascetically driven mystical experiences. The first, which she called “union of the powers,” lasted eight years. During this time, she felt drawn to God alone and drawn away from people. The second state, which she called “mystical death,” lasted seven years, during which she had a feeling of detachment from God and was plagued with deep mental depression and thoughts of hell and judgment. She frequently had dark, weird dreams, which she considered a form of revelation. In the third state, which she called “the apostolic state,” she claimed that she was absorbed into and united with God. During this time, she preached, but she did not preach the gospel; she preached mystical experiences.

As she fasted to the extreme and often went without sleep, her mystical experiences increased. She experienced what she thought was union with the essence of God. She had mental delusions or demonic visitations such as envisioning “horrible faces in blueish light.” She went into trances, which would leave her unable to speak for days. During some trances, she wrote things that she believed were inspired (Guyon, *An Autobiography*, p. 321-324). This is automatic writing, and she was doubtless influenced by demons. She claimed that she and La Combe could communicate for hours without speaking verbally. She believed she could speak in the language of angels.

In 1688, she was arrested on heresy charges and imprisoned in a convent for several months. In December 1695, she was again imprisoned, this time for seven years.

Released in March 1703, she spent the final 15 years of her life in silence and isolation on the estate of her son-in-law.

After her death, Guyon’s works were published by a Dutch Protestant pastor named Poirer. In the 1700s, her books were popular among some Lutherans, Methodists, and Moravians. Today they are popular with evangelicals and even some fundamentalists.

There is some truth in Guyon’s writings, but taken as a whole they are unscriptural and dangerous.

Following are some of the errors:

1. She emphasized the surrender of herself to the Catholic Church without reservation.

Madam Guyon spoke of her goal as “perfect obedience to the will of the Lord, submission to the church” (Guyon, *Autobiography*). Though charged with heresy by the Catholic Church it was not because she rejected Rome’s dogmas such as the papacy, the priesthood, or salvation through the sacraments. She died submissive to Rome.

2. She focused on having an *experience* of God rather than knowing him *by faith* through the Bible.

This is the essence of mysticism. To the contrary, though, the Lord Jesus exalted faith over sight and experience (John 20:29). Paul said “*we walk by faith not by sight*” (2 Cor. 5:7) and taught us that faith comes from the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Faith does not come from within or from mystical experiences. Madame Guyon was not Bible-centered in her Christian walk, and that is a grave and fatal error.

3. She warned against “critical” examination of spiritual things.

In the introduction to her book on prayer, Madame Guyon says, “Beloved reader, read this little book with a sincere and honest spirit. Read it in lowliness of mind **WITHOUT THE INCLINATION TO CRITICIZE**. If you do, you will not fail to reap profit from it.”

That is extremely dangerous and unscriptural. Everything is to be proven by the Bible (Isaiah 8:20; Acts 17:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1). If we do not test everything carefully by the Word of God, we are open to spiritual deception (2 Cor. 12:1-4). Jesus warned that we must not allow anyone to deceive us, which takes for granted the fact that they will try to deceive us (Mat. 24:4). It is each individual’s responsibility to be on guard.

3. She employed pagan methods of emptying the mind in meditation and prayer. Note the following quote:

“May I hasten to say that the kind of prayer I am speaking of is **NOT A PRAYER THAT COMES FROM YOUR MIND**. It is a prayer that begins in the heart Prayer offered to the Lord from your mind simply would not be adequate. Why? Because your mind is very limited. The mind can pay attention to only one thing at a time. Prayer

that comes out of the heart is NOT INTERRUPTED BY THINKING” (Guyon, *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*, p. 4).

“All the prayers that proceed from your mind are merely preparations for bringing you to A PASSIVE STATE; any and all active contemplation on your part is also just preparation for bringing you to a passive state” (Guyon, *Experiencing Union with God through Inner Prayer*).

One of the types of prayer taught by Guyon was a form of meditation whereby the soul is emptied of all self-desire and interest and passively awaits possession by God. This is much more akin to Hinduism than to biblical prayer.

Consider 1 Peter 5:8, which says the believer is to be sober and vigilant, continually alert for spiritual danger. The Bible does not say the mind should be passive in prayer. To the contrary, the believer is to gird up the mind (1 Pet. 1:13) and watch in prayer (Col. 4:2). That describes a use of the mind. We are to love the Lord with all our hearts AND all our minds (Lk. 10:27). The Bible does not play the heart against the mind as Madame Guyon did. In fact, the two are often used synonymously in Scripture.

4. She looked for God within herself.

In her book on prayer Guyon says, “God is, indeed found with facility, when we seek Him within ourselves.”

In her autobiography, Guyon says that when she was 19 years old a Catholic Franciscan monk told her, “It is, madame, because you seek without what you have within. Accustom yourself to seek God in your heart, and you will there find Him.”

Though she was a Roman Catholic and she did not profess a scriptural salvation experience, trusting rather in her infant baptism and the sacraments, she began from that point forward looking within herself for God and truth. She prayed:

“O my Lord, Thou wast in my heart, and demanded only a simple turning of my mind inward, to make me perceive Thy presence. Oh, Infinite Goodness! how was I running hither and thither to seek Thee, my life was a burden to me, although my happiness was within myself. ... Alas! I sought Thee where Thou wert not, and did not seek Thee where thou wert. It was for want of understanding these

words of Thy Gospel, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. ... The kingdom of God is within you."

Madame Guyon often misused Scripture, and she did so in this case. In Luke 17:21 Jesus was addressing the unsaved Pharisees, and He certainly was not saying that the kingdom of God was inside of them, because on another occasion He told the Pharisees that their father was the devil (John 8:44). In Luke 17:21 Christ was actually saying that the kingdom of God was right there in the midst of the Pharisees, because He, the King, was there presenting Himself as the Messiah and working miracles as evidence thereof. (For more about this "The Kingdom of God" at <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/kingdom-of-god.html>.)

Further, Jesus taught us to pray to God in Heaven, not to God inside of us. See Matthew 6:9.

5. She believed in sinless perfection.

Madame Guyon believed that her mystical experiences would "devour all that was left of self" and that she would be rid of "troublesome faults" (*Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*, p. 73).

To the contrary, the great apostle Paul testified that in himself dwelt "no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). We are taught in Scripture that the sin nature is not removed in this present life, and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves (1 John 1:8-10).

6. She believed she could achieve a complete union with God, an absorption into God.

Madame Guyon said: "So was my soul lost in God, who communicated to it His qualities, having drawn out of it all that it had of its own." She spoke of being plunged "wholly into God's own divine essence" (Guyon, p. 239).

"... any and all active contemplation on your part is also just preparation for bringing you to a passive state. They are preparations. They are not the end. They are a way to the end. The end is union with God" (Guyon, *Experiencing Union with God through Inner Prayer*).

This is a pagan concept that has no basis in Scripture. The believer is a child of God, but he is not absorbed into God and does not partake of his divine essence. Only Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, can say that He is one with and of the same

essence with God. Christ alone dwells in the light “*which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see*” (1 Tim. 6:15). In Revelation 22:3, in the New Heaven and New Earth, the Bible says that God is still God and “*his servants shall serve him.*” God is God, and though the believer is His child through Christ, he is not God and never will be. When 1 Peter 1:4 speaks of being a “*partaker of the divine nature,*” it refers to partaking of God’s moral qualities, which is what the Bible means when it speaks of man as made in the image of God. Adam was made in God’s image morally, as an upright being, but Adam was not God. 1 Peter 1:4 refers to the same thing as Ephesians 4:24, “*put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,*” and as Colossians 3:10, “*put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.*”

7. She spent her life looking within herself and seeking mystical experiences rather than obeying the great commission of Jesus Christ.

Madame Guyon thought she was caught up with God, but really, she was caught up with herself. She consumed her life largely upon her own personal religious devotions. She did not know the true Gospel of Jesus Christ for herself nor did she carry it to others. Though she spoke of the grace of Christ, it was intermingled with and corrupted by Catholic sacramental heresy.

This has been one of the foundational errors of monastic mysticism from the early centuries until now. God has not called the believer to remove to a remote cave or mountain top hideout or solitary cell, or to sit around looking inside of himself for God, or to seek to put oneself into a passive meditative state, or to be caught up in visions and trances. The Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles did nothing like this. Their prayer and meditation was much more practical than that. And Christ has commanded His churches to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).

Hildegard of Bingen

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was a German nun in the Benedictine order. She was the head of two abbeys and was very influential through her writings. Though the process of her

canonization was not formalized, she has long been called a saint. Pope John XXII mentioned her feast day in 1324 and she was included in Baronius' 16th-century *Roman Martyrology*. Pope Benedict XVI formalized her canonization in October 2012.

Since 1979 her works have enjoyed a revival through the contemplative movement. She is promoted by Richard Foster, who includes an entire chapter by her in his book *Spiritual Classics*. She is also promoted by Matthew Fox, the New Age priest who was ordained as an Episcopalian after being forced out of the Catholic priesthood.

She was put in a Benedictine monastery at age eight to be educated by Jutta von Spanheim, the abbess of the monastery who was an anchoress and practiced silent contemplation. As part of her asceticism an anchoress was devoted to live in a little cell next to a church for her entire life. There was only one door and a little window through which her food and other necessities were passed. The door was commonly locked from the outside, with only one or two people having a key and visitation privileges. They were even called prisons.

“Anchors of both sexes, though from most accounts they seem to be largely women, led an ascetic life, shut off from the world inside a small room, usually built adjacent to a church so that they could follow the services, with only a small window acting as their link to the rest of humanity. Food would be passed through this window and refuse taken out. Most of the time would be spent in prayer, contemplation, or solitary handworking activities, like stitching and embroidering. Because they would become essentially dead to the world, anchors would receive their last rights from the bishop before their confinement in the anchorage. This macabre ceremony was a complete burial ceremony with the anchor laid out on a bier” (“The Life and Works of Hildegard,” <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/med/hildegarde.html>).

At age 15 Hildegard became a Benedictine nun.

Her extreme asceticism went far beyond merely being locked into an anchorite cell. Her “strict practices of fasting and self-punishment, resulted in a lifetime of health problems and migraine headaches” (John Talbot, *The Way of the Mystics*, p. 55). She

recommended constant fasting, abstinence from meat, and “maceration of the flesh and heavy beatings” as the means of overcoming fleshly desires.

Hildegard is alleged to have had visions from age three to the end of her life. She claimed that by means of the visions she gained the ability to “understand, without any human teaching, the writings of the prophets, the evangelists and of other holy men and those of certain philosophers” (Sabina Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, p. 43).

At age 47 she supposedly received a command from God to write down the visions, and for the next ten years she did so with the help of various secretaries, including a monk named Volmar. She was encouraged in this task by Bernard of Clairvaux, who influenced the pope to approve of her visions. She called them “the secret mysteries of God.”

Her visions are contained in three books, *Scivias* (*Know the Ways*), *Liber vitae meritorum* (*Book of Life's Merits*), and *Liber diuinorum operum* (*Book of the Divine Works*).

Hildegard said that while in vision she lost all bodily sensation.

“At a later time I saw a mysterious and wonderful vision so that my inmost core was convulsed and I lost all bodily sensation, as my knowledge was altered to another mode, unknown to myself” (Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, p. 141).

She allegedly saw images of each person in the Godhead, which the Bible says is impossible (John 1:18; 4:46).

She said that God told her that men should confess their sins into “the ear of the priest” (auricular confession) and the priest “is the judge in place of my Son” (*Book of Life's Merits*, I, chapt. 79).

She saw the Roman Catholic Church covered with the blood of Christ, even though it denies His gospel of grace, perpetually offers Christ anew on its altars, worships him in a piece of bread, and exalts Mary at least as highly as Christ.

She claimed that marriage was a result of man's fall, whereas the Bible says marriage was instituted by God before the fall (Genesis 2:20-25). God had instructed the man and woman to be fruitful and multiply before the fall (Gen. 1:27-28).

She claimed that God told her that the forbidden fruit was the apple (*Scivias*, I, vision 2, chapter 13). In fact, it was the fruit of a unique tree called the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:16-17).

She falsely claimed that the end of history was at hand in her day.

Like some of the other Catholic mystics, Hildegard included the female element in her understanding of God (*Christian Mystics*, p. 82).

She was deeply committed to devotion to Mary and dedicated many songs to her, including one entitled “Praise for the Mother.”

Hildegard’s visions described purgatory, even though there is no such teaching in Scripture, and in fact Scripture says that sins are purged fully and only by the cross of Jesus Christ. She described purgatory as a place of fire, a stinking marsh, punishing spirits, fiery thorns, spikes, toads, horrible worms, vipers, and scorpions.

Following are two of her visions of purgatory:

“For the torments of these punishments purge the souls, who, living in the transitory world deserved there the purgation of their sins through punishment in the non-transitory [world]. They were not fully purged in the flesh, having been prevented by death, or even tried in the world by the divine flails of compassionate God. Therefore they will be purged by these punishments, unless they are snatched from them by the labours of men and the virtues of the saints, which God worked in them through the invocation of the piety of divine grace” (*Book of Life’s Merits*, I, chapt. 77, cited from Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, p. 77).

“And I saw a horrendous place, full of fiery thorns and spikes and horrible worms, through which wicked spirits harried with fiery whips the souls of those who while they were in their bodies in the world stood for all kinds of injustice. And because they upheld injustice in word and deed, they are punished with thorns and spikes; and since they preserved bitterness in it, they are tortured by worms; and since they were merciful to no one through injustice they are afflicted by the wicked spirits with fiery whips.

And I saw and understood these things” (*Book of Life’s Merits*, IV, chapt. 43).

Hildegard believed that souls could be rescued from purgatory through “the recitation of psalms for the dead, almsgiving, prayers, and other holy works.”

She believed that man is one with the universe.

“O man, look to man. For man has the heavens and earth and other created things within him. He is one, and all things are hidden within him” (*Causae et curae*, I, chapt. 4).

Hildegard even wrote on health issues and prescribed remedies. Her works on medicine and science were published under the titles *Physica* (*Natural History*) and *Causae et curae* (*Causes and Cures*). They are known collectively as *Subtilitates diversarum naturarum creaturarum* (*The Subtleties of the Diverse Natures of Created Things*).

Her medical works are still consulted in the alternative health movement, but they are unscientific in the extreme, involving curative stones, incantations, and prescriptions of various herbs, etc., with the objective of balancing the “humours in the body,” which is an occultic rather than a scientific view.

“Her views were derived from the ancient Greek cosmology of the four elements--fire, air, water, and earth--with their complementary qualities of heat, dryness, moisture, and cold, and the corresponding four humours in the body--choler (yellow bile), blood, phlegm, and melancholy (black bile). Human constitution was based on the preponderance of one or two of the humours. Indeed, we still use words ‘choleric’, ‘sanguine’, ‘phlegmatic’ and ‘melancholy’ to describe personalities. Sickness upset the delicate balance of the humours, and only consuming the right plant or animal which had that quality you were missing, could restore the healthy balance to the body. That is why in giving descriptions of plants, trees, birds, animals, stones, Hildegard is mostly concerned in describing that object’s quality and giving its medicinal use. Thus, ‘Reyan (tansy) is hot and a little damp and is good against all superfluous flowing humours and whoever suffers from catarrh and has a cough, let him eat

tansy. It will bind humors so that they do not overflow, and thus will lessen” (“The Life and Works of Hildegard,” <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/med/hildegarde.html>).

Jewel therapy formed a significant part of Hildegard’s medical practice.

“[The emerald] is a specific for pain in the heart, stomach, or side, epilepsy, headache, colds, and sores. The cure is effected by external application in most cases, although sometimes just looking at the jewel while repeating a religious charm will produce the desired effect; alternatively, it can be placed in wine which is then drunk.

“... Hildegard’s account is heavily biased towards their magical qualities. Thus the sapphire can be used to improve intellectual powers if held in the mouth for a short while on rising in the morning, or used to free those possessed by malignant spirits if hung in a bag round the neck. Topaz indicates the presence of poison in food, and so should be worn in a ring and frequently inspected. However, even these virtues are somehow connected with the amount of heat or cold possessed by the stone, thus ‘Alabaster is not rightly hot or cold, but is lukewarm and so it is that there is almost no medical use for it’” (Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, p. 87).

For “libidinous cravings,” she recommended the sparrowhawk. The grease was to be caught during the cooking process and mixed with other things. If the woman put some of this in her naval, her “ardor” would be gone in a month (*Physica*, VI, chap. 20)!

For epileptic seizure, she recommended tying glowworms in a cloth and placing it on the stomach.

For jaundice, the sufferer must tie a bat onto his back and then onto his stomach until it dies.

Deafness is cured by placing a lion’s ear on the deaf person’s ear.

Baldness is cured by spreading bear’s grease mixed with the ash of wheat straw on the head and leaving it there as long as possible.

Drunkenness is cured by dunking a small female dog in water and using that water to bathe the head.

For an infestation of fleas, the sufferer is instructed to dry some dirt by heating it in a vessel and then sprinkle it on his bed, “and

when the fleas sense the dryness they cannot stand it and depart and perish, and thus one can have peace from them.”

For a suspected poisoning, she recommended that powdered steel be placed in the person’s food. This “will attenuate the poison, although the person who eats it may still fall ill.”

As a preventative against poisoning, she suggested making a potpourri of certain dried plants and smelling it every day.

Hildegard even mentions the mythical “griffin” (a cross between a lion and an eagle) in her list of 72 birds and insects.

Ignatius of Loyola

Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) was the founder of the Jesuits or the Society of Jesus. He was pronounced a saint in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV.

Ignatius was “converted” by reading the legendary lives of Catholic saints (in *The Life of Christ* by Ludolph of Saxony and *The Golden Legend* by Jacopo of Varazze) and by allegedly seeing a vision of the baby Jesus in Mary’s arms. Ignatius vowed to “serve only God and the Roman pontiff, His vicar on earth.”

He also dedicated himself to Mary. At the pilgrimage site of Our Lady of Arantzazu in Spain he made a vow of chastity to her and entrusted himself to her protection and patronage. He spent an entire night venerating the Black Virgin at the Abbey of Montserrat near Barcelona and surrendered his sword and dagger to her (<http://www.ignatiushistory.info/conversion.html>).

Loyola’s asceticism was very extreme. He lived for a year in a cave, wearing rags, never bathing, and begging for his food. All of this was an effort to do penance for his sins. He scourged and starved himself and slept very little. He taught that “penance” for sin requires “chastising the body by inflicting sensible pain on it” through “wearing hairshirts, cords, or iron chains on the body, or by scourging or wounding oneself, and by other kinds of austerities” (*The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, First Week, Vintage Spiritual Classics, p. 31).

The Society of Jesus was approved in 1540 by Pope Paul III with the papal bull “Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae” (To the Government of the Church Militant) and was a major part of the brutal Counter

Reformation. The Jesuits were called the pope's "shock troops." By 1650 there were 15,000 of them operating throughout the world. Pope Paul was a staunch proponent of the Inquisition and the founder of the Council of Trent, which issued curses against those who refused to accept Catholic doctrine.

Ignatius' Jesuits took a vow of complete submission to the pope, the superiors of their order, and the Catholic Church. They were determined "to go without questioning wherever the pope might direct," and were instructed as follows: "Let every one persuade himself that he who lives under obedience should be moved and directed, under Divine Providence, by his superior, JUST AS IF HE WERE A CORPSE, which allows itself to be moved and led in any direction."

In his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius taught absolute obedience to Rome:

"WE MUST PUT ASIDE ALL JUDGMENT OF OUR OWN, and keep the mind ever ready and prompt to obey in all things the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, our holy Mother, the hierarchical Church. We should praise sacramental confession ... the frequent hearing of Mass ... vows of religion ... relics of the saints by venerating them ... the regulations of the Church ... images and veneration of them. ... Finally, we must praise all the commandments of the Church, and be on the alert to find reasons to defend them, and by no means in order to criticize them. ... If we wish to proceed securely in all things, we must hold fast to the following principle: WHAT SEEMS TO ME WHITE, I WILL BELIEVE BLACK IF THE HIERARCHICAL CHURCH SO DEFINES" (*The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Vintage Books edition, Rules, 352-362, 365, pp. 124-124).

The members of Ignatius' Society were willing to lie, steal, and kill for the pope and for their immediate superiors. The Jesuits plotted and often succeeded in the violent overthrow of governments and the assassination of non-Catholic leaders. They were instigated in the Gunpowder Plot, which was an attempt in November 1605 to kill King James I and the members of the British Parliament. Six months earlier Guy Fawkes had taken a

solemn oath with his co-conspirators, which oath “was then sanctified by the performing of mass and the administering of the sacraments by the Jesuit priest John Gerard in an adjoining room” (David Herber, “Guy Fawkes,” <http://www.britannia.com/history/g-fawkes.html>).

Ignatius is very influential in the modern contemplative movement through his *Spiritual Exercises*. These emphasize purifying oneself through asceticism and using the imagination in prayer. The *Spiritual Exercises* is intended to be a handbook for retreat directors, and it takes about a month to go through the entire course.

The first three weeks correspond to the three-fold path of Catholic mysticism. Week One is a time of “purgation” and purifying through confession and asceticism. Week Two is a time of “illumination” by meditating on Christ. Week Three is “unitive,” characterized by intimate and habitual union with God.”

Visualization prayer is a central part of Ignatius’ exercises. The practitioner is to spend four or five hours each day in this practice. He is to walk into biblical and extra-biblical historical scenes through the imagination and bring the scene to life by applying all five senses, seeing the events, hearing what people are saying, smelling, tasting, and touching things--all within the realm of pure imagination. He is even to put himself into the scene, talking to the people and serving them. Ignatius encourages practitioners, for example, to imagine themselves present at Jesus’ birth and crucifixion.

Consider some excerpts:

“Imagine Christ our Lord present before you upon the cross, and begin to speak with him ...” (First Week, 53).

“Here it will be to see in imagination the length, breadth, and depth of hell. ... to see in imagination the vast fires, and the souls enclosed ... to hear the wailing ... with the sense of smell to perceive the smoke ... to taste the bitterness ... to touch the flames” (First Week, fifth exercise, 65-70).

“I will see and consider the Three Divine Persons, seated on the royal dais or throne of the Divine Majesty ... I will see our Lady and the angels saluting her. ... [I will see] our

Lady, St. Joseph, the maid, and the Child Jesus after His birth. I will make myself a poor little unworthy slave, and as though present, look upon them, contemplate them, and serve them..." (Second Week, 106, 114).

"While one is eating, let him imagine he sees Christ our Lord and His disciples at the table, and consider how He eats and drinks, how He looks, how He speaks, and then strive to imitate Him" (Third Week, 214).

Visualization prayer has become very popular and widespread within the modern contemplative movement, but it is heretical.

First of all, visualization prayer is disobedience. The Bible contains everything we need for faith and practice. It is able to make the man of God "*perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible contains everything we need to learn how to pray correctly, and it says nothing whatsoever about imagination prayer. This is not the type of prayer that Jesus taught us to pray (Matthew 6:9-15).

Second, visualization prayer is vain and foolish because it is pure fantasy. We can't imagine Jesus' birth beyond the simple facts described in Scripture. We don't know what Mary or Joseph or baby Jesus or the room or the manger or the angels or the shepherds or the wise men looked like. We don't know what they said to one another. We don't know the temperature or the exact smells and tastes. If I try to imagine such things I am entering into the realm of pure fantasy.

Third, visualization prayer is not faith. Faith is not based on imagination; it is based on Scripture. "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17). God has given us everything we need in Scripture and our part is to believe what God says. "*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*" (John 20:31).

Fourth, visualization prayer is presumptuous because it goes beyond divine Revelation. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "*The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.*" By going beyond what the Bible says and

trying to delve into Bible history through the imagination, I am leaving the revealed things and entering the secret things.

Fifth, visualization prayer is dangerous. It is dangerous because it adds to Scripture. If I get in the habit of visualizing Bible scenes, I can easily think that my visualizations are authoritative. I can fall into Rome's error of accepting extra-biblical revelations. It is also dangerous because demonic entities can involve themselves in my vain imaginings. Satan influenced Peter's thinking (Mat. 16:22-23), and he can certainly influence mine if I venture into forbidden realms.

Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* are filled with **Mary veneration**. The practitioner is instructed to pray the *Hail Mary* many times and to ask Mary for grace.

“A colloquy should be addressed to our Lady, asking her to obtain for me from her Son and Lord the grace to be received under His standard...” (Second Week, 147).

Ignatius also recommended praying *Hail Holy Queen* (“Three Methods of Prayer,” p. 258). This blasphemous prayer addresses Mary as holy Queen, the Mother of Mercy, our life, our love, our hope, and most gracious advocate:

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy,
our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve;
to thee do we send up our sighs,
mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn then, most gracious advocate,
thine eyes of mercy toward us;
and after this our exile,
show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.

Ignatius taught a works gospel, which is cursed by God according to Galatians 1:6-8.

He says that some are in hell “because though they believed they did not keep the Commandments” (First Week, Fifth Exercise, 71).

He says it is “necessary for salvation” “that as far as possible I so subject and humble myself as to obey the law of God our Lord in all things” (Week Two, “Three Kinds of Humility,” 165).

Ignatius promoted the use of **spiritual directors**. One of his practices, called Revelation of Thoughts, involves examining one's soul and exposing its contents to a director. It is based on the heresy of Catholic confession.

Ignatius promoted the repetitious **Breath prayer**, which he called "a measured rhythmical recitation." He described this as follows:

"With each breath or respiration, one should pray mentally while saying a single word of the *Our Father*, or other prayer that is being recited, in such a way that from one breath to another a single word is said" (*The Spiritual Exercises*, "Three Methods of Prayer," p. 258).

The Lord Jesus forbade vain repetitions in prayer (Matthew 6:6-7).

Next to Ignatius' tomb in the Chiesa del Gesu, the Jesuit headquarters in Rome, is a 16th century statue depicting Mary violently casting Protestant Reformers Martin Luther and John Huss out of heaven because of their doctrines of "scripture alone" and "grace alone." The statue's title is "The Triumph of the Faith over Heresy" and it was created by Pietro Le Gros. It depicts official Catholic doctrine that was encapsulated in the proclamations of the Council of Trent, which issued a curse against any person who believes that the Bible *alone* is the standard for faith or that salvation is by the grace of Christ *alone*. In spite of the ecumenical ventures of the Catholic Church in recent decades, the Council of Trent has never been rescinded and was quoted authoritatively by the Vatican II Council of the 1960s. The same monument in the Jesuit Church features an angel gleefully tearing up a small book, depicting either "heretical" Protestant books or the vernacular Bible translations that were condemned by Rome.

Jager, Willigis

Willigis Jager (b. 1926) is a German Benedictine priest at the Munsterschwarzach Abbey in Wurzburg, Germany.

He is well-known in the German-speaking world, and some of his books on contemplation have been translated into English. These include *The Way to Contemplation: Encountering God Today*

(Paulist Press, 1986) and *Contemplation: A Christian Path* (Liguori Press, 1994).

In 1975 he moved to Japan and spent six years studying Zen Buddhism under Yamada Koun Roshi at the Sanbo Kyodan school in Kamakura. (*Roshi* is the title of a Zen master.) In 1981 he was authorized as a Zen teacher and took the name Ko-un Roshi. He moved back to Germany and began teaching Zen at the Munsterschwarzach Abbey, drawing as many as 150 people a day.

In February 2002 he was ordered by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (currently Pope Benedict XVI) to cease all public activities. He was “faulted for playing down the Christian concept of God as a person and for stressing mystical experience above doctrinal truths” (“Two More Scholars Censured by Rome,” *National Catholic Reporter*, March 1, 2002).

Thus, Ratzinger tried to stem the tide of eastern mysticism that is flooding into the Catholic monastic communities, but he was extremely inconsistent in this objective and ultimately ineffectual.

Jager kept quiet for a little while, but soon he was speaking and writing again. In 2003 Liguori Press published *Search for the Meaning of Life: Essays and Reflections on the Mystical Experience*, and in 2006 Liguori published *Mysticism for Modern Times: Conversations with Willigis Jager*, edited by Christoph Quarch.

Jager denies the creation and fall of man as taught in the Bible. He denies the unique divinity of Christ, as well as His substitutionary atonement and bodily resurrection.

Jager believes that the universe is evolving and that the evolving universe is God. He believes that man has reached a major milestone in evolution, that he is entering an era in which his consciousness will be transformed. This is similar to the New Age doctrine taught by Teilhard de Chardin.

“The quest for the meaning of life, the search for our true essence, or--as we Christians usually say--for God, is part of the basic principle of evolution. Actually it isn't a search at all. RATHER THE DIVINE IS UNFOLDING IN US AND THROUGH US. The Divine comes to consciousness in us. We think that as human beings we are on a quest for God. But we're not the ones searching for the Ultimate Reality. Rather it is the Ultimate Reality that causes the

dissatisfied yearning and the search in us. God is the seeker. God awakens in us. We ourselves can't do anything; we can only let go so the Divine can unfold itself. We can only 'get out of God's way,' as Eckhart says. The essential nature reveals itself if only we don't prevent it. And if there is a redemption, then we are redeemed from being possessed by our ego so that our real selves can spread their wings" (*Search for the Meaning of Life*, chapter one).

This is New Age paganism. It says that man is not separated from God and that, in fact, man is God if he would only open his eyes and realize it. It says that man is not a sinner that needs to be redeemed by the blood of Christ. He doesn't need to repent and believe in Christ as Lord and Saviour; he simply needs to be "redeemed" from the false idea that he is a mere creature.

Jager believes in the divinity of man, that what Christ is every man can become.

"In Jesus becoming human we now possess the potential to become Divine" (*Search for the Meaning of Life*).

In a sermon on 1 Corinthians 11:24 Jager said

"Christ is saying: 'This is me. There is no difference between this bread and me.' Does bread not stand in this moment for the whole of creation, as a symbol for everything that has been created? DOES CHRIST NOT FURTHER SAY THERE, THAT THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD AND HIS CREATION? ... Similarly Master Eckhart says in *Beati paupers*: 'If I had not been God would not have been: that God is God, for this I am the cause; would I not exist; God would not be God.' In his sermon 'Qui audit me' we read further: 'The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me. MY EYE AND GOD'S EYE ARE ONE AND THE SAME'" ("This Is My Body," *Monastic Interreligious Dialogue Bulletin*, Oct. 1982).

Jager believes that the creation is God and that God is in the creation.

"The physical world, human beings, and everything that is are all forms of the Ultimate Reality, all expressions of

God, all ‘one with the Father’” (*Contemplation: A Christian Path*, p. 93).

This statement contains the heresies of pantheism, panentheism, universalism, and the Fatherhood of God.

Believing that all religions point to the same God, Jager promotes interfaith dialogue as the key to unifying mankind.

“Religion may be compared to a glass window. It remains dark unless it is lit from behind. The light itself is not visible but in the window of religion it takes on a structure and becomes comprehensible to everyone. Although religion tends to bind its followers to the structure of the window, the ultimate thing is not the window but the light that shines behind it. Only those who see the light of God behind all the structures can realise the meaning and goal of religion. The danger is that the symbols and images of God will obscure rather than illuminate the reality they are supposed to shed light on” (*Search for the Meaning of Life*).

Jager learned these heretical pagan doctrines from his close association with Zen Buddhism and his mindless mysticism.

He says:

“Do not reflect on the meaning of the word; thinking and reflecting must cease, as all mystical writers insist. Simply ‘sound’ the word silently, letting go of all feelings and thoughts” (*Contemplation: A Christian Path*, 1994, p. 31).

At a contemplative retreat in July 1985 at Mount Angel Abbey in Oregon, Jager said the aim of Christian prayer is transcendental contemplation in which the practitioner enters a deeper level of consciousness. This requires emptying the mind, which is achieved by focusing on one’s breathing and repeating a mantra. This “quiets the rational mind,” “empties the mind,” and “frustrates our ordinary discursive thinking” (James Conner, “Contemplative Retreat for Monastics,” *Monastic Interreligious Dialogue Bulletin*, Oct. 1985).

Jager draws particularly from Johannes Tauler, Meister Eckhart, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, and *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

He says that as the rational thinking is emptied and transformed, one “seems to lose orientation” and must “go on in blind faith and trust.” He says that there is “nothing to do but

surrender” to “this pure blackness” where “no image or thought of God remains.”

This is idolatry. To reject the Revelation God has given of Himself and to attempt to find Him beyond this through blind mysticism is to trade the true and living God for an idol.

The report on this contemplative retreat in the *Monastic Interreligious Dialogue Bulletin* noted:

“The mystics call this the real way of prayer: pursuing the meditation to the ultimate frontiers of God Who is beyond all thoughts or images. The goal of contemplation is to experience purely the Divine Being, without experiencing ourselves as the gazer. ... The essential part of mysticism is NADA [nothing]”

John of the Cross

John of the Cross (1542-1591) was born Juan de Yepes Alvarez in Spain and was a Carmelite friar and priest, a mystic, and a major figure in the Counter Reformation. He was canonized by Pope Benedict XIII in 1726 and his “feast day” is December 14.

He is called the “doctor of mystic theology,” and because of the contemplative movement his writings are more popular today than ever.

He was partly educated by the Jesuits, and in 1563, at age 20, he entered the Carmelite Order, which is dedicated to Mary, and took the name Juan de Santo Maria (John of Saint Mary). He was ordained a priest four years later and was attracted to solitary and silent contemplation. He met Teresa of Avila and they joined forces to establish the Discalced (barefoot) Carmelites.

He was highly ascetic from an early age, so abusing his body that the *Catholic Encyclopedia* says that “twice he was saved from certain death by the intervention of the Blessed Virgin.”

His mystical objective was the soul’s union with God, and he believed that this requires that the soul first be emptied of self and purified of all traces of earthly dross. This is a false gospel of salvation as well as a false doctrine of sanctification, that of works. He taught that one had to go through “the dark night of the soul” during this journey. This is actually the spiritual darkness of Catholic mysticism.

He wrote poems (*Spiritual Canticle* and *Dark Night of the Soul*) describing the mystical search of the soul for God. He also wrote treatises on this subject. He spoke of a “nothing” (*nada*) experience achieved through mysticism, which sounds far more like Hinduism than biblical Christianity.

John promoted the “path of the negative,” which refers to pursuing God through blind experience rather than through defining God by Bible doctrine and knowing Him through faith in divine revelation. John’s “via negative” practice is “founded on the awareness that any and all attempts to define God are inadequate. One can better say that God is not, for God is not an idea, not a concept...” (*Living with Wisdom*, p. 106). This is blind mysticism and idolatry. If one’s pursuit of God is not confined by the revelation of Scripture, the seeker is left to his own imagination and doctrines of devils.

John is said to have lived “in intimate union with God and his Mother” (“St. John of the Cross,” Doctors of the Catholic Church web site).

John held to a pantheistic doctrine, saying, “My beloved [God] is the high mountains, and the lovely valley forests, unexplored islands, rushing rivers” (Timothy Freke, *The Spiritual Canticle: The Wisdom of the Christian Mystics*, p. 60).

Johnston, William

William Johnston (b. 1925) is a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest and an authority on Zen Buddhism. He is based at the Sophia University in Tokyo and promotes the syncretization of Catholic contemplative practices with eastern paganism.

He teaches meditative practices in his books such as *The Still Point* (1970), *The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing* (1978), *The Inner Eye of Love: Mysticism and Religion* (1978), and *The Mystical Way: Silent Music and the Wounded Stag* (1993).

He believes that everyone is called to pursue mysticism, calling it a “universal vocation,” and says that “the Spirit of God is working in the modern world to create a need” for mystical experience.

He says that meditation “goes beyond ordinary reasoning,” that it is entering “into silence--WITHOUT WORDS, WITHOUT REASONING, WITHOUT THINKING ... into the nothingness, into the emptiness, into the darkness” (“Interview with William Johnston,” *Compass*, Mar. 2, 1997).

He says:

“When one enters the deeper layers of contemplative prayer one sooner or later experiences the void, the emptiness, the nothingness ... the profound mystical silence ... AN ABSENCE OF THOUGHT” (*Letters to Contemplatives*, p. 13)

Johnston’s mysticism is deeply syncretistic and his own doctrine has been heavily influenced by his close association with pagan religions.

He makes the universalistic New Age proclamation, “For God is the core of my being and the core of all beings” (*The Mystical Way*, 1993, p. 224).

Johnston admits that Catholic mysticism borrows from eastern pagan religions.

“The twentieth century, which has seen so many revolutions, is now witnessing THE RISE OF A NEW MYSTICISM WITHIN CHRISTIANITY. ... For the new mysticism has learned much from the great religions of Asia. It has felt the impact of yoga and Zen and the monasticism of Tibet. It pays attention to posture and breathing; it knows about the music of the mantra and the silence of Samadhi” (*The Mystical Way: Silent Music and the Wounded Stag*, foreword).

He directly associates the practice of Catholic centering prayer with Hinduism and Buddhism:

“What I can safely say, however, is that there is a Christian Samadhi that has always occupied an honored place in the spirituality of the West. This, I believe, is the thing that is nearest to Zen. It is this that I have called Christian Zen” (*Lord, Teach Us to Pray*, 1991, p. 54).

Samadhi is the Hindu concept of achieving oneness with God through yoga.

In *The Inner Eye of Love* (1981), Johnston uses Hindu terminology of “the third eye” to describe meditative practices. He says the third eye is between the eyebrows and is “an eye of insight where you see more deeply into things.”

“I believe the Gospel is speaking about the third eye. And that’s where enlightenment comes; that’s where the awakening comes. That’s where the seeing comes, in the third, the ‘inner eye.’ Now in the Western tradition, in the Gospel, it’s not precisely located, but in Hinduism and so on, it’s here. They sometimes have the red spot in the third eye. I think it’s quite an important concept for mysticism--the notion of awakening” (*Compass*, Mar. 2, 1997).

In *The Inner Eye of Love* Johnston describes contemplative practices in Hindu-Buddhist terms as a never-ending “downward journey” that brings the practitioner into union with God. He also associates “Christian” mysticism with that “of all the great religions.

“In the mystical life one passes from one layer to the next in an inner or downward journey to the core of the personality where dwells the great mystery called God--God who cannot be known directly, cannot be seen (for no man has ever seen God) and who dwells in thick darkness. This is the never-ending journey which is recognizable in the mysticism of all the great religions. It is a journey towards union because the consciousness gradually expands and integrates data from the so-called unconscious while the whole personality is absorbed into the great mystery of God” (p. 127).

Julian of Norwich

Julian of Norwich (1342-1423), whom Thomas Merton called “the greatest of the English mystics,” had a series of sixteen intense visions that she described in her writings. She lived at about the same time as the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

The study of her life and writings has experienced a great revival in recent years, and there are contemplative “Julian Meetings” dedicated to this pursuit (*Christian Mystics*, p. 134).

She was an extreme ascetic, an anchoress who walled herself off from society for 20 years, living in a tiny cell with one small window that gave her a view of a Catholic altar and the Eucharistic host of the Mass. Her food was passed through this window.

The fact that she had a window looking onto the altar is significant. She was venerating the host as Christ.

Her visions are described in *Showings, or Revelations of Divine Love*. It is the first book known to have been written by a woman in English. She claims to have witnessed Christ's sufferings on the cross. Her visions also exalt Mary.

Julian held many peculiar heresies in addition to the ones she got from Rome. She believed that God and Jesus are our Mother, that God lives in all men, that God is all things and is in all things, that sin is not shameful but honorable, and that God has no wrath.

She said, "God rejoices that he is our Mother," and she addressed Christ as "Very Mother, Jesus."

Her most famous saying is a positive confession mantra: "All is well, and every kind of thing will be well."

This statement is true for the born again child of God who is walking in God's will (Romans 8:28), but it certainly not true for the unsaved and for those who are walking in disobedience to God. It is more akin to a New Age mantra, which denies the fall and man's separation from God and God's holy justice and salvation by substitutionary atonement, than a proper expression of Christian doctrine.

Following are some of her statements:

"We should highly rejoice that God dwells in our soul and still more highly should we rejoice that our soul dwells in God. Our soul is made to be God's dwelling place, and the dwelling place of our soul is God who was never made" ("Julian of Norwich, Lighthouse Trails Research).

