

*Ancient Thought In Modern Dress:
Spiritual Formation
& the Seventh-Day Adventist Church*
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In his July 2010 keynote sermon, Ted N.C. Wilson, newly elected President of the Seventh-Day Adventist church counseled, **“Stay away from non-biblical spiritual disciplines or methods of spiritual formation that are rooted in mysticism such as contemplative prayer, centering prayer, and the emerging church movement in which they are promoted.”**



Why would Elder Wilson ask us to stay away from spiritual disciplines or formation? What do we know about them? Are they truly non-biblical as he states? To make a statement like that Elder Wilson must have known that for a number of years those disciplines have been coming ever so subtly into the Adventist church. It is encouraging that he has discerned the dangers of mysticism, yet many in the church today are still are unaware of these practices. They do not know the history of the contemplative movement or how to recognize the disciplines when they are perpetrated.

Despite the warning of Elder Wilson the floodgate has been opened and these disciplines are rapidly increasing in the Adventist church. Let me add my voice by paraphrasing 1st Corinthians 4:14-15, “I do not write these things to shame the church, but as my beloved brothers and sisters I warn you. For though you have ten thousand instructors claiming Christ, yet you have not many fathers who are preaching the true gospel as it is in the Son of God.”

This document was compiled for my brothers and sisters in the Seventh-Day Adventist church with a goal to help us understand ancient thought and how it survives today in modern dress. This examination is about representations, associations, principalities and powers, and is not intended to denigrate any persons past or present. It was prepared with love and respect in the hopes of facilitating prayerful Scripture study and soul searching. My commentary is minimal to allow others to speak for themselves.

Will the teachings of ancient thought, as you see presented here, turn our hearts and minds to our Heavenly Father through our Saviour Jesus Christ? Are they based on Scriptural truths that can help us in our daily walk and witness? Please pray for discernment as we all must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

Before we continue, a brief look at some history relating to the two churches found in the book of Revelation is in order.

The Apostolic Church Became the Church in the Wilderness

“And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.” - (Revelation 12:14, 6 KJV)

"The **Church in the Wilderness** is the **connecting link between apostolic Christianity and God's people today**... [T]here were Christian people in every country during this long period of history who possessed churches, colleges, mission stations, and theological schools; who followed closely and adhered steadfastly to the beliefs and practices delivered by the apostles to the saints; and who possessed and preserved the original Scriptures given to the church in the first century. These people constitute the Church in the Wilderness." (B.G. Wilkinson, *"Truth Triumphant: The Church in the Wilderness"*, page 9)

"The Church in the Wilderness did not arrive at the truth by opposition to prevailing dogmas and heresies. **Its faith was** not a faith newly received. The religious beliefs of its members were **an inheritance from the days of the apostles. To them men owe the preservation of the Bible.** Contrary to almost universal belief, the Church in the Wilderness embraced the true missionary churches during the long night of **the Dark Ages.** It held aloft the torch of education while **the rest of the world** about it **was falling into the darkness of ignorance and superstition.** Its territory was not circumscribed. On the contrary, its influence penetrated into all parts of the known world." (*Ibid* page 11)

"Previous to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman army, at which time the apostles were dispersed, the gospel had gone to Samaria, Ethiopia, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, and India. The **religion of Christ was enriched** in all utterance. As a **bright and shining light**, it evangelized Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Greek philosophers, and Confucianists, **laying strong foundations for the future.**" (*Ibid* page 21)

"Christianity was to enter a new field through the leadership of Paul, strong herald of the cross. In **Antioch**, the capital of the Roman province of Syria, was to be found a new center for the gospel. When Jerusalem, the original headquarters, was destroyed, the leadership passed to Antioch, where it remained for some time." (*Ibid* page 23)

"The **metaphorical way of (Bible) commentary**, with its deep spiritual meanings, **began in Egypt.** Origen composed over 6,000 commentaries of the Bible in addition to his famous Hexapla. In this context, the historian Rees states, 'The most renowned intellectual institution in the early Christian world was undoubtedly the **Cataphetical School of Alexandria**, and its primary concern was the study of the Bible. The preoccupation of this school was to discover everywhere the spiritual sense underlying the written word of the Scripture.'" (Bishop Angaelos, *"The Altar in the Midst of Egypt: A Brief Introduction to the Coptic Orthodox Church"*, page 25)