"And I saw no difference between God and our Substance: but as it were all God" ("Julian of Norwich," Lighthouse Trails Research).

"I saw that God is in all things" (quoted by Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, 1988, p. 123).

“God also showed that sin would be no shame but an honour to man, for just as for every sin there is an answering pain in reality, so for every sin bliss is given to the same soul” (quoted by Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend*, p. 146).

“In Julian’s theology, we find the fullest expression of the concept of the femininity of God. ‘God is really our Mother as he is Father,’ she says. ‘Our precious Mother Jesus brings us to supernatural birth, nourishes and cherishes us by dying for us, giving us the sacrament’” (Leech, *Soul Friend*).

“And so Jesus is our true Mother in nature by our first creation, and he is our true Mother in grace by his taking our created nature” (“Julian of Norwich,” Lighthouse Trails Research).

“The Second Person of the Trinity is our mother in nature, in our substantial making. In him we are grounded and rooted, and he is our mother by mercy in our sensuality, by taking flesh” (Julian of Norwich,” Lighthouse Trails Research).

“I it am. The greatness and goodness of the Father, I it am; the wisdom and kindness of the Mother, I it am” (“Julian of Norwich,” Lighthouse Trails Research).

“For in man is God, and God is in all. And I hope by the grace of God he that beholdeth it thus shall be truly taught and mightily comforted” (Julian of Norwich,” Lighthouse Trails Research).

“One aspect of her writing that is most liberating, is her assertion that there is no wrath in God. This speaks to a world, where, if there is any awareness of God at all, there is an awareness that God is a God of judgment and anger; an image of God with a big stick waiting to get one!” (Diocese of Johannesburg, quoted by Lighthouse Trails Research).

Keating, Thomas

See M. Basil Pennington.

Kelsey, Morton

Morton T. Kelsey (1917-2001) was an Episcopalian priest, a liberal theologian, and a Jungian psychologist who promoted Catholic contemplative practices. He was a long time professor at the University of Notre Dame.

His book *The Other Side of Silence* promotes silent meditation, the Jesus prayer, Zen, yoga, visualization prayer, dream analysis, and journaling.

As a Jungian, Kelsey believed that through mysticism the individual could delve beyond the “false self” to the true Self or Other, which is God. “Kelsey, who learned his version of Christian mysticism by integrating many diverse religious practices with the depth psychology of Carl Jung, claimed that below our rational consciousness lays a whole inner world where one meets the ‘Other’” (Bob DeWaay, “Contemporary Christian Divination,” *Critical Issues Commentary*, Issue 83).

Kelsey acknowledged that individuals who practice deep meditation can develop psychic abilities, but he ignored the fact that this is occultic:

“A person may become open to telepathy and thus know what is going on in other people’s minds, to precognition ... to clairvoyance ... or to psychokinesis [controlling objects with one’s mind]. These capacities are often found among Hindu gurus, Zen masters, or anyone who uses deep meditation, as well as among Christian saints. They appear to be one of the results of continued meditation” (*The Other Side of Silence*, 1995 edition, p. 150).

Kelsey encouraged his readers to borrow from pagan religions, ignoring the Bible’s warning about trying the spirits and being constantly sober and vigilant.

“When we are clear enough about our own point of view, we can find help in the methods of Eastern Christianity or in the ways of the Far East, perhaps by consulting the *I Ching* or through mandala contemplation; we may even find help in the ways of shamanism or Islam” (*The Other Side of Silence*, p. 151).

Kelsey taught the use of visualization and exhorted his readers not to fear when the visualizations took on a life of their own! He quoted from Carl Jung, who communicated with a spirit guide throughout most of his life:

“In the same way, when you concentrate on a mental picture, IT BEGINS TO STIR, the image becomes enriched by details, it moves and develops. Each time, naturally, you mistrust it and have the idea that you have just made it up, that it is merely your own invention” (Jung, *Analytical Psychology*, quoted in Kelsey, *The Other Side of Silence*, p. 226).

Kelsey then comments:

“It is usually not too difficult for most people to start the process by concentrating on something graphic. The hard part comes in realizing THAT SOMETHING COULD MOVE UNEXPECTEDLY INSIDE US WITHOUT OUR CONSCIOUS DIRECTION. That is why it is so vital in developing imagination, meditation, or contemplation TO REALIZE THAT OUR EGO IS NOT THE ONLY FORCE OPERATING WITHIN US” (*The Other Side of Silence*, p. 227).

Since Kelsey didn't believe the Bible, viewing it largely as myth, he didn't understand that when images “stir” and “move unexpectedly” and take on a life of their own, it is because one has entered the realm of the demonic.

Kelsey was a big promoter of Jungian dream interpretation, and taught this through the following books: *Dreams: The Dark Speech of the Spirit* (1968), *God, Dreams, and Revelation* (1974), *Dreams: A Way to Listen to God* (1978), *Adventure Inward* (1980), and *Symbols, Dreams and Visions* (1988).

Bob DeWaay reports:

Kelsey was a leader in exploring this means of gaining information from the spirit world. Kelsey relied on the research and teaching of Carl Jung. According to Kelsey, Jung believed that the unconscious mind thinks symbolically or metaphorically (*God, Dreams, and Revelation*, 1991, p. 172). Kelsey shares his understanding of Jung's thinking: “The task of dream interpretation, according to Jung, is that of learning a strange language

with many nuances, of learning to understand the symbolic communications of the unconscious--the language of art, literature, mythology, and folklore. He saw no attempt on the part of the unconscious to deceive or distort' (Ibid.). Jung believed that the unconscious is connected to a larger spiritual reality, a 'collective unconscious.' Kelsey believed that the Hebrew prophets were tapping into the 'collective unconscious': 'The images of Ezekiel, although little studied in recent years, are well known in song and literature. They are genuine productions of what depth psychology would call the collective unconscious, something from beyond the conscious mind and often beyond the limits of personal experience' (*God, Dreams, and Revelation*, p. 45).

Kelsey followed Jung to the belief that the 'Other' as he says, can be found in the unconscious which connects the individual to a spiritual reality. Kelsey said about Jung's experiences and understanding of 'depth psychology': 'From this fact came the certainty that reality, and frequently the best of reality, is found in these depths. This is also reality that demands a religious attitude from people, and it is found only when we allow ourselves to be led by the thinking of the unconscious, symbolic thinking that can be found in fantasy and dream and in myth and story' (*God, Dreams, and Revelation*, p. 173). So following the theories of Carl Jung who had a spirit guide named Philemon, contemporary mystics are looking for meaning from the world of the unconscious mind (a concept not found in the Bible). Dreams are considered a means of access to this world of symbol and myth (Bob DeWaay, "Contemporary Christian Divination," *Critical Issues Commentary*, Issue 83).

Kelsey was a universalist. He never exhorted his readers that they needed to be born again scripturally in order to meet God in their innermost being:

"I believe that the Holy One lives in every soul" (Kelsey, cited from Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing*, p. 67).

"Each and every individual has value. No individual is expendable. Each person has a destiny and unique value to the Divine Lover" (Kelsey, *Companions on the Inner Way*).

“There is a deep hunger that God has hidden in our inner abyss, which continues to draw us to the Divine Lover” (*Companions on the Inner Way*).

One blogger wrote of Kelsey:

“His writings have probably done more to turn me toward Rome and Constantinople for spiritual wisdom than just about anything else!” (<http://pursiful.com/?p=377>).

Kelsey’s book *Reaching the Journey to Fulfillment* features the following recommendation of the goddess worshiper Sue Monk Kidd on the back cover:

“This book grapples with the heart of things, things like love and evil, prayer and dreams, life after death, and a world view that beautifully embraces both the spiritual and physical realms. If you are seeking from life its deepest meaning, this book will set you reaching.”

Kempis, Thomas À

Thomas à Kempis (Thomas of Kempen) (1380-1471) was a German Augustinian monk. His birth name was Thomas Hemerken but his birth place was Kempen, and the name à Kempis was given to him when he entered the priesthood.

He was ordained in the Canons Regular of St. Augustine in 1413. Twelve years later he was elected to the position of sub-prior (prior’s assistant) in the monastery of Mount St. Agnes and in that capacity was responsible for training those who were aspiring to be priests.

He was denied canonization as a saint because when his body was dug up splinters were found embedded under his fingernails (Robert Wilkins, *A History of Man’s Obsessions and Fears*). Apparently he was accidentally buried alive, and the canonization authorities determined that a true saint wouldn’t fight death in such a manner.

Kempis was the author of the very influential contemplative volume, *The Imitation of Christ*. First printed in 1471, it has gone through countless editions and has been translated into more than 50 languages. Ignatius of Loyola read a chapter of this book each day of his life. Therese of Lisieux memorized it before entering the

Carmelite convent. Thomas Merton listed the reading of it as one of the steps to his conversion to Rome.

The Imitation of Christ is composed of four independent treatises, written at different times. It is a series of meditative reflections on the spiritual life of monastics.

It is filled with Catholic heresies. Book IV, for example, is about the sacrament of the Mass. Consider the following statements:

“... how great should be the reverence that I, and every Christian, should have in the presence of this Holy Sacrament when we receive the most excellent Body of Christ?” (*The Imitation of Christ*, Vintage Spiritual Classics, 1998, Book IV, chap. 1, 7, p. 181).

“But, You, my God, the Holy of Holies, the Creator of all things and Lord of angels, are here present before me on this altar!” (Book IV, chap. 1, 8, p. 181).

“But, in the Sacrament of the altar, You, my God, the man Christ Jesus, are fully present...” (Book IV, chap. 1, 8, p. 182).

“This most worthy and most revered Sacrament is the salvation of our soul and body and the medicine for every spiritual illness” (Book IV, chap. 4, 2, p. 189).

Book III and Book IV are written in the form of a dialogue between a disciple and Jesus, and Kempis writes as if Jesus were directly and personally answering questions. Yet this “Jesus” gives instructions that are plainly contrary to Scripture and was thus a false christ.

For example, “Jesus” encourages the invocation of saints (Book III, chap. 57, 7, p. 173). Yet when the Jesus of the Bible taught us to pray, He taught us to pray directly and only to “*our father which art in heaven*” (Mat. 6:9). There is not a hint anywhere in the New Testament that the apostles and disciples prayed to anyone other than God.

Kempis’ *Jesus* taught that “only a priest, duly ordained in the Church, has the power to celebrate Mass and consecrate the Body of Christ” (Book IV, chap. 5, 1, p. 191). In the New Testament, there is no such thing as a consecrated priesthood in the churches. There is only the priesthood of all the believers (1 Pet. 2:5).

Kempis' *Jesus* also taught blind acceptance of the heretical Mass.

“You must avoid all useless prying and investigating into this most august Sacrament, if you do not want to be inundated with doubts” (Book IV, chap. 18, 1, p. 213).

The apostle Paul, writing by divine inspiration, plainly taught that the Lord's Supper is strictly a memorial meal (1 Cor. 11:23-25).

Kempis' *Jesus* said that an inquiry into truth is permissible only if one is ready to follow the “teachings of the Fathers” and “believe His saints” (Book IV, chap. 18, 2, 3, p. 214). Thus, Kempis' *Jesus* did not encourage people to search the Scriptures as the *Jesus* of the Bible did (John 5:39) but taught them rather to trust in human tradition.

Kidd, Sue Monk

Sue Monk Kidd (b. 1948) is a very popular writer. Her first two novels, *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002) and *The Mermaid Chair* (2005), have sold more than 6 million copies and the first one is being produced as a movie. She has also written two popular books on contemplative spirituality: *God's Joyful Surprise* (1988) and *When the Heart Waits* (1990).

She is quoted by evangelicals such as David Jeremiah (*Life Wide Open*), Beth Moore (*When Godly People Do Ungodly Things*), and Richard Foster (*Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*). Kidd's endorsement is printed on the back of Dallas Willard's book *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. She wrote the foreword to the 2006 edition of Henri Nouwen's *With Open Hands* and the introduction to Thomas Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation*.

It is “contemplative spirituality” that changed Kidd's life, and her experience is a loud warning about flirting with Catholic mysticism.

She was raised in a Southern Baptist congregation in southwest Georgia. Her grandfather and father were Baptist deacons. Her grandmother gave devotionals at the Women's Missionary Union, and her mother was a Sunday School teacher. Her husband was a minister who taught religion and a chaplain at a Baptist college. She was very involved in church, teaching Sunday School and

attending services Sunday morning and evening and Wednesday. She describes herself as the person who would have won a contest for “Least Likely to Become a Feminist.” She was even inducted into a group of women called the Gracious Ladies, the criterion for which was that “one needed to portray certain ideals of womanhood, which included being gracious and giving of oneself unselfishly.” She was also a Christian writer and contributing editor to *Guideposts* magazine.

But for years she had felt a spiritual emptiness and lack of contentment. Prayer was “a fairly boring mental activity” (Kidd’s foreword to Henri Nouwen’s *With Open Hands*, 2006, p. 10). She says,

“I had been struggling to come to terms with my life as a woman--in my culture, my marriage, my faith, my church, and deep inside myself” (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, p. 8).

She was thirty years old, had been married about 12 years, and had two children.

Instead of learning how to fill that emptiness and uncertainty with a know-so salvation and a sweet walk with Christ in the Spirit and a deeper knowledge of the Bible, she began dabbling in Catholic mysticism. A Sunday School co-worker gave her a book by the Roman Catholic monk Thomas Merton. She should have known better than to study a book by a man who was committed to a false gospel and should have been warned by the brethren, but the “judge not” New Evangelical philosophy that controls the vast majority of Southern Baptist churches created an atmosphere in which the reading of a Catholic monk’s book by a Sunday School teacher was acceptable. Their thinking goes like this: Who are we to judge what other people read, and who is to say that a Roman Catholic priest might not love the Lord?

Kidd began to practice Catholic forms of contemplative spirituality and to visit Catholic retreat centers and monasteries.

“... beginning in my early thirties I’d become immersed in a journey that was rooted in contemplative spirituality. It was the spirituality of the ‘church fathers,’ of the monks I’d come to know as I made regular retreats in their monasteries. ... I thrived on solitude, routinely practicing

silent meditation as taught by the monks Basil Pennington and Thomas Keating. ... For years, I'd studied Thomas Merton, John of the Cross, Augustine, Bernard, Bonaventure, Ignatius, Eckhart, Luther, Teilhard de Chardin, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and others" (pp. 14, 15).

Of Merton's autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, which she read in 1978 for the first of many times, she says,

"My experience of reading it initiated me into my first real awareness of the interior life, igniting an impulse toward being ... it caused something hidden at the core of me to flare up and become known" (Kidd's introduction to *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 2007, pp. xiii, xi).

Of Merton's book *New Seeds of Contemplation* she says, "[It] initiated me into the secrets of my true identity and woke in me an urge toward realness" and "impacted my spirituality and my writing to this day."

Merton communicated intimately with and was deeply affected by Mary veneration, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sufism, so it is not surprising that his writings would create an appetite that could lead to goddess worship.

In *The New Seeds of Contemplation*, Merton made the following frightening statement that shows the great danger of Catholic mysticism:

"In the end the contemplative suffers the anguish of realizing that HE NO LONGER KNOWS WHAT GOD IS. He may or may not mercifully realize that, after all, this is a great gain, because 'God is not a what,' not a 'thing.' This is precisely one of the essential characteristics of contemplative experience. It sees that there is no 'what' that can be called God" (p. 13).

What Catholic mysticism does is reject the Bible as the sole and sufficient and perfect revelation of God and tries to delve beyond the Bible, even beyond thought of any kind, and find God through mystical "intuition." In other words, it is a rejection of the God of the Bible. It says that God cannot be known by doctrine and cannot be described in words. He can only be experienced through

mysticism. This is a blatant denial of the Bible's claim to be the very Word of God.

This opens the practitioner to demonic delusion. He is left with no perfect objective revelation of God, no divinely-revealed authority by which he can test his mystical experiences and intuitions. He is left with an idol of his own vain imagination (Jeremiah 17:9) and a doctrine of devils.

Kidd's own first two books were on contemplative spirituality.

The involvement in Catholic contemplative practices led her to the Mass and to other sacramental associations.

"I often went to Catholic mass or Eucharist at the Episcopal church, nourished by the symbol and power of this profound feeding ritual" (p. 15).

There is an occultic power in the Mass that has influenced many who have approached it in a receptive, non-critical manner.

She learned dream analysis from a Jungian perspective and believed that her dreams were revelations. One recurring dream featured an old woman. Kidd concluded that this is "the Feminine Self or the voice of the feminine soul" and she was encouraged in her feminist studies by these visitations.

She spent much time with a friend who had a feminist mindset and was "exploring" feminist writings, and she began to read ever more radical feminists, such as Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Elaine Pagels, and Rosemary Radford Ruether.

We are reminded of the Bible's warning, "*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*" (1 Cor. 15:33).

She says, "I began to form what I called my feminist critique" (p. 59). She learned to see "patriarchy" as "a wounder of women and feminine life" (p. 60).

She determined to stop testing things and follow her heart, rejecting the Bible's admonition to "prove all things" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

"I would go through the gate with what Zen Buddhists call 'beginner's mind,' the attitude of approaching something with a mind empty and free, ready for anything, open to everything. ... I would give myself permission to go wherever my quest took me" (p. 140).

She rejected the doctrine that the Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice. In church one day the pastor proclaimed this truth, and she describes the frightful thing that happened in her heart at that moment:

“I remember a feeling rising up from a place about two inches below my navel. ... It was the purest inner knowing I had experienced, and it was shouting in me no, no, no! The ultimate authority of my life is not the Bible; it is not confined between the covers of a book. It is not something written by men and frozen in time. It is not from a source outside myself. My ultimate authority is the divine voice in my own soul. Period. ... That day sitting in church, I believed the voice in my belly. ... The voice in my belly was the voice of the wise old woman. It was my female soul talking. And it had challenged the assumption that the Baptist Church would get me where I needed to go” (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, pp. 76, 77, 78).

She began to think that the Bible is wrong in its teaching about women and that women should not take the subordinate position described therein. She came to believe that Eve might have been a hero instead of a sinner, that eating the forbidden fruit had actually opened Eve’s eyes to her true self. Kidd came to the conclusion that the snake was not evil but “symbolized female wisdom, power, and regeneration” (p. 71). She was surprised and pleased to learn that the snake is depicted as the companion of ancient goddesses, concluding that this is evidence that the Bible is wrong.

She determined that she was willing to lose her marriage, if necessary.

“I would not, could not forfeit my journey for my marriage or for the sake of religious acceptance or success as a ‘Christian writer.’ I would keep moving in my own way to the strains of feminine music that sifted up inside me, not just moving but embracing the dance. ... I felt the crumbling of the old patriarchal foundation our marriage had rested upon in such hidden and subtle ways. Though both of us would always need to compromise, THERE WAS NO MORE SACRIFICING MYSELF, NO MORE REVOLVING AROUND HIM, no more looking to him for validation, trying to be what I thought he needed me to

be. MY LIFE, MY TIME, MY DECISIONS BECAME
NEWLY MY OWN” (pp. 98, 125).

In her case, her husband stayed with her and came to accept her feminist vision, even leaving his job in the Christian college and becoming a psychotherapist, but in many other cases the feminist philosophy has destroyed the marriage. She says, “I’ve met women who in such circumstances have stayed and others who’ve left. Such choices are achingly difficult, but I’ve learned to respect whatever a woman feels she must do.”

It is amazing how self-deceived a person can become, to the point where they are convinced that it is a righteous thing to renounce a solemn marriage vow that was made before God and man.

She rejected God as Father.

“I knew right then and there that the patriarchal church was no longer working for me. The exclusive image of God as heavenly Father wasn’t working, either. I needed a Power of Being that was also feminine” (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, p. 80).

She came to believe in the divinity of man.

“There’s a bulb of truth buried in the human soul that’s ‘only God’ ... the soul is more than something to win or save. It’s the seat and repository of the inner Divine, the God-image, the truest part of us” (*When the Heart Waits*, 1990, pp. 47, 48).

“When we encounter another person ... we should walk as if we were upon holy ground. We should respond as if God dwells there” (*God’s Joyful Surprise*, p. 233).

She began to delve into the worship of ancient goddesses. She traveled with a group of women to Crete where they met in a cave and sang prayers to “the Goddess Skoteini, Goddess of the Dark.” She says, “... something inside me was calling on the Goddess of the Dark, even though I didn’t know her name” (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, p. 93).

Soon she was praying to God as Mother.

“I ran my finger around the rim of the circle on the page and prayed my first prayer to a Divine Feminine presence.

I said, ‘Mothergod, I have nothing to hold me. No place to be, inside or out. I need to find a container of support, a space where my journey can unfold’” (p. 94).

She came to the place where she believed that she is a goddess.

“Divine Feminine love came, wiping out all my puny ideas about love in one driving sweep. Today I remember that event for the radiant mystery it was, how I felt myself embraced by Goddess, how I felt myself in touch with the deepest thing I am. It was the moment when, as playwright and poet Ntozake Shange put it, ‘I found god in myself/ and I loved her/ I loved her fiercely’” (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, p. 136).

“To embrace Goddess is simply to discover the Divine in yourself as powerfully and vividly feminine” (p. 141).

“I came to know myself as an embodiment of Goddess” (p. 163).

“When I woke, my thought was that I was finally being reunited with the snake in myself--that lost and defiled symbol of feminine instinct” (p. 107).

She came to believe in the New Age doctrine that God is in all things and is the sum total of all things, that God is the evolving universe and we are a part of God.

“I thought: Maybe the Divine One is like an old African woman, carving creation out of one vast, beautiful piece of Herself. She is making a universal totem spanning fifteen billion years, an extension of her life and being, an evolutionary carving of sacred art containing humans, animals, plants, indeed, everything that is. And all of it is joined, blended, and connected, its destiny intertwined. ... In other words, the Divine *coinheres* all that is. ... To *coinhere* means to exist together, to be included in the same thing or substance” (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, pp. 158, 159).

She built an altar in her study and populated it with statues of goddesses, Jesus, a black Madonna--and a mirror to reflect her own image.

“Over the altar in my study I hung a lovely mirror sculpted in the shape of a crescent moon. It reminded me to honor

the Divine Feminine presence in myself, the wisdom in my own soul” (p. 181).

She even believes that the world can be saved by the divine mother.

“I know of nothing needed more in the world just now than an image of Divine present that affirms the importance of relationship--a Divine Mother, perhaps, who draws all humanity into her lap and makes us into a global family” (p. 155).

The Dance of the Dissident Daughter ends with the words, “She is in us.”

According to this book, Kidd’s daughter, too, has accepted goddess worship.

Kreeft, Peter

Peter Kreeft (born c. 1937) is a Roman Catholic apologist, philosopher, and author. He attributes his conversion to Rome partly to reading the writings of the mystic John of the Cross.

Kreeft believes that Mary will ultimately conquer Satan and that even Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists will probably go to Heaven.

As an apologist for Rome, Kreeft has a Jesuit level of disingenuousness. In an article in the February 1992 issue of *The Bookstore Journal*, the official publication of the Christian Booksellers Association, Kreeft made two bold and patently untrue statements.

First, he said that Catholics trust in Christ alone for salvation.

“Catholics are Christians. They believe every word in the Bible. They believe in Christ as Lord and Savior. They trust in Him alone for their salvation.”

In fact, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that salvation is through its sacraments, and the Council of Trent cursed those who trust in Christ alone.

“If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ’s sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Sixth session, Canons Concerning Justification, Canon 12).

“If anyone says that baptism is optional, that is, not necessary for salvation, LET HIM BE ANATHEMA” (Seventh session, Canons on Baptism, Canon 5).

The proclamations and anathemas of the Council of Trent were fleshed out in the murderous persecutions vented upon true Christians by Rome, and Trent has never been annulled. Vatican II referred to Trent dozens and dozens of times, quoted Trent’s proclamations as authoritative, and reaffirmed Trent on every hand. By my own count, *The New Catholic Catechism* cites Trent no less than 99 times. At the opening of the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII stated, “I do accept entirely all that has been decided and declared at the Council of Trent.” Every cardinal, bishop and priest who became a member of the Council signed that document (Wilson Ewin, *You Can Lead Roman Catholics to Christ*, Quebec Baptist Mission, 1990 edition, p. 41).

The New Catholic Catechism of 1992 stated:

“The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation” (1129).

Kreeft’s second erroneous statement in the *Bookstore Journal* was the following:

“Catholics [don’t pray to saints, they] only ask saints to pray for them--just as we ask the living to pray for us” (p. 30).

The Berean Call observed:

“That’s false--and, as a Catholic, Kreeft knows it. Consider ‘The Holy Father’s Prayer for the Marian Year’ [1988]. John Paul II doesn’t ask Mary to PRAY for Catholics, he asks her to DO what only God can do: to comfort, guide, strengthen and protect ‘the whole humanity.’ His prayer ends, ‘Sustain us, O Virgin Mary, on our journey of faith and OBTAIN FOR US THE GRACE OF ETERNAL SALVATION’” (*The Berean Call*, April 1992).

Kreeft’s 1996 book, *Ecumenical Jihad: Ecumenism and the Culture War*, is absolutely packed with heresies. Kreeft calls for all Christian denominations to join hands with Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and other pagan religionists (including atheists and agnostics “if they are of good will and intellectual honesty”), to

form a “jihad” against the forces of secularism. “Jihad,” meaning “holy war,” is a term used by Muslims to describe their willingness to fight unto death against the enemies of Allah. Kreeft’s “ecumenical jihad” sounds very much like the fulfillment of the end-times religious whore of Revelation 17. Kreeft thinks the “culture war” “is about the salvation of the soul,” “the continued biological survival of our species,” and “is certainly about eternal life or eternal death” (pp. 20, 21). Kreeft thinks it is “very likely” that there is a “hidden Christ” in pagan religions, so that Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc., will be saved “through Christ and His grace” even though they do not consciously know or worship Jesus Christ (pp. 156, 157). Kreeft urges his readers to dedicate themselves “to the Immaculate Heart of Mary,” because Mary “is the one who will win this war” and is the one “who triumphs over Satan” (p. 169). Kreeft worships the wafer of the Catholic Mass “because it is Christ” (p. 162) and because God “hides behind the appearances of a little Wafer of bread” (p. 157). He thinks that God prefers to work through the intermediaries of Mary and the saints and that “He wants us to pray through Mary, and not only directly” (p. 154).

Kreeft says:

“Allah is not another God ... we worship the same God. ... The same God! The very same God we worship in Christ is the God the Jews--and the Muslims--worship” (*Ecumenical Jihad*, pp. 30, 160).

Kreeft says that he will follow the pope wherever he leads:

“I am happy as a child to follow Christ’s vicar on earth everywhere he leads. What he loves, I love; what he leaves, I leave; where he leads, I follow” (Kreeft, “Hauled Aboard the Ark by Peter,” <http://www.peterkreeft.com/topics/hauled-aboard.htm>).

Main, John

John Main (1926-1982) was a British-born Benedictine monk and priest. His birth name was Douglas Main. After studying law at Trinity College, Dublin, he joined the British Colonial Service. While stationed in Malaysia in 1955 he met Hindu Swami

Satyananda, who taught him how to use a mantra to achieve a meditative stillness and alleged connection with “the divine.”

Main described the objective of his Hindu guru’s meditation:

“For the swami, the aim of meditation was the coming to awareness of the Spirit of the universe who dwells in our hearts, and he recited these verses from the Upanishads: ‘He contains all things, all works and desires and all perfumes and tastes. And he enfolds the whole universe and, in silence, is loving to all. This is the Spirit that is in my heart. This is Brahman’” (Main, *Christian Meditation*, p. 11).

Thus, Hindu meditation seeks to bring the practitioner into union with God, believing that all men are a part of God and that God is within all men. This is pure universalism, and Main nowhere renounces it.

In 1959 Main began preparations to become a Benedictine priest and took the name of John. He was ordained in 1963. In the early 1970s he studied the writings of John Cassian and *The Cloud of Unknowing* and saw parallels between the Catholic mystic meditative practices and that of Swami Satyananda. He said Hindu meditation was like the *Cloud of Unknowing* in “the Cloud’s use of a single repeated word to overcome thought” (*Christian Meditation*, p. 51) and “the concept of prayer as listening and being rather than speaking and thinking” (p. 10).”

Main combined Catholic contemplative practices with yoga and in 1975 began founding meditation groups in Catholic monasteries on this principle. These spread outside of the Catholic Church and grew into an ecumenical network called the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM).

Main taught the following method:

“Sit still and upright, close your eyes and repeat your prayer-phrase (mantra). Recite your prayer-phrase and gently listen to it as you say it. DO NOT THINK ABOUT ANYTHING. As thoughts come, simply keep returning to your prayer-phrase. In this way, one places everything aside: INSTEAD OF TALKING TO GOD, ONE IS JUST BEING WITH GOD, allowing God’s presence to fill his heart, thus transforming his inner being” (*The Teaching of*

Dom John Main: How to Meditate, Meditation Group of Saint Patrick's Basilica, Ottawa, Canada).

Manning, Brennan

Brennan Manning's (b. 1934) birth name was Richard Francis Xavier Manning. In 1963 he was ordained to the Franciscan priesthood. In the late 1960s he joined the Little Brothers of Jesus of Charles de Foucauld in Spain. This Order spends its days in manual labor serving poor communities and its nights "wrapped in silence and prayer." He spent six months in solitary contemplation in a remote cave in a desert. In the 1970s he returned to the United States and eventually entered a six month treatment program for alcoholism at the Hazelden treatment center in Minnesota. In 1982 he got married and left the priesthood.

Manning's foundational error is his false gospel.

His web site features his biography, and what is glaringly absent is any scriptural testimony of salvation. Instead, we find the following statement:

"In February 1956, while Brennan was meditating on the Stations of the Cross, a powerful experience of the personal love of Jesus Christ sealed the call of God on his life."

There is no repentance, no scriptural new birth, merely a "sealing" of that which began at his infant baptism. Further, the Jesus of the Stations of the Cross is Rome's false christ, a christ who was assisted in his suffering by his mother and other women.

Though Manning is no longer a priest, he continues to participate in and promote the blasphemous Catholic mass. When he is in his home in New Orleans he attends the morning daily mass at the Holy Spirit Catholic Church.

Manning preaches a false antinomian, Roman-tinged, psychology-influenced gospel. He believes a person can be saved and continue to live in the grossest sin without repentance. Following Rome's pattern, Manning's gospel glosses over the basis for salvation, which is the blood and death of Jesus Christ (even while giving it lip service), and ignores the necessity of the new birth. Manning uses biblical terms but he redefines them, giving

them unbiblical meanings. His writings are filled with half truths and statements of truth followed by contradictions to those statements.

Manning continually quotes from and unquestioningly affirms the writings of false teachers such as Paul Tillich (an adulterous neo-orthodox theologian), Carl Jung (who considered Christianity a myth and wrote under the guidance of a demon spirit guide), Beatrice Bruteau (a New Ager who believes in the divinity of man), Henri Nouwen (who believed men can be saved apart from faith in Christ), Thomas Merton (a Buddhist-Catholic), Teresa of Avila, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (pantheistic, evolutionary Jesuit mystic), Thomas Aquinas and “St.” Augustine (doctors of the Catholic Church), and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (a father of neo-orthodoxy).

Manning says, “To evangelize a person is to say to him or her: you, too, are loved by God in the Lord Jesus” (*The Ragamuffin Gospel*, 2nd edition, 2000, p. 120).

This is not the gospel and it is not scriptural evangelism. While it is certainly true that God loves sinners, that is only a part of the story; God is also holy and will judge every infraction of His law. The biblical gospel begins with the bad news of man’s fallen condition and his guilt and only when the sinner acknowledges this and repents and puts his trust exclusively in Jesus Christ can he experience God’s love in a saving manner. In the book of Romans, Paul dwelt on God’s holiness and wrath and man’s lost condition for nearly three chapters before he got to the good news of the offer of salvation in Christ (Romans 1:18- 3:25).

Manning says, “God is a kooky God who can scarcely bear to be without us” (*The Ragamuffin Gospel*, p. 165).

It is blasphemous to describe God as “kooky.” And if His love means He can “scarcely bear to be without us,” what is eternal Hell all about? Jesus frequently warned about Hell, and stated, in fact, that most sinners will go there. “*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*” (Mat. 7:13-14).

Writing about the woman in John 8 who was caught in adultery, Manning says that Jesus “didn’t demand a firm purpose of amendment” and “didn’t seem too concerned that she might dash back into the arms of her lover” (*The Ragamuffin Gospel*, 1990, p. 167).

To the contrary, Jesus commanded her, “Go, and sin no more” (Jn. 8:11). Similarly, after Jesus healed the crippled man in John 5 He instructed him, “Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee” (Jn. 5:14).

Manning mentions in particular some people that he has met: a female prostitute, a woman who had an abortion, and a male homosexual (*Ragamuffin*, pp. 32-33). He claims that all of these are saved even though they justify their sin and have no intention of turning from it. The apostle Paul addressed Manning’s error in 1 Corinthians 6:9-13:

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such WERE some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body.”

The church members at Corinth had lived all sorts of wicked lives before they were saved, but after they believed on Christ they were changed, and Paul warned them about going back to the old life. He warned them, in particular, about fornication. The gospel of Christ teaches that sinners are saved by God’s grace without works, but it also teaches that those who are saved are saved “*unto good works*” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

The apostle John taught: “HE THAT SAITH, I KNOW HIM, AND KEEPETH NOT HIS COMMANDMENTS, IS A LIAR, AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN HIM” (1 John 2:4).

Manning says:

“Something is radically wrong when the local church rejects a person accepted by Jesus: when a harsh, judgmental and unforgiving sentence is passed on homosexuals; when a divorcee is denied communion; when the child of a prostitute is refused baptism; when an unlaicized priest is forbidden the sacraments” (*The Ragamuffin Gospel*, p. 30).

There is a world of confusion and doctrinal error in this one statement. First, the Scriptures instruct churches to reject those who claim to be saved but who live in gross sin (1 Corinthians 5). Second, Manning assumes that judging things by God’s Word is “harsh” and “unforgiving” but this certainly does not have to be the case. The Bible instructs believers to “*prove all things*” (1 Thess. 5:21), commends the Bereans for searching the Scripture daily to see “*whether those things were so*” (Acts 17:11), and says, “... *he that is spiritual judgeth all things*” (1 Cor. 2:15). Third, Manning claims that forgiveness should be given whether or not there is repentance on the part of the sinner, but the Bible says there is no forgiveness without repentance (Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; 2 Cor. 7:9-10; 2 Pet. 3:9). Jesus said, “... *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*” (Lk. 13:3). Fourth, the Bible says the saved person is changed. “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (2 Cor. 5:17). Fifth, Manning teaches the heresy of infant baptism, whereas the Bible says baptism is for believers only (Mk. 16:15). Sixth, Manning defends the Catholic priesthood, whereas the Bible says every believer is a priest in Christ and there is not a hint anywhere in the New Testament that a special priesthood has been set up in the churches (1 Peter 2:5, 9). Seventh, Manning defends the unscriptural Catholic sacraments even though they have no support in the Scripture and they teach a works salvation.

Manning even claims that those who take the mark of the Beast will be saved.

“And he [Christ] will say to us: ‘Vile beings, you who are in the image of the beast and bear his mark, but come all the same, you as well’” (*The Ragamuffin Gospel*, p. 21).

To the contrary, the book of Revelation plainly states that all who take the mark of the Beast will suffer in Hell.

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name” (Rev. 14:9-11).

Manning mocks a strong biblical position.

He warns about “the Bible thumper” (*The Ragamuffin Gospel*, p. 36).

He says:

“I am deeply distressed by what I only can call in our Christian culture the idolatry of the Scriptures. For many Christians, the Bible is not a pointer to God but God himself. In a word--bibliolatry ... I develop a nasty rash around people who speak as if mere scrutiny of its pages will reveal precisely how God thinks and precisely what God wants” (*The Signature of Jesus*).

Bible believers don't worship the Bible, but they do accept it for what it claims to be, the very Word of God, and they know therefore that they will find on its pages precisely how God thinks!

Manning warns about “academicians who would imprison Jesus in the ivory tower of exegesis” (*The Ragamuffin Gospel*, p. 14). Thus, after the fashion of the theological modernist Manning sets up the authority of Jesus over against that of the Bible, ignoring the fact that we know nothing for certain about Jesus and His doctrine apart from the Bible.

Manning promotes an ecumenical, tolerant doctrinal position.

He says we should “listen to people in other denominations and religions” and we shouldn't “find demons in those with whom we disagree” (*The Ragamuffin Gospel*, p. 65).

In emerging church fashion, Manning warns against being “either-or” and opts rather for the mythical “both-and.” He says:

“If we are open, we rarely resort to either-or, either creation or evolution, liberty or law, sacred or secular, Beethoven or Madonna. We focus on both-and, fully aware that God’s truth cannot be imprisoned in a small definition. ... But the open mind realizes that reality, truth, and Jesus Christ are incredibly open-ended” (*The Ragamuffin Gospel*, p. 65).

It is obvious that Manning has a different religion from that of the Lord’s apostles, who were incredibly dogmatic. The apostle John, for example, said: “*And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness*” (1 John 5:19). From the perspective of the mushy, can’t-be-pinned-down-on-anything Christianity of Brennan Manning, 1 John 5:19 is incredibly narrow-minded and wrongheaded, but I will gladly take my stand with the Lord’s apostles.

Note, too, Manning’s openness to the most extreme forms of worldliness, as exemplified by his recommendation of Madonna, “The Material Girl.”

Manning promotes mind-emptying contemplative mysticism.

In *The Signature of Jesus* Manning promotes the dangerous practice of centering prayer, which involves chanting “a sacred word” to empty the mind and allegedly enter into silent experiential communion with God within:

“[T]HE FIRST STEP IN FAITH IS TO STOP THINKING ABOUT GOD AT THE TIME OF PRAYER. ... enter into the great silence of God. Alone in that silence, the noise within will subside and the Voice of Love will be heard. ... Choose a single, sacred word ... repeat the sacred word inwardly, slowly, and often” (pp. 212, 215, 218).

Manning encourages the use of mantras to empty the mind. He recommends repeating an eight-word mantra (“The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing”) for 10 minutes.

“The first step toward rejuvenation begins with accepting where you are and exposing your poverty, frailty, and emptiness to the love that is everything. DON’T TRY TO feel anything, THINK ANYTHING, or do anything ...

Don't force prayer. Simply relax in the presence of the God you half believe in and ask for a touch of folly" (*The Ragamuffin Gospel*, p. 196).

Manning promotes silent meditation. As noted earlier, he once spent six months in isolation in a cave in Spain. He meditates in silence each day. He spends eight days a year at a Jesuit retreat center in Colorado during which he speaks only 45 minutes each day. His spiritual director is a Dominican nun.

Manning calls centering prayer a "GREAT DARKNESS" (*The Signature of Jesus*, p. 145) and an entire chapter of his book is devoted to "Celebrate the Darkness." He claims that the darkness of centering prayer is caused by the human ego being broken and spiritual healing being achieved, but since the practice is not supported by Scripture that is presumption and not faith.

When leading contemplative retreats, Manning recommends that the practitioners not read the Bible.

Emerging church leader Spencer Burke says that this is how he was led into Roman Catholic mysticism:

"I remember going on a three-day silent retreat with Brennan Manning while I was still at Mariners. To my horror, BRENNAN TOLD US WE SHOULD NOT READ ANY BOOKS DURING THIS TIME--EVEN THE BIBLE. Instead, we should just sit and let God speak to us. ...

"THAT EXPERIENCE SEEMED TO MARK A TURNING POINT IN MY FAITH. SHORTLY AFTERWARD, I stopped reading from the approved evangelical reading list and BEGAN TO DISTANCE MYSELF FROM THE EVANGELICAL AGENDA. I DISCOVERED new authors and NEW VOICES at the bookstore--Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen and St. Teresa of Avila. The more I read, the more intrigued I became. Contemplative spirituality seemed to open up a whole new way for me to understand and experience God. I was deeply moved by works like *The Cloud of Unknowing*, *The Dark Night of the Soul* and the *Early Writings of the Desert Fathers*" ("From the Third Floor of the Garage: The Story of TheOOze," <http://www.spencerburke.com/pdf/presskit.pdf>).

Observe that Brennan Manning taught Burke to communicate with God WITHOUT THE BIBLE and to accept the experiences that came by this method as authentic. This is blind mysticism.

Manning claims to receive visions and special messages from God through his meditative practices.

Manning promotes the dangerous practice of visualization, instructing people to visualize what Jesus might have looked like (*The Ragamuffin Gospel*, p. 197). This is vain idolatry. No man knows what Jesus looked like, and if I visualize what I THINK He looked like I am creating my own idol. Further, to use one's imagination in this way is to invite demonic influence.

It also appears that Manning believes in universalism and the divinity of man.

In *Abba's Child*, Manning wrote:

“[I]f I find Christ, I will find my true self and if I find my true self, I will find Christ” (Manning, *Abba's Child*, p. 125).

This is not the biblical Christ; it is the New Age “christ” who is in (or can be in) every man.

In *Abba's Child*, Manning recommends the writings of Beatrice Bruteau. She is the founder of The School for Contemplation and believes that God is within every human being. She says that each person can say, “I AM,” which is a name for Almighty God. She said:

“We have realized ourselves as the Self that says only I AM, with no predicate following, not ‘I am a this’ or ‘I have that quality.’ Only UNLIMITED, ABSOLUTE I AM” (Interview with Bruteau, *A Song That Goes on Singing*, quoted from www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/manning.htm).

I AM, of course, is one of the biblical names of God. Why would Manning recommend Bruteau with no warning if he does not agree with this blasphemy?

In *The Signature of Jesus*, Manning gives this quote from the mystic Catholic priest William Shannon and the Catholic Buddhist Thomas Merton:

“During a conference on contemplative prayer, the question was put to Thomas Merton: ‘How can we best help people to attain union with God?’ His answer was very clear: WE MUST TELL THEM THAT THEY ARE ALREADY UNITED WITH GOD. CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER IS NOTHING OTHER THAN COMING INTO CONSCIOUSNESS OF WHAT IS ALREADY THERE” (p. 218).

Merton was a Trappist monk who promoted the integration of Zen Buddhism and Christianity. The titles of his books include “Zen and the Birds of the Appetite” and “Mystics and the Zen Masters.” Merton was a universalist.

William Shannon was very bold in his rejection of the God of the Bible:

“This is a typical patriarchal notion of God. He is the God of Noah who sees people deep in sin, repents that He made them and resolves to destroy them. He is the God of the desert who sends snakes to bite His people because they murmured against Him. He is the God of David who practically decimates a people. ... He is the God who exacts the last drop of blood from His Son, so that His just anger, evoked by sin, may be appeased. This God whose moods alternate between graciousness and fierce anger. THIS GOD DOES NOT EXIST” (William Shannon, *Silence on Fire*, pp. 109, 110).

In *The Ragamuffin Gospel* Manning says:

“Nevertheless, the central affirmation of the Reformation stands: through no merit of ours, but by his mercy, WE HAVE BEEN RESTORED to a right relationship with God through the life, death, and resurrection of his beloved Son. This is the Good News, the gospel of Grace” (p. 18).

That is not the gospel of grace; that is the gospel of unconditional universalism. The true gospel is that whoever believes in Christ will be saved (John 3:16), but Manning claims that men are already redeemed. He says, “We HAVE BEEN restored.”

Manning quotes David Steindl-Rast approvingly in *The Signature of Jesus* (pp. 210, 213-214). Steindl-Rast, a contemplative Roman Catholic priest, said: “Envision the great religious

traditions arranged on the circumference of a circle. At their mystical core they all say the same thing, but with different emphasis” (“Heroic Virtue,” *Gnosis*, Summer 1992).

Manning quotes Matthew Fox approvingly in at least two of his books, *Lion and Lamb* (p. 135) and *A Stranger to Self Hatred* (pp. 113, 124). Fox says:

“God is a great underground river, and there are many wells into that river. There’s a Taoist well, a Buddhist well, a Jewish well, a Muslim well, a Christian well, a Goddess well, the Native wells-many wells that humans have dug to get into that river, but friends, there’s only one river; the living waters of wisdom” (quoted from John Caddock, “What Is Contemplative Spirituality,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, Autumn 1997).

Since Manning gives glowing recommendations for these people and offers no warning to his readers about their universalism it appears that he holds the same heresy.

In His books *The Signature of God* and *Gentle Revolutionaries* Manning describes a dream he has had about judgment day. He sees Adolf Hitler and Hugh Hefner (founder of *Playboy* magazine) and himself and others going before God to be judged, but God just takes them by the hand and walks them home. The implication is that everyone is accepted by God through grace, regardless of whether they repent and believe the gospel and have a born again experience.

Manning is supportive of the homosexual agenda.

As we have seen, Manning believes that homosexuals should be accepted and not required to repent of their sin. He identifies “homophobia” as “among the most serious and vexing moral issues of this generation” (*Abba’s Child*).

A phobia is an unreasonable fear of something, in this case, homosexuality. Thus, Manning would have us believe that those who reject homosexuality as immoral and who do not want homosexuals to influence society, who oppose their filthy parades and “marriages,” have some sort of psychological illness. In fact, according to Manning, one of the most serious moral issues of our day is the rejection of homosexuality on the part of Bible believers.

To be consistent, Manning must lump Paul into the “homophobic” camp, because he strongly condemned homosexuality. Consider what Paul said about it:

“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet” (Rom. 1:26-27).

Manning denies the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ.

He writes:

“[T]he god whose moods alternate between graciousness and fierce anger ... the god who exacts the last drop of blood from his Son so that his just anger, evoked by sin, may be appeased, is not the God revealed by and in Jesus Christ. And if he is not the God of Jesus, he does not exist” (Brennan Manning, *Above All*, p. 58-59; the foreword to this book is written by CCM artist Michael W. Smith).

Manning boldly states that the God that required a blood sacrifice is an idol, but throughout the Old Testament we are taught that “*it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul*” (Lev. 17:11) and “*without shedding of blood is no remission*” (Heb. 9:22). Jesus Christ fulfilled all of the Old Testament blood sacrifices when He came and died on Calvary. John the Baptist said, “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). Hebrews says: “*Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us*” (Heb. 9:12).

In reality, it is Manning’s god of unconditional love that is the nonexistent idol.

The following is an important observation about Manning by John Caddock:

“There is a seductive quality to his writings. He reports grappling with and overcoming fear, guilt, and psychological hang-ups and difficulties, including

alcoholism. He gives the impression that he has a very intimate relationship with God and that he has insight to a superspirituality. He regularly meditates and reports having many visions and encounters with God. He is an extremely gifted writer who is able to tug at the emotions of the reader while at the same time introducing ideas that the reader would immediately reject if they were not cloaked under this emotional blanket.

“He promises readers that if they apply his teaching they too will gain this same intimacy with God as well as freedom from fear, guilt, and psychological hang-ups and difficulties. This is very attractive. Manning’s prescription to achieve this is not by traditional prayer and by the reading and application of the Bible. Rather, the means to this end is a mixture of Eastern mysticism, psychology, the New Age Movement, liberation theology, Catholicism, and Protestantism. This mixture will not deliver intimacy with God. It no doubt will lead to special feelings and experiences. Those practicing Manning’s methods will likely feel closer to God. However, in the process they will actually move away from Him as a result of a counterfeit spirituality” (“What Is Contemplative Spirituality and Why Is It Dangerous?” <http://www.faithalone.org/journal/1997ii/Caddock.html>).

Merton, Thomas

Thomas Merton (1915-68), was a Roman Catholic Trappist monk whose writings are influential within Catholicism, the New Age movement, the peace movement, as well as the centering prayer movement that lies at the heart of the emerging church and that is permeating evangelicalism. Richard Foster quotes Merton at least 14 times in his popular book *Celebration of Discipline*.

Merton was a prolific author. Nearly 70 of his books were published during his lifetime or posthumously. His autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, sold 600,000 hardbound copies in its first year and millions of copies since. It has been continually in print since 1948. His books have been translated into at least 29 languages.

Merton was involved with the peace movement during the Vietnam War. He was closely associated with the pacifist anti-

Americans Daniel and Philip Berrigan and Dorothy Day. The Thomas Merton Center for Peace and Justice carries on this philosophy.

Merton has been called “the most influential proponent of traditional monasticism in American history” (Ursula King, *Christian Mystics*, p. 229).

Ray Yungen says:

“What Martin Luther King was to the civil rights movement and what Henry Ford was to the automobile, Thomas Merton is to contemplative prayer. Although this prayer movement existed centuries before he came along, Merton took it out of its monastic setting and made it available to and popular with the masses” (*A Time of Departing*, p. 58).

Born in France, Merton was baptized in a Protestant denomination as an infant, though he was not a practicing Christian. After moving to America, he joined the Catholic Church. This occurred in 1938. The first step was a visit to a mass, which was prompted by “a sweet, strong, gentle, clean urge which said: ‘Go to Mass! Go to Mass!’” (Jim Forest, *Living with Wisdom: A Life of Thomas Merton*, p. 56). Merton said that afterwards he was filled with peace and contentment. The mystical power of the mass has been influential in the conversion of many people who are not spiritually regenerated and grounded in God’s Word. Soon thereafter, while reading the biography of Gerard Hopkins, a convert to Catholicism who became a Jesuit priest, Merton felt an impulsive stirring. “All of a sudden, something began to stir within me, something began to push me, to prompt me. It was a movement that spoke like a voice. What are you waiting for? Why do you still hesitate? You know what you ought to do? Why don’t you do it? It’s useless to hesitate any longer” (Forest, pp. 58, 59). Instead of testing this impulse by the Scriptures, Merton obeyed. He found a priest and said, “Father, I want to become a Catholic.”

In 1941, Merton was accepted as a monk into the Order of Reformed Cistercians, otherwise known as Trappists. He spent 27 years in the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani monastery, located near Louisville, Kentucky. It is dedicated to Mary, and all of the monks bear her name. Merton’s name was changed to Frater Maria

Ludovicus or Brother Mary Louis. In Merton's day, the monastery followed a strict ascetic discipline. Most of the time the monks observed silence, communicating by sign language. They abstained from meat, with a typical meal consisting of bread, potatoes, an apple, and barley coffee. They slept in their robes on straw-covered boards in unheated dormitories, their sleeping cubicles separated only by shoulder-high partitions. Hot water was available two days a week. Each Friday the monks lashed their own backs with small whips. They could communicate with those outside the monastery only four times a year via half-page letters that were read by a superior before being posted, and they could not leave the monastery even to attend the funeral of a parent. The daily routine, which began long before sunrise with prayers and chanting, consisted of physical labor punctuated by prescribed periods of study and worship.

For three years, Merton lived as a hermit. He said: "This solitude confirms my call to solitude. The more I'm in it, the more I love it. One day it will possess me entirely, and no man will ever see me again" (*Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*, 2007, DVD).

Merton was committed to Rome's foundational heresies such as the papacy, the mass, baptismal regeneration, prayers to the saints, and salvation through works (Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*, pp. 62, 71, 72, 74, 108).

Merton considered the host, the consecrated wafer of the mass, to be Christ. He venerated it as Christ and prayed to it as Christ. Consider the following quotes from his autobiography

"And I saw the raised Host--the silence and simplicity with which Christ once again triumphed, raised up, drawing all things to Himself ... Christ, hidden in the small Host, was giving Himself for me, and to me, and, with Himself, the entire Godhead and Trinity..." (*The Seven Storey Mountain*, 1998 edition, pp. 245, 246).

"All these people, workmen, poor women, students, clerks, singing the Latin hymn to the Blessed Sacrament written by St. Thomas Aquinas. I fixed my eyes on the monstrance, on the white Host. ... I looked straight at the Host, and I knew, now, Who it was that I was looking at, and I said: 'Yes, I want to be a priest, with all my heart I want it. If it is

Your will, make me a priest'..." (*The Seven Storey Mountain*, pp. 279, 280).

"I was in the Church of St. Francis at Havana. ... I had come here to hear another Mass. ... Then ... there formed in my mind an awareness, an understanding, a realization of what had just taken place on the altar, at the Consecration: a realization of God made present by the words of Consecration in a way that made Him belong to me. ... a sudden and immediate contact had been established between my intellect and the Truth Who was now physically really and substantially before me on the altar" (pp. 310, 311).

Merton was a great venerator of Mary. As we have seen, his monastery is dedicated to Mary. Its chapel is called "the chapel of Our Lady of Victories." The first time Merton visited Gethsemani Abbey he described it as "the Court of the Queen of Heaven" (John Talbot, *The Way of the Mystic*, p. 221). Merton named his little hermitage "the hermitage of Saint Mary of Carmel" and said that she was "queen of mine to the end of the ages" (*Living with Wisdom*, p. 143). Merton's autobiography is filled with passionate statements about Mary. He calls her Our Lady, Glorious Mother of God, Queen of Angels, Holy Queen of Heaven, Most High Queen of Heaven, Mediatrix of All Grace, Our Lady of Solitude, Immaculate Virgin, Blessed Virgin, and Holy Queen of souls and refuge of sinners. He dedicated himself to her and prayed to her continually. Consider the following samples:

"Glorious Mother of God, shall I ever again distrust you, or your God, before Whose throne you are irresistible in your intercession? ... As you have dealt with me, Lady, deal also with my millions of brothers who live in the same misery that I knew then: lead them in spite of themselves and guide them by your tremendous influence, O Holy Queen of souls and refuge of sinners, and bring them to your Christ the way you brought me" (Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, pp. 143, 144).

"One of the big defects of my spiritual life in that first year was a lack of devotion to the Mother of God. I believed in the truths which the Church teaches about Our Lady, and I said the 'Hail Mary' when I prayed, but that is not enough. People do not realize the tremendous power of the Blessed

Virgin. They do not know who she is: that IT IS THROUGH HER HANDS ALL GRACES COME BECAUSE GOD HAS WILLED THAT SHE THUS PARTICIPATE IN HIS WORK FOR THE SALVATION OF MEN. ... She is the Mother of the supernatural life in us. Sanctity comes to us through her intercession. God has willed that there be no other way” (*The Seven Storey Mountain*, p. 251).

“When we crossed over the divide and were going down through the green valley towards the Caribbean Sea, I saw the yellow Basilica of Our Lady of Cobre [in Cuba] ... “There you are, Caridad del Cobre! [Merton was praying to La Caridad, the black Madonna, the Queen of Cuba] It is you that I have come to see; you will ask Christ to make me His priest, and I will give you my heart, Lady: and if you will obtain for me this priesthood, I will remember you at my first Mass...” (p. 308).

“I realized truly whose house that was, O glorious Mother of God! ... It is very true that the Cistercian Order is your special territory and that those monks in white cowls are your special servants ... Their houses are all yours--Notre Dame, Notre Dame, all around the world. Notre Dame de Gethsemani ... I think the century of Chartres was most of all your century, my Lady, because it spoke of you clearest not only in word but in glass and stone, showing you for who you are, most powerful, most glorious, MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACE, and the most High Queen of Heaven, high above all the angels, and throned in glory near the throne of your Divine Son” (p. 352).

Merton also prayed to a variety of Catholic saints, including Therese of Lisieux. He says, “I was immediately and strongly attracted to her” (*The Seven Storey Mountain*, p. 388). He not only prayed to her but he also dedicated himself to her, vowing, “If I get into the monastery, I will be your monk” (p. 400).

Merton was heavily involved in Catholic contemplative mysticism. He pursued the heschastic tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy, which is highly mystical and observes such things as the Jesus Prayer. This involves the repetition of a word or phrase such as “Lord Jesus Christ Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Ancient monastic contemplative manuals suggest that this

be repeated from 3,000 to 12,000 times a day (Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way*, p. 60). Commonly the practitioner is taught not to think on the words but to allow them to speak to him “intuitively.” This is an attempt to go beyond the words of the Bible, beyond doctrinal conceptions, to a direct experience of God.

From the writings of John of the Cross, Merton learned the “path of the negative,” which refers to pursuing God through experience rather than through defining God by Bible doctrine. Merton’s 1951 book *Ascent to Truth* was devoted to this idea. “It was through John that Merton had been introduced to the *via negativa*, or apophatic tradition, a spiritual path founded on the awareness that any and all attempts to define God are inadequate. One can better say that God is not, for God is not an idea, not a concept...” (*Living with Wisdom*, p. 106). Merton wrote, “We must always walk in darkness. We must travel in silence. We must fly by night” (*Ascent to Truth*, p. 179).

This is blind mysticism and idolatry. “All attempts to define God are NOT inadequate,” because the Bible’s definition of God is divinely inspired and infallible. If one’s pursuit of God is not confined by the revelation of Scripture, the seeker is left to his own imagination and is in danger of being deluded by doctrines of devils. The believer does not stumble after God in darkness but knows God through faith in the wonderful light of divine Revelation.

Merton was also influenced by Julian of Norwich, who called Jesus “our Mother.” This mystic “helped to open the door to Merton’s exploration of God’s feminine dimension” (*Living with Wisdom*, p. 144).

Merton believed that contemplative mysticism is the key to Christian unity. He said, “If I can unite in myself the thought and the devotion of Eastern and Western Christendom, the Greek and the Latin Fathers, the Russian with the Spanish mystics, I can prepare in myself the reunion of divided Christians” (*Living with Wisdom*, p. 129).

From the mystical idolatry of the Roman Catholic variety, it is not a great leap to mystical idolatry of the pagan variety, and Merton made that leap in a big way. He was “a strong builder of

bridges between East and West” (*Twentieth-Century Mystics*, p. 39).

It was a Hindu monk named Bramachari who originally encouraged Merton to pursue the “Christian mystical tradition.” This was before Merton even converted to Catholicism. Bramachari said to Merton: “There are many beautiful mystical books written by the Christians. You should read St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, and *The Imitation of Christ*. ... Yes, you must read those books” (*The Seven Storey Mountain*, pp. 216, 217). Ray Yungen observes, “Bramachari understood that Merton didn’t need to switch to Hinduism to get the same enlightenment that he himself experienced through the Hindu mystical tradition” (*A Time of Departing*, p. 199).

Merton was also influenced by Aldous Huxley, who found enlightenment through hallucinogenic drugs and was one of the first Westerners to promote Buddhism. Henri Nouwen said that Huxley brought Merton “to a deeper level of knowledge” and was his first contact with mysticism (*Thomas Merton: Contemplative Critic*, 1991, pp. 19, 20).

“He had read widely and deeply and intelligently in all kinds of Christian and Oriental mystical literature, and had come out with the astonishing truth that all this, far from being a mixture of dreams and magic and charlatanism, was very real and very serious” (Nouwen, *Thomas Merton*, p. 20).

Alan Altany observes:

“The pre-Christian Merton had come across Aldous Huxley’s book on mysticism, *Ends and Means*, which sowed an attraction for not only mysticism in general, but for apophatic mysticism--meaning a knowledge of God obtained by negation--that would enable him to later relate to Buddhist teachings about the Void and Emptiness” (“The Thomas Merton Connection,” Fall 2000, <http://www.thomasmertonsociety.org/altany2.htm>).

Huxley was Merton’s introduction into Buddhism, a religion that he pursued extensively during his years at Gethsemani beginning in about 1952. Merton studied the teachings of Zen master D.T. Suzuki and Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh.

After meeting Thich Nhat Hanh, Merton said, "... he and I see things in exactly the same way" (*Faith and Violence*, quoted in *Living with Wisdom*, p. 215). When Merton wrote to D.T. Suzuki in 1959, he said, "Time after time, as I read your pages, something in me says, 'That's it!' ... So there it is, in all its beautiful purposelessness" (*Living with Wisdom*, p. 213).

Merton also studied mystical Islamic Sufism. He said, "I'm deeply impregnated with Sufism" (Rob Baker and Gray Henry, *Merton and Sufism*, 1999, p. 109).

Sufis "chant the name of Allah as a mantra, go into meditative trances and experience God in everything" (Yungen, p. 59). They seek to achieve "fana," which is "the act of merging with the Divine Oneness." Some Sufis use dance and music to attain mystical union with God. I observed the "whirling dervish" ritual in Istanbul in April 2008. As they whirl in a trance-like state to the music, the Sufi mystics raise the palm of one hand to heaven and the other to the earth, to channel the mystical experience.

The *Yoga Journal* makes the following observation:

"Merton had encountered Zen Buddhism, Sufism, Taoism and Vedanta many years prior to his Asian journey. MERTON WAS ABLE TO UNCOVER THE STREAM WHERE THE WISDOM OF EAST AND WEST MERGE AND FLOW TOGETHER, BEYOND DOGMA, IN THE DEPTHS OF INNER EXPERIENCE. ... Merton embraced the spiritual philosophies of the East and integrated this wisdom into (his) own life through direct practice" (*Yoga Journal*, Jan.-Feb. 1999, quoted from the Lighthouse Trails web site).

Eventually Merton claimed to be both a Buddhist and a Christian. The titles of his books included *Zen and the Birds of the Appetite*, *The Way of Chuang Tzu*, and *Mystics and the Zen Masters*.

Merton also said that he was both a Buddhist and a Hindu:

"I see no contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity. The future of Zen is in the West. I INTEND TO BECOME AS GOOD A BUDDHIST AS I CAN" (David Steindl-Rast, "Recollection of Thomas Merton's Last Days in the West," *Monastic Studies*, 7:10, 1969, <http://www.gratefulness.org/readings/>

dsr_merton_recol2.htm, this report contains quotations from Merton's talks at the Our Lady of the Redwoods Abbey in Whitethorn, California, in late 1968 on his way to Asia where he died).

"You have to see your will and God's will dualistically for a long time. You have to experience duality for a long time until you see it's not there. IN THIS RESPECT I AM A HINDU [here he was saying that he believed in Hindu monism rather than Christian dualism; that God is all and all is God]. Ramakrishna has the solution. ... Openness is all" ("Recollection of Thomas Merton's Last Days in the West," *Monastic Studies*, 7:10, 1969, http://www.gratefulness.org/readings/dsr_merton_recol2.htm).

"Asia, Zen, Islam, etc., all these things come together in my life. It would be madness for me to attempt to create a monastic life for myself by excluding all these" (quoted by Rob Baker and Gray Henry, *Merton and Sufism*, p. 41).

"I believe that by openness to Buddhism, to Hinduism, and to these great Asian traditions, we stand a wonderful chance of learning more about the potentiality of our own Christian traditions" (quoted by William Shannon, *Silent Lamp*, 1992, p. 276).

"I think I couldn't understand Christian teaching the way I do if it were not in the light of Buddhism" (Frank Tuoti, *The Dawn of the Mystical Age*, 1997, p. 127).

(On a visit to the Abbey of Gethsemani's bookstore in June 2009, I saw many books on display that promote interfaith unity. These include *Zen Keys* by Thich Nhat Hanh, *Bhagavad Gita* (Hindu scriptures), *Buddhists Talk about Jesus and Christians Talk about Buddha*, *Meeting Islam: A Guide for Christians*, and *Jesus in the World's Faiths*.)

Merton defined mysticism as an experience with God *beyond words*. In a speech to monks of eastern religions in Calcutta in October 1968, he said:

"... the deepest level of communication is not communication, but communion. IT IS WORDLESS. IT IS BEYOND WORDS, AND IT IS BEYOND SPEECH, and it is BEYOND CONCEPT" ("Thomas Merton's View of Monasticism," a talk delivered at Calcutta, October

1978, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, Appendix III, 1975 edition, p. 308).

Of Chuang Tzu (also called Zhuang Tze), a Chinese sage and one of the authors of Taoist principles, Merton said, "Chuang Tzu is not CONCERNED WITH WORDS AND FORMULAS about reality, but with the direct existential grasp of reality in itself" (Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu*, pp. 10-11). Merton called Chuang Tzu "my kind of person."

The Bible warns that "*evil communications corrupt good manners*" (1 Cor. 15:33), and it is therefore not surprising that Merton was deeply influenced by his intimate association with pagan religions. Eventually he denied the God of the Bible, the reality of sin, the separation of man from God because of sin, the necessity of Christ's atonement, the bodily resurrection, and hell.

Merton's deep association with contemplative mysticism also resulted in his belief in panentheism, that God is in everything and that all men are united in God, and that within man is a pure spark of divinity. While standing at an intersection in Louisville in 1958, Merton says that he had an epiphany that he described as follows.

"In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut,* in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. ... Then it was as if I suddenly saw the SECRET BEAUTY OF THEIR HEART, THE DEPTHS OF THEIR HEARTS WHERE NEITHER SIN nor desire nor self-knowledge CAN REACH, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed. ... 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 THAT IS UNTOUCHED BY SIN and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes our lives, which is inaccessible to

the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our will. This little point of nothingness and of absolute poverty is THE PURE GLORY OF GOD IN US. ... It is so to speak His name written in us, as our poverty, as our indigence, as our dependence, as our sonship. It is like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven. IT IS IN EVERYBODY, and if we could see it we would see these billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of a sin that would make all darkness and cruelty of life vanish completely. THE GATE OF HEAVEN IS EVERYWHERE” (Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, pp. 140-142). (* Walnut was later renamed Muhammed Ali Blvd., and in 2008 the intersection was named Thomas Merton Square.)

This mystical experience was a denial of the Bible. It denies the Bible’s teaching that all men are lost sinners separated from God, that salvation is only through faith in the blood of Christ, and that God alone is God.

Through his study of contemplative Catholic and pagan mysticism, Merton became a universalist of sorts. Nowhere did he say that Buddhists, Hindus, and Sufis worshipped false gods or that they were hell-bound because they do not believe in the Christ of the Bible. When writing about Zen Buddhists, Merton always assumed that they were communing with the same “ground of Being” that he himself had found through Catholic monasticism.

Merton said that monks of all religions are “brothers” and are “already one.” At an interfaith meeting in Calcutta, India, in 1968, sponsored by the Temple of Understanding, Merton said:

“I came with the notion of perhaps saying something for monks and to monks of all religions because I am supposed to be a monk. ... My dear brothers, WE ARE ALREADY ONE. BUT WE IMAGINE THAT WE ARE NOT. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are” (“Thomas Merton’s View of Monasticism,” a talk delivered at Calcutta, October 1968, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, 1975 edition, appendix III, p. 308).

Merton used the terms God, Krishna, and Tao interchangeably.

“It is in surrendering a false and illusory liberty on the superficial level that man unites himself with the inner ground of reality and freedom in himself which is the will of God, of Krishna, of Providence, of Tao” (“The Significance of the Bhagavad-Gita,” *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, appendix ix, p. 353).

Merton claimed that there is no reason to believe that God has not revealed himself to other religions.

“Since in practice we must admit that God is in no way limited in His gifts, and since there is no reason to think that He cannot impart His light to other men without first consulting us, THERE CAN BE NO ABSOLUTELY SOLID GROUNDS FOR DENYING THE POSSIBILITY OF SUPERNATURAL (PRIVATE) REVELATION AND OF SUPERNATURAL MYSTICAL GRACES TO INDIVIDUALS, NO MATTER WHERE THEY MAY BE OR WHAT MAY BE THEIR RELIGIOUS TRADITION, provided that they sincerely seek God and His truth. Nor is there any a priori basis for denying that the great prophetic and religious figures of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., could have been mystics, in the true, that is, supernatural, sense of the word” (*Mystics and Zen Masters*, p. 207).

Merton could only write such a thing because he rejected the Bible as his sole authority for truth. Of course, God doesn't have to consult us about anything, but He has chosen to reveal His mind in the Scripture and the Scripture plainly states that there is no salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ. “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*” (John 3:26). In John 10, Jesus said that He is only the door to God's sheepfold, and “*he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber*” (John 10:1).

Merton described mankind as “persons within whom God exists” and said that man glorifies God simply by being what he is (*Twentieth-Century Mystics*, p. 35).

Merton begins his book *Mystics and Zen Masters* with a positive review of the evolutionary, universalist, cosmic Christ theories of

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and R.C. Zaehner. Nowhere does he renounce these views. Merton writes:

“This implies, according to the Teilhardian view, a recognition that Christianity itself is the fruit of evolution and that the world has from the beginning, knowingly or not, been converging upon the Lord of History as upon its ‘personal center’ of fulfillment and meaning. ... We are thus in ‘the passage from an epoch of individual despairs to one of shared hope in an ever richer material and spiritual life.’

“[Zaehner] sees an evolution in mysticism from the contemplation that seeks to discover and rest in the spiritual essence of the individual nature, to a higher personalist mysticism which transcends nature and the individual self in God together with other men in the Mystical Christ” (*Mystics and Zen Masters*, 1967, p. 5).

In his last speech, Merton called “original sin” a myth (“Marxism and Monastic Perspectives,” a talk delivered at Bangkok on December 10, 1968, *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, appendix VII, p. 332).

Merton rejected the view that non-Christians are lost sinners who are “all corrupted in their inner heart” and deceived by the devil (*Mystics and Zen Masters*, p. 206).

This, of course, is exactly what the Bible says about the individual who does not believe on Christ and submit to God’s Word in the Bible. Such an individual has no light (Isaiah 8:20) and has a deceived and desperately wicked heart (Jeremiah 17:9). He is dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), controlled by the devil (Eph. 2:2), “*having no hope, and without God in the world*” (Eph. 2:12).

Merton was also influenced by Jungian psychology. In 1956, he participated in a two-week seminar at St. John’s University in Minnesota on psychiatry and its application to religious life. In 1959, Merton began undergoing psychoanalysis with Dr. James Wygal in Louisville. Merton believed Carl Jung’s theory that the “I” that is self-conscious is not the real “I,” but that the real “I” is already “united to God in Christ” and the self-conscious “I” will eventually disappear. He did not write that this as true only for

believers in Christ but for mankind in general (*Twentieth-Century Mystics*, p. 35).

Merton has been at the forefront of the modern interfaith movement that is powered by contemplative practices:

“Thomas Merton was perhaps the greatest popularizer of interspirituality. He opened the door for Christians to explore other traditions, notably Taoism, Hinduism and Buddhism” (Wayne Teasdale, *Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World’s Religions*).

“Merton was consciously trying to relate the mystical insights of other traditions with his own Christian faith” (Teasdale, *A Monk in the World*, p. 181).

In 1958, Merton wrote to Pope John XXIII for permission to conduct interfaith dialogues, and in February 1960 he received permission from the Vatican to pursue this project in a “discreet” manner” (*Living with Wisdom*, p. 141). This was a foreview of the door that opened up for interfaith dialogue following the Second Vatican Council. The pope was so impressed with Merton that he presented him with the stole that he wore during his papal coronation. Today this resides in the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine College in Louisville.

Merton believed that the key to interfaith dialogue is to ignore doctrine and to focus on mystic contemplative experience.

“Personally, in matters where dogmatic beliefs differ, I think that controversy is of little value because it takes us away from the spiritual realities into the realm of words and ideas ... But much more important is the sharing of the experience of divine light ... It is here that the area of fruitful dialogue exists between Christianity and Islam” (Rob Baker and Gray Henry, *Merton and Sufism*, p. 109).

Actually, what Merton found in meditation was the same as what Mother Teresa found: darkness. He said:

“God, my God, God who I meet in darkness, with you it is always the same thing, always the same question that nobody knows how to answer. I’ve prayed to you in the daytime with thoughts and reasons, and in the nighttime. I’ve explained to you a hundred times my motives for

entering the monastery, and you have listened and said nothing. And I have turned away and wept with shame. Perhaps the most urgent and practical renunciation is the renunciation of all questions, because I have begun to realize that you never answer when I expect” (*Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*, 2007, DVD).

“The hermit, all day and all night, beats his head against a wall of doubt. That is his contemplation” (quoted from Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way*, p. 41).

Merton was powerfully influenced by dreams, because he did not test them by Scripture. Beginning in 1958, he had dreams of a Jewish girl who embraced him in non-judgmental love. He identified her with the mythical “Hagia Sophia” (holy wisdom) of Eastern Orthodoxy, which is supposed to represent the feminine aspect of God and the unity of God with creation. Merton called the girl “Proverb” and even wrote letters to her. Merton believed that she symbolized the tenderness of God that permeates all of creation. “There is in all things an inexhaustible sweetness and purity, a silence that is a fount of action and of joy. It rises up in wordless gentleness and flows out to me from the unseen roots of all created being” (*Living with Wisdom*, p. 147).

This is more universalistic, panentheistic nonsense, but it was encouraged by Merton’s dreams.

In 1964, Proverb appeared to Merton as “a Chinese princess who had come to spend the day with him.” He interpreted this as permission to pursue “the wisdom of the Far East” (*Living with Wisdom*, p. 181).

(For more about the role of dreams in demonic delusion, see the entry on “Sue Monk Kidd” in the Directory of Contemplative Mystics at the end of this book.)

When Merton was 51 and was in the hospital for a back operation, he developed a romantic relationship with his 24-year-old nurse (who “bore a striking resemblance to the Proverb of his dreams”). He pursued this relationship over a period of months during his trips out of the monastery for follow up and rehabilitation. According to *Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*, he broke “all his vows” but he did not marry the girl.

In 1968, Merton took the trip of his dreams, to visit India, Ceylon, Singapore, and Thailand, to experience the places where his beloved eastern religions were born. He said, "I'm going home, to a home I've never been in this body."

When he arrived in Calcutta, Merton said that he had come to Asia as a pilgrim seeking wisdom from "ancient sources":

"I come as a pilgrim who is anxious to obtain not just information, not just 'facts' about other monastic traditions, but to drink from ancient sources of monastic vision and experience" (*The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, pp. 312, 313).

One of his goals was to search out a location for a Christian-Buddhist monastery. He described this in his diary of the trip in connection with a conversation with a Buddhist leader in Sri Lanka (Ceylon).

"We talked long about my idea of Buddhist dialogue and of a meditation monastery that would be open to Buddhism" (*The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, p. 218).

In India, Merton met with the Dalai Lama three times and said that "there is a real spiritual bond between us" (*The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*, 1975 edition, p. 125). The Dalai Lama agreed. When he visited Merton's grave at Gethsemani Abbey, he said, "Now our spirits are one" (<http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Jan1997/feature1.asp> 10/8/2002).

In Sri Lanka, Merton visited a Buddhist shrine by the ocean at Polonnaruwa, the ancient capitol.

"The path dips down to Gal Vihara: a wide, quiet, hollow, surrounded with trees. A low outcrop of rock, with a cave cut into it, and beside the cave a big seated Buddha on the left, a reclining Buddha on the right, and Ananda, I guess, standing by the head of the reclining Buddha. In the cave, another seated Buddha. The vicar general, shying away from 'paganism,' hangs back and sits under a tree reading the guidebook. I am able to approach the Buddhas barefoot and undisturbed, my feet in wet grass, wet sand. Then the silence of the extraordinary faces. The great smiles. Huge and yet subtle. Filled with every possibility, questioning nothing, knowing everything, rejecting

nothing ... without trying to discredit anyone or anything--without refutation--without establishing some other argument" (*The Asian Journal*, p. 233).

This alleged wisdom is a complete denial of the Bible, which teaches us that there is truth and there is error, light *and* darkness, God *and* Satan, and they are not one. The apostle John said, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). True wisdom lies in testing all things by God's infallible Revelation and rejecting that which is false. Proverbs says, "The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going" (Prov. 14:15).

Merton described his visit to the stone Buddhas as an experience of great illumination, a vision of "inner clearness." His complete capitulation to paganism was evident in the words that he wrote about his experience with the idols:

"The thing about all this is that there is no puzzle, no problem, and really no 'mystery.' All problems are resolved and everything is clear, simply because what matters is clear. The rock, all matter, all life, is charged with dharmakaya ... Everything is emptiness and everything is compassion. I don't know when in my life I have ever had such a sense of beauty and spiritual validity running together in one aesthetic illumination" (*The Asian Journal*, p. 235).

Dharmakaya refers to the eternal aspect of Buddha. Merton was expressing the panentheistic belief that God permeates everything.

This was a demonic delusion on par with Merton's mystical experiences with the Mass and Mary.

Six days later, Merton was in Bangkok, Thailand, participating in an interfaith dialogue of contemplatives. The conference began with a welcoming address from the Supreme Patriarch of Thai Buddhism (*Living with Wisdom*, p. 235). In the final talk of his life, Merton said:

"I believe that by openness to Buddhism, to Hinduism, and to these great Asian traditions, we stand a wonderful chance of learning more about the potentiality of our own [Christian] traditions, because they have gone, from the natural point of view, so much deeper into this than we

have. ... Now I will disappear from view, and we can all go have a Coke or something” (*Merton: A Film Biography*, 1984).

He then went to his cottage and was electrocuted by a faulty fan switch. He was fifty-three years old.

As we have seen, Merton’s influence has been great. His books, which have sold by the millions, have been translated into many languages. There is an International Thomas Merton Society (with national branches in 15 countries), a Thomas Merton Studies Center, a Thomas Merton Foundation, and a Merton Institute for Contemplative Living.

Merton has hundreds of disciples in the Roman Catholic Church, including David Steindle-Rast, M. Basil Pennington, William Johnston, Henri Nouwen, Philip St. Romain, William Shannon, and James Finley.

J. P. Moreland

James P. Moreland (b. 1948) is a professor of philosophy at Talbot School of Theology at Biola University.

He has written on apologetics and social issues and is a fellow of the Discovery Institute, which defends intelligent design. In recent years he has been promoting contemplative spirituality.

The Lost Virtue of Happiness: Discovering the Disciplines of the Good Life (2008), co-authored by Moreland and Klaus Issler, promotes contemplative practices. It says that “solitude and silence” are “absolutely fundamental to the Christian life.” (p. 51). Moreland and Issler recommend meditating at Catholic retreat centers, meditating on pictures and statues of Jesus, and repetitious prayers.

Following are some excerpts:

“In our experience, Catholic retreat centers are usually ideal for solitude retreats. ... We also recommend that you bring photos of your loved ones and a picture of Jesus. ... Or gaze at a statue of Jesus. Or let some pleasant thought, feeling, or memory run through your mind over and over again” (pp. 54, 55).

“[W]e recommend that you begin by saying the Jesus Prayer about three hundred times a day. ... When you first awaken, say the Jesus Prayer twenty to thirty times. As you do, something will begin to happen to you. God will begin to slowly begin to occupy the center of your attention. ... Repetitive use of the Jesus Prayer while doing more focused things allows God to be on the boundaries of your mind and forms the habit of being gently in contact with him all day long” (pp. 90, 92, 93).

Moreland is opposed to an “overemphasis” on the Bible:

“In the actual practices of the Evangelical community in North America, there is an over-commitment to Scripture in a way that is false, irrational, and harmful to the cause of Christ. And it has produced a mean-spiritedness among the over-committed that is a grotesque and often ignorant distortion of discipleship unto the Lord Jesus. ... [The problem is] that the Bible is the sole source of knowledge of God, morality, and a host of related important items. Accordingly, the Bible is taken to be the sole authority for faith and practice” (“How Evangelicals Became Over-Committed to the Bible and What Can Be Done about It,” Evangelical Theological Society speech, quoted from “Contemplative Proponent J.P. Moreland,” Lighthouse Trails, Nov. 21, 2007).

We don’t know who Moreland is referring to when he talks about “a mean-spiritedness among the over-committed.” That is a popular strawman. But we do know that the Bible itself claims to be the sole divine revelation to man and it is able to make the man of God “*perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is obvious that if the Bible can do this, nothing else is necessary. It appears that Moreland wants to loose himself from the Bible’s restrictions and launch out into the wide world of mysticism.

In *Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit’s Power*, Moreland again recommends contemplative meditation. He urges his readers to practice centering prayer by focusing “the center of your attention on your physical heart muscle” (p. 159). In this book Moreland recommends Richard Foster and the late Roman Catholic priest Henri Nouwen.

Nouwen, Henri

Henri J.M. Nouwen (1932-1996) was a Roman Catholic priest who taught at Harvard, Yale, and the University of Notre Dame. Nouwen has had a vast influence within the emerging church and evangelicalism at large through his writings, and he has been an influential voice within the contemplative movement. A *Christian Century* magazine survey conducted in 2003 found that Nouwen's writings were a first choice for Catholic and mainline Protestant clergy. Nouwen is promoted by Christian leaders as diverse as Robert Schuller and Rick Warren (who highly recommends Nouwen's contemplative book *In the Name of Jesus*).