"One hundred years after the death of the Apostle John, **spiritual darkness** was fast settling down upon the Christian community; and **the fathers**, who flourished towards the commencement of the third century, **frequently employ language for which they would have been sternly rebuked, had they lived in the days of the apostles and evangelists.**" (William D. Killen, *"The Ancient Church"*, period II, section II, chapter V, p. 459-460 (1859) also *"Source Book for Bible Students"*, 1922, 1940 revised, Review & Herald Publishing)

"Antioch did not so early become a seat of Christian learning, but from e. 270 onward, under Lucian, it came into rivalry with Alexandria as a center of theological thought and influence. In the great christological controversies of the fourth and following centuries **Alexandria and Antioch were always antagonists, Alexandria representing a mystical transcendentalism and promoting the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures; Antioch insisting on the grammatico-historical interpretation of the Scriptures, and having no sympathy with mystical modes of thought.** (Albert Henry Newman, *"A Manual of Church History"*, Volume 1, page 297, 1899)

"The **Bibles produced by the Syrian scribes** presented the Syrian text of the school of Antioch, and this text **became** the form which displaced all others in the Eastern churches and is, indeed, **the Textus Receptus** (Received Text) from which our Authorized Version (King James) is translated." (de Lacy O'Lear, "*The Syriac Church and Fathers*", page 49)

"To the common people, the principal truths of Christianity were explained in their purity and simplicity, and all subtleties were avoided: nor were weak and tender minds overloaded with a multitude of precepts. **But in their schools,** and in their books, the **doctors** who **cultivated literature and philosophy,** and **especially those of Egypt,** deemed it elegant and exquisite, to **subject divine wisdom to the scrutiny of reason,** or rather to bring under the precepts of their **philosophy,** and **examine metaphysically,** the nature of the doctrines taught by *Christ.*" (Johann Lorenz Mosheim, "*Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*", page 216, 1832)

History shows that the apostate church of Rome adopted the ways of Egypt and Babylon. She persecuted and attempted to destroy the Church in the Wilderness, most often for being non-trinitarian in belief, as well as for keeping the seventh day Sabbath, observing Passover, and the other appointed holy convocations of the Lord as taught in Scripture. The wilderness church prevailed because she was preserved and nourished by our Heavenly Father.

The Father had a very special reason for preserving the church because He Himself chose her to be the bride for His eternal only begotten Son. Since the fall of Adam and Eve all of God's chosen people have had to go through a wilderness experience, but we are not alone because Jesus, the Bridegroom has promised "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Though I have returned to My Father to prepare a place for you and receive the kingdom I will not leave you as comfortless orphans. I will come to you not by might or power, but by My Spirit. That way no matter where you are in the world you will be given grace, the divine influence and presence of My life, to abide in your heart and soul until I return."

Through another spirit Satan is working his powers to deceive. Rome, through Egypt and Babylon, continues her attempt to destroy the bride today through mysticism, philosophy, metaphor, metaphysics, and ultimately, identity theft. Though the church will appear as about to fall it will not because she will have removed her cloak of self-righteousness and put on the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness. "The remnant that purify their souls by obeying the truth gather strength from the trying process, exhibiting the beauty of holiness amid the surrounding apostasy" (Ellen G. White, Selected Messages Bk 2, p. 380).

We are called today to be Christ's bride without spot or wrinkle, a holy nation, a peculiar people who will comprise those who keep the commandments and have the faith and testimony of our Kinsman Redeemer who will come soon in the clouds of Heaven to collect His own. We want to be part of that glorious assembly. Part of our work now is to expose Satan's lies. Please continue to read this examination carefully and prayerfully.

Roots of Contemplation

Christian Monasticism was born in Egypt and was instrumental in the formation of the **Coptic Orthodox Church** character of submission, simplicity and humility, thanks to the teachings and writings of the **Great Fathers of Egypt's Deserts.** **All Christian monasticism stems,** either directly or indirectly, **from the Egyptian example.** ("*Coptic Orthodox Church*" & "*Desert Fathers*", wikipedia)

Many individuals who spent part of their lives in the Egyptian desert went on to become important figures in the Church and society of the fourth and fifth century, among them Athanasius of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, John Cassian, and Augustine of Hippo. Through the work of these last two, the **spirituality of the desert fathers**, emphasizing an **ascent to God through** periods of **purgation** and **illumination** that **led to unity with the Divine**, deeply affected the spirituality of the Western Church and the Eastern Church. For this reason, the writings and spirituality of the desert fathers are still of interest to many people today. (*Ibid*)