Nouwen's biographer said that he "had a homosexual orientation" (Michael Ford, *Wounded Prophet*, 1999).

Nouwen did not instruct his readers that one must be born again through repentance and personal faith in Jesus Christ in order to commune with God. The book *With Open Hands*, for example, instructs readers to open themselves up to God and surrender to the flow of life, believing that God loves them unconditionally and is leading them. This is blind faith. Nouwen wrote:

"When we pray, we are standing with our hands open to the world. We know that God will become known to us in the nature around us, in people we meet, and in situations we run into. We trust that the world holds God's secret within and we expect that secret to be shown to us" (*With Open Hands*, 2006, p. 47).

Nouwen did not instruct his readers to beware of false spirits and to test everything by the Scriptures. He taught them, rather, to trust that God is leading in and through all things and that they should "test" things by their own "vision." He denied the biblical teaching that man is a fallen creature with a darkened heart that can only be enlightened through the new birth.

Nouwen was deeply involved in contemplative mysticism. He was strongly influenced by Thomas Merton and wrote a book about him in 1972 (*Pray to Live: Thomas Merton--Contemplative Critic*). Nouwen also mentioned Merton in his books *Intimacy* (1969) and *Creative Ministry* (1971).

In his book *In the Name of Jesus*, Nouwen said that Christians must move “from the moral to the mystical.”

Nouwen claimed that contemplative meditation is necessary for an intimacy with God:

“I do not believe anyone can ever become a deep person without stillness and silence” (quoted by Chuck Swindoll, *So You Want to Be Like Christ*, p. 65).

He taught that the use of a mantra could take the practitioner into God’s presence.

“The quiet repetition of a single word can help us to descend with the mind into the heart ... This way of simple prayer ... opens us to God’s active presence” (*The Way of the Heart*, p. 81).

He said that mysticism and contemplative prayer can create ecumenical unity because Christian leaders learn to hear “the voice of love”:

“Through the discipline of contemplative prayer, Christian leaders have to learn to listen to the voice of love. ... For Christian leadership to be truly fruitful in the future, a movement from the moral to the mystical is required” (*In the Name of Jesus*, pp. 6, 31, 32).

In fact, if Christians are listening to the voice of the true and living God, they will learn that love is obedience to the Scriptures. “*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous*” (1 John 5:3).

Nouwen, like Thomas Merton and many other Catholic contemplatives, combined the teaching of eastern gurus with ancient Catholic practices. In his book *Pray to Live* Nouwen relates approvingly Merton’s heavy involvement with Hindu monks (pp. 19-28).

In his foreword to Thomas Ryan’s book *Disciplines for Christian Living*, Nouwen says:

“[T]he author shows a wonderful openness to the gifts of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Moslem religion. He discovers their great wisdom for the spiritual life of the Christian and does not hesitate to bring that wisdom home” (*Disciplines for Christian Living*, p. 2).

Nouwen's involvement with mysticism led him to a form of universalism and panentheism (God is in all things).

"The God who dwells in our inner sanctuary is the same as the one who dwells in the inner sanctuary of each human being" (*Here and Now*, p. 22).

"Prayer is 'soul work' because our souls are those sacred centers WHERE ALL IS ONE ... It is in the heart of God that we can come to the full realization of THE UNITY OF ALL THAT IS" (*Bread for the Journey*, 1997, Jan. 15 and Nov. 16).

In his final book Nouwen described his universalist doctrine as follows:

"Today I personally believe that while Jesus came to open the door to God's house, all human beings can walk through that door, whether they know about Jesus or not. Today I see it as my call to help every person claim his or her own way to God" (*Sabbatical Journey*, New York: Crossroad, 1998, p. 51).

He claimed that every person who believes in a higher power and follows his or her vision of the future is of God and is building God's kingdom:

"We can see the visionary in the guerilla fighter, in the youth with the demonstration sign, in the quiet dreamer in the corner of a café, in the soft-spoken monk, in the meek student, in the mother who lets her son go his own way, in the father who reads to his child from a strange book, in the smile of a girl, in the indignation of a worker, and in every person who in one way or another dreams life from a vision which is seen shining ahead and which surpasses everything ever heard or seen before" (*With Open Hands*, p. 113).

"Praying means breaking through the veil of existence and allowing yourself to be led by the vision which has become real to you. Whether we call that vision 'the Unseen Reality,' 'the total Other,' 'the Spirit,' or 'the Father,' we repeatedly assert that it is not we ourselves who possess the power to make the new creation come to pass. It is rather a spiritual power which has been given to us and which

empowers us to be in the world without being of it” (p. 114).

The radical extent of Nouwen’s universalism is evident by the fact that the second edition of *With Open Hands* has a foreword by Sue Monk Kidd. She is a New Ager who promotes worship of the goddess! Her book *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter: A Woman’s Journey from Christian Tradition to the Sacred Feminine* was published in 1996, a decade before she was asked to write the foreword to Nouwen’s book on contemplative prayer. Monk Kidd worships herself.

“Today I remember that event for the radiant mystery it was, how I felt myself embraced by Goddess, how I felt myself in touch with the deepest thing I am. It was the moment when, as playwright and poet Ntozake Shange put it, ‘I found god in myself/ and I loved her/ I loved her fiercely’” (*The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, p. 136).

“Over the altar in my study I hung a lovely mirror sculpted in the shape of a crescent moon. It reminded me to honor the Divine Feminine presence in myself, the wisdom in my own soul” (p. 181).

Sue Monk Kidd’s journey from the traditional Baptist faith (as a Sunday School teacher in a Southern Baptist congregation) to goddess worship began when she started delving into Catholic contemplative spirituality, practicing centering prayer and attending Catholic retreats.

Nouwen taught that God is only love, unconditional love.

“Don’t be afraid to offer your hate, bitterness, and disappointment to the One who is love and only love. ... [Pray] ‘Dear God, ... what you want to give me is love-- unconditional, everlasting love’” (*With Open Hands*, pp. 24, 27).

In fact, God’s love is not unconditional. It is unfathomable but not unconditional. Though God loves all men and Christ died to make it possible for all to be saved, there is a condition for receiving God’s love and that is acknowledging and repenting of one’s sinfulness and receiving Jesus Christ as one’s Lord and Saviour.

Further, God is not *only* love; He is also holy and just and light and truth. This is what makes the cross of Jesus Christ necessary. An acceptable atonement had to be made for God's broken law.

We conclude with the following discerning warning from Lighthouse Trails:

“For skeptics in Christian circles (professors, pastors, teachers, etc.) who are touting and promoting the writings of Henri Nouwen, let it be known that you are promoting the writings of Thomas Merton--they are one in the same. They both believed in the importance of eastern-style meditation, and they both came to believe there were many paths to God and divinity dwelt in all things and people. Not only are Nouwen's books evidence of this, but there is record of nearly thirty years of journals, articles, forewords to others books, talks, and interviews where Nouwen espouses the path of mysticism” (“Why Christian Leaders Should Not Promote Henri Nouwen,” Lighthouse Trails, Nov. 21, 2008).

Pennington, M. Basil, and Thomas Keating

M. Basil Pennington and Thomas Keating are very influential in the centering prayer movement which is sweeping through evangelical and Baptist churches. Their writings have helped popularize monastic retreats among evangelicals.

Both are Trappist monks and priests in the Roman Catholic Church. They co-authored *Finding Grace at the Center: The Beginning of Centering Prayer*. First published in 1978, this book has had a wide influence.

PENNINGTON (1931-2005) entered the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance in 1951 at St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts. This Order is also called Trappist after the name of the location of their founding, which was the Abbey of Notre Dame de la Grande Trappe.

The Order is dedicated to contemplation. The monks dedicate themselves to silence and solitude and meditation under the Rule of Saint Benedict. This Rule teaches salvation and sanctification through asceticism. Chapter 7 of the Rule presents a 12-step ladder of virtue and asceticism that “leads to heaven.” These include

repression of self-will, submission to superiors, confession, stifling laughter, and speaking only when asked a question. Under the Rule of Benedict everything is regulated, including sleeping, waking, meal times, quantity and quality of food, clothing, work, and recreation. The Rule forbids the ownership of any private property or the receipt of letters or gifts without permission of the abbot.

Pennington became professor of Theology at St. Joseph's in 1959, professor of Canon Law and professor of Spirituality in 1963, and Vocation Director in 1978.

In 2000 he was elected abbot of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, Georgia. This was founded in 1944 by 20 monks from the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky where Thomas Merton lived.

Pennington returned to St. Joseph's after his retirement in 2002, and died in 2005 in a car crash.

Pennington believed that hell is separation from God and a feeling of isolation in this present life.

“Separation from God is the essential suffering and we call it hell. Many people don't know that much of the emptiness or longing desire that they suffer from is because they are not in touch with God or whatever name they give Him. Separation is a very real form of suffering in this life” (interview with Mary NurrieStearns, “Transforming Suffering,” 1991, Personal Transformation website, <http://www.personaltransformation.com/Pennington.html>).

Pennington was a universalist who taught that man shares God's divine nature.

“We are united with everybody else in our human nature and in our SHARING OF A DIVINE NATURE, so we are never really alone, we have all this union and communion. Getting in touch with that reality is the greatest healing. We can adopt meditative practices which enable us to begin that journey of finding our true inner selves or transcending our separate selves and leave behind some of the pain and suffering” (Interview with Mary NurrieStearns)

Pennington said, "... the soul of the human family is the Holy Spirit" (*Centered Living*, p. 104).

Pennington taught that the meditative practices of all religions bring one into the experience of the same God:

"It is my sense, from having meditated with persons from many different [non-Christian] traditions, that in the silence we experience a deep unity. When we go beyond the portals of the rational mind into the experience, there is only one God to be experienced" (Pennington, *Centered Living*, p. 192).

In fact, there is also the "god of this world" who assumes the persona of an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Pennington promoted a radical interfaith ecumenism. He called Hindu swamis "our wise friends from the East" (*Finding Grace at the Center*, p. 23). He said, "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 and similar practices" (p. 23).

THOMAS KEATING (b. 1923) entered the Cistercian Order in 1944 and was appointed Superior of St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado, in 1958.

In 1961 he was elected abbot of St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts. The centering prayer movement began at St. Joseph's in the 1970s. Trappist monk William Meninger found a "dusty copy" of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and he and Keating and Pennington began developing a system of contemplation based on that as well as the writings of John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila.

Observing that this type of Catholic contemplation is very similar to that of Buddhist and Hindu mystics, they invited pagan meditation masters, including Zen Buddhist Roshi Sasaki, to teach at some of the retreats.

They also began writing books. In addition to co-authoring *Finding Grace at the Center*, Keating has written *Open Mind, Open Heart* (1986), *The Mystery of Christ* (1987), *Invitation to Love* (1992), *Intimacy with God* (1994), *The Human Condition* (1999),

Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit (2000), and *St. Therese of Lisieux* (2001).

By 2004, St. Joseph's had become a full-fledged Zen center. This was the fruit of interfaith contemplative dialogue. In April of that year Jesuit Robert Kennedy installed Trappist monk Kevin Hunt as the first American Trappist instructor of Zen (*National Catholic Reporter*, July 16, 2004).

“Under the ‘protection’ of a Buddha statue and filing in to the cadence of a Japanese drum, the procession reached the Abbey’s Chapter Room. There the installment was made: after the imposition of hands whereby Kennedy made Hunt his successor, the latter received the ‘Robe of Liberation’ -- a black Japanese kimono -- and his teaching staff.

“Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, General Superior of the Jesuits, wrote a letter praising Hunt’s achievement as ‘one that we can all celebrate in thanksgiving to God.’ According to Kolvenbach, it is through Zen meditation that Catholics can become aware of the loving presence of God. HUNT PREDICTS THAT BUDDHISM WILL CHANGE CATHOLICISM” (<http://www.traditioninaction.org/RevolutionPhotos/A082rcTrapistZen.htm>).

Keating combines contemplative practices with humanistic psychology, eastern religion, and New Age, and he has been deeply influenced by his pagan associations.

He believes that man has a “false self” built up through one’s life experiences and this false self is filled with guilt because of a *false* sense of sin and separation from God. The guilt supposedly is not real and the false self is “an illusion.” The objective of contemplative techniques is to reach beyond this false self to the true self that is sinless and guiltless and already in union with God.

This is a universalistic doctrine that denies the fall and salvation through faith in the substitutionary atonement of Christ.

Keating says:

“As we evolve toward self-identity and full self-consciousness, so grows the sense of responsibility, and hence guilt, and so grows the sense of alienation from the

true self which has long ago been forgotten in the course of the early growth period. This whole process of growth normally takes place without the inner experience of the divine presence. That is the crucial source of the false self. ... THERE'S NOTHING BASICALLY WRONG WITH YOU, it's just that YOUR BASIC GOODNESS has been overlaid by emotional programs for happiness which are aimed at things other than the ultimate happiness which is your relationship with God" (Keating interview with Kate Olson, "Centering Prayer as Divine Therapy," *Trinity News*, Trinity Church in the City, New York City, volume 42, issue 4, 1995).

Keating describes thoughtless meditative prayer in Hindu terms as being united with God in a mindless experience.

"Contemplative prayer is the opening of mind and heart, our whole being, to God, the Ultimate Mystery, BEYOND THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND EMOTIONS. It is a process of interior purification THAT LEADS, IF WE CONSENT, TO DIVINE UNION" (Keating interview with Kate Olson, "Centering Prayer as Divine Therapy," *Trinity News*, Trinity Church in the City, New York City, volume 42, issue 4, 1995).

Keating describes centering prayer is "a journey into the unknown" (*Open Mind, Open Heart*, p. 72).

Keating wrote the foreword to Philip St. Romain's strange and very dangerous book *Kundalini Energy and Christian Spirituality* (1990). Keating says, "Kundalini is an enormous energy for good," but also admits that it can be harmful. He recommends that kundalini "be directed by the Holy Spirit." He postulates that the meditative prayer practices of Catholic mystics such as Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross might have been associated with kundalini energy. Keating concludes by saying: "This book will initiate Christians on the spiritual journey into this important but long neglected dimension of the transforming power of grace."

Kundalini is a Hindu concept that there is powerful form of psychic energy at the base of the spine that can be "awakened." It is called the serpent, is purely occultic, and has resulted in many demonic manifestations.

Its own practitioners warn repeatedly about its dangers. *The Ayurveda Encyclopedia* says, “Those who awaken their kundalini without a guru can lose their direction in life ... they can become confused or mentally imbalanced ... more harm than good can arise” (p. 336). The book *Aghora II: Kundalini* warns many times that “indiscriminate awakening of the Kundalini is very dangerous” (p. 61). It says: “Once aroused and unboxed Kundalini is not ‘derousable’; the genie will not fit back into the bottle. ... Those who ride Kundalini without knowing their destination risk losing their way” (p. 20). In fact, the book says “some die of shock when Kundalini is awakened, and others become severely ill” (p. 61). It is likened to a toddler grasping a live wire (p. 58).

Keating retired as abbot in 1981 and co-founded (with Gustave Reininger and Edward Bednar) the Contemplative Outreach to promote centering prayer.

Keating is heavily involved in interfaith dialogue and promotes contemplative practice as a tool for creating interfaith unity.

He is one of the founders of the Snowmass Conference at St. Benedict’s Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado. This organization sponsored contemplative interfaith conferences for 20 years. They met “to meditate together in silence and to share our personal spiritual journeys.”

At the conclusion of the dialogues they published *The Common Heart* as an expression of their conviction that the things that unite them are greater than the things that divide. Contributors included Keating, Roshi Bernie Glassman (Zen), Swimi Atmarupananda (Hindu), Ibrahim Gamard (Islam), Pema Chodron (Buddhism), Netanel Miles-Yepes (Sufi), and Rabbi Henoch Dov Hoffman (Judaism).

The foreword to the book was written by New Ager Ken Wilber.

Keating and the Snowmass Conference published eight “Guidelines for Interreligious Understanding,” including the following.

The world religions bear witness to the experience of Ultimate reality to which they give various names: Brahman, Allah, Absolute, God, Great Spirit.

Ultimate Reality cannot be limited to any name or concept.

The potential for human wholeness--or in other frames of reference, enlightenment, salvation, transformation, blessedness, nirvana--is present in every human person.

Prayer is communion with Ultimate Reality, whether it is regarded as personal, impersonal or beyond them both

This is blatant universalism, and it is fruit of contemplative spirituality and interfaith dialogue.

Keating is past president of the Temple of Understanding, founded in 1960 by Juliet Hollister. The mission of this New Age organization is to "create a more just and peaceful world" by achieving "peaceful coexistence among individuals, communities, and societies." The tools for reaching this objective are interfaith education, dialogue, mystical practices, fostering mutual appreciation and tolerance, and promotion of the contempt of global citizenship.

Keating is also past president of the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (MID), which is sponsored by the Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries of North America. Founded in 1977, it is "committed to fostering interreligious and intermonastic dialogue AT THE LEVEL OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE." This means that they are using contemplative practices, yoga, Zen, and Sufism to promote interfaith unity and to help create a new world. The MID works in association with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Consider one of the objectives of the MID:

"The methods of concentration used in other religious traditions can be useful for removing obstacles to a deep contact with God. They can give a better understanding of the oneness of Christ as expressed in the various traditions and CONTRIBUTE TO THE FORMATION OF A NEW WORLD RELIGIOUS CULTURE. They can also be helpful in the development of certain potencies in the individual, for THERE ARE SOME ZEN-HINDU-SUFI-ETC. DIMENSIONS IN EACH HEART" (Mary L. O'Hara, "Report on Monastic Meeting at Petersham," *MID Bulletin 1*, October 1977).

In January 2008 the MID web site featured Thomas Ryan's book *Interreligious Prayer: A Christian Guide*. It contains "resources from eight religions that might be used in varying kinds of interreligious services." The religions are Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Baha'i, and Native American. A review of the book at the MID site web says:

"It is as one human family ... that we are called to live in harmony and to bring about justice and peace in our one world; and, as the author points out, FINDING ONE ANOTHER IN GOD IN PRAYER 'is the shortest way between humans'" (Katherine Howard, "Book Review: Can We Pray Together," *MID Bulletin* 80, January 2008).

The Monastic Interreligious Dialogue is associated with the North American Board for East-West Dialogue (NABEWD). At its first meeting in January 1978 at a monastery in Clyde, Missouri, Robert Muller, a New Age leader at the United Nations, was selected as the organization's advisor (Pascaline Coff, "Bridging Millennia through Dialogue," *MID Bulletin* 71, Sept. 2003). Muller believes in the divinity of all men.

Beginning in 1982 the NABEWD has sponsored exchanges between Catholic and Buddhist monks and nuns. The Buddhists visit Catholic monasteries in North America, while the Catholics visit Buddhist monasteries in Asia. This was done with the approval of the Dalai Lama, who was approached in 1981 while he was participating in a Buddhist-Catholic interfaith symposium at the Naropa Buddhist Institute in Boulder, Colorado. David Steindl-Rast and Thomas Keating also participated in the symposium. When the Catholics asked the Dalai Lama if he and his monks would be willing to participate, he replied, "Yes, but I have no money" (Pascaline Coff, *Ibid.*). The Catholics volunteered to pay the expenses, and the exchanges began the following year.

Peterson, Eugene

Eugene Peterson (b. 1932), the author of *The Message*, was for many years James M. Houston Professor of Spiritual Theology at Regent College. He also served for 35 years as founding pastor of Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in Bel Air, Maryland. Today he is retired and lives in Montana.

The New Testament portion of *The Message* was published in 1993 and the complete Bible in 2002. It is called a “translational-paraphrase” and is said to “unfold like a gripping novel.” In fact, it IS a novel!

It was “translated” by Peterson and reviewed by 21 “consultants” from the following schools: Denver Seminary (Robert Alden), Dallas Theological Seminary (Darrell Bock and Donald Glenn), Fuller Theological Seminary (Donald Hagner), Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Trinity Episcopal School, North Park Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Richard Averbeck). Columbia Bible College, Criswell College (Lamar Cooper), Westminster Theological Seminary (Peter Enns), Bethel Seminary (Duane Garrett), Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Paul R. House), Covenant Theological Seminary, Westmont College, Wesley Biblical Seminary, Reformed Theological Seminary, Moody Bible Institute (John H. Walton), Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and Gordon College (Marvin Wilson).

The Message is widely recommended by well-known Christian leaders. In keeping with his love for every new translation and paraphrase to appear since the Revised Standard Version, Billy Graham printed his own edition of “*The Message: New Testament*.” Warren Wiersbe says, “*The Message* is the boldest and most provocative rendering of the New Testament I’ve ever read.” Jack Hayford says, “*The Message* is certainly destined to become a devotional classic -- not to mention a powerful pastoral tool.” Rick Warren loves *The Message* and quotes it frequently, five times in the first chapter of *The Purpose-Driven Life*. J.I. Packer says, “In this crowded world of Bible versions Eugene Peterson’s blend of accurate scholarship and vivid idiom make this rendering both distinctive and distinguished. *The Message* catches the logical flow, personal energy, and imaginative overtones of the original very well indeed.” CCM artist Michael Card says, “Peterson’s translation transforms the eye into an ear, opening the door of the New Testament wider than perhaps it has ever been opened.” Leighton Ford says, “*The Message* will help many to transfer God’s eternal truths to their contemporary lives.” Joni Earckson Tada says, “WOW! What a treasure *The Message* is. I am going to carry it with me. This is a treasure that I will want to use wherever I am.”

The Message is also recommended by Amy Grant, Benny Hinn, Bill Hybels, Bill and Gloria Gaither, Chuck Swindoll, Toby of DC Talk, Gary Smalley, Gordon Fee, Gordon MacDonald, Jerry Jenkins, John Maxwell, Joyce Meyer, Kenneth Copeland, Max Lucado, Michael W. Smith, Newsboys, Phil Driscoll, Rebecca St. James, Rod Parsley, Stuart and Jill Briscoe, Tony Campolo, Bono of U2, Vernon Grounds, to name a few. (This information was gathered from the NAVPress web site.).

Peterson told *Christianity Today* that a major turning point in his ministry was a lecture by Paul Tournier sponsored by the liberal *Christian Century* magazine and held at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore (“Books & Culture Corner: The Contemplative Christian,” by Nathan Bierma, *Christianity Today* web site, Sept. 29, 2003). In a 1973 masters thesis entitled “Paul Tournier’s Universalism,” Daniel Musick warned:

“Paul Tournier was an unrestricted universalist. His writings, personal correspondence with him, and interviews with many who knew him support this conclusion. An analysis of his soteriology over 35 years of writing reveals a transition from reformed roots to an unbiblical, neo-orthodox perspective influenced by Emil Brunner and Karl Barth.”

Peterson has recommended *The Shack*. Though fictional, this book’s objective is the redefinition of God. It is about a man who becomes bitter at God after his daughter is murdered and has a life-changing experience in the very shack where the murder occurred; but the God he encounters is most definitely not the God of the Bible. Young’s depicts God the Father as a black woman who loves rock & roll, and well as a man with gray hair and a pony tail. Young’s male/female god/goddess is the god of the emerging church. He is cool, loves rock & roll, is non-judgmental, does not exercise wrath toward sin, does not send unbelievers to an eternal fiery hell, does not require repentance and the new birth, and puts no obligations on people. (For documentation see “The Shack’s Cool God” at the Way of Life web site, www.wayoflife.org.)

Peterson has also recommended Rob Bell’s universalistic book *Love Wins*. Bell says hell is in this life and most men will eventually be saved. He writes: “This insistence that God will be united and reconciled with all people is a theme the writers and prophets

return to again and again. ... The God that Jesus teaches us about doesn't give up until everything that was lost is found. This God simply doesn't give up. Ever" (Love Wins, Kindle location 1259-1287). Bell calls the preaching of eternal hell "misguided and toxic," a "cheap view of God," and "lethal" (location 47-60, 2154-2180). He says there is something wrong with this God and calls Him "terrifying and traumatizing and unbearable" (location 1273-1287, 2098-2113).

That kind of talk apparently resonates deeply with Peterson. No wonder he loves the non-judgmental god/goddess of *The Shack*.

Peterson is a big promoter of Catholic contemplative mysticism. He is on the Board of Reference for the international ecumenical contemplative organization Renovaré (pronounced Ren-o-var-ay, which is Latin, meaning "to make new spiritually"), founded by Richard Foster. At the October 1991 Renovaré meeting in Pasadena, Foster praised Pope John Paul II and called for unity in the Body of Christ through the "five streams of Christianity: the contemplative, holiness, charismatic, social justice and evangelical" (CIB Bulletin, December 1991). Foster advocates the practices of Catholic mystics and "the integration of psychology and theology." In his book entitled *Prayer* Foster draws material from Julian of Norwich, Thomas Merton, Bernard of Clairvaux, Madame Guyon, Teresa of Avila, even St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. Renovaré promotes guided imagery, visualization, centering prayer, astral projection, Zen meditation, and Jungian psychology (Calvary Contender, Feb. 15, 1998).

Along the same line, notice the heroes of the faith that Peterson quotes in the article "Spirit Quest" (which is a Native American term for seeking intimacy with and revelation from pagan spirits):

"Single-minded, persevering faithfulness confirms the authenticity of our spirituality. The ancestors we look to for encouragement in this business -- Augustine of Hippo and Julian of Norwich, ... Teresa of Avila -- didn't flit. They stayed" (*Christianity Today*, Nov. 8, 1993).

Augustine, Julian, and Teresa had authentic spirituality? Not when tested by Scripture. Julian of Norwich said, "God showed me that sin need be no shame to man but can even be worthwhile" (quoted by Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend*, p. 146). She

also said, “God is really our Mother as he is our Father” and called Christ “Mother Jesus.” Augustine taught that the sacraments are the means of saving grace, was one of the fathers of infant baptism, claiming that baptism takes away the child’s sin, taught that Mary did not commit sin and promoted prayers to her, believed in purgatory and the veneration of relics, accepted the doctrine of celibacy for “priests,” and laid the foundation for the inquisition, to name a few of his heresies. Teresa of Avila was probably demon possessed; she levitated and made strange noises deep in her throat, experienced terrifying visions and voices, and held to Rome’s sacramental gospel that works are required for salvation.

Peterson was Professor of Spiritual Theology at Regent College, and it is obvious that he has been influenced deeply by the Catholic and modernistic Protestant “spirituality” in which he has immersed himself for so many decades. Regent College’s bookstore features many works by Catholic mystics, such as those already named, and by theological modernists. I have visited this bookstore many times, and there is no warning whatsoever in regard to these books.

The mystical “spirituality” that is so popular in evangelical and charismatic circles today is a yearning for an experiential relationship with God that downplays the role of faith and Scripture and that exalts “transcendental” experiences that lift the individual from the earthly mundane into a higher “spiritual” plane. Biblical prayer is talking with God; mystical prayer is silent meditation and “centering” and other such things. Biblical Christianity is a patient walk of faith; mystical spirituality is a flight of fancy. Biblical study is analyzing and meditating upon the literal truth of the Scripture; mystical spirituality focuses on a “deeper meaning”; it is more allegorical and “transcendental” than literal.

It is not surprising that Peterson’s Bible translation has a New Agey flavor to it. He even uses the term “as above, so below,” which is a New Age expression for the unity of God and man, heaven and earth. In the book *As Above, So Below*, the editors of the *New Age Journal* say: “This maxim implies that the transcendent God beyond the physical universe and the immanent God within ourselves are one. Heaven and Earth, spirit and matter, the invisible and the visible worlds form a unity to which we are intimately linked” (quoted from Warren Smith, *Deceived on*

Purpose: The New Age Implications of the Purpose-Driven Church, Ravenna, Ohio: Conscience Press, 2004).

The Message is an environmental Bible, as well. In Romans 15:13, *The Message* says, “May the God of green hope fill you up with joy...” and in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, it says that those who “use and abuse the earth and everything in it, don’t qualify as citizens in God’s kingdom.”

The Message is also pro-homosexual, playing right into the hands of those who teach that homosexuality is a natural condition that God can bless instead of a sin that needs to be repented of. Every passage that condemns homosexuality is tampered with in *The Message*. For example, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 in the KJV warns that “effeminate, nor abusers themselves with mankind” will not inherit the kingdom of God without being born again. In *The Message* this becomes the vapid and almost meaningless “those who use and abuse each other, use and abuse sex.” In 1 Timothy 1:10, “them that defile themselves with mankind” is changed to “the irresponsible, who defy all authority, riding roughshod over God, life, sex, truth, whatever.

Rahner, Karl

Karl Rahner (1904-84) was a German Jesuit priest who has been called “the foremost Roman Catholic theologian of the 20th century.”

He was the author of thousands of books and articles. His major books included *Theological Investigations* (23 volumes, 1961-92), *Foundations of Christian Faith* (1978), *Prayers for a Lifetime* (1984), *I Remember* (1985), and *Spirit in the World* (1994).

He entered Jesuit training in 1922 and was ordained ten years later. Influenced by the German existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger, Rahner’s teaching was highly philosophical and complex.

He believed in evolution and in salvation apart from faith in Christ. He spoke of the “anonymous Christian,” referring to an individual who unconsciously responds to God’s grace operating in the world, though he might even reject the gospel. “His approach allows him to suggest that the beliefs of non-Christian religious traditions are not necessarily true, while allowing that

they may nevertheless mediate the grace of God by the lifestyles which they evoke--such as a selfless love of one's neighbor" ("Karl Rahner," <http://www.island-of-freedom.com/rahner.htm>).

Rahner had a major influence on the Second Vatican Council.

"Karl Rahner's concept of Anonymous Christian was one of the most influential theological ideals to affect the Second Vatican Council. In *Lumen Gentium*, the council fathers stated: 'Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or his Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do his will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience.' They went on to write, in *Gaudium et Spes*, 'Since Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery'" ("Anonymous Christian," *Wikipedia*).

Rahner was heavily involved in contemplative mysticism. During the early years of his Jesuit training he was deeply influenced by the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, and his first article was "Why We Need to Pray." He continued to practice and teach Ignatian mysticism throughout his life. Harvey Egan, who has written and taught extensively on Catholic contemplative monasticism, completed his doctorate on the *Spiritual Exercises* under Rahner's direction. Egan entitled his biography of Rahner "The Mystic of Everyday Life."

Leonard Sweet quoted Rahner as saying, "The Christian of tomorrow will be a mystic, one who has experienced something, or he will be nothing" (*Quantum Spirituality*, 1991, p. 76).

Riggs, Anne K.

Anne K. Riggs is an ecumenical Quaker. She is associate general secretary of the Ecumenical Secretariat of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and is co-editor of QUEST, which stands for Quaker Ecumenical Seminars in Theology. She has a doctorate in theology from the Catholic University of America.

Her theology is very liberal. A recent issue of QUEST equated the Bible with the Quran.

“The Bible and Qur’an are sources of genuine spiritual wisdom which, if read with discernment, sensitivity, and intelligence, can help transform our lives. Friends were among the first Christians to recognize divine wisdom not only in the Bible but also in the Qur’an” (Anthony Manousos, “A Quaker Perspective on the Qur’an and the Bible,” QUEST, Fall-Winter 2007-2008).

She believes that there is a divine inner light in every person that can be accessed through non-judgmental mysticism.

“In silence which is active, the Inner Light begins to grow ... a tiny spark. For the flame to be kindled and to grow, subtle argument and the clamor of our emotions must be stilled. It is by an attention full of love that we enable the Inner Light to blaze and illuminate our dwelling and to make of our whole being a source from which this Light may shine out” (“The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) as a Religious Community,” <http://www.quaker.org/quest/issue1-3.html>).

She says that silent meditation kindles the “inner light” and produces revelation, but one must be careful not to test the revelations with “subtle argument.” This is blind mysticism and it will inevitably lead to spiritual delusion.

Richard Rohr

Richard Rohr (b. 1943) is a Franciscan priest who is heavily involved in contemplative mysticism and liberal “social-justice” works. He is the director of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which he founded in 1986. He is a contributing editor and writer for *Sojourners* magazine.

He was charged with heresy but cleared by the Vatican. He believes in female priests, does not believe that homosexuals need to repent, and holds to a universalistic doctrine. He believes that much in the Bible, such as the Garden of Eden, is mythical (Rohr, *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*, 1999, p. 16).

In October 8, 2000, Rohr wrote a letter of support to Soulforce, which is an organization dedicated to “freedom for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people from religious and political oppression.” Addressing them as “brothers and sisters of the church,” Rohr said, “Our gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered brothers and sisters have been left outside of his realm of grace for far too long.” This, of course, is not true. No sinner has been left outside of the realm of God’s grace in Jesus Christ, but all are called to repent of their sin and without repentance there is no salvation (Luke 13:3-5; Acts 17:30; 20:21).

Like Thomas Merton, Rohr integrates pagan contemplative practices with that of ancient Catholic “saints.” He has adapted practices such as Buddhist koans and Hindu mantras. He holds to a form of panentheism.

In January 2008 Rohr and his organization sponsored a conference called “Jesus and Buddha: Paths to Awakening.” The announcement said:

“The Four Noble Truths are the distilled essence of the Buddhist teaching. In this retreat, each of the Four Noble Truths will be introduced and explored, with emphasis given to the presence of each Noble Truth at the heart of Jesus’ call to awaken to God’s presence in every detail of our daily lives. ... The teachings of both Jesus and Buddha call us to transformational honesty. They are both teaching us how to see, and how to see all the way through! They both knew that if you see God for yourself, you will see the Divine in all things.”

Rohr says that his philosophy teaches “us to be both-and” and “keeps us from either-or.” It “keeps us inclusive and compassionate toward everything.” It “keeps us from the false choice of liberal or conservative” and “allows us to enjoy both sides of things.” It “is far beyond my religion versus your religion” and “allows us to be both distinct and yet united.” He says this is the essence of the Center for Action and Contemplation (http://www.cacradicalgrace.org/resources/rg/2008/01_Apr-Jun/and.php).

In fact, this is the essence of Hinduism, the New Age, and the emerging church. Biblical Christianity, on the other hand, teaches us that there is truth and error, right and wrong, good and bad, God and the Devil, light and dark, that there is only one way of

salvation and many false ways, that men are either saved or lost. Isaiah 5:20 says, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

Ryan, Thomas

Thomas Ryan (b. c. 1945) is a Paulist priest who is heavily involved in interfaith dialogue via contemplative mysticism.

He was ordained to the priesthood in 1975 and directed the Canadian Centre for Ecumenism for 14 years. In 1995 he founded Unitas in Montreal to promote ecumenical and interfaith unity through meditation. In 2000 he set up the Paulist Office for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations.

In 1991 Ryan took a sabbatical in India and was initiated in yoga and Buddhist meditation. He is a certified teacher of Kripalu yoga. In his book *Prayer of Heart and Body: Meditation and Yoga as Christian Spiritual Practice* (1995) and his DVD *Yoga Prayer* (2004) he combines Catholic contemplative practices with Hindu yoga.

In his foreword to Ryan’s book *Disciplines for Christian Living*, Henri Nouwen says:

“[T]he author shows a wonderful openness to the gifts of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Moslem religion. He discovers their great wisdom for the spiritual life of the Christian and does not hesitate to bring that wisdom home” (*Disciplines for Christian Living*, p. 2).

In January 2008 the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (MID) web site featured Ryan’s book *Interreligious Prayer: A Christian Guide*. It contains “resources from eight religions that might be used in varying kinds of interreligious services.” The religions are Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Baha’i, and Native American. A review of the book says:

“It is as one human family ... that we are called to live in harmony and to bring about justice and peace in our one world; and, as the author points out, FINDING ONE ANOTHER IN GOD IN PRAYER ‘is the shortest way between humans” (Katherine Howard, “Book Review: Can We Pray Together,” *MID Bulletin* 80, January 2008).

Ryan's universal doctrine is evident from a quote he gives from Catholic monk Bede Griffiths at the beginning of *Prayer of Heart and Body*.

“All self-understanding arises from understanding ourselves as spiritual beings, and it is only contact with the UNIVERSAL HOLY SPIRIT that can give us the depth and the breadth to understanding our own experience. Meditation is the way most commonly employed by seekers throughout history in their quest to penetrate surface appearances and come to grips with the Real” (p. 15).

Though we know that the Holy Spirit, as God, is infinite and omnipresent, He is not “universal” in the sense that He is in all men. This statement denies the Bible's teaching of the fall of man and salvation only through personal faith in Jesus Christ.

The advertisement for *Yoga Prayer*, which is published by Paulist Productions, says:

“Here is a practice that invites you to come home to your body as a temple of the indwelling presence of God.”

The presentation has no instruction for how to be born again scripturally in order to receive the presence of God, merely assuming that each practitioner has God's presence.

Ryan says, “To be Christian in these times is to be ecumenical, and to be religious is to be inter-religious” (https://www.paulist.org/main/profile_20061204ryan.htm).

Shannon, William

William H. Shannon is a Roman Catholic priest in the Diocese of Rochester, New York. He is emeritus professor of theology at Nazareth College.

Shannon is a disciple of the Buddhist Catholic Thomas Merton. He founded the International Thomas Merton Society and has written at least four books about him: *The Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story* (1992), *Something of a Rebel: Thomas Merton's Life and Works* (1997), *Thomas Merton's Paradise Journey: Writings on Contemplation* (2000), and *The Thomas Merton Encyclopedia* (2006).

Shannon has also written other books on Catholic contemplative practices, including *Seeking the Face of God: The Path to a More Intimate Relationship with Him* (1999) and *Silence on Fire: Prayer of Awareness* (2000).

Silence on Fire (1991) is about “wordless prayer.”

Shannon has been so deeply influenced by Thomas Merton and his pagan contemplative practices and associations that he has come to believe that unsaved men can find God in themselves. He gave the following counsel to an atheist.

“You will never find God by looking outside yourself. You will only find God within” (*Silence on Fire*, p. 99).

This is a universalistic view that God is already in every man and simply needs to be sought. It denies the fall and salvation only through faith in Christ.

Shannon also expressed his universalism in *Seeds of Peace*:

“This forgetfulness, of OUR ONENESS WITH GOD, is not just a personal experience, it IS THE CORPORATE EXPERIENCE OF HUMANITY. Indeed, this is one way to understand original sin. We are in God, but we don’t seem to know it. We are in paradise, but we don’t realize it” (*Seeds of Peace*, p. 66).

Shannon believes that contemplative prayer puts man in connection with the whole universe. This is Hindu monism.

“The goal of all true spirituality is to achieve an awareness of our oneness with God and with all of God’s creation ... and with all that is” (*Silence on Fire*, p. 160).

Shannon is very bold in his rejection of the God of the Bible:

“This is a typical patriarchal notion of God. He is the God of Noah who sees people deep in sin, repents that He made them and resolves to destroy them. He is the God of the desert who sends snakes to bite His people because they murmured against Him. He is the God of David who practically decimates a people. ... He is the God who exacts the last drop of blood from His Son, so that His just anger, evoked by sin, may be appeased. This God whose moods alternate between graciousness and fierce anger. THIS GOD DOES NOT EXIST” (*Silence on Fire*, pp. 109, 110).

Shantivanam Ashram

The Saccidananda Ashram in India, which was named after the Hindu godhead (also called Shantivanam Ashram or Forest of Peace), was founded by Roman Catholic priests to integrate Catholic and Hindu contemplation principles. It was established by **JULES MONCHANIN** (1895-1957) and **HENRI LE SAUX**, both of the Benedictine order. The ashram was built in Tamil Nadu on the banks of a “holy river.”

The liturgy at the ashram includes readings from Hindu scriptures. They adopted Hindu practices such as wearing an orange robe, going barefoot, taking the tika, and practicing vegetarianism. They applied the Hindu name *Saccidananda* to the God of the Bible.

This is Roman Catholicism going back to its pagan origins.

The two Catholic priests took the names of Hindu holy men, Monchanin calling himself Parama Arubi Ananda (the bliss of the supreme spirit) and le Saux calling himself Swami Abhishiktananda (bliss of the anointed one). He stayed in Hindu ashrams and learned from Hindu gurus. In 1968 le Saux became a hermit in the Himalayas, living there until his death in 1973. He was involved in ecumenical retreats and interfaith work, attempting to reconcile Christianity with Hinduism. “He sought to penetrate the mystical experience of East and West at the deepest level and believed that Christianity would be renewed from its contact with Hindu spirituality” (Ursula King, *Christian Mystics*, p. 240).

His books *Prayer: Hindu-Christian Meeting Point, Further Shore* and *Saccidananda: A Christian Approach to Advaitic Experience* continue to be published.

After the departure of le Saux, the Shantivanam Ashram was led by **ALAN RICHARD “BEDE” GRIFFITHS** (1906-93). He called himself Swami Dayananda (bliss of compassion).

Griffiths was born in England to an evangelical Anglican family. His father “had a simple, evangelical religion, and a devotion to Moody and Sankey’s hymns, which he was never tired of singing” (Griffiths, *The Golden String*, p. 18).

The steps that led Griffiths from this evangelical faith to Hinduism began with his education. The Bible warns that “evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33). Griffiths was first influenced by a “Christian humanist” named W.H. Fyfe at Christ’s Hospital grammar school. Fyfe “did not believe in dogma” and claimed that the virgin birth of Christ doesn’t matter (p. 23). Next Griffiths went to Magdalen College at Oxford University, where “the prevailing thought was skeptical.” He said, “... most of my friends who read philosophy soon came to the conclusion that truth was something which it was impossible to know” (p. 31).

Another major step toward unbelief was Griffiths’ private reading. He says, “For by this time I had begun to read for myself, and my reading was to draw me gradually away from the Church, and eventually from any recognised form of religious belief. ... In this way though I scarcely realised it my reading was leading me to a view of life which was essentially pagan rather than Christian” (pp. 21, 25). He was greatly influenced by the Unitarians such as Samuel Coleridge and William Wordsworth. Coleridge was a leader of the “broad church” movement that was leading the Church of England in a liberal direction. Wordsworth was a worshiper of nature. Griffiths says, “The love of nature was the only thing which then moved me deeply, and I found in Wordsworth a religion which was wholly based on this” (p. 33). He was particularly attracted to Wordsworth’s mysticism, which was a “kind of trance which he experienced in the presence of nature” and a “state of ecstasy ... an experience which gave one a direct insight into the inner meaning of life” (p. 34).

Griffiths was also influenced by the psychological theories of Carl Jung.

Griffiths called creation, the fall, the virgin birth, resurrection, ascension, heaven, and hell “the language of mythology” (*The Marriage of East and West*, pp. 28, 34, 175, 176, 187). He said that the resurrection of Christ was “not an event in space and time” (*The New Creation in Christ: Christian Meditation and Community*, p. 77).

As for the doctrine of hell, Griffiths said, “But at least, we can dismiss from our minds all thought of an endless suffering in time” (*The Marriage of East and West*, p. 35).

He called the doctrine of man’s separation from God “an illusion” (p. 55).

Griffiths had rejected Jesus Christ and the Bible and was pursuing the impossible dream of finding ultimate truth elsewhere. He was treading a frightful path of spiritual blindness. “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

In 1931, while at Oxford, Griffiths converted from Anglicanism to Catholicism. In this he was influenced by the writings of John Newman, one of the fathers of the Oxford Movement. Newman left the Church of England and joined the Catholic Church (eventually becoming a Cardinal), and multitudes followed in his footsteps. Through Newman Griffiths was introduced to the “church fathers,” who taught him the heresies that “the Church was infallible” and that the authority of the apostles has come to reside in the Catholic bishops, with the “Bishop of Rome” as the successor of Peter.

Griffiths also studied the writings of Catholic mystics such as Benedict, Thomas Kempis (*The Imitation of Christ*), William Law, Jacob Boehme, Johann Tauler, Henry Suso, Ignatius Loyola, and John of the Cross. Griffiths lived alone in a hermitage and practiced Catholic asceticism.

He came to believe that through meditation one can find God “beyond all thought and feeling and imagination” (*The Golden String*, p. 116) and “beyond images and concepts, beyond reason and will” (*The Marriage of East and West*, p. 22). In fact, this is blind mysticism. It is to reject the God of biblical revelation for an idol, but Griffiths said, “I wanted to abandon myself utterly to this power” (p. 111), ignoring the Bible’s warning that “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14).

In 1932, Griffiths joined the Benedictine monastery of Prinknash Abbey near Gloucester and was ordained a priest eight years later. The name *Bede* was given to him when he entered the Benedictine order. It means prayer.

In 1955, he went to India at the invitation of an Indian Benedictine monk to help found a Benedictine monastery. He wrote to a friend saying, "I want to discover the other half of my soul" (Griffiths, *The Marriage of East and West*, p. 3). In 1958, he settled at Kurisumala Ashram in Kerala, at first living in a palm leaf hut. He adopted the lifestyle of a Hindu jogi, wearing the saffron-colored kavi, going barefoot, meditating, eating no meat. They read from the Hindu scriptures in the morning, from the Muslim Koran and the Sikh scriptures at midday, and from Indian poets and mystics at night (p. 20). His objective was to "find the way to the marriage of East and West" (p. 4). He says, "Thus we began to realize that truth is one, but that it has many faces, and each religion is, as it were, a face of the one Truth, which manifests itself under different signs and symbols in the different historical traditions" (*The Marriage of East and West*, p. 20).

Several years after settling in Kerala Griffiths moved to the Shantivanam Ashram, invited there by Henri le Saux, when he moved to the Himalayas.

Through his books and lectures, Griffiths has had a large role in promoting the interfaith philosophy in Roman Catholic monasteries in America, Canada, England, Australia, and Germany. He wrote 12 books on interfaith dialogue, the most popular being *The Marriage of East and West*.

Griffiths was deeply affected by his interfaith associations. He adopted the heresy of universalism.

"Christ died for all from the beginning to the end of time, to bring all people to that state of communion with God, with the eternal Truth and Reality, for which they were created. ... Wherever man encounters God, or Truth, or Reality, or Love, or whatever name we give to the transcendent mystery of existence, even if he is formally an atheist or an agnostic, he encounters the grace of God in Christ" (*The Marriage of East and West*, pp. 33, 34).

"... every Church, every religion, every human community, is only a stopping place, a tent which is pitched on this earth by pilgrims who are on their way to the City of God" (*The Marriage of East and West*, p. 39).

Griffiths believed that all men who follow their own reason are disciples of Christ:

“All men, therefore, who are guided by their reason and conscience and follow the light which has been given them, are truly by their implicit faith and desire disciples of Christ and vitally related to his Church” (*The Golden String*, p. 176).

Griffiths accepted the Hindu concepts of dualism and the interrelatedness of everything (monism). At a talk he gave in 1991 Griffiths said:

“I saw God in the earth, in trees, in mountains. It led me to the conviction that there is no absolute good or evil in this world. We have to let go of all concepts which divide the world into good and evil, right and wrong, and begin to see the complementarity of opposites which Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa called the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the ‘coincidence of opposites’” (<http://www.bedegriffiths.com/bio.htm>).

Griffiths promoted a New Age integration of Christianity with evolution and eastern religion.

“We’re now being challenged to create a theology which would use the findings of modern science and eastern mysticism which, as you know, coincide so much, and to evolve from that a new theology which would be much more adequate” (Renee Weber, *Dialogues With Scientists and Sages: The Search for Unity* (1986), p. 163).

Griffiths adopted the Hindu doctrine that man is the infinite, eternal God.

“This brings us to the third aspect of this supreme reality, that of Purusha. Purusha is the cosmic man, of whom it is said ‘one fourth of him is here on earth, three quarters are above in heaven.’ This is the archetypal man, the pole (*quth*) or Universal Man ... This is beautifully expressed in the Chandogya Upanishad. ‘There is this city of Brahman (the human body) and in it there is a small shrine in the form of lotus, and within can be found a small space. This little space within the heart is as great as this vast universe. The heavens and the earth are there, and the sun and the moon and the stars; fire and lightening and wind are there,

and all that now is and is not yet--all that is contained within it.' ... Purusha is the cosmic person, who contains the whole creation in himself and also transcends it" (*The Marriage of East and West*, pp. 66, 67).

At the end of his life Griffiths came to believe in the reality of mother goddess. This was the fruit of his communion with idolatry. In 1990, after a stroke, he began to speak of the awakening of his repressed feminine.

"Intimating it was a mystical experience which could not properly be put into words, Father [Griffiths] used symbolic language to try and express the depth of the experience. The two symbols he used were the Black Madonna and the Crucified Christ. He said these two images summed up for him something of THIS MYSTERIOUS EXPERIENCE OF THE DIVINE FEMININE and the mystery of suffering. When he first spoke about the Black Madonna, he said his experience of her was deeply connected to the Earth-Mother, to the forms of the ancient feminine found in rocks and caves and in the different forms in nature. HE LIKENED IT TO THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FEMININE EXPRESSED IN THE HINDU CONCEPT OF SHAKTI--THE POWER OF THE DIVINE FEMININE. Later Father wrote these reflections on the Black Madonna: 'The Black Madonna symbolizes for me the Black Power in Nature and Life, the hidden power in the womb. ... I feel it was this Power which struck me. She is cruel and destructive, but also deeply loving and nourishing.'

"A few months later Father again wrote: 'THE FIGURE OF THE BLACK MADONNA STOOD FOR THE FEMININE IN ALL ITS FORMS. I FELT THE NEED TO SURRENDER TO THE MOTHER, and this gave me the experience of being overwhelmed by love. I realized that surrendering to death, and dying to oneself is surrendering to Total Love.'

"Regarding the image of the Crucified Christ, Father made the statement that his understanding of the crucifixion had deepened profoundly. He wrote: 'On the Cross Jesus surrendered himself to this Dark Power. He lost everything: friends, disciples, his own people, their law and

religion. ... He had to enter the Dark Night, to be exposed to the abyss. Only then could he become everything and nothing, opened beyond everything that can be named or spoken; only then could he be one with the darkness, the Void, THE DARK MOTHER WHO IS LOVE ITSELF” (<http://www.bedegriffiths.com/bio.htm>).

This is very similar to the experience that Sue Monk Kidd had on her journey from Catholic contemplative practices to goddess worship. She fell in love with ancient goddess religion and had a particular affection for the Black Madonna. This is because the Madonna was originally borrowed from pagan idolatry, from the ancient mother goddess mystery religions that stemmed from Babel.

St. Romain, Philip

Philip St. Romain is a Roman Catholic substance abuse counselor, lay minister, and retreat master, and the author of *Kundalini Energy and Christian Spirituality* (1990).

Through Catholic contemplative practices St. Romain has been led into very dark demonic spheres. He believes that he came in touch with the Hindu “kundalini energy.” He calls it “a natural evolutionary energy inherent in every human being.”

In his foreword to the book, Thomas Keating postulates that meditative prayer practices of Catholic mystics such as Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross might have been associated with kundalini. He claims that “kundalini is an enormous energy for good” and concludes by saying: “This book will initiate Christians on the spiritual journey into this important but long neglected dimension of the transforming power of grace.”

In fact, centering prayer and other forms of *Christian Zen* or *Christian yoga* initiate people into spiritual darkness and deception.

St. Romain began to have strange experiences through the practice of centering prayer, which involves emptying the mind and centering down into oneself. After “centering down” into silence, gold lights would appear and swirl in his mind, forming themselves into captivating patterns. “Wise sayings” popped into his mind as if he were “receiving messages from another.” He felt

prickly sensations that would continue for days. After studying Hinduism he came to the conclusion that he was dealing with kundalini.

“From the Hindu literature, I learned that what I was calling the true self, they called enlightenment, advaita, or Self-realization (sat-chit-ananda). This awakening is the goal of Hinduism, and the various kinds of yogas are disciplines to lead one to realize this goal. I came into contact with a very deep, holistic understanding of human nature and its various systems of energy and intelligence which helped me to understand myself better. Hinduism teaches one how to work with these various levels to come to the experience of enlightenment.”

Kundalini is a Hindu concept that there is powerful form of psychic energy at the base of the spine that can be “awakened.” It is described as a coiled serpent and is called “serpent power.” It is supposed to be located in the first of the seven “chakras” or power centers in the body. If the kundalini is awakened through such things as yogic meditation, intensive chanting and dancing, and the laying on of hands, it can be encouraged to move up the spinal column, piercing the other chakras, eventually reaching the seventh chakra at the top of the head, resulting in spiritual insight and power through “union with the Divine.”

Kundalini is purely occultic and has resulted in many demonic manifestations. It is said to create sensations of heat and cold, tingling, electric current, internal pressures, inner sounds and lights, buzzing in the ear, compulsive bodily movements and expressions (such as grimacing), uncontrollable emotional outbursts, loss of memory, a sense of an inner eye, drowsiness, and pain. The Inner Explorations web site tells of a man who, while dabbling in the activation of kundalini energy, experienced touches by invisible hands and animals that would attach themselves to him or bite him or lick his face (www.innerexplorations.com/ewtext/ke.htm).

St. Romain believes that through yogic meditation he can reach beyond the “false self” and connect with “true self” or the Ground of Being, which is God. He says, “The Ground that flows throughout my being is identical with the Reality of all creation.” Thus he believes that God flows in all things and is one with all

things. This is a Hindu concept and is a bold denial of the fall of man, God's transcendent holiness, and salvation only through faith in the blood of Christ.

St. Romain has come to depend on the voice that he hears in contemplative prayer.

"I cannot make any decisions for myself without the approbation of THE INNER ADVISER, whose voice speaks so clearly in times of need ... there is a distinct sense of an inner eye of some kind 'seeing' with my two sense eyes" (*Kundalini Energy*, p. 39).

In a postscript to "Kundalini Energy," Lisa Romain, Philip's wife, describes how she learned to deal with her husband's kundalini experiences. She says:

"When he told me a few years ago about seeing lights in his head (which he later called mandalas), buzzings in the ears, crying for hours at night, energy fizzing from the top of his head, the 'crab' in his brain, the pressure inside his ears, I found it all very strange."

She says that she was puzzled and awed by these things, but she concluded that "God leads us on the journey" and "we follow with trust." Sadly, this "trust" is a blind leap into the dark rather than biblical faith.

In the afterword to Romain's book, James Arraj says that the mixture of Hinduism and Buddhism and Jungism with Christianity WILL CREATE THE "TRUE GLOBAL CULTURE."

We have no doubt that this is true and it is described in Revelation 17 as a harlot religion riding the antichrist! It will be the ultimate fulfillment of the ancient Tower of Babel.

Saux, Henri Le

See Saccidananda Ashram.

Steindl-Rast, David

David Steindl-Rast (b. 1926), a Benedictine monk, was born and educated in Austria and immigrated to the United States in 1952. In 1953, he joined the Mount Saviour Monastery, a Benedictine

community in Elmira, New York. In 1958-59 he held the Thrope Lectureship at Cornell University, the same position previously held by the modernist Paul Tillich.

Beginning in 1967, following the Second Vatican Council, he became heavily involved with Catholic-Buddhist interfaith dialogue and studied under four Zen Buddhist masters. He came to believe that Catholics and Buddhists are communing with the same God and wrote *The Ground We Share: Buddhist and Christian Practice*. This was co-authored by Zen Buddhist Robert Aitken Roshi.

Currently he is involved with the Network for Grateful Living, which is New Agey organization dedicated to the goal of creating a new world through such things as contemplative mysticism, visualization, interfaith dialogue, environmentalism, developing an awareness of angels, and the Buddhist concept of flowing gratefully with the moment and being one with the “ground of Being.” The Network’s web site features a quote from Eckhart Tolle’s book *The Power of Now*, “I have lived with several Zen masters--all of them cats.”

Steindl-Rast’s syncretistic, universalistic doctrine is evident in the following statement:

“Envision the great religious traditions arranged on the circumference of a circle. At their mystical core they all say the same thing, but with different emphasis” (“Heroic Virtue,” *Gnosis*, Summer 1992).

In a 2006 interview with Tom Fox for the *National Catholic Reporter*, Steindl-Rast said that the notion that we are separated from God because of sin and that God demands certain things from us and punishes us when we don’t live up to His standards is fast disappearing “because deep down in our hearts we know God is not separate from us” (<http://www.ncrcafe.org/node/443>).

Suso, Henry

Henry Suso (1295-1366), whose name in German was Heinrich Seuse, was a Dominican priest and a disciple of Meister Eckhart. He was declared a saint in 1831 by Pope Gregory XVI.

For decades he was excessive in his asceticism, severely mistreating his body in an attempt to participate in Christ's sufferings and assist in his own salvation and sanctification.

"His feet were full of sores, his legs dropsical, his knees bloody and seared, his loins covered with scars from the horsehair, his body wasted, his mouth parched with intense thirst, his hands tremulous from weakness" (Ursula King, *Christian Mystics*, pp. 113, 114).

"Suso devised for himself such comforts as an undergarment studded with a hundred and fifty brass nails, sharpened and so fixed as to pierce his skin; gloves with sharp tacks in order to discourage him from disturbing the noxious insects with which, by a sort of invitation, his body teemed; a door to sleep on, and to make sure that this should not be too comfortable, a cross with thirty protruding needles and nails just under his body. In winter he slept on the bare floor of his cell and froze, his body covered with scars and his throat parched with thirst. He boasts that over a period of twenty-five years he never took a bath, and strove to 'attain such a high degree of purity' that he would neither scratch nor touch any part of his body other than hands and feet" (Richard Nolan, "Internal Suffering and Christianity," <http://www.philosophy-religion.org/criticism/suffering.htm>).

Suso considered himself a fighter of "heresy" but in reality he was a persecutor of the brethren. He reproved those who refused to submit to Rome's authority.

His *Little Book of Truth* contains his mystical doctrine. Like Eckhart, Suso taught that man can become one with God through mystical union:

"They are deprived of their own being and are transformed into another form, into another glory, and into another force. Now what else is this other strange form but the divine nature and the divine essence into which they flow and which flows into them, in order to be one with it? What else is this glory than to be transfigured and glorified in the light of being, to which man has no access?" (*Christian Mystics*, p. 112).

Suso was devoted to Mary and published a book entitled *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom*, which consists of “dialogues between the Servant and the Virgin Mary.”

Suso was one of the “Rhineland Mystics,” which refers to a small group of contemplatives who lived in Germany in the 14th century. See also Meister Eckhart and Johanne Tauler.

Talbot, John Michael

John Michael Talbot (b. 1954) is a very popular Contemporary Christian Music recording artist, with sales of millions of CDs. He is also influential in the contemplative prayer movement. He represents two of the most powerful glues binding together the ecumenical movement, contemporary music and contemplative mysticism.

Talbot was raised Methodist, but in his book *Come to the Quiet* he thanks his parents for “installing a great love for world religions with me in my formative years.” From about age 10 he was singing and playing professionally with his siblings in folk bands. At age 15 he dropped out of school and formed the folk rock band Mason Proffit with his older brother Terry. They opened for Janis Joplin, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, and other well-known groups and sold hundreds of thousands of records. At age 17 he married, and soon thereafter he began an earnest investigation into religion.

In 1971 Talbot was in a motel room praying, “God, are you a he, a she, or an it?” when he “saw a Christ figure standing over” him (*Come to the Quiet*, p. 5).

“I saw an image that looked like Jesus--it was a typical Christ figure--an incredible sight. He didn't say anything--he was just there. ... I had been reading about Jesus and feeling him in my heart, but at that moment I actually experienced his touch. I knew it was Jesus” (*Troubadour for the Lord*, p. 46).

He says, “From then on, I began calling myself a Christian again, though I didn't understand Christian theology.”

At this point he claims to have turned in a fundamentalist direction, becoming a “Bible thumper.” He doesn't say what kind of “fundamentalism” it was, though. He says that he kept his

shoulder-length hair and was not committed to any one congregation, so it is hard to say what he was involved with. It sounds like it was his own sort of “fundamentalism” that he devised from various sources.

He describes the experience only in negative terms, saying that he became very skeptical of any other religion (as if that were wrong!) and was ready with a Scripture for any question or problem. He considered the Catholic Church “the great whore of Babylon.”

He looks back on all of that as a negative thing, but in reality it is the way of the truth, which is very strict and narrow. The Psalmist said, “*Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way*” (Psa. 119:128).

He says that when he visited friends he would “come on like a Bible thumper, condemning their life-styles and spitting out Scripture verses to make my point. I scared them to death! I know they were thinking, ‘Hey, John boy, you’ve changed. You’re not the loving, patient friend you were before.’ And they were absolutely right” (*Troubadour for the Lord*, p. 63).

This is a strange way to describe what was happening, unless there is something he is not telling us. Perhaps he wasn’t kind and humble and gentle with his friends. If so, the problem was with him and not with “fundamentalism.”

He doesn’t say, but it is definitely not wrong to quote Scripture and to warn people that they need to be saved before it is too late. The Lord Jesus Christ preached frequently on hell in the most forceful of terms (e.g., Mark 9:43-48).

As for a believer’s old friends thinking he has gone crazy and not being particularly thrilled with his new life, that has been happening for 2,000 years. The apostle Peter described it in his day. “*Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you*” (1 Peter 4:1).

As for rebuking sin, that is the legitimate and God-designed purpose of the Law. It exposes sin to make men see their lost condition so that they will flee to Christ (Romans 3:19). The Bible commands the believer not only not to have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, “*but rather reprove them*” (Ephesians 5:11).

As for the idea that this is not an act of love, it is actually the most loving and friendly thing one can do! Unbelievers don't consider it loving; they want the Bible believer to keep his religion to himself, but the day will come when they will understand that preaching the Scripture and warning of spiritual danger is a most compassionate gesture.

Talbot says that during those days he talked Catholics out of their church and "convinced them they couldn't really be saved in the Catholic church with all that idol worship and repeated ritual" (*Troubadour for the Lord*, p. 63).

He claims that he "was becoming more centered on that book than on Jesus" and "was unwittingly committing the sin of bibliolatry" (*Troubadour for the Lord*, p. 65).

We don't know what was going on in his heart, but it is impossible to walk with Christ properly without making the Bible central to one's Christian life. This is not bibliolatry; it is obedience. Fundamentalists don't worship the Bible; they worship God; but the honor the Bible for what it claims to be, the very Word of God. The Lord Jesus said, "*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:31-32), and, "*He that is of God heareth God's words*" (John 8:47), and, "*My sheep hear my voice*" (John 10:27), and, "*I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them*" (John 17:8).

Along that time Talbot's wife divorced him and later remarried. In *Come to the Quiet*, Talbot seems to blame fundamentalism and a dogmatic Christian faith even for this (p. 6). In fact, he blames fundamentalism for just about everything, for his friends leaving him and his family becoming "worried about" him and the fact that he "had hit bottom."

He claims that he "became a pretty terrible person to be around," but he can't rightfully blame that on a strict Bible faith. If it is true that he was a terrible person to be around, then it was a personal problem.

Through counsel with a preacher in the liberal American Baptist Church, Talbot began to soften his zeal. He also entered the contemporary Christian music world, which further tempered his fundamentalist enthusiasm. Contemporary Christian Music has

always had a tolerant, non-doctrinal, ecumenical outlook. He signed with Billy Ray Hearn's new label, Sparrow Records. CCM's radical ecumenical philosophy is evident by the fact that when Talbot converted to Catholicism and wanted to continue recording albums under Sparrow, Hearn was supportive. Talbot's first album as a Catholic was wrongly titled "The Lord's Supper"; it was actually about the Catholic Mass. Talbot says: "When Billy Ray sensed the spirit of renewal that came through loud and clear on this album, he became excited about the potential for ministry to the broader Catholic market" (*Troubadour for the Lord*, p. 114).

Talbot was receptive when the road manager of his band gave him a book about Francis of Assisi. This set him on the path to Roman Catholicism, mysticism, and interfaith dialogue. He read Thomas Merton, Thomas à Kempis, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Bernard of Clairvaux, the *Cloud of Unknowing*, and other Catholic mystical writings.

He began meeting with a Catholic priest named Martin Wolter at Alverna, a Franciscan retreat center in Indianapolis (now defunct).

In 1978 he joined the Roman Catholic Church, and within a year his parents followed. He claims that God spoke to him and said: "She is my first Church, and I love her most dearly. But she has been sick and nearly died, but I am going to heal her and raise her to new life, and I want you to be a part of her" (*Come to the Quiet*, p. 7).

Obviously this was a deluding spirit, because the first churches described in the Bible were nothing like the Roman Catholic Church. Peter was married. He did not operate as a pope. He didn't sit on a throne or wear special clothes and lord it over his brethren. In the early churches described in the New Testament there was no special ordained priesthood, no ceremony like the Mass, no host, no monstrance, no bells, no incense, no tabernacle, no prayers to Mary, no special sainthood, no purgatory, no cardinals, no archbishops, no infant baptism, no holy relics.

The same year he joined the Catholic Church Talbot became a lay "brother" in the Secular Franciscan Order and began to live at Alverna as a hermit. He claims that he had a powerful mystical experience on the feast day of Mary's (mythical) assumption into

heaven. He was walking by the Shrine to Our Lady of Lourdes with its statue of Mary and felt called to build a little shack nearby so that he could enter contemplative solitude.

In 1982 he founded the Little Portion Hermitage in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, and in 1990 the Brothers and Sisters of Charity was approved by the Catholic Church. This is “an integrated monastic community of families, celibates and singles,” and Talbot is “General Minister and Spiritual Father.” The community, which is formally recognized by the Catholic Church as a “Public Association of the Faithful,” has about 40 members who live on the 250-acre property in Arkansas and another 500 nationwide.

In 1989 Talbot broke his Franciscan vow of celibacy and married Viola Pratka, who also broke her vow of celibacy as a nun to enter the marriage.

In April 2008 the chapel, library, offices, and many common areas of the hermitage were destroyed in a fire.

When he was beginning to study Catholicism at Alverna, Talbot thought of giving up his music. He had entered the CCM movement after leaving Mason Profit, and his “early albums presented a conservative, Protestant theology.”

The Catholic priest counseled him to think twice about this decision, saying, “I think God has chosen you as A BRIDGE BUILDER...” (*Troubadour for the Lord*, p. 90).

As the priest suggested, Talbot has indeed become a major bridge builder. He has used his music as a bridge between Catholicism and Protestantism. His albums were the first by a Catholic artist to be accepted by both Protestant and Catholic listeners.

“In 1988, *Billboard Magazine* reported that Talbot out-ranked all other male Christian artists in total career albums sold. After more than three million sales with Sparrow Records, making him Sparrow’s all-time best-selling recording artist, John Michael Talbot started a new record label in 1992 called *Troubadour for the Lord*” (“John Michael Talbot,” Talbot’s web site).

Surveys have shown that 60 percent of Talbot’s listeners are non-Catholic.

In 1996 Talbot produced an ecumenical album (*Brother to Brother*) jointly with fellow CCM performer Michael Card, an

evangelical. Of this venture, Card testified: “Doing this project has enabled us to become real friends. And along the way, the denominational lines have become really meaningless to me, and to John, too” (*CCM Magazine*, July 1996).

To say that denominational lines are meaningless is to say that doctrine is not important, because doctrine is one of the key things that divide denominations and churches. Some churches teach sound doctrine about Jesus Christ and some teach false. Some teach sound doctrine about salvation; some, false. Some teach sound doctrine about baptism; some, false. Some teach sound doctrine about the Holy Spirit; some, false. Some teach sound doctrine about the New Testament church; some, false.

Timothy’s job in Ephesus was “that thou mightest charge some that they TEACH NO OTHER DOCTRINE” (1 Timothy 1:3). That is a very strict position on doctrine. When a church stands upon the whole counsel of New Testament doctrine, it automatically becomes divided from churches that stand for different doctrine. This cannot be avoided, and it is not wrong. In fact, God forbids sound churches from associating with those who hold different doctrine (Romans 16:17).

In an article entitled “Our Fathers, and Our Divided Family,” in the Catholic charismatic magazine *New Covenant*, Talbot called for Christian unity on the basis of the Roman Catholic papacy:

“A Roman Catholic, I respect other Christians. We are especially close to those who value apostolic tradition as well as Scripture. But even in this we face further debates that are obstacles to complete Christian unity. THIS IS WHY THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH INSISTS THAT SCRIPTURE, TRADITION AND MAGISTERIUM ARE NECESSARY FOR A FULLY UNIFIED PEOPLE. WE ROMAN CATHOLICS FIND THIS IN THE POPE AS BISHOP OF ROME, TOGETHER WITH THE BISHOPS OF THE CHURCHES IN FULL COMMUNION WITH ROME. This has theologically freed us to develop the greatest mystical and functional unity in Christendom. It has also given us an authority that enables us to enter into interfaith and ecumenical dialogue without defensiveness. ... May we all hear these ancient truths and experience real conversion of heart” (John Talbot, “Our

Fathers, and Our Divided Family,” *New Covenant*,
September 1997, p. 21).

Talbot says Catholic tradition and the papacy are equal in authority with the Scripture. He says true Christian unity can be found only in fellowship with the pope of Rome. He prays that his readers will hear this message and experience conversion to Rome. What could be more unscriptural? The apostle Paul said anyone, even an angel from heaven, that preaches a false gospel is cursed of God (Galatians 1). The Roman Catholic popes, with their sacramental gospel and blasphemous claims and titles, have been under this curse from their origin. Nowhere does the New Testament say the apostles passed on their authority at death. The true apostles were given miracle-working signs to authenticate their calling (2 Corinthians 12:12). Nowhere does the New Testament establish a pope over all of the churches, and nowhere do we see Peter acting as a pope. We don't need the so-called "church fathers" to explain to us the rule of faith and practice; God has given us the infallible and perfectly sufficient rule in the Holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17) which were completed during the days of the apostles (Jude 3) and sealed with a solemn seal in Revelation 22:18-19 which forbids anyone to add to or take away from what God has revealed.

Talbot says that we need to obey the pope:

"I believe that today we need a true sense of obedience to the pope once again" (*Hermitage: Its Heritage and Challenge for the Future*, p. 167).

"I believe we must stay in radical union with the primary structure of the pope and the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church..." (p. 173).

As wrong-headed as Talbot's theology is, there is room for it in the doctrinally confused world of Contemporary Christian Music and the contemplative prayer movement. He is considered a brother in Christ and is welcomed with open arms, even in the face of God's commands that we mark and avoid those who promote doctrine contrary to that taught by the apostles (Romans 16:17-18).

The devil is using the ecumenical thrust of CCM to break down the walls between truth and error toward the completion of the one-world apostate "church."

Referring to the mixed crowds who attended the Talbot/Card concerts in Catholic churches, Talbot said that he delights to see Protestants who never would have darkened the doorstep of a Catholic church come to one of his concerts.

“All of a sudden they say, ‘Hey, I feel very much at home here. That doesn’t mean necessarily I want to be a Roman Catholic, but I feel very much at home worshipping God with other people who are not that different from me” (John Talbot, quoted in “Interfaith Album Strikes Sour Note,” Peter Smith, Religious News Service, Dec. 8, 1996).

In 1996 Talbot was instrumental in forming the Catholic Musicians Association to encourage Catholic musicians and to help them find a place in the more mainstream world of CCM. Joining Talbot at the founding meeting in April 1996 were Tony Melendez, Dana, Susan Stein (executive of Heartbeat Records), Paulette McCoy (Oregon Catholic Press), and Catholic officials and professionals involved in marketing and publicity (Steve Rabey, “Association Formed to Support Catholic Music,” *CCM Update*, May 27, 1996). At the meeting Stein said she “would like Protestants and Catholics to set aside what are basically petty differences” and urged evangelicals “to be a bit less judgmental and a bit more open to understanding.”

There is nothing “petty” about the differences between Roman Catholicism and Bible-believing Christianity!

The charismatic emphasis, though without tongues, is also seen in Talbot's experience. “Dreams and other direct ‘revelations’ from God account for his increasing conviction that the Roman Church holds the key to the future” (Peck, *Rock-Making Musical Choices*).

Talbot’s music is mostly acoustic folk and ballad style, but he also incorporates chanting and a wide variety of other music forms, including rock. Talbot promotes the false philosophy of the neutrality of music:

“We need to know rock ‘n’ roll. We need to know the gentleness of a folk tune. We need to know the majesty of Handel’s *Messiah*. We need to know the awesome reverence of the Gregorian chant” (John Talbot, *CCM Magazine*, July 1998, p. 28).

Talbot has also used “contemplative spirituality” as a bridge between Catholics and non-Catholics.

Talbot promotes mindless contemplation. When Thomas Keating spoke at Talbot’s hermitage in August 2006, he taught them how to “evacuate” the mind both by using mantras and by simply refusing to focus on any thought:

“In one of his talks at Little Portion, Father Keating contrasted Benedictine monk John Main’s mantra-focused practice of contemplative prayer with the centering prayer method. While both methods can clear the mind, reduce stress and lead the practitioner closer to God, there are differences between emphases on both attention and intention.

Rather than focusing on a word, such as Main’s suggested ‘maranatha,’ centering prayer seeks, as Father Keating explained, ‘to let go of all thoughts, feelings and sensations.’

This ‘evacuation process’ he described as a complete ‘surrendering of the false self.’ The priest likened the ‘false self’ to what some psychologists deem the ‘super-ego’ or what St. Paul referred to as his ‘old man.’

Quoting Jesus in Matthew 6:6, Father Keating led his listeners into a deeper understanding of what Christ was referring to when he said, ‘Go to your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret.’

The priest maintains that letting go of every movement of the false self allows one to move more deeply into their own ‘inner room’ to abide in God. He recommended ‘a twice-daily discipline of 20 minutes of time in total silence, with eyes closed and heart open, to set both our intention and attention on God alone’ (“Father Thomas Keating Leads Retreats for Public, Religious,” *Arkansas Catholic*, Aug. 26, 2006).

This practice is dangerous in the highest degree. The Bible nowhere teaches the believer to enter into any sort of mindless condition. We are to be sober and vigilant at all times (1 Peter 5:8). Every teaching on prayer and meditation in Scripture focuses on thoughtful word prayer and thoughtful meditation. Keating promotes the “false self” psycho-babble that comes from secular

psychologists such as Carl Jung, who communed with demons. The false self of psychology is most definitely *not* the “old man” that Paul described.

This type of contemplative mysticism is a recipe for spiritual shipwreck and demonic delusion, and that is exactly what has happened to John Talbot.

Like his music, Talbot’s contemplative practices are a bridge between Catholicism and evangelicalism for the many evangelicals who are influenced by him.

At the same time, the contemplative practices are a bridge between idolatrous eastern religions and Roman Catholicism.

Evangelicals being influenced by Talbot are in danger of crossing the bridge of CCM and contemplation to Rome and beyond to paganism.

Talbot says:

“I began practicing meditation, specifically breath prayer, once again. I integrated the use of Tai Chi and yoga into my morning workout. ... I found the enlightenment of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva, the way of the Taoist and Confucian sage, and the freedom of the Hindu sannyasin, or holy man, through this full integration in Christ” (Talbot, *Come to the Quiet*, p. 8).

“For myself, after the moving meditations of Hinduism and Taoism, and the breath, bone-marrow, and organ-cleansing of Taoism, I move into a Buddhist seated meditation, including the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. I do all of this from my own Christian perspective...” (*Come to the Quiet*, p. 237).

On his web site Talbot says:

“Personally, I have found the Christian use of such techniques as centering prayer most helpful in entering more fully into the peace of the contemplative experience as described by the Christian mystics. While our own tradition does well in describing the theology and steps of such contemplation, THE NON-CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS OFTEN DO BETTER IN TREATING THE ACTUAL MECHANICS OF MEDITATION, SUCH AS BREATH, POSTURE AND SPECIFIC MENTAL FOCUS, ETC. ... I have discovered a deeper experience of

contemplation that helps me remain calmer and Christ-like in the midst of the ups and downs of fulfilling my leadership responsibilities. ... THE USE OF THE 'MECHANICS OF MEDITATION' AS TAUGHT BY OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE OTHER FAITHS can sometimes be helpful if used correctly to augment the classical Catholic teachings on the spiritual life" (Talbot, "Many Religions, One God," Oct. 22, 1999, <http://www.johnmichaeltalbot.com/Reflections/index.asp?id=135>).

Talbot does warn that there is spiritual danger in using pagan meditation techniques, but he doesn't take his own warnings seriously enough.

"On the Pastoral level I would point out that I do this after 20 plus years of Christian and Catholic experience of being fully immersed and guided by a wise and orthodox Friar in the Patristic and monastic/contemplative tradition of orthodox Catholic Christianity. Without this grounding I would easily find myself confused by so many different voices and spirits about meditation and prayer, not to mention the basic understanding of God and Jesus Christ. IT CAN BE MOST DESTRUCTIVE IF USED UNWISELY. I CAN ALMOST PROMISE THAT THOSE WHO UNDERTAKE THIS STUDY ALONE WITHOUT PROPER GUIDANCE, AND GROUNDING IN CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY, WILL FIND THEMSELVES QUESTIONING THEIR OWN FAITH TO THE POINT OF LOSING IT. SOME MAY FIND THEMSELVES SPIRITUALLY LOST. IT HAS HAPPENED TO MANY. For this reason, we do not take the newer members of The Brothers and Sisters of Charity through this material in any depth as part of their formation, but stick squarely to overt Catholic spirituality and prayer teachings. I WOULD NOT RECOMMEND TOO MUCH INTEGRATION OF THESE THINGS WITHOUT PROPER GUIDANCE for those newer to the Catholic or Christian faith" (Talbot, "Many Religions, One God," Oct. 22, 1999).

Talbot thus recognizes the extreme danger of pagan contemplative practices, yet he thinks he is capable of using them without being harmed. He should listen to the words of Scripture:

“*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

In fact, Talbot has been deeply influenced and corrupted by his association with paganism. First, it confirmed him in the heresies of Rome. Next, it confirmed him that paganism is not so pagan and that salvation might be found in them.

He speaks of his “brothers and sisters” in other religions, saying:

“Christianity emphasizes the role of Jesus as the ultimate Incarnation of God to complete all that is good in other faiths” (“The Many Paths of Religion, and the One God of Faith,” part 2, October 1999, <http://www.johnmichaeltalbot.com/Reflections/index.asp?id=137>).

This is not what *biblical* Christianity emphasizes! Biblical Christianity emphasizes that Jesus is the *ONLY* incarnation of God and the other religions are darkness and error. The prophet Isaiah said, “*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is NO light in them*” (Isa. 8:20), and the Lord Jesus said, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them*” (John 10:7-8).

Contemplative mysticism has led John Talbot to a false god which he calls “the Ultimate Reality” and which is experienced beyond all concepts by all practitioners of contemplative mysticism.

“It is on the level of spirit that we find mystical common ground. THE REALM OF SPIRIT, OR PURE SPIRITUAL INTUITION BEYOND ALL IMAGES, FORMS, OR CONCEPTS, IS WHERE WE ALL BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE THE ULTIMATE REALITY BEYOND ALL THOUGHT, EMOTION, OR SENSUAL PERCEPTION. Yet, this ultimate experience completes all else in a way that enlivens them all. We may call this Reality by different objective names, but the Reality does not change. This realm of spirit is found in breakthrough through the use of paradoxes beyond all logic, image, or form” (“The Many Paths of Religion, and the One God of Faith” Part 2).

This is a pagan concept of God. It is an idol. The born again believer in Jesus Christ does not experience the same spiritual “Reality” as those who are not born again. And the born again Bible believer does not try to encounter God apart from thinking and concepts. Our knowledge of God is taught in the Scripture, and apart from this divine revelation we know nothing certain about God. What Talbot is describing is the pagan mysticism that foolishly and blindly tries to “experience” and “know” God directly apart from doctrine.

Talbot says:

“So it is true that no one comes to the Father except through Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. But the mystics of other faiths also share the Ultimate paradox that constitutes this way. In this we find great compliment and common ground, while also believing in the uniqueness, and completion of all else in Jesus” (“The Many Paths of Religion, and the One God of Faith,” part 2).

This is interfaith mystical gobbledygook. In fact, the mystics of other faiths share nothing with us and know nothing about God, and I say that on the authority of the divine revelation given to John the “apostle of love.”

“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen” (1 John 5:19-21).

Talbot even recommends Pierre Teilhard, who taught evolution and the deification of man and denied that the Jesus of the Bible is the only Christ. Talbot says, “Teilhard de Chardin broke yet new ground with his Cosmic Christ, and a revolutionary marriage between science and mysticism” (*Come to the Quiet*, p. 95).