“The **contemplative movement** traces its roots back to these monks. They were the ones who first promoted the **mantra as a prayer tool**. The **desert fathers** believed as long as the desire for God was sincere--anything could be utilized to reach God. If a method worked for the Hindus to reach their gods, then **Christian mantras** could be used to reach Jesus.” (Ray Yungen, “*A Time of Departing*”)

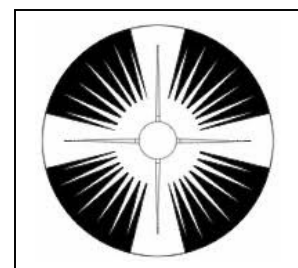
“**St. Athanasius of Alexandria** wrote, ‘God became man so that man might become god’ (*On the Incarnation* 54:3, PG 25:192B). His statement is an apt description of theosis. Theosis (“deification,” “divinization”) is the process of a worshiper becoming free of *hamartia* (“missing the mark”), being united with God, beginning in this life and later consummated in bodily resurrection. For Orthodox Christians, Theosis is salvation. Theosis assumes that humans from the beginning are made to share in the Life or Nature of the all-**Holy Trinity**. Therefore, an infant or an adult worshiper is saved from the state of unholiness for participation in the Life of the Trinity — which is everlasting.” (“*Theosis*”, wikipedia & orthodoxwiki)

“Through **theoria**, the **contemplation of the triune God**, human beings come to know and experience what it means to be fully human (the created image of God); through their communion with Jesus Christ, God shares Himself with the human race, in order to conform them to all that He is in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. As God became human, in all ways except sin, He will also make humans god (Holy or saintly), in all ways except his divine essence (uncaused or uncreatedness).” (“*Theosis*”, wikipedia)

“**For many fathers**, *theosis* goes beyond simply restoring people to their state before the Fall of Adam and Eve, teaching that because Christ united the human and divine natures in Jesus' person, **it is now possible for someone to experience closer fellowship with God than Adam and Eve initially experienced in the Garden of Eden**, and that people can become more like God than Adam and Eve were at that time. Some Orthodox theologians go so far as to say that Jesus would have become incarnate for this reason alone, even if Adam and Eve had never sinned.” (Vladimir Lossky, “*The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*”, 1957)

“**The journey** towards theosis includes **many forms of praxis** (practice). Living in the community of the church and partaking regularly of the **sacraments**, and especially the **Eucharist**, is taken for granted. Also important is cultivating “**prayer of the heart**”, and prayer that never ceases, as Paul exhorts the Thessalonians. **This unceasing prayer of the heart is a dominant theme in the writings of the (Desert) Fathers.**” (“*Theosis*”, orthodoxwiki)

“**Many Christians today are seeking** to move away from a more narrow “proclamation” centered gospel to **a more holistic gospel which cares for the whole person: body, mind and soul**....The resurgence of the soul can be seen within the church as the movement to **reclaim the contemplative essence** of the



Christianity which unites us beyond our theological differences. How do we know, really know this God we believe in?" (imagodeifund.org)

"Areas of interest under the umbrella of "Care of Souls" include: **contemplative prayer**, sacred art, **spiritual disciplines**, contemplative reading of Scripture ("**lectio divina**"), **spiritual formation**, **spiritual direction**, holistic healing, **mind-body practices**, **ecumenical dialogue & church unity** across denominational, racial and gender lines and efforts to promote a more **kind, compassionate, heart-centered, holistic Gospel.**" (Ibid)

"In popular contemporary forms of Christianity, faith too often has become equated with belief and the ancient path of "salvation" has become reduced to a futuristic, legal transaction for "getting into heaven." Many seeking a deeper experience of God find their religious faith disconnected from their **very human spiritual quest. Many are turning to Eastern spiritual practices for a more holistic, direct connection with the Sacred.** In response, many branches in Western Christendom are seeking to recover the mystical heart of classical Christian spirituality and to offer this to our seeking culture. Protestantism in particular—with its more propositional emphasis is...

looking backwards

to the **early church fathers**,
to the **desert fathers & mothers**,
to the **mystics**
to our roots in Hebrew spirituality

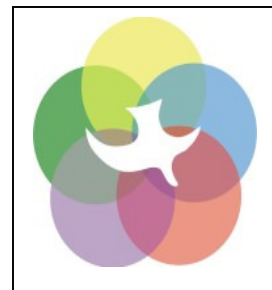
looking Eastward

to the **Orthodox Church**
& to **other faith traditions**
for help to **move beyond the mind**
& into the heart to reclaim Christianity
as a **transformative, fully human path**
of following Christ & growing in divine likeness
as image-bearers of God." (imagodeifund.org)

*Which "spiritual disciplines" do you follow regularly?
Which do you need to add to your life?*

Questions posed at ifollowdiscipleship.org for Seventh-Day Adventists

"For the next five hours you are to **enjoy EPC** (acronym for Extended Personal Communication with God.) Keep the time just for you and God. Find a place where you will **be in solitude**-your room, a rock along some trail, your car, wherever you choose; and **observe silence**-no professional chats with the other pastors. Don't break the silence until at least 3:00 o'clock. You can **fast if you want**, or pick up a sack lunch. You may want to journal, read Scripture or some devotional book, enjoy nature, or simply **meditate** as ways to **be in the presence of God.** Go in peace and grace." (Adventist Pastor Dr. Merle Whitney, "A Journey With God and Colleagues in Solitude, Support and Sharing", Adventist Today magazine, September 1, 2002)



"The Task Force to Reach the Next Generation was set up by the administrators of the Southeastern California Conference (of Seventh-Day Adventists)...to reach and retain youth and young

adults... As additional groups of pastors were formed, the "official" name became The Journey to Reach the Next Generations..., and most participants and leaders now refer to the process simply as "**The Journey**." (*Ibid*)

"**Paul Jensen**, director of **The Leadership Institute**, and an **ordained Adventist minister**, was commissioned to direct and facilitate the task force. He was joined by his Institute colleagues Wayne Anderson, Jon Byron, and Chuck Miller. They have continued the process along with other Institute staff and resource persons who have been added. (*Ibid*)

"Paul Jensen is also an **Adjunct Assistant Professor of Leadership and Christian Formation and Spirituality in Contemporary Culture at Fuller Theological Seminary**. He has served on the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ and pioneered campus ministries and **trained campus chaplains for the Adventist Church**." ("*Leadership Institute*" website, <http://www.tli.cc/>)

Staff includes **Jon Ciccarelli** who "serves as **senior pastor at the Calimesa Seventh-Day Adventist Church**. Jon is a singer/songwriter and speaks on the subjects of **spiritual formation/life transformation**, worship, **mentoring**, and **leadership**. With his wife, Lisa, Jon leads **Sacred Hearts**, a **retreat ministry for married couples**, deepening their intimacy with one another through deepened intimacy with God." (*Ibid*)

"On the *Journey*, we will experience two Spirit-led journeys (Inner & Outer): **An Inner Journey**- At the heart of this process is **spiritual formation—the central priority of discipleship** and the **foundational base** from which Christian leaders learn to serve the church and the world with love and power... Attention will be given to nourishing the inner life of participants through the daily exercise of **spiritual disciplines** and in extended times alone with God for silence, solitude, prayer, confession, worship, celebration, study, praying the hours, meditation, reflection, examen, lectio divina, journaling, spiritual reading, etc... **Target Audience**- Pastors, associates, church planters, youth pastors, parachurch staff, missional leaders, teachers, chaplains and marketplace leaders. (*Ibid*, 2010-11 "*The Journey*" brochure, <http://www.tli.cc/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/gen19introduction.pdf>)

[T]he **foundation** for **The Journey** was the **spiritual formation of the pastors** involved in the process. Though **we who began The Journey...did not know this was a key element in what we were getting into, it was welcomed and quickly accepted**. Soon **spiritual formation** as part of The Journey process **became an important aspect of recruiting subsequent groups**... The Journey is truly a life-saving journey to God, and as a pastor on this journey I have the privilege of inviting my parishioners to join me. They in turn invite others. I wish you, too, could come along. (Adventist Pastor Dr. Merle Whitney, "*A Journey With God and Colleagues in Solitude, Support and Sharing*", Adventist Today magazine, September 1, 2002)