Talbot’s “contemplative” practices include prayers to Rome’s mythical Mary. In his book *Simplicity* he says:

“Personally, I have found praying the Rosary to be one of the most powerful tools I possess in obtaining simple, childlike meditation on the life of Jesus Christ.”

The Rosary is largely a prayer to Mary as the Queen of Heaven. In 1984 Talbot said:

“I am also feeling the presence of Mary becoming important in my life. ... I feel that she really does love me and intercedes to God on my behalf” (*Contemporary Christian Music Magazine*, November 1984, p. 47).

John Michael Talbot has become a very effective bridge between darkness and light.

Tauler, Johann

Johann Tauler (1300-61) was a German Dominican priest and a disciple of Meister Eckhart.

Tauler has been lauded by evangelicals such as D. Martyn Lloyd Jones (in *The Puritans: Their Origins and Their Successors*) and by charismatics such as Francis McNutt (in *Overcome by the Spirit*).

Tauler taught that there are three stages in the mystical life: (1) spirituality and virtue (accomplished by such things as asceticism, meditation, and good works), (2) spiritual poverty (a denuding of self through an experience of “a dark night of the soul”), and (3) a divinized life (union with God). He described the latter as “a union of our created spirit with God’s uncreated one.”

Tauler said that through this process the individual is “reformed in the form of God, clothed with His divinity” and “led into another Heaven which is the divine Essence itself” (Tauler, *Sermons*, Paulist Press, pp. 172, 77).

To Tauler, mystical practice is to seek after an experience whereby “God is born within a just soul by grace and out of love.”

Tauler had an experience whereby he heard a voice in his head and fell into a trance and lost consciousness.

The occultic experience of “spirit slaying” also occurred under his ministry. One time after he preached, 40 men were left lying on the ground “almost as if they were dead.”

Tauler’s writings had a powerful influence on the 16th century revolutionary Thomas Muntzer who was a leader in the Peasant’s

War. Muntzer sought a mystical experience of God and was opposed to the doctrine that the Bible is the sole authority for faith, saying that “they poison the Holy Spirit with the Holy Scripture” (Alan Morrison, “The Evangelical Attraction of Mysticism”). Muntzer was associated with the “Zwickau prophets” who claimed to have had direct inspiration from God.

Tauler’s writings were also influential in the life of John Wesley. He grew up in a home steeped with the Catholic mystics and was highly influenced by them even though he eventually renounced them in large part. The following is from “The Evangelical Attraction of Mysticism” by Alan Morrison:

Initially John was wholly accepting their teachings, and they made and left a deep impression on him during the formative years of his life. Eventually, he became involved in a protracted internal struggle with mysticism which never really abated.

John Wesley wrote to his brother Samuel on 23rd Nov. 1736: ‘I think the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of the faith was the writings of the Mystics.’ And in this connection he specifically names Johann Tauler and the Spanish Quietist, Miguel de Molinos.

In his Preface to the *Collection of Hymns and Sacred Poems* in 1739, John Wesley writes: ‘Some verses, it may be observed, in the following Collection, were wrote upon the scheme of the Mystic Divines. And these, it is owned, we had once in great veneration, as the best explainers of the Gospel of Christ. But we are now convinced that we therein greatly erred, not knowing the Scriptures neither the power of God. And because this is an error which many serious minds are sooner or later exposed to, and which indeed most easily besets those who seek the Lord Jesus in sincerity, we believe ourselves indispensibly obliged, in the presence of God, and angels, and men, to declare where in we apprehend those writers not to teach ‘the truth as it is in Jesus.’

And he then lays out the argument under four headings: They lay another foundation; their manner of building on it is the opposite of that prescribed by Christ (He commands us to build up one another. They advise: ‘To the desert! To the desert! and God will build you up’); their

superstructure has no correspondence with that laid down by the Apostle Paul; they teach another Gospel.

Again, in his diary on 5th June 1742, Wesley writes: 'I just made an end of Madam Guyon's *Short Method of Prayer*. Ah, my brethren! O that ye knew how much God is wider than man! Then you would drop the Quietists and Mystics together, and at all hazards keep to the plain, practical, written word of God'.

In Wesley's journal dated 5th February 1764 is written: 'I began reading Mr Hartley's ingenious *Defence of the Mystic Writers*. But it does not satisfy me. I must still object: 1) To their sentiments (most of them hold to justification by works); 2) To their spirit; 3) To their whole phraseology, which is both unscriptural and affectedly mysterious.'

However, in spite of all this insight and rejection of mystical teaching, Wesley was a complex character who never really shook off the foundations of the mystical teaching he had imbibed. As J. Brazier Green says in *John Wesley and John Law* (Epworth Press, 1945, p. 179): 'Although Wesley uttered substantial indictments of the Mystics in 1739, 1756 and 1764, he was also publishing and commending their writings in his *Christian Library* (1749-55) and until the last years of his life'.

And it was the Mystic's doctrine of 'perfection' which laid the ground for Wesley's own teaching in this area. In an article on 'Perfectibilists' in Blunt's *Dictionary of Sects, Heresies, Ecclesiastical Parties and Schools of Thought* (Rivington's, 1874), the writer states:

'Many mystical divines have believed that a life of profound devotional contemplation leads on to such a union with God that all which is base and sinful in the Christian's soul becomes annihilated, and there ensues a superhuman degree of participation in the Divine perfection. Such a doctrine was held by the great mystic whose works pass under the name of Dionysius, and from him was handed down to the Quietist Hesychasts, the strict Franciscans, the Molinists, the Jansenists, and the German Mystics [Dominicans such as Eckhart and Tauler], from whom it passed on to the English

Methodists, among whom it has always been a special tenet that sanctification may, and ought to, go on to perfection.’

Doesn't this show how dangerous it can be to be undiscerning in what one reads for spiritual nourishment? Naive believers imagine they can pick out the 'good bits' and reject the 'bad bits'. But why involve yourself in such play when the result could be shipwreck... (Morrison, "The Evangelical Attraction of Mysticism," <http://www.bereanbeacon.org/EvangelicalAttraction.html>).

In this very informative article exposing the danger of Catholic mysticism and warning of its great influence within evangelicalism today, Morrison further observes:

There is nothing whatsoever of the Atonement of Christ in Tauler. He does not preach an atoning Christ who has died as the substitute for the sins of His people, or who has brought reconciliation between a wrathful God and a repentant people, or who has served as the propitiation for our sins. Then we *would* know that he was indeed an evangelical. Instead, it is all Dominican mysticism, pietistic language without any genuine Bible theology and all wrapped up in the most extreme forms of allegorisation. ...

Essentially Tauler teaches that the human soul is a Divine spark which can be kindled though living the right kind of life and practising the right kind of works. This is standard Roman Catholic mystical redemption teaching. ...

Last year, I attended a Bible Rally in what would be regarded as a highly orthodox church and heard a similarly highly orthodox and well-known Reformed preacher (who, incidentally, had spent his formative years at Westminster Chapel) suddenly start waxing lyrical about how John Tauler had preached to cathedrals-full of people and brought about many conversions. But he seemed to be completely unaware that the people were converted to Catholic mysticism rather than Bible Christianity (Morrison, "The Evangelical Attraction of Mysticism," <http://www.bereanbeacon.org/EvangelicalAttraction.html>).

Tauler practiced the wild-eyed allegorical interpretation of Scripture that is typical of Catholic mystics. Note the following excerpts from his sermons:

“Christ also said: ‘You shall be witnesses in Samaria.’ Samaria means ‘union with God’. Surely the closest and most direct way of bearing witness is to be truly united with Him. In this way the soul takes flight away from itself and from all creatures, for in the simple unity of the Divine Godhead it sheds all multiplicity. It is now exalted above itself. ... In such a state a man can lose himself entirely in God. ... Beyond this he is led into another Heaven which is the divine Essence itself, where the human spirit loses itself so completely that no trace of the self remains. ... How could the mind grasp such a thing? Even the spirit of man cannot comprehend it, for so submerged is it now into the divine ground that it knows nothing, feels nothing, understands nothing but God alone in His simple, pure undisguised Unity” (Tauler, *Sermons*, p. 77).

“God commanded Abraham to go out of his land and leave his kin, so that He might show him all good. ‘All good’ signifies the divine birth, which contains all good within itself” (Tauler *Sermons*, p. 38).

Tauler was one of the “Rhineland Mystics,” referring to a small group of contemplatives who lived in Germany in the 14th century. See also Meister Eckhart and Henry Suso.

Teasdale, Wayne

Wayne Teasdale (1945-2004) was a Roman Catholic lay monk whose writings are influential in the contemplative movement.

As a student in a Catholic college in Massachusetts, he began visiting St. Joseph’s Abbey near Spencer and came under the direction of Thomas Keating, one of the founders of the centering prayer movement and a leader in interfaith dialogue. This eventually led Teasdale into an intimate association with pagan religions and the adoption of Hinduism.

As a candidate for the Ph.D. in Theology at Fordham University, Teasdale wrote his dissertation on Alan Griffiths, the Benedictine

priest who moved to India and became a Hindu-Catholic, changing his name to Swami Dayananda, going barefoot, wearing the orange robe, practicing yoga and vegetarianism, taking the tika, and eventually believing in ancient goddess religion. (See the previous study on Shantivanam Ashram.) Eventually Teasdale visited Shantivanam Ashram and lived in a nearby Hindu ashram for two years, following in Griffiths' footsteps. In 1989 he became a "Christian" *sanyassa*, which refers to a Hindu ascetic monk who dedicates his entire life to spiritual pursuits.

Teasdale taught at various Catholic institutions (DePaul University, Columbia College, Benedictine University, Catholic Theological Union) and has never been disciplined by the Catholic hierarchy for his interfaith philosophy.

Teasdale lived for a decade at the Hundred Acres Monastery in New Hampshire.

Teasdale was deeply involved in interfaith activities, believing that what the religions hold in common can be the basis for creating a new world, which he called the "Interspiritual Age" -- a "global culture based on common spiritual values."

He coined the term *INTERSPIRITUALITY* to describe this agenda and believed that the Catholic Church is the key to bringing it about.

"She also has a responsibility in our age to be bridge for reconciling the human family ... the Spirit is inspiring her through the signs of the times to open to Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Taoists, Confucians, and indigenous peoples. As matrix, the Church would no longer see members of other traditions as outside her life. She would promote the study of these traditions, seek common ground and parallel insights" (*A Monk in the World*, 2002, p. 54).

Like New Agers, Teasdale believed that interfaith unity is necessary for the world's future:

"The Hindu, the Buddhist, the Muslim, the Jew, the Jain, the Sikh, the Christian and the agnostic all belong to the same planetary environment. ... It is essential for the future for all the religious traditions to recognize this underlying

unity” (“The Meeting of East and West: Elements of a Relationship,” *Spirituality Today*, Summer 1986).

Teasdale believed that mystical contemplation is the key to interspirituality and that this will unlock the door into the New Age.

“In the silence is a dynamic presence. And that’s God, and we become attuned to that” (quoted by Michael Tobias, *A Parliament of Souls in Search of a Global Spirituality*, 1995, p. 148).

Teasdale developed this agenda in the book *The Mystic Heart: Finding a Universal Spirituality in the World’s Religions*. The foreword was written by the Dalai Lama, who urges all religions to join forces to “create a more spiritually evolved and compassionate planet” (Amazon.com review).

Teasdale’s universalism, religious syncretism, and complete denial of biblical truth are evident in this book. He wrote:

“We have been given the gift of life in this perplexing world to become who we ultimately are: creatures of boundless love, caring compassion, and wisdom.”

“Mysticism is direct, or unmediated experience of Ultimate Reality, whether we mean by that term God, Spirit, the Tao, the Wakan Tanka of the Lakota Native Americans, the One, the Absolute, and Unmoved Mover, the Divine, or Infinite Consciousness. Whatever word we employ, the Ground of all being and existence is what is meant. This reality is experientially accessible to us in the mystical, contemplative, or fully actualized spiritual states of the mind, in the depths of consciousness itself.”

Thus, Teasdale was a universalist who believed that all mystics attune to the same God, even though he is called by different names, defined in different ways, and approached in different ways.

Teasdale was involved in many interfaith organizations and projects, including the North American Board for East-West Dialogue, Common Ground (publisher of *Interreligious Insight*), and the Parliament of the World’s Religions.

He was acquainted with the Dalai Lama and assisted the Dalai Lama and Thomas Keating and others in creating the Universal Declaration on Nonviolence to promote world peace based on the

philosophy of the Hindu leader Gandhi (“Wayne Teasdale,” Wikipedia).

Teasdale helped establish the Interspiritual Dialogue in Action (ISDnA), one of the many New Age organizations affiliated with the United Nations. (Its NGO sponsor is the National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union.) Its objective is to promote the “the Interspiritual Age,” and toward this end it is using three New Age tools: interfaith dialogue, education, and networking or community building. (See our book *The New Age Tower of Babel*, available from Way of Life Literature.) It is committed “to actively serve in the evolution of human consciousness and global transformation” (web site).

The ISDnA partners with One Spirit Learning Alliance and Interfaith Seminary in New York City operate a New Age educational curriculum. The curriculum combines the mystic interfaith doctrine of Teasdale with the New Age doctrine of Ken Wilber, Don Beck, and others. It promotes such things as evolution, reincarnation, the divinity of man, all religion as myth, the integration of science, psychology and religion, and the coming of a New Age. Course titles include “Integral Spirituality: Exploring the Common Core of Human Wisdom” and “The Evolutionary Journey from Dirt to God.”

The One Spirit Learning Alliance and Interfaith Seminary defines God as a “vast presence of energy and intelligence.” It claims that all religions, at their core, “are committed to the common values of peace, tolerance, wisdom, compassionate service, and love for all creation.” It aims to develop an interfaith “spirituality” that will help build a new world. Its web site features symbols of all religions above the statement “We are all children of the one universe.” The One Spirit Interfaith Seminary is participating in the Cosmic Mass NYC scheduled for September 19, 2008. This is a multimedia worship experience that “celebrates the Divine Feminine and Sacred Masculine” and “the concept of Peace through the prism of many faith traditions.” Beginning at 7:30 sharp with “a procession of costumed dancers, jesters and celebrants,” it will feature “wild, rave-like dancing.” The participants will seek to “enter the sacred darkness and emerge into the energy of compassion” so that they can be “anointed as prophets” and “sent out to join the dance of all creation.”

Near the end of his life Teasdale conducted *The Mystic Heart* seminar series with New Ager Ken Wilber, who believes in the divinity of man. The introduction to the series says:

“If, as historian Arnold Toynbee put it, the introduction of Buddhism into the West ‘may well prove to be the most important event of the 20th century,’ we might also argue that the re-discovery of the contemplative roots of Christianity will be equally important. And as we enter the 21st century, it stands to reason that the recognition of a common mystical ground between Buddhism, Christianity, and the other World Religions will be the most important event of all.”

In the first seminar in this series Teasdale said, “You are God; I am God; they are God; it is God” (“The Mystic Heart: The Supreme Identity,” <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7652038071112490301&q=ken+Wilber>).

Wilber also contributed the foreword to Teasdale’s 2002 book *A Monk in the World: Cultivating a Spiritual Life*.

Other books by Teasdale include *Towards a Christian Vedanta: The Encounter of Hinduism and Christianity according to Bede Griffiths* (1987), *The Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World’s Religions* (foreword by the Dalai Lama, 1999), *Bede Griffiths: An Introduction to his Interspiritual Thought* (2003), *Catholicism in Dialogue: Conversations across the Traditions* (2004), and *The Mystic Hours: A Daybook of Inspirational Wisdom and Devotion* (2004).

Teilhard De Chardin, Pierre

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) was a French philosopher and Jesuit priest who taught New Age mystical doctrine. *De Chardin* was not his last name but was a French aristocratic title.

His mother was fervently devoted to the Catholic “saints and mystics,” and he inherited this passion. He became a great devotee of the Catholic Mary:

“At home, his mother had nurtured Pierre’s love of ‘the little Jesus’ and encouraged his devotion to both the infant Christ and his mother Mary. ... he made an act of personal

consecration to the Blessed Virgin on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Devotion to Our Lady became deeply rooted in his heart, and, in 1895, he joined the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception. Throughout his life Mary was to hold a special place in his meditations and retreats, and he always remained faithful to the recitation of the rosary” (Ursula King, *Spirit of Fire: The Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin*, pp. 2, 4, 11).

This is idolatry, and it is no surprise that he was drawn through the contemplative devotion to Catholic idols to a devotion to the pantheistic “heart of matter.” The same deceiving spirits are behind the worship of Mary and the worship of nature. He later wrote, “The truth is that even at the peak of my spiritual trajectory I was never to feel at home unless immersed in an Ocean of Matter” (Teilhard, *The Heart of Matter*).

“His inner attraction to the great forces of nature, so deeply rooted in earlier childhood experiences, became so immensely strong that it awakened in him a vibrant cosmic consciousness--an experience of such intensity that he felt divine vibrations running through all things. ... when surrendering himself ‘to the embrace of the visible and tangible universe,’ he learned to feel the hand of God. And when he saw, ‘as though in ecstasy, that through all of nature I was immersed in God.’ He now became fully aware of a deeply pantheistic and mystical inclination in him. This vibrant sense of a strong nature mysticism was to remain with him all his life” (Ursula King, *Spirit of Fire*, pp. 19, 20).

He even wrote a Hymn to Matter:

“Blessed be you, harsh matter, barren soil, stubborn rock ... Blessed be you, perilous matter, violent sea, untameable passion. ... I bless you, matter, and you I acclaim ... as you reveal yourself to me today, in your totality and true nature.”

He expressed his pantheistic view as follows:

“There is a communion with God, and a communion with earth, and a communion with God through earth” (Teilhard, *Cosmic Life*, 1916).

Teilhard was trained by the Jesuits from age 11 and ordained to the priesthood in 1911.

He is referred to in a positive manner by many within the contemplative movement. In the introduction to his edition of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, William Johnston refers to “the dynamic approach of Teilhard de Chardin,” calling it “biblical.” Richard Foster includes a chapter by Teilhard in his book *Spiritual Disciplines*. Larry Crabb recommends Teilhard’s book *The Divine Milieu*. Brennan Manning quotes sympathetically from Teilhard. John Michael Talbot says, “Teilhard de Chardin broke yet new ground with his Cosmic Christ, and a revolutionary marriage between science and mysticism” (*Come to the Quiet*, p. 95). John Yungblut combined Christian contemplation with Jungian psychology and Teilhard’s doctrine of the evolution of the universe. Bret McCracken, in *Hipster Christianity*, says cool emerging Christians identify with Teilhard (p. 98).

Teilhard’s (pronounced *tay-yar*) major writings include *The Phenomenon of Man* (1955), *The Divine Milieu* (1957), *The Future of Man* (1959), *Human Energy* (1962), *The Activation of Energy* (1963), *Hymn of the Universe* (1964), and *Christianity and Evolution* (1969).

Teilhard was “a leading proponent of *orthogenesis*, the idea that evolution occurs in a directional, goal driven way” (“Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,” *Wikipedia*). He called it “sacred evolution.” He didn’t believe in blind naturalistic evolution as per Darwin or Huxley, but in evolution as the tool used by “God” to create and perfect the universe. He described “sacred evolution” as follows:

“In very truth, it is God, and God alone whose Spirit stirs up the whole mass of the universe in ferment. ... The fact is that creation has never stopped. The creative act is one huge continual gesture, drawn out over the totality of time. It is still going on” (*The Mystical Milieu*, 1917).

This is a blatant denial of the Bible’s teaching that God made the heaven and earth in six “evening and morning” days and that He rested from creation on the seventh day.

Teilhard’s views on evolution were influenced through studies at the Museum of National History in Paris and by evolutionists Henri Bergson and Theodosius Dobzhansky. *The New York Times*

for March 19, 1937, described Teilhard as “*the Jesuit who held that man descended from monkeys.*” Teilhard carried out research into man’s evolution, making extended paleontological* explorations in China and elsewhere. He was one of discoverers of the Peking Man in China and helped excavate the gravel pit in England where the Piltdown Man was discovered, both supposed “missing links” between man and apes. The Piltdown Man was exposed in 1953 as a deliberate forgery consisting of the lower jawbone of an orangutan combined with the skull of a man. Teilhard’s role in the hoax is unknown. (* Paleontology is the study of prehistoric life forms through the examination of fossils.)

One of Teilhard’s scientific colleagues was Julian Huxley, who helped promote Teilhard’s writings and penned the foreword to the 1959 edition of *The Phenomenon of Man*. Julian was the grandson of the infamous Thomas Huxley (1825-1893), the friend of Charles Darwin who turned Darwinian evolution into a campaign against God. Julian was a brash evolutionist in his own right. He developed the “modern synthesis,” the unified form of evolution that is accepted by the great majority of biologists and that basically declares evolution by natural selection a fact rather than a theory, claiming that is consistent with all modern “scientific” findings in every field of biology. Julian was an atheistic humanist, the first director of UNESCO, a founding member of the World Wildlife Fund, and a proponent of human population control. Julian’s brother, Aldous, was a Hindu mystic who claimed to have found enlightenment through drugs.

Teilhard taught that God is the consciousness of the universe, that everything is one, and that everything is evolving in greater and greater enlightenment toward an ultimate point of perfection. He called this perfection CHRIST, THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH, and THE OMEGA POINT. Teilhard spoke much of Christ, but his Christ was not the Christ of the Bible.

New Ager Brian Swimme, a Teilhard disciple, says:

“You could summarize his thought simplistically and say that the universe begins with matter, develops into life, develops into thought, develops into God. That’s his whole vision, right there. Now clearly, this God that develops-- it’s not as if God is developed out of matter. God is present from the very beginning, but in an *implicit* form, and the

universe is accomplishing this great work of making divinity *explicit*" (Susan Bridle, "The Divinization of the Cosmos: An Interview with Brian Swimme on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin," <http://www.wie.org/j19/teilhard.asp?page=2>).

Teilhard wrote:

"All around us, to right and left, in front and behind, above and below, we have only to go a little beyond the frontier of sensible appearances in order to see the divine welling up and showing through. But it is not only close to us, in front of us, that the divine presence has revealed itself. It has sprung up universally, and we find ourselves so surrounded and transfixed by it, that there is no room left to fall down and adore it, even within ourselves. By means of all created things, without exception, the divine assails us, penetrates us and moulds us. We imagined it as distant and inaccessible, whereas in fact we live steeped in its burning layers" (*The Divine Milieu*).

This is not the transcendent Creator God of the Bible, but the monistic God of Hinduism. Teilhard described himself as a pantheist.

"What I am proposing to do is to narrow that gap between pantheism and Christianity by bringing out what one might call the Christian soul of Pantheism of the pantheist aspect of Christianity" (*Christianity and Evolution*, p. 56).

"Now I realize that on the model of the incarnate God whom Christianity reveals to me, I can be saved only by becoming one with the universe. Thereby, too, my deepest pantheist' aspirations are satisfied" (*Christianity and Evolution*, p. 128).

To Teilhard, all men's souls constitute the "soul of the world" which is evolving toward the "ultimate convergence in perfection on Omega and the Christ" (Anne Bancroft, *Twentieth-Century Mystics*, p. 55). Thus, man is part of the divine and will eventually merge with it. He called his theory of evolution the Law of Complexity, claiming that the Omega Point is drawing the universe to itself so that it is being guided toward ever higher states of consciousness. He described the Omega Point as a divine

personal intellectual being that is outside of the framework of evolution and that is guiding the evolution.

Teilhard denied every major doctrine of the Bible. He denied the transcendent holy creator God, Satan, the fall of man, the unique divinity of Jesus, the substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection, and salvation through personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Of Adam he wrote:

“There is a two-fold and serious difficulty in retaining the former representation of original sin. It may be expressed as follows: “The more we bring the past to life again by means of science, the less we can accommodate either Adam or the earthly paradise” (“Note on Some Possible Historical Representations of Original Sin,” 1922).

Teilhard taught that evolution has progressed in three stages, the geosphere, the biosphere, and the noosphere. The geosphere (inanimate matter) was formed first, followed by the biosphere (biological life). The NOOSPHERE is the “sphere of human thought” or “collective consciousness” that is now supposedly evolving toward perfection. “It is like a thinking envelope of the earth of which all humans are part. All contribute to it through their thinking, feeling, connecting, and interacting with each other, and above all, through their powers of love” (King, *Spirit of Fire*, p. 88). Modern technological achievements such as the Internet are seen by many as a fulfillment of this evolutionary leap. Teilhard called the early computers at Berkeley and Harvard “the last word in systematization after the last word in energy” (King, p. 214). “According to Tom Wolfe’s 2000 book *Hooking Up*, the teachings of Teilhard de Chardin influenced many of the engineers that were the creators of Silicon Valley in California” (“Pierre Teilhard,” *Wikipedia*). Lyndon LaRouche, who ran for the U.S. presidency, based his political theories on the importance of the noosphere in human development.

In *The Phenomenon of Man* (1968) Teilhard claimed that mankind is on the verge of an evolutionary leap in consciousness similar to that allegedly achieved when man emerged from the animal kingdom.

“All around us, tangibly and materially, the thinking envelope of the Earth--the Noosphere--is multiplying its

internal fibers and tightening its network; and simultaneously its internal temperature is rising, and with this its psychic potential” (Teilhard, *The Planetization of Mankind*).

He “believed the new consciousness would be similar to mystical enlightenment in that it was likely to have collective and cosmic elements which would have the effect of drawing individuals closer to God” (*The Aquarian Guide to the New Age*). New Agers such as Barbara Hubbard have latched onto this doctrine as foundational to their agenda.

He believed that “a new mysticism is developing where religion and science can animate and mutually transform each other” (King, *Spirit of Fire*, p. 176). This is exactly what is happening through the “intelligent design” movement. Many scientists are acknowledging that naturalistic principles alone cannot explain life, but they also continue to reject the Almighty Creator God of Scripture. In His place, they postulate some sort of New Age higher power. For example, Francis Collins, director of the Human Genome Project, says:

“I’m a scientist that believes the tools of science are the way to understand the natural world and one needs to be rigorous about that. But I’m also a believer in a personal God. I find the scientific worldview and the spiritual worldview to be entirely complementary. And I find it quite wonderful to be able to have both of those worldviews existing in my life in a given day, because each illuminates the other” (video presentation at the American Museum of Natural History’s Spitzer Hall of Human Origins).

This might sound respectful toward “religion,” but in fact it is a bold repudiation of the Bible, because the Bible refuses to speak only about “religious things.” The Bible begins with a plain account of how the universe was made, so it refuses to leave such things to “science.” And if the Bible is wrong about the material universe there is no reason to believe it is right about anything else and no reason to “respect” its teachings on any other subject.

(See “Darwinian Gods,” a chapter in the book *Seeing the Non-existent: Evolution’s Myths and Hoaxes*, available from Way of Life Literature.)

Teilhard said:

“The outcome of the world, the gates of the future, the entry into the super-human--these are not thrown open to a few of the privileged nor to one chosen people to the exclusion of all others. They will open only to an advance of all together, in a direction in which all together can join and find completion in a spiritual renovation of the earth” (*The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 245).

This is the New Age theme that the world must reach its new level of evolutionary transformation as a whole and that those who resist are enemies of world peace and blessing. It calls to mind the New Age techniques of building community through dialogue and religious tolerance.

Teilhard was a mystic and described his practice of meditation as “going down into my innermost self, to the deep abyss” (*The Divine Milieu*, p. 76). He said: “At each step of the descent a new person was disclosed within me of whose name I was no longer sure, and who no longer obeyed me.” At the end of the journey he found “a bottomless abyss at my feet.”

This is a loud warning to those who have ears to hear. Though the mystic believes that he is touching light and truth through contemplative practices, in reality he is fellowshiping with darkness and devils. Who were these “persons” who were distinct from Teilhard himself and who did not obey him? From a biblical perspective, we would have to conclude that the man was communicating with demons.

Teilhard said he was led along by a spirit all his life.

“Ever since my childhood an enigmatic force had been impelling me” (Teilhard, *The Heart of the Matter*, 1979, p. 53).

It was this “enigmatic force” that led Teilhard to reject the Christ of the Bible.

Teilhard said that mysticism is the heart of true religion, and mysticism is a pantheistic faith in the unity of the universe.

“Without mysticism, there can be no successful religion: and there can be no well-founded mysticism apart from faith in some unification of the universe” (“The Road of

the West: To a New Mysticism,” cited from Ursula King, *Spirit of Fire*, p. 141).

He believed this new mysticism would create a new religion:

“One might say that a hitherto unknown form of religion--one that no one could as yet have imagined or described, for a lack of a universe large enough and organic enough to contain it--is burgeoning in the heart of modern man, from a seed sown by the idea of evolution. ... Far from being shaken in my faith by such a revolution, it is with irrepressible hope that I welcome the inevitable rise of this new mysticism and anticipate its equally inevitable triumph” (“The Stuff of the Universe”).

It is not surprising that Teilhard was drawn toward Hinduism. In questions of comparative mysticism he “always gave most attention to Indian monism and Vedanta” (King, p. 188).

In 1947 he published “The Spiritual Contribution of the Far East” in which he envisioned a “confluence of East and West.” He promoted the World Congress of Faiths and its syncretistic approach to religion as the path toward world peace and prosperity. He saw this movement as “indispensable for the future evolution of humankind” (King, pp. 189, 190).

We can see that Teilhard was led down the same path by the same spirits as Thomas Merton.

Teilhard was appreciative of the writings of Carl Jung, “with which his own thought had something in common” (King, p. 213). This is very telling, as Jung was led along by spirit guides throughout his life. (See *The New Age Tower of Babel*.)

Teilhard viewed Rome as essential to human evolution. He believed that “one of the poles passes through Rome, the prime pole of ascent of what in my jargon I call ‘hominization’” (*Letters from a Traveler*, 1962, p. 299). This is in harmony with the Bible’s description of Rome, the city on seven mountains, the city drunken with the blood of the martyrs, as Mystery Babylon, the end-time incarnation of ancient idolatrous Babylon which will unite with the antichrist during his brief reign (Revelation 17).

Teilhard was a big supporter of the United Nations, another pillar of the New Age Tower of Babel. He wrote several papers for UNESCO. He proposed to Julian Huxley an “institute for the study

of human self-evolution.” (See *The New Age Tower of Babel*, available from Way of Life Literature -- www.wayoflife.org.)

A few days before his death Teilhard said “If in my life I haven’t been wrong, I beg God to allow me to die on Easter Sunday,” and that is exactly when he died, on Easter, April 10, 1955 (“Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,” *Cambridge Encyclopedia*).

This reminds us that “signs” and “fleece” are not sure evidence of the truth. The Bible is the sole authority for discerning whether something is right or wrong, and the Bible condemned Teilhard’s beliefs. The fulfillment of 10,000 signs cannot make right that which the Bible condemns.

It is telling that Teilhard had serious doubts about his own beliefs. He wrote:

“How, most of all, can it be that ‘when I come down from the mountain’ and in spite of the glorious vision I still retain, I find that I am so little a better man, so little at peace, so incapable of expressing in my actions, and thus adequately communicating to others, the wonderful unity that I feel encompassing me? Is there, in fact, a Universal Christ, is there a Divine Milieu? OR AM I, AFTER ALL, SIMPLY THE DUPE OF A MIRAGE IN MY OWN MIND? I OFTEN ASK MYSELF THAT QUESTION” (*The Heart of the Matter*, 1978, pp. 99, 100).

Teilhard’s doctrine was opposed by his Catholic superiors during his lifetime, but he was rehabilitated by Pope John XXIII, the same pope who called the Second Vatican Council that marked a significant upswing in end-time ecumenism and interfaith dialogue. Teilhard was also promoted by Pope John Paul II. In an article in *l’Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, Cardinal Cassoroli stated that Teilhard was “the testimony of the coherent life of a man possessed by Christ in the depths of his soul.” Cassoroli said that Teilhard “was concerned with honoring both faith and reason, and anticipated the response to John Paul II’s appeal: ‘Be not afraid, open, open wide to Christ the doors of the immense domains of culture, civilization, and progress’” (June 10, 1981). Such a statement of approval could not have been made apart from the pope’s consent.

Teilhard's writings have wielded a large influence within Catholicism and Protestantism alike.

Following are some other quotes from Teilhard:

"[T]he Cross still stands ... But this on one condition, and one only: that it expand itself to the dimensions of a New Age, and cease to present itself to us as primarily (or even exclusively) the sign of a victory over sin" (*Christianity and Evolution*, pp. 219-220).

"I believe that the Messiah whom we await, whom we all without any doubt await, is the universal Christ; that is to say, the Christ of evolution" (*Christianity and Evolution*, p. 95).

"The Age of Nations is past. The task before us now, if we would not perish, is to build the Earth."

"We have reached a crossroads in human evolution where the only road which leads forward is towards a common passion. ... To continue to place our hopes in a social order achieved by external violence would simply amount to our giving up all hope of carrying the Spirit of the Earth to its limits."

"Our duty, as men and women, is to proceed as if limits to our ability did not exist. We are collaborators in creation."

"Love alone can unite living beings so as to complete and fulfill them ... for it alone joins them by what is deepest in themselves. All we need is to imagine our ability to love developing until it embraces the totality of men and the earth."

"Someday, after mastering winds, waves, tides and gravity, we shall harness the energy of love; and for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire."

"We are one, after all, you and I. Together we suffer, together exist, and forever will recreate each other."

"You are not a human being in search of a spiritual experience. You are a spiritual being immersed in a human experience."

"We have only to believe. And the more threatening and irreducible reality appears, the more firmly and

desperately we must believe. Then, little by little, we shall see the universal horror unbend, and then smile upon us, and then take us in its more than human arms.”

“... we see not only thought as participating in evolution as an anomaly or as an epiphenomenon; but evolution as so reducible to and identifiable with a progress towards thought that the movement of our souls expresses and measures the very stages of progress of evolution itself. Man discovers that *he is nothing else than evolution become conscious of itself*” (*The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 221).

“The outcome of the world, the gates of the future, the entry into the super-human--these are not thrown open to a few of the privileged nor to one chosen people to the exclusion of all others. They will open only to an advance of *all together*, in a direction in which *all together* can join and find completion in a spiritual renovation of the earth...” (*The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 245).

Teresa of Avila

Teresa of Avila (1515-82) was born in Avila, Spain, with the birth name of Teresa de Cepdea y Ahumada. She left her parents' home secretly at age 19 and entered the Monastery of the Incarnation operated by Carmelite nuns. She is also called Teresa of Jesus. She was canonized as a saint in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV, and in 1970 Pope Paul VI declared her a “doctor of the church.” Only two other women have been so designated, and both were mystics: Catherine of Siena and Therese of Lisieux.

Her published writings, which are a major influence in the contemplative movement, include *The Way of Perfection*, *The Interior Castle*, and her autobiography.

The Carmelite order is devoted to Mary. It is called the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The Discalced Carmelite church in Rome, Santa Mari della Vittoria (Church of Our Lady of Victory), contains a fresco of *The Virgin Mary Triumphant over Heresy*, depicting Mary being praised by the choirs of heaven. The “heresy” in question was Protestantism’s rejection of popery. Rome’s Mary was victorious over such heresies as the Bible as the sole authority of faith and practice and salvation by grace alone without works.

Teresa, too, was a great hater of Protestantism. She saw herself and her nuns in a battle to overturn “the harm and havoc that were being wrought in France by these Lutherans” (*The Way of Perfection*, p. 50). She believed that the Protestants brought damnation to themselves by rejecting Rome and the Mass (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 32, p. 235; *The Way of Perfection*, chap. 3, pp. 21, 22).

Teresa was greatly influenced by books on mystical asceticism, including *Abecedario Espiritual (The Spiritual Alphabet)* and *The Ascent of Mount Sion* by Bernardo de Lardeo.

She was also influenced by mystical Kabbalism:

“Given her partly Jewish background, her thinking was also affected by Jewish Kabbalistic mysticism, elements of which can be detected in her writings” (Ursula King, *Christian Mystics*, 1998, p. 138).

Her grandfather converted from Judaism to Catholicism but returned to Judaism and was condemned by the Spanish Inquisition.

Teresa believed in Rome’s works salvation. She said that no one who is faithful to the practice of contemplative meditation can lose his soul (Thomas Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*, p. 108).

She was dedicated to Mary as well as to an assortment of other Catholic saints. She called Mary the Queen of the Angels, Queen of Heaven, etc. She even claimed to have seen Mary ascend to heaven.

“Once, on the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, the Queen of the Angels, the Lord was pleased to grant me this favour. In a rapture, I saw a representation of her ascent from heaven, of the joy and solemnity with which she was received, and of the place where she now is” (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 39, p. 305).

Teresa was especially devoted to Joseph.

“I took as my lord and advocate the glorious St. Joseph, commending myself earnestly to him... For His Majesty wishes to teach us that, as He was Himself subject to him on earth ... so in heaven the Lord does what he asks. ... I managed to observe his feast with the greatest possible solemnity. ... I wish that I could persuade everyone to

venerate this glorious saint, for I have great experience of the blessings that he obtains from God. I have never known anyone who was truly devoted to him and offered him particular service who did not visibly increase in virtue, for he gives very real help to those souls who commend themselves to him” (*The Life of Saint Teresa*, p. 48).

“St. Joseph, my true lord and father, appeared to me, and told me to proceed with my arrangements, for the money would not be lacking” (chap. 33, p. 246).

In fact, she says that Mary was so pleased by her veneration of Joseph, that both of them appeared and clothed her in a “robe of great whiteness and clarity,” after which Mary took her by the hands and “told me that I was giving her great pleasure by serving the glorious St. Joseph, and promised me that my plans for the convent would be fulfilled” (chap. 33, p. 247).

She was also devoted to the Mass, calling it the “Most Holy Sacrament” and believing that the consecrated wafer is Christ. Many of her visions and raptures occurred during Mass.

“O my Lord and my Good, I cannot say this without tears and a great rejoicing in my soul that You should wish to be with us, and are with us, in the Sacrament” (chap. 14, p. 102).

“But what can hinder us from being with Him after His Resurrection, since we have Him so near us in the Sacrament, in which He is already glorified ... In the most holy Sacrament, He is our companion” (chap. 22, p. 155).

“Almost always Our Lord appeared to me as He rose from the dead, and it was the same when I saw Him in the Host” (chap. 29, p. 206).

“One day when I was hearing Mass, at the elevation of the Host I saw Christ on the Cross...” (chap. 38, p. 288).

She was a great believer in purgatory and claimed that many souls were brought out of this mythical place through her intercession.

“As for rescuing souls from purgatory and such notable acts, the Lord has granted me so many favours of this kind that I should exhaust myself and my readers if I were to

describe them all” (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 39, p. 296).

Teresa was blindly committed to Rome’s authority.

“... so long as my tale is consistent with the truths of the holy Catholic Church. If it is not, your Reverence must burn it immediately, and I agree to its destruction” (chap. 10, p. 75).

“The soul always tries to act in conformity with the Church’s teaching, asking advice from this person and that, and acting as one already so deeply grounded in these truths that no imaginable revelation, even if it saw the heavens open, would cause it to swerve an inch from the doctrine of the Church” (chap. 25, p. 178).

She inflicted tortures on herself and practiced extreme asceticism and was often ill. In this state she experienced visions and heard voices that caused her great fear and anguish and led her friends and some of her confessors to think she was demon possessed. She experienced temporary paralysis, would allegedly levitate and make mysterious noises down in her throat (Hugh Farrell, *The Charismatic Phenomenon in the Church of Rome*; Farrell is a former Catholic priest).

She practiced mindless meditation and in this state would often go into her ecstatic “raptures.”

“All that the soul has to do at these times of quiet is merely to be calm and make no noise. By noise I mean working with the intellect to find great numbers of words and reflections with which to thank God. ... in these periods of quiet, the soul should repose in its calm, and learning should be put on one side” (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 15, pp. 106, 107, 108).

“The intellect, at any rate, is of no value here” (chap. 16, p. 113).

For a long time her strange experiences were considered demonic by her own associates.