"The **Judeo-Christian tradition of contemplation and prayer** dates back to the earliest Christian church and beyond. The **exercise of contemplation** in prayer **is ancient**, and shows up in every major religion in some form. **Buddhists** are deeply contemplative, disciplined observers of their own minds, dedicated to understanding, accepting and overcoming suffering. **Hindu mystics** have contemplated the many attributes of God and developed a dynamic system of worship... **Sufis**, who make up the **mystical arm of Islam**, have traditions of deep, wild mystical prayer expressed in dance and poetry." (<http://contemplativechristian.com/contemplative-prayer/history/>)

"In the **Christian tradition**, the earliest forms of contemplative prayer are attributed to **ascetic monks** living in the desert in the first few centuries following Christ's death and

resurrection. Commonly referred to as the “**desert fathers**”, these monks lived simple lives in the deserts of Egypt, Palestine and Syria. This group included and influenced church fathers like St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great in the West, and Pseudo-Dionysius and the Hesychasts in the East.” (*Ibid*)

“The **mystical tradition** was reinvigorated again in the Middle Ages, through St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Hildegard, Meister Eckhart, Ruysbroek, Tauler and others. Thomas A’Kempis, writer of *Imitation of Christ*, later followed, as well as Julian of Norwich, and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. It continued in the post-Reformation church with St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Therese of Lisieux, and St. Francis de Sales. Ignatius of Loyola’s order of Jesuits began and continued in the contemplative tradition, and there were many others who contributed.” (*Ibid*)

“In the **modern church**, Trappist monk Thomas Merton certainly renewed interest in contemplation, and the Jesuit and Carmelite orders have followed suit... The parallel efforts of Thomas Keating and John Main have brought **Centering Prayer** and **Christian Meditation**, respectively, into the mainstream. And, I can’t talk about contemplation without mentioning Richard Rohr, director of the Center for Action and Contemplation, whose writing has deeply touched me on my journey.” (*Ibid*)

“The **Protestant Church can’t boast of this kind of historical tradition, as its concern for the Bible as sole truth has limited its receptivity**. However, its contemplative practices have no doubt existed along the way, and are well established today. With the **exception of some evangelical or especially conservative churches**, there are **deliberate efforts to encourage contemplative prayer in Protestant congregations** throughout the United States.” (*Ibid*)

“Here are **important terms** you need to understand: **contemplative prayer, centering prayer, breath prayer, prayer labyrinth, taize, Christian yoga, spiritual disciplines & spiritual formation (lectio divina), the silence/stillness, sacred spaces, GODencounters and Jesus prayer, prayer stations, prayer rooms**, etc. This “new spirituality” has many more names, too many to even list.” (<http://reclaimsda.org/reclaimsda/Welcome.html>)

“I shall now attempt to **explain** how these simple exercises can be taken to be **contemplation in the strict Christian sense of the word. If the explanation does not satisfy you or only creates problems for you**, then I suggest that you put aside all I say about this matter and **practice these awareness exercises merely as a means of *disposing yourself for prayer and contemplation, or just ignore these exercises altogether and move on to others...that are more to your taste.**” (Anthony de Mello, “*Sadhana: A Way To God: Christian Exercises in Eastern Form*”, (Institute of Jesuit Resources, 1978), page 28) *Disposing-- set in readiness, to come to terms, to transfer to the control of another.

“**Richard Foster’s** 1978 best-seller *Celebration of Discipline*, and **Dallas Willard’s** 1988 *Spirit of the Disciplines*, re-introduced evangelicals to classic **spiritual disciplines** such as **solitude, silence, and fasting**, and offered a more **contemplative approach to Scripture and prayer**. (Keri Wyatt Kent, “*Rediscovering Spiritual Formation*”, WILLOW Magazine, Issue 4, 2007, <http://www.willowcreek.com/wcanews/story.asp?id=WN02142007>)

“Such spiritual disciplines had been a part of the **Catholic tradition** for a long time, although they were often practiced primarily within the walls of the **monastic community. Foster and**

Willard brought them to the evangelical community, although it took a while for mainline and evangelical churches to embrace them.” (*Ibid*)

“**Spiritual formation** is not a new idea or concept, and “a lot of Protestants are in the same boat--we are rediscovering it,” says Dr. Jon Dybdahl....And, he adds, the **Adventist Church** has some work to do. For many years, his **Spiritual Formation at Andrews Seminary** has surprised, shocked and blessed pastor-students who thought they knew everything there is to know about **spiritual growth and discipline**. His fresh approach to **spiritual formation for Adventist leaders** will help re-ignite the fire within you for ministry.” (Empower 2005 Conference info)