“Many were the reproaches and trials that I suffered when I spoke of this, and many were my fears and persecutions. They felt so certain of my being possessed by a devil that some of them wanted to exorcise me. ... When the visions

became more frequent, one of those who had helped me before, and who had taken my confession sometimes when the minister could not, began to say that clearly I was being deceived by the devil. He ordered me, since I had no power of resistance, always to make the sign of the Cross when I had a vision, and to snap my fingers at it, in the firm conviction that this was the devil's work" (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 29, pp. 206, 207).

Her experiences troubled her greatly and she often feared that she was possessed by or influenced by the devil. She mentions such fears dozens of times in her autobiography. She even described her own mental state in terms of lunacy:

"But this intellect of mine is so wild that it seems like a raving lunatic. Nobody can hold it down, and I have no sufficient control over it myself to keep it quiet for a single moment" (chap. 30, p. 219).

Peter of Alcantara became her spiritual adviser in 1557 and convinced her that the weird experiences "were authentic" (*The Pocket Dictionary of Saints*, p. 472). He was a contemplative Franciscan priest who practiced extreme asceticism. He lived in a tiny cell only four and a half feet long, slept sitting up with his head propped against a piece of wood, never sleeping more than one and a half hours a day, ate only once in three days at the most, always remained standing or kneeling on his knees, and wore a sackcloth habit bound as tight as he could bear it. For 20 years continuously he wore a shirt of iron-plates. For three years he kept his eyes on the floor and did not look at any person. He, therefore, was as nutty as Teresa.

Teresa claims to have seen many visions and heard many voices. She called her visions "union," "rapture," "elevation," "flight," and "ecstasy." She believed that this was the fourth stage in "the ascent of the soul." Her experiences in this state included intoxication, pain, a feeling of strangulation, levitation, and bodily paralysis. These are signs of demon possession rather than the biblical evidence of Spirit filling.

When she was in "rapture" her thoughts would be suspended.

She was unable to resist these experiences. Following is how she described it:

“The will leaves; the memory is, I think, almost lost, and the mind, I believe, though it is not lost, does not reason--I mean that it does not work” (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 10, p. 71).

“... when one is in this state, as I have said, ONE HAS NO POWER TO DO ANYTHING” (chap. 18, p. 123).

“... the soul is conscious that it is fainting almost completely away in a kind of a swoon ... Its breath and all its bodily powers progressively fail it, so that it can hardly stir its hands without great effort. Its eyes close involuntarily, and if they remain open, they see almost nothing. If a person reads in this state he can scarcely make out a single letter; it is as much as he can do to recognize one. He sees that there are letters, but as the understanding offers no help, he cannot read them, even if he wants to. He hears but does not understand what he hears. ... It is the same with the tongue, for he cannot form a word, nor would he have the strength to pronounce one. The whole physical strength vanishes...” (chap. 18, pp. 125, 126).

“At other times resistance has been impossible; my soul has been carried away, and usually my head as well, WITHOUT MY BEING ABLE TO PREVENT IT...” (chap. 20, p. 137).

“Sometimes my pulse almost ceases to beat at all, as I have been told by the sisters who sometimes see me in this state ... My bones are all disjointed and my hands are so rigid that sometimes I cannot clasp them together. Even next day I feel a pain in my wrists and over my whole body, as if my bones were still out of joint” (chap. 20, p. 140).

“Very often they seemed to leave my body as light as if it had lost all its weight, and sometimes so light that I hardly knew whether my feet were touching the ground. But during the rapture itself, THE BODY IS VERY OFTEN LIKE A CORPSE, UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING OF ITSELF. ... Generally the senses are disturbed; and though absolutely powerless to perform any outward action the subject still sees and hears things, though only dimly, as if from far away” (chap. 20, p. 142).

“... when the soul is in union ... there can be no seeing or understanding or hearing at all. THE SOUL IS WHOLLY IN ANOTHER’S POWER, and during this very brief period the Lord does not seem to leave it free for any experience whatever” (chap. 25, p. 176).

“So when these spells of deep recollection or rapture came on me, and I COULD NOT RESIST THEM EVEN IN PUBLIC, I was so ashamed afterwards that I was unwilling to appear where anyone would see me” (chap. 31, p. 226).

“I took up a rosary ... I had been there only a few moments when I WAS SEIZED BY A RAPTURE SO VIOLENT THAT I COULD OFFER NO RESISTANCE. I seemed to be raised to Heaven, and the first persons I saw there were my father and my mother” (chap. 38, p. 283).

“I went after Mass to a very lonely spot where I used often to pray ... a great impulse swept over me, without my seeing the manner of it; my soul seemed to be on the point of leaving my body ... THE IMPULSE WAS SO STRONG THAT I COULD DO NOTHING AGAINST IT” (chap. 38, p. 286).

This is contrary to the way God operates. The Bible says that the “*spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets*” (1 Corinthians 14:32). In other words, God does not seize a true prophet in such a manner that he has no control.

At times she supposedly levitated.

“... sometimes it has affected my whole body, which has been lifted from the ground” (chap. 20, p. 137).

“It seemed to me when I tried to resist that a great force, for which I can find no comparison, was lifting me up from beneath my feet. It came with greater violence than any other spiritual experience, and left me quite shattered” (Ibid.).

“On other occasions ... I lay on the ground and the sisters came to hold me down, but all the same the rapture was observed” (Ibid.).

In the latter excerpt she describes a group of nuns gathered around trying to hold her down while she is levitating. What a truly amazing scene!

Teresa believed that she was receiving divine revelation through her raptures. “In ecstasy come true revelations...” (chap. 21, p. 151).

She claimed that she could gain a thousand times more wisdom in a single instant through a vision than she could by laboring for years in normal study and contemplation (*The Way of the Mystics*, p. 128). She said, “For the soul suddenly finds itself learned, and such exalted mysteries as that of the Holy Trinity are so plain to it that it would boldly argue against any theologian” (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 27, p. 190). She said that since she started having visions she “had very little or no need of books” (chap. 26, p. 186).

In one vision an angel drove the fiery point of a golden lance repeatedly through her heart, causing her both great pain and ecstasy. She took this as a sign that she should imitate the suffering of Jesus and gave rise to her motto, “Lord, either let me suffer or let me die.” She described the experience like this:

“Beside me, on the left hand, appeared an angel in bodily form, such as I am not in the habit of seeing except very rarely. ... He was not tall but short, and very beautiful; and his face was so aflame that he appeared to be one of the highest rank of angels, who seem to be all on fire. They must be of the kind called cherubim, but they do not tell me their names. ... In his hands I saw a great golden spear, and at the iron tip there appeared to be a point of fire. This he plunged into my heart several times so that it penetrated to my entrails. When he pulled it out, I felt that he took them with it, and left me utterly consumed by the great love of God. The pain was so severe that it made me utter several moans. The sweetness caused by this intense pain is so extreme that one cannot possibly wish it to cease, nor is one’s soul then content with anything but God. This is not a physical, but a spiritual pain, though the body has some share in it--even a considerable share. ... Throughout the days that this lasted I went about in a kind of stupor” (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila*, chap. 29, p. 210).

This experience is depicted in a 17th century statue in the Carmelite church in Rome (Santa Maria della Vittori). The “Ecstasy of St. Theresa” shows the mystic in rapture as the angel

prepares to pierce her heart again with a spear. The sculptor, Gianlorenzo Bernini, was a contemplative himself who practiced Ignatius of Loyola's spiritual exercises.

Teresa claimed to have had visions of heaven and hell. She said that in heaven people communicate without speaking (chap. 27, p. 191). Hell was entered through "a very long, narrow passage, or a very low, dark, and constricted furnace" and the ground "appeared to be covered with a filthy wet mud, which smelt abominably and contained many wicked reptiles" (chap. 32, p. 233).

God forbids anyone to add to the prophecies that are given in Scripture, but Teresa of Avila ignored this warning (Revelation 22:18-19).

She alleged to have seen Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father. She saw Jesus in glory as well as resting in the Father's bosom. Teresa's "Jesus" (of course) looked as He appears in Catholic paintings.

"Once when I was at Mass on St. Paul's Day, there stood before me the most sacred Humanity, in all the beauty and majesty of His resurrection body, as it appears in paintings" (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 28, p. 196).

"He would show me His wounds, and then He would appear sometimes on the Cross and sometimes as He was in the Garden. Sometimes too, but rarely, I saw Him wearing the crown of thorns, and sometimes carrying His Cross as well ... But always His body was glorified" (chap. 29, p. 207).

The Holy Spirit appeared as a large dove.

"While in this condition, I saw above my head a dove very different from the doves of this world. It was not feathered like them, but its wings were made of little shells which shone with a great brilliance. It was bigger than a dove, and I seemed to hear the rustling of its wings" (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 38, p. 287).

She also claimed to have seen many demons. One appeared as a Negro.

"The Lord plainly wished me to understand that this was the devil's work; for I saw close beside me a most hideous

little Negro gnashing his teeth, as if in despair at losing what he had tried to win. ... there were some sisters there who were helpless, and did not know how to relieve my pain. For he made me thrash about with my body, head, and arms, and I was powerless to prevent him" (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 31, p. 222).

She claimed that the most effective thing against demons is holy water.

"I have learnt from the experience of several occasions that there is nothing the devils fly from more promptly, never to return, than from holy water. They fly from the Cross also [a crucifix], but return again. So there must be a great virtue in holy water. For my part I feel a special and most notable solace in my soul when I take it up. In fact I am generally conscious of refreshing power in it which I could not describe; it is like an inner delight that comforts my whole soul" (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 31, p. 223).

There is not a hint of such a thing in the New Testament, of course. In Ephesians 6 Paul described the whole armor of God by which we can defeat the devil, and holy water and crucifixes are not mentioned.

She claimed to have seen and talked with many dead people, including Peter of Alcantara. In fact, she claimed that he astral projected to her even when he was living.

"It has been the Lord's pleasure that I should have more to do with him [Peter] since his death than in his life, and that he should advise me on many subjects. I have often seen him in the greatest glory. The first time he appeared to me, he spoke of the blessedness of his penance, which had won him so great a prize, and of many other things as well. A year before his death he appeared to me, when I was on a journey. I knew that he was soon to die and told him so, though we were many miles apart. As he drew his last breath, he appeared to me again and said that he was going to rest" (*The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, chap. 27, pp. 194, 195).

Therese of Lisieux

Therese of Lisieux (1873-97) was canonized in 1925 by Pope Pius XI and is called Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face. She is the patron saint of AIDS sufferers, aviators, florists, illness, and missions. In 1944 Pope Pius XII named her “co-patroness of France,” and in 1997 Pope John Paul II named her one of the 33 Doctors of the Church. She is one of only three women to be so named, the other two also being contemplative mystics (Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Siena).

She was born in Alençon, France, with the birth name of Therese Martin. After her mother died when she was four, the family moved to Lisieux. Her parents had five daughters that survived birth, and they all became nuns. Teresa entered the Carmelite convent at Lisieux at age 15. Though their father had a series of strokes that left him “physically and mentally handicapped to the point of insanity,” his cloistered nun daughters were not allowed to visit him.

Therese was known for her “Little Way” approach to spirituality, which involves absolute surrender, childlike trust in God, doing small acts of kindness, performing the humblest tasks, and simple prayers.

There is nothing wrong in this simple way in itself, as far as it goes, but in her case it was immersed in Catholic heresy. She was a great devotee of Mary, for example. Not long after her sister Pauline entered the convent Theresa became ill nearly unto death. After praying to a statue of Mary in her room she “saw Mary smile at her and she was cured” (Michael K. Jones, “Saint Theresa of Lisieux,” Medjugorje USA web site).

Her writings, which were published posthumously as *The Story of a Soul*, were a 20th century bestseller and are influential in the contemplative prayer movement.

Thompson, Marjorie

Marjorie Thompson is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church USA. As a Research Fellow at Yale Divinity School she studied “Christian spirituality” with Roman Catholic Henri Nouwen. In 1996 she became the director of Pathways for

Congregational Spirituality operated by the Upper Room. This organization promotes eastern style meditation and is the creator of Walk to Emmaus, a meditation tool.

She contributed to *A Reader's Companion to Crossing the Threshold of Hope: Sixteen Writers on the Pastoral Writings of Pope John Paul II*.

Her book *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (1995) promotes contemplative practices, such as centering prayer and the Jesus prayer.

The prologue says:

“[Some Christians find that] meditation, a traditional Buddhist practice, helps them live their Christian discipleship more faithfully. ... The practice of contemplative prayer might give a Christian ground for constructive dialogue with a meditating Buddhist. Spiritual practice is the heart of this book.”

In *Soul Feast* Thompson quotes from and recommends books by Roman Catholic mystics Thomas Merton, Brother Lawrence, Thomas Keating, Henri Nouwen, Morton Kelsey, and Anthony de Mello (1931-87). De Mello established a prayer center in India that teaches a method of Catholic contemplation combined with Hinduism. In his book *Sadhana: A Way to God*, De Mello quotes approvingly of a Hindu guru who taught yogic breathing and said: “The air you breathe is God. You are breathing God in and out. Become aware of that, and stay with that awareness.”

Thompson also quotes favorably from New Agers Matthew Fox, M. Scott Peck, and Gerald May.

Tickle, Phyllis

Phyllis Tickle is an Episcopalian lay “Eucharistic minister and lector” and a Senior Fellow of Cathedral College at the liberal Washington National Cathedral.

Her series of books on *The Divine Hours* has greatly increased the popularity of the Catholic practice of ritualistic praying at set times each day using assigned prayers. This practice is called by many names, such as keeping the hours, praying the hours,

observing the offices, and the liturgy of the hours. It has been the practice of Catholic monasteries since the time of Benedict.

Tickle says that religion does not have to be theological, meaning doctrinal and based on Scripture. In a 1997 interview with Liza Hetherington of the exceedingly liberal Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, Tickle speaks warmly of the influx of Buddhism into Christianity.

“Religion’ does not necessarily have to be theological. And that’s the first thing. You know, Alan Watts, whatever else he said, he said a funny thing about Buddhism. He said, ‘Buddhism is Atheism in the name of God.’ And that’s absolutely true. One of the things that’s fascinating about religion in this country right now is the great influx of Buddhism, because Buddhism is a non-theistic faith, basically, and, therefore, does not abrade anybody’s doctrine. It’s moved easily into all three of our established religions in this country, especially into Judaism and Christianity, by allowing us to get a perspective that religion is both a thing of God and a thing of Man” (“God-Talk in America,” http://www.gracecathedral.org/enrichment/interviews/int_19970909.shtml).

Tickle speaks of the New Age as good thing that is giving some people an entrance into the truth. The following statement from her 1997 interview with Grace Cathedral reveals her gross misuse of Scripture:

“New Age has been a huge doorway into an arena where most Americans never had entered before. It has functioned as a system of rhetoric, but also as a community, a gentle, compassionate, nurturing community for a hurting people. And has allowed us to begin to understand the principles of spirituality and of spiritual practice that have allowed many to pass from the wide gate to the narrow gate of doctrinal affiliation. And because our Lord spoke of wide gates and narrow gates does not mean that He didn’t also envision the possibility that a wide gate could lead into a chamber that was exited through a narrow gate. HE NEVER SAID YOU COULDN’T GO THROUGH BOTH OF THEM. IT WAS NEVER AN ‘EITHER-OR,’ and I think that’s a big part of what’s happened. I also think, if we’re back to sheepfolds,

that God said that, ‘The Kingdom of God is being entered sort of brusquely.’ People are breaking into it. They’re not coming in through the gate, they’re jumping the wall--if you remember that metaphor out of St. John. I think a lot of them are jumping the wall and, you know, they began as New Agers.”

To say that the New Age can lead to the truth because of its nurturing community and “spirituality” is to ignore the fact that its spirituality is demonic. As for the wide road and the narrow road, according to the Bible, salvation IS either-or! You are either saved or lost. You are either on the broad road that leads to destruction or you on the narrow road that leads to eternal life. And there are not different entrances to the narrow way! There is only one, which is the strait gate of being born again through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). It is called *strait* because it is exclusive, and the individual has to humble himself as a lost sinner and put his faith in the atoning cross work of Christ. You can’t “jump over the wall” onto the salvation road. You can’t come by some other way. The New Age doesn’t lead to salvation; it leads only to eternal damnation. The only way that a New Ager can find salvation is if God gets hold of him and convicts him of his sin and shows him that he is fellowshiping with devils and that individual responds to God’s Spirit and repents and turns to Christ. That is what happened to me in 1973, but the New Age itself didn’t help me one iota; it is a demonic delusion and leads only to destruction.

Tickle says the emerging church is blending the four major streams of American Christianity: Evangelicalism, Charismaticism, mainline liberal Protestantism, and liturgicalism (Catholicism, Orthodoxy). She says, “Where the quadrants meet in the center there’s a vortex like a whirlpool and they are blending” (“The Future of the Emerging Church,” March 19, 2007, *Leadership Magazine*, http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2007/03/the_future_of_t.html).

Indeed, they are, but what she is describing is end-time apostasy and the stage being set for the formation of a one-world “church.”

Tickle promotes non-verbal contemplative praying. She supports Sybil MacBeth’s method of “praying” through art, which is taught in the book *Praying in Color*. Tickle says:

“The whole business of entering prayer WITHOUT THE VEHICLE OF WORDS is very important, for it allows the spirit to flow freely with the spirit of God, and does not have to articulate what is happening until one comes out from prayer” (“Praying in Color: A Conversation with friends and authors Sybil MacBeth and Phyllis Tickle on a whole new way to pray without words,” <http://www.explorefaith.org/books/macbeth.html>).

Wordless meditation is not biblical prayer; it is a pagan practice that is a recipe for demonic deception. Those who practice it are invariably led into heresies.

It should not be surprising, then, that Tickle believes in a female God and calls the Holy Spirit “he or she or it.” She teaches that by partaking of the Lord’s Supper the believer is feeding God and reinvigorating the Holy Spirit, whatever that means. Speaking at Rob Bell’s Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, she said:

“God is both male and female. God is both father and mother. ... There is more than one thing under the name of God, and it is both male and female. ... As we are about to do that [take the Lord’s supper], let us remember what we are doing. We not only celebrate that death and that promise of return, but we are feeding by eating God--which is what we are doing here--by eating the body and blood of our God, we are feeding the God within us. For as we take those elements the Spirit also feeds within us and is reinvigorated as he or she or it is by our faith” (Tickle, “A Treasure We Don’t Understand,” May 3, 2009).

Webber, Robert

Robert Webber (1933-2007) was a professor at Wheaton College for about 30 years and taught at Northern Seminary in Chicago the last seven years of his life.

He is one of the fathers of the contemplative movement and a very influential voice in the emerging church. In his book *Common Roots* (1978) he argued that the early church era of A.D. 100-500 has “insights which evangelicals need to recover.” Those “insights” include monastic “contemplative spirituality.”

Webber continued this line of thinking in *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelicals Are Attracted to the Liturgical Church* (1985), *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (1999), *Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (2002), and *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life* (2006).

Webber promoted a very broad ecumenism:

“Paradigm thinking sets us free to affirm the whole church in all its previous manifestations. ... This search for a common heritage allows for the emergence of a new understanding of unity and diversity. ... So while we are all Christians, some of us are Roman Catholic Christians, Eastern Orthodox Christians, Reformation Christians, twentieth-century Christians, or some other form of modern or postmodern Christians” (*Ancient-Future Faith*, pp. 16, 17).

“A goal for evangelicals in the postmodern world is to accept diversity as a historical reality, but to seek unity in the midst of it. This perspective will allow us to see Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches as various forms of the one true church...” (*Ancient-Future Faith*, p. 85).

“We evangelicals need to turn our backs on the old separatist model” (*Ancient-Future Faith*, p. 86).

“Today evangelicals and Catholics are enjoying spiritual camaraderie that was nonexistent a few years ago. ... Evangelicals in a postmodern world will increasingly feel at home with Catholics, Orthodox, and other Protestant bodies...” (*Ancient-Future Faith*, p. 87).

“... evangelicals need to go beyond talk about the unity of the church to experience it through an attitude of acceptance of the whole church and an entrance into dialogue with the Orthodox, Catholic, and other Protestant bodies” (*Ancient-Future Faith*, p. 89).

Before he died Webber organized “A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future,” an effort to challenge evangelicals “to strengthen their witness through a recovery of the faith articulated by the consensus of the ancient Church and its guardians in the traditions of EASTERN ORTHODOXY, ROMAN

CATHOLICISM, the Protestant Reformation and the Evangelical awakenings.”

To arrive at this radical ecumenical position, Webber traveled far from his roots. In the books *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail* and *The Divine Embrace* he described the move away from a strict biblicist position.

Webber grew up in a fundamental Baptist home. His father, who was born in 1900, was involved in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy and was a separatist. He left the liberal American Baptist Convention and joined the Conservative Baptists. Webber’s parents were missionaries in Africa for the first seven years of his life. The family moved back to the States when one of their children became seriously ill and the father pastored the Montgomeryville Baptist Church, located about 25 miles west of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After high school Webber attended Bob Jones University.

Describing his childhood he says:

“I went to Christian schools and palled around with Christian friends from my youth group. The boundaries of home, church, and school were very tight” (*The Divine Embrace*, p. 150).

“I was the kid who couldn’t go to the movies, the kid who had to keep Sunday as a holy day (no sports), the kid who had to watch everything I did and said. But I wasn’t just a preacher’s kid. I was also a fundamentalist Baptist. From an early age, it was thoroughly ingrained within me that I was both a fundamentalist and a Baptist. Being Christian wasn’t enough. ... Catholics were pagan. Episcopalianism was a social club. Lutherans had departed from the faith. Presbyterians were formalistic. And Pentecostals were off-center” (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 13).

“One central conviction of my parents was that our fundamentalist way was the only faith that stood in continuity with the New Testament. All other viewpoints were distorted at best and some, especially Roman Catholicism, contained no connection with New Testament Christianity whatsoever” (*The Divine Embrace*, p. 199).

What he was taught about Rome was true. How did he get from there to the point where he considered the Roman Catholicism a genuine church and the Protestant Reformation “a tragedy”? He describes the steps in his books.

Lack of Clarity about Personal Salvation

One thing that is missing in the biographical account of Webber’s youth is a biblical testimony of salvation. Never does he give a biblical, life-changing testimony of being born again and walking with Christ in sweet fellowship through faith in God’s Word. The closest he comes is a description of an event that occurred when he was 13. His father talked to him about the need to be baptized. He did not seek out baptism because he had experienced a born again conversion; rather, his father talked him into it.

“I remember going out on the back porch that night, looking up into the stars, and asking myself whether or not I really believed, whether or not I was willing to take up my cross and follow after Christ. The prospect of my own baptism caused me to choose Christ again in a more intense way, to determine once more to follow him” (pp. 45, 46).

This is a works orientation to salvation. A determination to follow Christ is not the same as acknowledging one’s utter sinfulness and surrendering oneself into His care and trusting Him exclusively as one’s Saviour.

Webber even argued that salvation does not have to be a dramatic conversion experience and he admitted that he didn’t have such an experience. He said that repentance “can have a dramatic beginning or can come as a result of a process over time” (*The Divine Embrace*, p. 149). He saw salvation is a sacramental process that begins at baptism, and this is one reason why he left the Baptist church and joined the Episcopalian and was perfectly comfortable with Roman Catholicism.

Webber described many experiences he had with his Bible College students, but he doesn’t give any examples of counseling them about personal salvation. Consider something that happened to him in 1968, during his first year of teaching at Wheaton. As Webber was giving proofs for the existence of God, a student

raised his hand and said that he didn't believe that God exists and that the proofs didn't mean anything to him (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 27). When Webber asked the class if anyone else agreed, "several other hands slipped into the air." What is even more amazing than the fact that several Bible college students were atheists or agnostics was Webber's response. He asked them what they wanted him to teach and allowed them to guide him in a "search for a more profound and deeper meaning in life" by "tuning into the questions of meaning asked by the artists of our generation." Pathetically, he even says, "I can't say we came to adequate conclusions" (p. 28).

What he did *not* do is question these students' salvation and try to lead them to Christ, which should have been the very first thing he did.

Once-for-all personal regeneration is absolutely foundational to "experiencing God," but it is glaring in its absence in Webber's writings. What we have instead is an emphasis on sacramental terminology.

"... the sacrament ... is a means through which Christ encounters us savingly" (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, pp. 50, 51).

"He who saved me at the cross continues to extend his salvation to me through the simple and concrete signs of bread and wine" (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 51).

"In the Eucharist I feel both saved again and compelled to live in the Eucharistic way. Both justification and sanctification are communicated to me" (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 84).

"Baptism is the spiritual rite of conscious and intentional union with Jesus ... and reception of the Holy Spirit ..." (*The Divine Embrace*, p. 67).

"When baptism is enacted in faith, the spirit of God performs, ascribes, and accomplishes the very meaning of baptism--a forgiveness of our old identity is made real, and a new identity with Jesus is actualized" (*The Divine Embrace*, p. 152).

Webber even warns that it is possible to “overstress conversion.” He describes how that in 1983 Jon Braun of the Evangelical Orthodox Church spoke to Webber’s class at Wheaton about his pilgrimage into Orthodoxy.

“He was speaking about his upbringing in a Christian home and the fact that as a young person he had always believed but had had no dramatic experience of salvation. His parents, anxious for him to have a dramatic conversion experience, began to push him toward a decision. ‘This,’ he said soberly, ‘actually pushed me out of the church and made me think for a temporary period of time that I was an unbeliever.’ He then went on to say that placing too much emphasis on a dateable experience of salvation can be dangerous if we do not take into account that many who grow up in Christian homes grow into faith without such an experience” (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 76).

Jesus said that salvation is something you are supernaturally born into, not something you grow into. Webber should have encouraged parents who want their children to have a clear new birth experience, but instead he casts aspersion on such a thing and even says that it might be dangerous.

To say that “I have always believed” is an unscriptural testimony. You might not know the exact date, but you certainly should know when and where it happened and how that it clearly changed your life (2 Corinthians 5:17). You should be able to testify how that you acknowledged your sin against God and repented of it and put your faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the gospel, and called upon Him for salvation (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Romans 10:12-13; Acts 20:21). That is the only type of “conversion” that is described in the New Testament.

Webber says that “a dramatic experience of the saving reality of Christ is not to be denied or minimized” (p. 76), but he does deny and minimize it by indicating that there are other ways of salvation such as growing into faith and sacramentalism and by confusing justification with sanctification.

Lack of clarity about personal salvation is a foundational error of the emerging church.

Rejection of Separatism

Webber's first step to ecumenism was in rejecting the biblical doctrine of separation. He describes how that at Bob Jones University he heard the accusation that "Billy Graham is the greatest tool of the devil in the twentieth century" (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 70). They warned that Graham was flirting with modernism and compromising the gospel through cooperative evangelism, which is absolutely true, but Webber rejected that argument in his heart.

He mislabels the call for separation from disobedient compromisers like Graham as "second degree separation." In fact, it is not *second* degree but *first*! The Bible exhorts God's people to "*mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them*" (Romans 16:17). That is exactly what Billy Graham has done throughout his ecumenical career. He has taught a generation of evangelicals to downplay doctrine and to fellowship with heretics, and that is directly contrary to the doctrine that we learned from the apostles. Paul exalted doctrine and taught us to be very strict about it (1 Timothy 1:3) and he condemned heretics in the boldest, plainest manner (e.g., 1 Timothy 1:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:16-18).

Rejection of a Pure Church

Another thing that occurred when Webber was at Bible College was his rejection of the doctrine of a pure church.

"Why, I wondered, were we always so busy defining the perimeters in which truth and a right relationship to God were accurately defined? Was it really possible, I wondered, to have a pure church? The more I thought about this the more I felt that to be truly pure was an impossibility. ... How can anyone except God himself be pure and uncontaminated from false belief, ethical error, and incomplete judgment? For me the so-called concept of the purity of the church was a strait-jacket that made me increasingly uncomfortable" (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 71).

His question is answered plainly and simply in Scripture. Paul wrote to the church of Corinth and reproved and corrected them for their sins and errors. He urged them to be pure. He instructed

them to put the fornicator out of their midst (1 Corinthians 5) and to deal with the false teachers (2 Corinthians 11). Paul said:

“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

It is God’s will that the churches be pure, and even though we don’t live up to this in a perfect manner in this present world, that must always be the goal. We are to continually purge out the old leaven.

The doctrine of a pure church is not a strait-jacket for those who love Christ and want to please Him. Christ addressed seven of the churches in Asia in Revelation 2-3 and He reprovved their sins and errors and called upon them to repent. He warned that He would reject those that did not repent (Revelation 2:5). This is the standard for the entire church age. It is not the will of Christ that we ever grow complacent about sin and error in the churches.

The doctrine of a pure church is only a strait-jacket to those who want to be careless about doctrine for the sake of pursuing an ecumenical agenda.

Attending the Wrong Schools

Though he was raised in fundamental Baptist doctrine, Webber pursued theological graduate training in non-fundamentalist and non-Baptist schools (Reformed, Lutheran, Episcopal). This is a perfect recipe for going out of the right way. While attending Protestant seminaries he rejected the Baptist faith and became a Protestant. There is nothing surprising about that!

And it was at these seminaries, as we shall see, that Webber was taught about ecumenism and sacramentalism.

It was at these seminaries, too, where he also learned to think and write and speak in a complicated, philosophical manner. He writes far over the head of the ordinary Christian. His books could not help the simple village people in Africa that his parents helped by preaching simple Bible truth. He has complicated the simplicity of the faith (2 Corinthians 11:3). He forgot that God has revealed

His truth to babes (Mat. 11:25), that God has chosen to confound the wise of the world through the simple preaching of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:17-29).

Falling in Love with Calvin

First Webber fell in love with John Calvin.

“I was particularly attracted to John Calvin. ... at the Reformed Episcopal Seminary in Philadelphia. I studied under Robert K. Rudolf, a master teacher and a walking encyclopedia of Calvinist theology. By his magnetic personality and his deep devotion to logically consistent truths I was soon drawn into the teaching of John Calvin” (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 60).

Calvin came out of Rome, but he clung to many of Rome’s errors, including infant baptism, sacramentalism, the priesthood, state churchism, and amillennialism. He did not understand properly the doctrine of salvation or the church or Bible prophecy, among others. Calvin did not have a personal testimony of salvation other than his infant baptism and he was an avowed enemy of the Baptists. He imprisoned them and put them to death, burning one of them at the stake. Calvin’s allegorical interpretation of prophecy does away with the imminency of the return of Christ, which is a very important doctrine and has a great impact on Christian living.

To fall in love with Calvin is a definite step away from the simple New Testament Christian faith and church and a definite step toward Rome.

Studying the Church Fathers

Another stepping stone toward ecumenism was Webber’s study of the Church Fathers. Many of those who have converted to Rome have testified that the Church Fathers helped them in this venture. In reality, most of the so-called Church Fathers of the early centuries were tainted with heresies such as sacramentalism, asceticism, infant baptism, sacerdotalism (priestcraft), hierarchicalism, inquisitionism, and Mariolatry. They represent a gradual falling away from the apostolic faith and a preparation for the formation of the Roman Catholic Church. (See the article “Who Are the Church Fathers” at the Way of Life web site.)

Webber said that he stopped looking back on church history in a “judgmental manner” (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, pp. 61, 62). That was a great error, because the Bible says we are to “prove all things” (1 Thess. 5:21).

Attending an Ecumenical Prayer Fellowship

Another turning point in Webber’s life occurred in 1965 when he attended an ecumenical prayer community, invited by one of his seminary professors. Benedictine monks formed half of the group. Instead of obeying Romans 16:17 and 1 Corinthians 15:33 and many other Scriptures, Webber agreed to attend. He says, “As time went on my prejudices against the Roman Catholics began to fall by the wayside. I had encountered real people who were deeply committed to Christ and his church” (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 64). Dedicated Roman Catholics are obviously real people who are committed to Christ, but what Christ? Rome teaches that the consecrated wafer is Christ. And Roman Catholics are obviously committed to the “church,” but not the church that we see in the Bible.

Over the course of the next two years Webber’s thinking completely changed (*The Divine Embrace*, pp. 199, 200).

In October 1972, he preached a sermon at Wheaton College entitled “The Tragedy of the Reformation.”

The Mystical Mass

Having become sympathetic to Roman Catholicism, he disobeyed God’s Word to separate from heresy and attended a Catholic Mass where he had a life-changing mystical experience. This occurred at a Catholic retreat center. He said he was “surprised by joy” and “never had an experience like that in my life” and “was surely the richer for it” (*Signs and Wonders*, 1992, p. 5). At another Mass at St. Michael’s Church in Wheaton, Webber said he experienced “something deeper than anything else I had been through” (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 39).

The Mass is at the heart of Rome’s occultic mysticism, and many converts to and sympathizers with Rome have testified that the Mass had a part in breaking down their resistance.

Lou Ann Elwell, counselor of students at Wheaton College, is quoted by Webber as saying, “In the sacrament of the Eucharist I

feel close to the Lord, almost like he's saying, 'I'm here'" (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 43).

David DuPlessis, who was instrumental in breaking down the wall of separation between Pentecostals and Rome, described an experience he had during Mass at the Vatican. He said that his heart broke and he wept during the performance of the Mass at a session of the Second Vatican Council. By this mystical experience he was purged entirely from suspicion about Catholic doctrine and thereafter he could readily accept Catholic priests as brothers in Christ without any judgmentalism (*A Man Called Mr. Pentecost*, pp. 215, 216). It was certainly not the Spirit of Truth that met DuPlessis in the Mass and taught him not to judge doctrine and practice.

Webber developed a craving for sacramentalism. He says: "I felt a need for visible and tangible symbols that I could touch, feel, and experience with my senses. This need is met in the reality of Christ presented to me through the sacraments" (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 15).

Instead of being satisfied with faith in God's Word, Webber wanted signs and symbols. He wanted a physical experience. But the Bible says, "*For we walk by faith, not by sight*" (2 Corinthians 5:7). Faith comes by God's Word (Romans 10:17). It is the "*evidence of things not seen*" (Hebrews 11:1).

Webber joined the Anglican Church, but some of his former students have followed the sacramental path he blazed all the way to Mother Rome.

Contemplative Practices

Another thing that brought Webber into a radical ecumenical philosophy was his involvement with the Catholic contemplative practices, such as centering prayer and the Jesus Prayer. He recommends resting the chin on the chest and gazing at the area of the heart and repeating the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner") "again and again." He says, "I feel the presence of Christ through this prayer" (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 83). Mysticism is an attempt to experience God, and it is never satisfied with a faith walk based on God's Word. Further, Christ forbade repetitious prayers (Matthew 6:7-8). When we go beyond the Bible and get involved in practices that are

forbidden in Scripture, the devil is always ready to meet us in his guise as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

In *Ancient-Future Faith* (1999), Webber recommended the contemplative writings of the Catholic mystics, including St. Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas a Kempis, Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thomas Aquinas, and the Catholic-Buddhist Thomas Merton. He said:

“To immerse ourselves in these great works is to allow our vision to be expanded by a great treasure of spirituality. The value of all these books as well as many not mentioned are indispensable to spirituality. Those who neglect these works do so to their harm, and those who read them do so for their inspiration and spiritual growth” (p. 135).

Anointing with Oil by a Charismatic Female Preacher

Another turning point for Webber was in 1974 when a charismatic Episcopalian deaconess named Leanne Payne anointed him with oil and prayed over him and *healed his memories*. This occurred when he was deeply troubled over his future church affiliation.

“Starting in my pre-school years through high school, college, and seminary, we prayed through my spiritual journey, asking God for a sense of direction. I began to feel a sense of release from the past. To this day the effects of that prayer are still with me. For the confusion about my spiritual identity was laid to rest, and my feeling of being drawn into the Episcopal church was confirmed. ... For more than an hour Leanne prayed for me as I brought back to mind the wounds I had received by those who attempted to malign my faith pilgrimage and by those who sought to impede my journey into a wider, more inclusive sense of the Christian faith. After prayer, I felt free, even delivered” (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, pp. 44, 45, 65).

Observe that he considered himself “wounded” by fundamentalist types who had tried to warn him about the ecumenical, sacramental direction he was going, and this Episcopalian deaconess healed him of the “wounds” inflicted by those mean-spirited Biblicists. In fact, it was not wounds that they had given him but treasures. When someone cares enough to

reprove us for sin and error, that is a great gift, but he rejected their kindnesses and sought healing from their reproofs through an occultic ritual that has no support in Scripture.

There is nothing like the “healing of memories” in the Bible. Christ and the apostles and prophets of the early churches taught nothing about this, and if it were as necessary as its proponents say it is, the Bible would not be silent about it.

Webber describes how that his ecumenical activities broadened his thinking and made him more tolerant and accepting of all the denominations.

Rejecting the Bible as the Sole Authority for Faith and Practice

Eventually Webber came to the place where he was no longer satisfied with the doctrine that the Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice. He was no longer satisfied with a faith walk with Christ based on Scripture. He wanted an experience that went beyond this. He had been led astray through ecumenism and sacramentalism and contemplative spirituality.

The following is a very frightful thing and is a warning for those who are tempted to flirt with ecumenism.

He said that in 1969 he was preparing a sermon for Wheaton College chapel. He decided on a two-part message. The first part would be an evaluation of contemporary culture, and the second would be the biblical answer. In the second part he wanted to answer the question, “What can we tell a world of despairing people?” (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, p. 28). His outline began with the fact that God created the world and that the world, therefore, is meaningful, that God made man in His own image, that man fell away from God, and that Christ came to redeem men from their sins. That is precisely the answer given in the first three chapters of the epistle of Romans, but suddenly Webber became dissatisfied with these foundational Bible truths.

As I continued to redefine the answers, I asked myself, ‘Webber, why don’t these answers do anything for you?’...

The next morning I dragged my tired and weary body, mind, and soul to my office. I sat there at my desk and looked at those yellow, legal-sized pages of notes. ... I said to myself, ‘Webber, you’ve got to be honest about those answers. You can’t preach that with integrity.’

I stretched my arm across the desk, picked up the sermon manuscript and separated the two parts of the sermon. ... Then, in a moment of conviction, I stood to my feet, grabbed the answer part of my sermon in both hands, and vigorously crumpled the papers. Raising my right hand and arm high above my head, I tossed those answers with all my power into the wastebasket. I dropped back into my chair and sobbed for several hours. I had thrown away my answers. I had rid myself of a system in which God was comfortably contained. ... 'God,' I cried, 'where are you? Show yourself to me. Let me know that you are.' I was met by an awful silence. But it was not an empty silence. It was the silence of mystery--a silence that closed the door on my answers and broke the system in which I had enslaved God. I wept and I wept. ...

The next day I stood before the student body and delivered the first part of my sermon. Then I closed my notebook, looked at them directly, and told them what had happened to me. I told them that the answers don't work, that what we need is not answers about God, but God himself. And I told them how God was more real to me in his silence than he had been in my textbook answers. My God was no longer the God you could put on the blackboard or the God that was contained in a textbook, but a maverick who breaks the boxes we build for him (*Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, pp. 28, 29, 30).

This is one of the saddest, most frightful testimonies I have ever read.

How unwise to say that what we need is not answers about God, but God himself. How can we possibly know God apart from the revelation He has given in Scripture? Anything beyond that is blind mysticism rather than biblical faith. We need sound doctrine based on the Bible, *and* we need a living walk with God through Christ based on that doctrine. Countless Bible believers have found deep satisfaction and a fruitful spirituality in this. To set the one against the other is heresy.

God has not revealed Himself in silence; He has revealed Himself in the Bible. And the Bible never exhorts us to try to experience God in silence. We are to meditate on His Word day and night (Psalm 1:3). We are to walk in fellowship with Him by

praying without ceasing. Christ taught His disciples to pray by saying words, not by sitting in silence. In his epistles Paul described many of his prayers for an example to us, and they were always prayers of words. God is known by His own infallible revelation, and biblical faith is believing that revelation and knowing God through that revelation.

God is not contained in the Bible, but God is revealed in the Bible. God cannot be put on a blackboard, but God's Word can be written on a blackboard and believed in the heart.

To accept the Bible as the sole authority for faith and practice is not enslavement; it is freedom from deception. It is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Willard, Dallas

Dallas Willard (b. 1935) is a philosophy professor who has had an influence on the emerging church and evangelicalism at large through his writings on contemplative spirituality and the kingdom of God. Brian McLaren has called Willard and Richard Foster "key mentors in the emerging church."