In 2007 the Review & Herald published the **contemplative book** “*The Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul*” written by Jon Dybdahl. It was included as a valuable resource for Revival & Reformation in the January 2011 issue of “Adventist World.” You can read a review by Seventh-Day Adventist Pastor John Witcombe here: <http://amazingdiscoveries.org/ad-newsletter-archive-summer-2009-Hunger.html>

Dr. **Derek Morris**, senior pastor of the Forest Lake SDA Church, adjunct professor at Andrews University Theological Seminary and editor of Ministry Magazine states, “**For much of the Christian era the practice of spiritual direction was confined to Catholicism, particularly monasticism and the Society of Jesus [the Jesuits].** In recent years, there has been a **revival of interest in spiritual direction** as a resource **for spiritual formation among both Catholics and Protestants.** A leading Protestant advocate of spiritual formation is **Tilden Edwards**, director of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in



Washington, D.C. As I began my own prayer search for a spiritual friend, I came across the significant work by Tilden Edwards, *Spiritual Friend: Reclaiming the Gift of Spiritual Direction*. I strongly recommend this book as a valuable resource.” (Derek Morris, *Shalem Institute dissertation*, p. 7)

“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 our intent in assuming a particular bodily practice is to deepen our awareness in Christ, then it is Christian...this is important to remember in the face of those Christians who would try to impoverish our spiritual resources by too narrowly defining them. 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.**” (Tilden Edwards, “*Living in the Presence*,” Acknowledgement page)

Retired Seventh-Day Adventist pastor W. Clarence Schilt specializes in **Spiritual Formation** and integrated what he learned during “*The Journey*” into his 2009 book “A Life To Die For.” His endorsement of the program was included in a previous “*Journey*” brochure. Read an eye opening dialogue between Brother Schilt and pastor John Witcombe here: <http://spiritualformationsda.wordpress.com/>

An October 2009 Andrews University newsletter, put out by Kenley D. Hall (Andrews DMin Project Coach) explains that “**Discipleship & Spiritual Formation**” and “Youth and Young Adult Ministry” began in February 2010. Part of the curriculum involves a retreat to “*Still Waters.*”

“Do you need time and space to **allow Love to free you**? Do you long to "recollect a scattered life and **focus on the One** who calls and seeks and invites us to communion"? Do you desire a **deeper knowing** of who you are and who you are called to be in this world? Still Waters is a retreat house that values the timeless need for **silence, solitude, and spiritual companionship** in order to better **hear God's voice** and, therefore, be transformed by Him.” (<http://www.stillwaters.org/>)



Launched in the Fall of 2010, “the **new discipleship training resource**, called iFollow, has been **developed specifically for Adventist congregations**, and it responds to both a serious and growing demand for **practical, reliable discipleship training.**” (Dan Day, Director of the NAD Church Resource Center And Executive Editor, iFollowdiscipleship.org)

“**We didn’t want** to be reactionary in approach or to produce a **product that was merely copied from what others were doing**, with an Adventist name on it. We wanted to respond with a quality product that would bring unique *value* to churches. So, we set out on the long journey to create one—a journey that included advisory groups, committees of pastors, writers and editors—and then a lot of work.” (iFollowdiscipleship.org)

“**We knew that a “better” resource wouldn’t just be one that threw in a few Adventist terms, here and there**, but that was, indeed, more useful to pastors and other church leaders. The process of developing what has come to be known as **iFollow** was a long and arduous one. **It took us a full six years to get a broadly-based set of discipleship training “lessons.”** (iFollowdiscipleship.org)

“All of the writers are people who have much experience with **spiritual growth** as it occurs among people who participate in Adventist congregations. The theology of every presentation is congruent with the Twenty-eight Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and **rooted in Adventist heritage. We did look at other Christian sources** related to each topic and we made use of good ideas that were Bible-based and not in conflict with Adventist theology... **I can assure you that we edited out anything that was not rooted in Scripture and the Adventist heritage. There is nothing "New Age" or "spiritualistic" in these materials, not a single jot nor tittle!!**” (Rachel Davie’s “*Spectrum*” interview with and commentary by Monte Sahlin, iFollow’s General Editor, <http://www.spectrummagazine.org/node/2721>)