Willard is a professor in the philosophy department at the University of Southern California. He has taught at Fuller Theological Seminary and elsewhere.

He is also an ordained Southern Baptist minister.

Willard graduated from Tennessee Temple College in 1956 with a B.A. in psychology, but has moved far beyond his fundamentalist roots. Even then, according to his wife, "He did have rebellion in him" ("A Divine Conspirator: Dallas Willard is on a quiet quest to subvert nominal Christianity," *Christianity Today*, Sept. 2006).

Strangely, it was at fundamentalist Tennessee Temple that Willard had a mystical experience that changed his life. He met his wife, Jane, there, and after they prayed to surrender their lives to Christ during one of the services a man named R. R. Brown laid hands on Willard and prayed over him. Jane told *Christianity Today* that "Willard lost consciousness, later describing the experience as being enveloped in a cloud." She added, "A spiritual reality became tangible for Willard in that moment" (*Christianity Today*, Sept. 2006).

We don't know what happened to Willard that day, but the fruit of it is that he has walked away from a solid biblical position. He falsely labels the strict biblicist position "legalism."

In his book *The Divine Conspiracy*, Willard describes how that as a young assistant pastor in a Southern Baptist church he was convinced that he was ignorant of God and the soul, so he decided to study philosophy, of all things! He claims that God spoke to him and said, "If you stay in the churches, the university will be closed to you; but if you stay in the university, the churches will be open to you." Yet, the apostle Paul issued a very plain warning about the danger of philosophy. "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*" (Col. 2:8).

Willard's extensive journey into the depths of humanism and philosophy has corrupted his thinking as the Bible warns. "*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners*" (1 Cor. 15:33).

He rejects the infallible inspiration of Scripture, saying, "Jesus and his words have never belonged to the categories of dogma or law, and to read them as if they did is simply to miss them" (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. xiii). In fact, Jesus' words are dogma and law and much more.

Willard says that during his fundamentalist days he would shock his classmates with statements like this:

"If you could find a better way, Jesus would be the first one to tell you to take it. And if you don't believe that about him, you don't have faith in him, because what you're really saying is that he would encourage you to believe something that is false" (*Christianity Today*, Sept. 2006).

In reality, this is not a shocking statement so much as a ridiculous one. Jesus claimed to be the way, the truth, and the life and said that no man comes unto the Father but by Him (John 14:6). Thus, there is no "better" way, and if one finds a "better" way, then Jesus was wrong.

Willard is confused about salvation itself. He asks:

"Why is it that we look upon salvation as a moment that began our religious life instead of the daily life we receive from God?" (*The Spirit of the Disciplines*).

The biblical answer to this question is that Jesus Christ described salvation as a new birth, and a birth is not a lifelong process. Willard confuses justification with sanctification.

In *The Divine Conspiracy*, Willard rejects the gospel of believing in Christ's atonement.

“When all is said and done, ‘the gospel’ for Ryrie, MacArthur, and others on the theological right is that Christ made ‘the arrangement’ that can get us into heaven” (p. 49).

Willard rejects this gospel. Consider the following statement:

“In replying to MacArthur, Charles Ryrie states that ‘the Gospel that saves is believing that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead.’ ... Ryrie does not try to support his claim that removal of sin-guilt ... to secure entrance into heaven after death, is the problem or issue. ... But in the face of Christian history and of the biblical record, that claim does need support--support it can never find. The Christian tradition certainly deals with guilt and the afterlife, but by no means does it take them to be the only issues involved in salvation” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 44).

Thus, Willard rejects the gospel that Paul preached.

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Paul preached much about holy Christian living and discipleship, but he did not confuse this with the salvation of one's soul and of the justification of the sinner before God and the reconciliation of the sinner with God. Paul preached that salvation is a gift of God's grace in Christ and that good works follow as the fruit thereof.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

These are Bible truths that even children can understand, but Willard makes everything complicated, which is typical of false teachers.

The apostle Paul said that if a man preaches any other gospel than the one that he was given by divine revelation, he is cursed of God.

“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8).

Paul did not preach a kingdom gospel or a discipleship gospel. If I were Dallas Willard, I would not be able to sleep at night for Galatians 1:8 ringing in my mind.

Willard sets up a strawman of a gospel of justification that does not change the individual's life. He presents a distorted caricature of the gospel that is commonly preached by Bible believers, and his proposed solution to this alleged problem is a kingdom gospel.

“On a recent radio program a prominent minister spent fifteen minutes enforcing the point that ‘justification,’ the forgiveness of sins, involves no change at all in the heart or personality of the one forgiven. It is, he insisted, something entirely external to you, located wholly in God himself. His intent was to emphasize the familiar Protestant point that salvation is by God's grace only and is totally independent of what we may do. But what he in fact said was that being a Christian has nothing to do with the kind of person you are” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, pp. 36, 37).

Willard doesn't tell us what “prominent minister” he is referring to, but it is certainly *not* typical among evangelicals and Baptists even in this apostate day to preach that salvation has no impact on one's life. It is more typical to preach that one is saved by God's grace through the gift that Christ purchased, and this, in turn, results in the new birth which changes the life.

That is certainly what the Bible teaches. The person that is truly saved has repented of his rebellion before God and has turned around to face in a new direction. He has been regenerated and all things are new.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (1 Cor. 5:17).

“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9).

This is exactly what was taught at Tennessee Temple in the 1950s when Willard attended there and is what most independent Baptist churches preach today.

But what Willard promotes is a kingdom gospel that confuses salvation with discipleship, justification with sanctification, reconciliation with Christian living. He bases this on Christ’s preaching in Matthew, rejecting the proper dispensational interpretation which sees this as an announcement of the kingdom promised to David’s Son.

Willard’s error on the kingdom of God is one of the central errors of the emerging church, as we have documented in *What Is the Emerging Church?*

Willard’s book *The Divine Conspiracy* is intended for the general public and even for college and university students, but nowhere does he give a clear statement on the new birth and how a person can be born again. Nowhere does he warn of God’s judgment or of eternal hellfire. Nowhere is there any sense of urgency about the necessity of individual’s being saved before it is too late.

If Willard believes these essential things, he needs to publish a new edition of the book that includes them and he should issue an apology for such a gross oversight.

Willard teaches that Christian living is building the kingdom of God in this present world. He says:

“As far as the content of what I try to present is concerned it focuses on the gospel of the kingdom of God and becoming a disciple of Jesus in the kingdom of God. So it doesn’t merely have an emphasis on the forgiveness of sins and assurance of heaven as you are apt to find in most

evangelical circles. I think that is vital but it is not the whole story” (*Kingdom Living*).

He says that the kingdom of God is in the world today and all men walk in it.

“To be born ‘from above,’ in New Testament language, means to be interactively joined with a dynamic, unseen system of divine reality in the midst of which all of humanity moves about--whether it knows it or not. And that, of course, is “The Kingdom Among Us”” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 68).

This is not what the apostle John said.

“And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19).

For more about the kingdom of God see <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/kingdom-of-god.html>.

Willard even allows room for salvation apart from faith in Christ. In an interview he was presented with the following question:

“I still struggle with how I should view those who have other beliefs. I’m not sure I am ready to condemn them as wrong. I know some very good Buddhists. What is their destiny?”

To this he replied:

“I would take [this individual] to Romans 2:6-10: God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. What Paul is clearly saying is that if anyone is worthy of being saved, they will be saved. At that point many Christians get very anxious, saying that absolutely no one is worthy of being saved. The implication of that is that a person can be almost totally good, but miss the message about Jesus, and be sent to hell. What kind of a God would do that? I am not going to stand in the way of anyone whom God wants to save. I am not going to say he can’t save them. I am happy for God to save anyone he wants in any way he can. IT IS POSSIBLE

FOR SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT KNOW JESUS TO BE SAVED. But anyone who is going to be saved is going to be saved by Jesus" ("Apologetics in Action," *Cutting Edge* magazine, Winter 2001, vol. 5 no. 1, Vineyard USA, <http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=14>).

In Romans 2 Paul is not saying that someone can be saved by doing good. The theme of Romans 1:18 - 3:23 is that all men are under God's wrath because all are sinners. Paul summarizes this section in Romans 3:9 by saying, "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, THAT THEY ARE ALL UNDER SIN." He wouldn't contradict this by saying that it might be possible for some to be saved by good works. If a sinner *could* continue in well doing, he would be saved in that way, but no sinner does this nor can do this. Paul says in Romans 3 that none are righteous, none seek after God, none fear God, all are gone out of the way, "*there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*" In Romans 2 Paul says, "*For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law*" (verse 12). Since he says in chapter 3 that "all have sinned," this means that all will perish unless they obtain salvation through the grace of Jesus Christ.

And the idea that someone might be saved who doesn't know Jesus might sound wise and compassionate, but it is plainly refuted by Scripture and is therefore a fool's dream.

Jesus said, "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3). The new birth is a very real spiritual event, and it happens only when a sinner consciously puts his faith in Christ. In the same passage Jesus explained how to be born again. "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). He plainly stated, "*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*" (John 3:18).

Therefore, if a person does not consciously believe in Jesus Christ he is condemned. Jesus concluded that sermon by saying, "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (John 3:36). Words could not be clearer.

Jesus said further:

“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9).

A man can enter in through Christ and find acceptance with God, but any other door leads to destruction. And to say that an individual could enter into salvation through Christ and not know it is as ridiculous as it is unscriptural.

John said:

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:10-12).

The person that “hath the Son” is the person who believes on him, and the person that “hath not the son” is the one that does not believe. There is no such thing as “unconscious saving faith.”

There is simply no other way of salvation than to put one’s faith in Jesus Christ and to receive Him in such a manner that one is born anew.

Willard rejects the doctrine that God is wrathful. He believes it is wrong to see God as “a policeman on the prowl” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 64). He rejects the idea that God hates or that God “in a moment of rage” will destroy the earth (p. 267).

He says that the true idea of God is that He is only loveable.

“The acid test for any theology is this: Is the God presented one that can be loved, heart, soul, mind, and strength? ... If it fails to set a lovable God--a radiant, happy, friendly, accessible, and totally competent being--before ordinary people, we have gone wrong” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 329).

In fact, the acid test for any theology is whether or not it is Scriptural! And the Scripture describes God not only as loving and compassionate and patient, etc., but also as holy and just and as having wrath toward all sin, and that is not only God in the past

but also God in the present. The redeemed heart loves God in all of His facets, but the unredeemed heart loves only a god of its own creation.

It appears to me that Willard rejects the God of the Bible.

“Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him” (Psalm 2:12).

“God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psalm 7:11).

“Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him” (Psalms 50:3).

“For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many” (Isaiah 66:15-16).

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18).

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26-27).

“For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29).

If he believes in the God described in these and hundreds of other verses, he needs to go back and revise his books.

Willard calls the doctrine of substitutionary atonement a “theory” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 42). This is one reason why the emerging church heretic Brian McLaren likes Willard. Addressing the issue of the atonement, McLaren says:

“I think the gospel is a many faceted diamond, and atonement is only one facet, and legal models of atonement (which predominate in western Christianity) are only one small portion of that one facet. Dallas Willard also addresses this issue in ‘The Divine Conspiracy.’ Atonement-centered understandings of the gospel, he says, create vampire Christians who want Jesus for his blood and little else. He calls us to move beyond a ‘gospel of sin management’--to the gospel of the kingdom of God. So, rather than focusing on an alternative theory of atonement, I’d suggest we ponder the meaning and mission of the kingdom of God” (<http://www.brianmclaren.net/archives/000149.html>).

For more about the substitutionary atonement see the book *What Is the Emerging Church?*

Willard appears to hold to a post-millennial doctrine that the kingdom of God will be established gradually through the transformation of men and society.

“God’s way of moving toward the future is, with gentle persistence in unfailing purpose, to bring about the transformation of the human heart by speaking with human beings and living with and in them” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 380).

He describes the future kingdom of Christ as “gentle” and “nonviolent” (p. 381). This denies the Bible’s teaching that Christ will come in wrath and judgment and will rule with a rod of iron.

Willard promotes contemplative spirituality. His books *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, *Hearing God*, and *Renovation of the Heart* deal with this theme.

He recommends the Catholic-Buddhist Thomas Merton and the Roman Catholic mystic saints such as Teresa of Avila, Julian of

Norwich, Dominic, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Brother Lawrence, Francis of Assisi, Thomas à Kempis, and Henri Nouwen.

He recommends the Rule of Saint Benedict, *The Imitation of Christ*, and the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 370).

We have documented the deep theological heresy associated with these people and practices in the chapters “A Description of Roman Catholic Monasticism” and “The Error of Catholic Monasticism.” All of the Catholics that Willard recommends held to a false sacramental gospel, venerated Mary, prayed to a piece of bread, pursued an asceticism that Paul condemned in Colossians 2, believed in purgatory, etc.

Willard has been associated with Richard Foster since he attended Foster’s Quaker church in California in the 1970s. Willard was the song leader and sometimes a teacher in the church and his wife played the organ. Foster is the most influential promoter of Catholic contemplative mysticism alive today.

Willard is an ecumenist. He is a Ministry Team member with Foster’s radically ecumenical Renovaré organization. Foster describes the breadth of his ecumenical vision in these words:

“I see a Catholic monk from the hills of Kentucky standing alongside a Baptist evangelist from the streets of Los Angeles and together offering up a sacrifice of praise. I see a people” (*Streams of Living Water*, 1998, p. 274).

Willard favorably quotes a wide variety of heretics with no warning to his readers. In *The Divine Conspiracy* he quotes Malcolm Muggeridge, Hans Kung, C.H. Dodd, David Yonggi Cho, B.F. Westcott, Helmut Thielicke, Gustave Martelet, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, John Henry Newman, Rudolf Bultmann, Brennan Manning, J.R.R. Tolkien, plus the aforementioned Catholic mystic saints.

Willard rejects biblical separation and mischaracterizes and slanders those who seek to practice it.

“These are the perfectionists. They are a pain to everyone, themselves most of all. In religion they will certainly find errors in your doctrine, your practice, and probably your heart and your attitude” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 118).

Willard does not explain how it is possible to obey God's Word and NOT find errors in doctrine (e.g., Acts 17:11; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Tim. 1:3; 6:13-14; 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 2:7; Jude 3).

Willard grossly misinterprets 2 Corinthians 3:6-10 to support his doctrine that it is wrong to judge.

“Then there is a warning about trying to control others by ‘judging,’ blaming, condemning them. The apostle Paul later contrasted the ‘ministry of condemnation’ with the ‘ministry of the Spirit’ or ‘ministry of righteousness’ (2 Cor. 3:6-10)” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 137).

In truth, 2 Corinthians 3 contrasts the Law of Moses with the Gospel of Grace, the Old Covenant with the New. The “ministration of condemnation” of verse 9 is the same as the “ministration of death” in verse 7 and it refers to what Moses wrote “in stones” on Mt. Sinai. Paul was not warning about a Christian ministry that contends for the faith once delivered to the saints and carefully tests everything by Scripture and marks and avoids false doctrine. He was warning about Judaistic legalism that preached salvation through works.

Willard claims that God is not concerned about doctrinal purity. In fact, he says that God loves theologians of all types.

“Theologians on both the left and the right, and those on no known scale of comparison, are all loved by God, who has great things in mind for every one of them” (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 329).

This is contrary to the Bible, which says that those who preach false gospels are cursed (Galatians 1) and those who preach false christ are of the devil (2 Corinthians 11; 2 Peter 2; 2 John).

Willard holds the New Thought, Word-Faith doctrine that mind affects matter.

“This opens up a deep truth about our universe as a whole. It is a world that responds to desire and to will, and in many ways. ... this central fact of life shows that matter is not indifferent to personality. It is influenced by it and influences it in turn. This is an actual *fact* about our world and our place in it. Within a narrow range, then, desire and will directly influence physical reality by simply

desiring and willing it to behave in certain ways. ... One would not, at present, want to venture greatly on the reality of psychokinesis, the alleged ability to move things by thought and will alone. But recent scientifically organized studies strongly indicate a power very like it" (*The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 247).

In February 2006 Willard returned to Tennessee Temple University to conduct a seminar, which demonstrates unequivocally that Tennessee Temple has rejected its former position.

Yungblut, John

John Yungblut (d. 1995) was a graduate of the exceedingly liberal Harvard Divinity School and the Episcopal Divinity School and served in the Episcopalian ministry for 20 years. In 1960 he joined the Religious Society of Friends or Quakers. He was Director of Quaker House in Atlanta and Dean of Studies at the Quaker Meditation Center in Pendle Hill, Pennsylvania.

He was a lifelong student of the mystics and combined Christian contemplation with Jungian psychology and Teilhard's doctrine of the evolution of the universe. He believed that God is the sum total of all things and that the universe is evolving toward perfection. He denied that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the Creator of all things.

He believed that mysticism is a power that has only recently evolved.

"John Yungblut suggests that the mystical consciousness is a universal human faculty which is relatively new from an evolutionary perspective. Just as life emerged from non-living matter, thought from life, spirit from thought, so mystical awareness now emerges from spirit. It is like a sixth sense by which we are able to perceive unity (with God within us and with other people), relatedness and wholeness. It leads to identifying so intensely with others that none of us can be free while another is in fetters, nor rejoice while another suffers. Yungblut contends this is the faculty which most needs to be developed in humanity if we are to achieve the society we yearn for. It is the faculty Jesus urged us to develop by following his living example.

When Jesus said 'If you love me, feed my sheep', or 'Whatever you do to the least of these you do to me' he was demonstrating a highly developed mystical consciousness" (Barbara Smith, "Christian Mysticism," June 7, 1998, <http://www.home.earthlink.net/~livinghopefellowship/Schedules/1998/mysticism.htm>).

John's wife June corresponded extensively with Thomas Merton (<http://www.merton.org/research/Correspondence/z.asp?id=2192>).

In his 1974 book *Rediscovering the Christ* Yungblut taught that the Jesus of the New Testament is not the unique Son of God. In this book he wrote:

"But we cannot confine the existence of the divine to this one man among men. Therefore we are not to worship the man Jesus, though we cannot refrain from worshipping the source of this Holy Spirit or Christ-life which for many of us has been revealed primarily in this historical figure" (1991 edition, p. 164).

Yungblut says God was in Christ in the same way that Christ was in Paul:

"The mysticism of Paul ... was predominantly a Christ-mysticism, expressed in the being-in-Christ terminology. The identification with the risen Lord ... took so poignant a form that Paul did not find it blasphemous to say, 'I, yet not I, but Christ who lives in me.' ... Jesus must have felt much in the same with regard to God. 'I, yet not I, but God who lives in me'" (<http://www.christianmystics.com/contemporary/christinme.html>).

He said that all mystics, regardless of religious belief, come to the same perception that all is one.

"The core of the mystical experience is the apprehension of unity, and the perception of relatedness. For the mystics the world is one" (*Rediscovering the Christ*, p. 142).

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Index

- Acts 29, 45, **47**, **52**
Allegorical, 104, **154**, 362, 398, 435
Allender, Dan, 40
Alphonsus De Liguori, 17, 30, 70
Amillennialism, 234, 435
Anchoress, 281, 299
Angela of Foligno, 128, **232**
Anthony the Great, 120, **232**
Anti-Dispensationalism, **35**
Arsenius, Abba 126
Artress, Lauren, 113
Asceticism, 115-117, 127-128, **143**,
146-147, 155, 165, 239, 243-245,
259, 351, 414
Assagioli, Robert, 265
Astral Projection, 361
Atonement. *See* Christ's
Atonement
Augustine, 116, 118-119, **162**,
166-168, **233**-235
Augustinian, 304
Authority, Bible. *See* Bible as Sole
Authority
Automatic Writing, 276
Bailey, Alice, 83
Ballard, Jim, 240
Baptist Convention of North
Carolina, 71
Barth, Karl, 18-19, 360
Barclay, Robert, 12
Beck, Don, 401
Bell, Rob, 42, 211, 360, 427
Benedict, 41, 62, 73, 79, 121,
151-152, 211, **236**-**237**
Benedictine, 54, 150, 209-210, 227,
357, 436
Benner, David, 204, 256
Bernard of Clairvaux, 136, 150,
237, 282
Bible, Sole Authority, **17**, 65, **128**,
170, 346, 395, 439
Bible believers persecuted, 259
Biola University, 98, 345
Black Madonna, 227-229, 312, 332,
375-376
Blackfriars. *See* Dominican
Blanchard, Ken, 52, 55-56, 58,
212-213, 219, **239**, 241
Boehme, Jacob, 372
Bolger, Ryan, 41, 169
Bonaventure, 28, 127, 136, 139,
148, 155, **241**-242, 251, 274
Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, 18, 318, 451
Born Again. *See* Salvation
Bramachari, 334
Breath Prayer, 79, **98**-99, 170, 175,
291
Brother Lawrence, 64-65, 67, 79,
155, 210, **243**-244
Brunner, Emil, 18, 360
Bruteau, Beatrice, 64, 318, 324
Buber, Martin, 33, 61, 256
Buddhism, 59-60, 72, 77, 157-158,
181-182, 185, **207**, 209, 224, 229,
257, 262, 264, 266, 292, 294,
296-297, 308, 325, 341, 343-344,
348, 354, 367, 378, 402, 425
Burke, Spencer, 7, 186, 216, 323
Byrne, Rhonda, 213, 241
Campolo, Tony, 8, 42, **47**, 50, 74,
169, 189, 206, 215, 360
Card, Michael, 359, 385
Carmelite, 243-244, 295, 413, 423
Cassian, John, 142, 255
Catherine of Genoa, 133, 139, 143,
146, 150, **245**
Catherine of Siena, 77, 127, 133,
139, 141, 145-146, **246**, 413
Catholic Church, *See* Roman
Catholic Church

- Celibacy, **149-150**, 164, 166-167, 205, 235-236, 239, 272, 362,
- Center for Action and Contemplation, 365-366
- Centering Prayer, 7, 20, 41, 45, 48, 59, 70, **85-86**, 113, 174-176, 198-203, 267-268, 297,
- Chittister, Joan, 39, 74, 212
- Chopra, Deepak, 88, 213, 240
- Christ's Atonement, 140-141, 183, 199, 246, 337, 443
- Christ's Hospital, 371
- Christian Booksellers Association, 313
- Christianity Today, 46, 61, 253-255
- Church Fathers, 145, 154, 224, 233, 307, 372, 387, 435
- Church of England, 371
- Cistercian, 205, 210, 237, 351, 353, 357
- Clement of Alexandria, 116, 233
- Climacus, John, 126, 155
- Coelho, Mary, 210
- Coleridge, Samuel, 371
- Collins, Jim, 55, 57, 69
- Common Ground, 400
- Contemplation, Silent. *See* Meditation, Silent
- Contemplative Way, 265
- Cornerstone Festival, 51
- Council of Toulouse, 130-131, 260
- Council of Trent, 108, 287, 291, 313-314
- Cox, Harvey, 33
- Crabb, Larry, 204, 253-254, 256, 404
- Dalai Lama, 39, 185, 211-212, 215, 240, 343, 358, 400, 402
- Darkness, *See* Meditation, Darkness
- Darwin, Charles, 405
- Day, Dorothy, 17, 31-32, 329
- De Chardin, Pierre Teilhard. *See* Teilhard, Pierre
- De Foucauld, Charles, 317
- De Liguori, Alphonsus, 17, 30, 70, 133
- De Mello, Anthony 6-7, 88, 138, 185, **256**
- De Sales, Francis, **271**
- Desert Fathers, 115-116, 121-123, 126, 140, 143, 145-146, 150, 159, 161, 187, 233, 256, 323
- Dionysius, 119, 160-161
- Divine Hours, 50, 424
- Divinity of Man, 50, 88, 209, 293, 311, 318, 324, 401-402
- Dogwood Abbey, 205
- Dominic, 145, 247, **258-261**, 451
- Dominican, 41, 43, **258**, 397
- Dream Interpretation, 21, 24, 302
- Driscoll, Mark, 40, 45, 47, 52
- Drum Circle, 43-44
- DuPlessis, David, 437
- Eastern Orthodox, 46, 97, 142, 148, 428
- Eckhart, Meister, 31, 43, 62, 70, 148, 220, **261-262**, 266, 394
- Ecumenism, 9, 43, 264, 270, 314, 353, 367, 411, 428, 433-435, 439
- Edwards, Tilden, 72, 181, 206, **263**
- Emergent Village, 40
- Emerging Church, 36, **40**
- Episcopalian, 220, 281, 301, 424, 430, 438, 453
- Eswaran, Vijay, 241
- Evolution, 50, 200, 208-211, 252, 292, 339
- Faith, **174**
- False Christ, 190, 305, 317
- Fasting, 45, 83, 143, 145, 147, 150, 239, 281-282
- Female God, 360, 427
- Finley, James, 193, **265-267**, 345
- Flash Prayer, 27

- Focus on the Family, **52**
 Fordham University, 251, 398
 Foster, Richard, 8, **11**, 70, 78, 90,
 93, 100, 193, 212
 Fox, Emmet, 32
 Fox, George, 11-13
 Fox, Matthew, **269**, 326
 Francis De Sales, 17, 271
 Francis of Assisi, 18, 91, 128, 136,
 144, 220, 242, **272**,
 Franciscan, 206, 232, 278, 317, 365,
 384-385, 417
 Fuller Theological Seminary, 265,
 359, 441
 Fundamentalism, 381-383
 Fyfe, W.H., 371
 Gandhi, 215, 401
 Gethsemani Abbey, 331, 343
 Gibbs, Eddie, 41, 169
 Goddess, 5, 24, 58, 79, 81, **223-224**,
 226-229, 270, 308, 311-313, 326,
 350, 360-361, 375-376, 399
 Golden Gate Theological Seminary,
 69
 Golden Legend, 131, 286
 Gospel, **125**
 Grace Cathedral, 113, 425
 Grand Valley Baptist Association,
 71
 Great Commission, 140, 280
 Griffiths, Alan, 208, 398
 Greek Orthodox, 43, 49, *See*
 Eastern Orthodox
 Guided Imagery, 20, 22, 202, 361
 Guido II, 102
 Guyon, Madame, 17, 30, 50, 68,
 70-71, 100, 275-280, 361
 Hagia Sophia, 342
 Hairshirt, 145, 246-247, 259
 Hammarskjöld, Dag, 33
 Hanh, Thich Nhat, 60, 182, 334,
 336
 Harman, Willis, 214
 Healing, 32-33, 37-39, 44, 114, 198,
 237, 323, 352, 439
 Healing of Memories, 32, 37, 439
 Hell, 31, 33, 92, 117, 126, 151, 164,
 183, 215, 248, 271, 276, 288,
 290, 318, 321, 337-338, 352,
 360-361, 371-372, 382, 421, 446
 Herman, Nicholas. *See* Brother
 Lawrence
 Hesychasm, 148
 Hicks, Esther, 213, 241
 Hildegard of Bingen, 32, 138, 145,
 151, **280**
 Hinduism, 116, 157-158, 160-161,
 201-202, **207-208**, 261, 278,
 296-298, 334, 358, 366-367,
 370-371, 377-378, 398, 406, 410
 Hoffman Institute, 219, 240
 Hollister, Juliet, 210, 357
 Holy Laughter, 37
 Holy Water, 107, 166, 422
 Houston, Jean, 114
 Hubbard, Barbara, 408
 Hunt, Kevin, 354
 Huxley, Aldous, 334
 Huxley, Julian, 405, 410
 Huxley, Thomas, 405
 Idolatry, 135, 139, 177, 212, 222,
 229, 333, 375-376, 403
 Ignatius of Loyola, 22-23, 41, 50,
 69-71, 79, 91, 128, 144-145, 255,
286, 304, 361
 Imagination. *See* Visualization
 Imago Dei, 45
 Immorality, 151, 153
 Indulgences, 125, 139, 239
 Infant Baptism, 118, 166-167,
 234-235, 362
 Inner Light, 11-14, 21, 210, 250,
 252, 262, 365
 Inquisition, 118, 131, 166, 229, 234,
 259-260, 274, 287, 362

- Interfaith Dialogue, 184, 208-210, 229, 264, 269, 294, 341, 344, 356, 367, 373, 379, 398, 401, 411
- Interfaith Seminary, 401
- Interfaith Unity. *See* Interfaith Dialogue
- Interspiritual Dialogue in Action, 208, 401
- Issler, Klaus, 47, 98, 345
- Jacobins. *See* Dominican
- Jager, Willigis, 177, 209, 220, 291-292
- James, Timothy. *See* Fox, Matthew
- Jeremiah, David, 57-58, 227, 306
- Jerome, 117, **162**, **165**-166
- Jesuit, 41, 88, 287-288, 291
- Jesus Prayer, 4, 47, 54, **97**-99, 175
- Jihad, 314-315
- John of the Cross, 50, 65, 137, 142, 220, **295**, **333**
- John Paul II, 35, 118
- Johnston, William, 5, 88, 154, 199, **296**, 404
- Jones, Laurie Beth, 50, 240
- Jones, Tony, 40, 45, 95, 98, 169, 197, 202, 333, 342
- Julian of Norwich, 221, **298**, 333
- Jung, Carl, 23, 33, 196, 301-303, 318, 340, 371, 390, 410
- Keating, Thomas, 40, 62, 72, 85, 102-104, 184, 192, 208, 210-212, 216, **351**, 353, 358, 376, 398, 400, 424
- Kelly, Thomas, 55, 75, 250
- Kelsey, Morton, 196, 424
- Kennedy, Robert, 354
- Kingdom Gospel, 35
- Kidd, Sue Monk, 24, 79, 220, 223, 227, 229, **306**, 350,
- Kimball, Dan, 44, 75
- Knights Templar, 239
- Kreeft, Peter, 255, **313**
- Kundalini, 200-201, 355-356, 376-378
- Kurisumala Ashram 373
- La Combe, Francios, 275
- Labyrinth, 20, 28, 41, 45, 113-114
- Ladd, Ellen, 213, 241
- Lao-tse, 35
- LaRouche, Lyndon, 407
- Law, William, 372
- Lawrence of the Resurrection. *See* Brother Lawrence
- Lectio Divina, 4, 41, 45-46, 51, 54, 64, 68, 75, 99-106, 129, 268
- Le Saux, Henri, 207, 370
- Lectio Divina, 41, 46, 51, 68, **99**-106, 129
- Levitation, 197, 417
- Lewis, C.S., 22, 227, 252
- Little Brothers of Jesus, 317
- Living Spiritual Teachers Project, 39, 212
- Loeser, Alois, 9
- Loyola. *See* Ignatius of Loyola
- Magdalen College, 371
- Main, John, 20, 32, 70, 183-184, **315**
- Manning, Brennan, 64, 186-187, 198, 218, **317**, 322-324, 327, 404
- Mantra, 87-88, 99, 149, 159, 168, 175, 177, 184, 190, 192, 209, 267, 294, 297, 299, 316, 322, 335, 348, 389
- Mars Hill Graduate School, 40
- Marty, Martin, 33
- Mary, **135**
- Mass, 36, **106**-113, 133-134, 273, 415, 436
- May, Gerald, 424
- McKain, Larry, 55
- McLaren, Brian, 40, 51, 55, 74, 441, 450
- Mennonite, 34, 43, 61
- Merton, Thomas, 5-8, 17, 77, 79, 99, 134, 138, 182, 210, 221, **328**-342

Mike, 43, 59, 95, 100
 Miller, Calvin, 97
 Mirror of the Blessed Life, 131
 Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, 177, 184-185, 209-210, 220, 293-295, 357-358, 367
 Monasticism, 42-43, 54, 65, 102, 106, **115**, **125**-127
 Monchanin, Jules, 207, 370
 Moore, Beth, 62-63, 227, 306
 Moreland, J.P., 47, 98, 3, 45, **345**
 Mother Teresa, 110-111, 202-203, 215, 268, 341
 Muller, Robert, 210, 358
 Music, 82, 296-297, 335, 381, 383, 385, 387-388, 390, 394
 Myss, Caroline, 210
 National Catholic Reporter, 217, 292, 354, 379
 Nativity Scene, 273
 Navigators, 64
 Neo-Orthodoxy, 18-19
 New Age, 14, 28, 33-34, 41, 54-55, 74, 79, 83-84, 88-89, 210, 212-214, 374, 400-402, 408-412, 425-426
 New Birth. *See* Salvation
 New Evangelical, 81, 205, 224, 307
 Newman, John, 372
 Non-Thinking Meditation. *See* Meditation, Silent
 Noosphere, 407
 North American Board for East-West Dialogue, 185, 210, 358, 400
 Nouwen, Henri, 220, 223, 334, 345-346, **347**, 351, 367
 O'Connor, Elizabeth, 33
 Omega Point, 34, 405-406
 One Spirit Learning Alliance, 401
 Order of Friars Minor. *See* Franciscan
 Order of Preachers. *See* Dominican
 Origen, 102, 104, **117**, 150, 154, **162**-165, 168, 233
 Orthodox. *See* Eastern Orthodox
 Out of body experience. *See* Astral Projection
 Oxford Movement, 372
 Oxford University, 153, 371
 Pagitt, Doug, 41, 211
 Panentheism, 67, 161, 219, 221, 337, 349, 366
 Pantheism, 5, 55, 66, 161, 219, 222, 268-269, 294, 406
 Papa Prayer, 256
 Parliament of the World's Religions, 400
 Paul of Thebes, 120
 Paulist, 367-368
 Payne, Leanne, 438
 Pennington, Basil, 103, 174, 176, 185, 192, 207, 215, 308, 345, **351**
 Perennial Philosophy, 211-212
 Pererius, Benedict, 24
 Persecution. *See* Inquisition
 Pershon, Mike, 100
 Peter of Alcantara, 145-146, 417, 422
 Peterson, Eugene, 52, **358**-359
 Pope Innocent III, 259, 274
 Pope John Paul II, 9, 35, 246, 261, 361, 411, 423-424
 Pope John XXIII, 125, 144, 314, 341, 411
 Prairie Bible Institute, 68-69
 Prayer, Flash, 27
 Prayer, Swish, 27
 Prinknash Abbey, 227, 372
 Proving. *See* Testing
 Pseudo-Dionysius, *See* Dionysius
 Psychology, 250, 252-254, 340, 354, 361
 Purgatory, **139**-140, 246, 248, 283-284, 415
 Quaker, 11-14, 210, 250, 364, 453
 QUEST, 364

Quietism, 275
 Radio Bible Class, 69, 74
 Rahner, Karl, 5, 32, 214, 217, **363-364**
 Ratzinger, Joseph, 9, 292
 Ray, Michael, 57
 Regent College, 358, 362
 Regular Baptists. *See* General Association of
 Renovarè, 14, **34**, 78, 361, 451
 Repetition, 10, 20, 49, 63, 99, 109, **175**, 332, 348
 Resurrection, 22, 36, 117, 164, 183, 209, 243, 270, 274, 292, 325, 337, 371, 407, 415, 421, 432
 Riggs, Anne, 12
 Roberts, Zach, 205
 Roman Catholic Church - 106, 113, 125, 133, 150-154, 205, 282, 313, 384 *See* also Second Vatican Council
 Rohr, Richard, **365**
 Romaunt, 130
 Rosary, 138-139, 260-261, 394
 Ryan, Thomas, 209, 216, 358, **367**
 Sacred Heart of Jesus, 139, 242
 Salvation, **15-16**, **125**
 Sanford, Agnes, 32-33, 37, 219
 Sawyer, Nanette, 198
 Schutz, Roger, 9
 Second Vatican Council, 9, 53, 107-108, 111, 125, 135, 142, 269, 314, 341, 364, 379, 411, 437
 Self-flagellation, 145
 Separation, 146, 178, 180, 337, 354, 372, 433
 Shalem Institute, 69, 72, 263, 265
 Shambhala Publications, 210
 Shannon, William, 218, 324-325, 336
 Shantivanam Ashram, 208, 275, **370**
 Shenouda, 126
 Silence, 21, 32, 41, 53, 72-73, 79, 89, 90, 99, 146, 202, 241, 301, 330
 Sleep of God, 142
 Sloan, Karen, 43
 Snowmass Conference, 356
 Sojourners, 47, 365
 Sophia, 296, 342
 Sophia, Hagia, 342
 Soulforce, 366
 Southern Baptist, **69-71**, 223-224, 306-307
 Spirit Guides, 42, 213, 241, 410
 Spirit Slaying, 37, 394
 SpiritLines, 71-72
 Spiritual Director, 42, 145, 254-256, 323
 Spiritual Exercises, 48, 91-92, 137, 255, 286, 364
 St. Joseph's Abbey, 208, 351, 353, 398
 St. Romain, Philip, 200, 201, **376**, Starhawk, 270
 Stations of the Cross, 41, 45, **106**, 141, 170, 317
 Steindl-Rast, David, 217, 269, 325, **378**
 Stigmata, 141, 197, 248, 273
 Substitutionary Atonement. *See* Christ's Atonement
 Supina, Paul, 72
 Suso, Henry, 145, **379**
 Sweet, Leonard, 5-6, 52, 75, 82, 213, 221, 364
 Swimme, Brian, 251, 405-406
 Swindoll, Chuck, 76, 348, 360
 Swish Prayer, 27
 Talbot, John Micael, 101, 128-129, 139, 194, 200, 202, 217, **381**
 Taoism, 34, 59, 181, 202, 212, 257, 335, 341, 390
 Tauler, Johann, **394-395**
 Teasdale, Wayne, 211, 216, **398**

- Teilhard, Pierre, 34, 200, 220, 251, **402**
- Temple of Understanding, 60, 210, 338, 357
- Teresa of Avila, 21, 65, 129, 134, 137, **413**
- Testing, 186, 191, 309, 329, 344
- The Cloud of Unknowing, 20, **86-91**, 174, 191-192,
- The Imitation of Christ, 134, **304-305**, 334
- The Message, 358-360
- The Monk's Ladder, 102
- The Secret, 213, 241, 306
- Therese of Lisieux, 304, 332, 354, 413, **423**
- Thompson, Marjorie, 423
- Thoughtless Meditation. *See* Meditation, Silent
- Tickle, Phyllis, **424**
- Tolle, Eckhart, 83, 379
- Toulouse, Council of, *See* Council of Toulouse
- Tournier, Paul, 360
- Tutu, Desmond, 39, 212
- Unconditional Love, 327, 350
- UNESCO, 405, 410
- Union with God, **28**, 142
- Unitas, 367
- United Nations, 208, 210, 358, 401, 410
- Unity with God, 175, 246
- Universal Declaration on Nonviolence, 400
- Universalism, 5, 15, 59, 66, 81, 117, 164, 215, 294, 316, 324-326, 349-350, 357, 360, 369, 373, 400
- Upper Room, 424
- Vatican II. *See* Second Vatican Council
- Vegetarianism, 370, 399
- Vineyard Fellowship, 76
- Visions, 8, 50, 66, 121, 129, 134, 139, 146, 168, 197, 210, 232-233, 237, 248, 280, 282-283, 298-299, 302, 324, 328, 362, 415-417, 420-421
- Visualization, 20, **22-23**, 26, **91-94**, 196
- Von Spanheim, Jutta, 281
- Waldenses, 229, 259
- Waldo, Peter, 260
- Walk to Emmaus, 424
- Warren, Rick, 55, 69-70, 77, 201, 212-214, 245, 347, 359
- Washington National Cathedral, 424
- Watts, Alan, 425
- Webber, Robert, 43, 51, 100, 427
- Wesley, John, 395-396
- Wheaton College, 100, 427, 436, 439
- Wilber, Ken, 211, 214, 356, 401-402
- Willard, Dallas, 35, 215, 227, 268, 306, **441**, 444, 450
- Willow Creek Community Church, 56
- Wordsworth, William, 371
- Wycliffe, John, 132, 260
- Yoga, 41, 44, 181-185, 200-202, 208-209, 240-241, 256, 297, 301, 316, 335, 353, 357, 367-368, 376, 390, 399
- Yogananda, Paramahansa, 197, 213, 241
- Youth Specialities, 100
- Yungblut, John, 219, 404, 453
- Zaehner, R.C., 340
- Zen. *See* Buddhism
- Zarathustra, 34