Lessons and resources include a who’s who of influential and “spiritual” luminaries including: *Richard Foster, Henri Nouwen, Leonard Sweet, Rick Warren, Joan Chittister, Brian McLaren, Dallas Willard, Eugene Peterson, Richard Rohr, Philip Yancey, John Ortberg, Thelma Hall, Leo Tolstoy, A. W. Tozer, James Bryan Smith, Donald Whitney, Vincent Brummer, Scot McKnight, N.T. Wright, Thomas Cahill, Christopher Ringwald, Lewis Smedes, Miroslav Volf, John Eldredge, Bill Hybels, David Augsburger, Thomas Hart, Tony Jones, Delcy Kuhlman, Wendy Miller, Oletta Wald, Warren Nelson, Bill Ashlock, Mark Galli, and Chris Erdman.*



“**Richard Foster**, a contemporary author, has written perhaps the most widely used book on the topic of **spiritual disciplines** as they relate to deepening the spiritual life, *Celebration of*

Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth. In this book he groups spiritual disciplines into three categories: the **inward disciplines** (meditation, prayer, fasting, study), the **outward disciplines** (simplicity, solitude, submission, service), and the **corporate disciplines** (confession, worship, guidance, celebration)." (*"How Can I Be More Compassionate and Centered?"*, iFollowdiscipleship.org, Discipleship Resource for Seventh-Day Adventists)

"These three categories he refers to as three **"movements of the Spirit."** In other words, the disciplines within each movement are tools that provide opportunity for us to **experience the divine Spirit flowing with greater ease and power through our lives**. These **spiritual tools** have been used by people to grow bigger hearts, to develop greater compassion in us and a **deeper centeredness** in the midst of life's commotion and busyness. When we are willing to make these kinds of **disciplines** a part of our daily lives, when we are willing to **shape the rhythm** of our lives around these **spiritual activities**, we are empowered to shed our superficial habits and "bring the abundance of God into our lives." (*Ibid*)

"The Nouwen Society continues the legacy of **Henri Nouwen**, one of the most widely respected writers on spiritual topics. Its purpose is "to foster the **spirituality of solitude, community and compassion that was embodied in the life and teaching of Nouwen.**" His materials provide many **ways to encounter and experience God**. Accessible at: www.henrinouwen.org/ (*"Ways To Encounter God"*, iFollowdiscipleship.org, Discipleship Resource for Seventh-Day Adventists)

"The God who dwells in our inner sanctuary is the same as the one who dwells in the inner sanctuary of each human being." (Henri Nouwen, *"Here and Now"*, page 22)

"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." (Henri Nouwen, *"Sabbatical Journey"*, page 51, 1998)

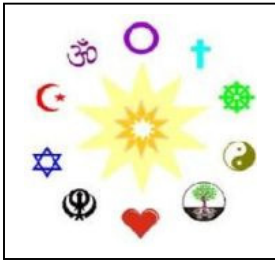
"The **quiet repetition of a single word** can help us to **descend with the mind into the heart**. This repetition has nothing to do with magic. It is not meant to throw a spell on God or force him into hearing us. On the contrary, a word or sentence repeated frequently can help us concentrate, to **move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

"Prayer is "soul work" because **our souls are those sacred centers where all is one** and where God is with us in the most intimate way." (Henri Nouwen, *"Bread for the Journey"*, page 15)

"Leonard Sweet is a United Methodist Minister and professor of evangelism at Drew University seminar in New Jersey. He is the author of many books on dealing with the diversity that exists in contemporary society. He blogs and announces new books, etc. at: www.leonardsweet.com (*"A Church That Values People"*, iFollowdiscipleship.org, Discipleship Resource for Seventh-Day Adventists)

"The interest in **shrines, candles, incense, and mantras** is an expression of our need to **take these rituals back** and make them a part of our **templed dailiness**. In fact, the world is doing better than the church in wooing outsiders with **templing experiences**, providing spiritual activities (not necessarily good ones) that can be fitted into everyday life." (Leonard Sweet, *"SoulSalsa"*)

“Fasting has been used by almost every major religion as a tool to help purify one’s desires and to increase the experience of contentment. The purpose is to give your mind and body a break from something that you typically feel a need for in order to engage in a more intense opportunity for spiritual activities, for spiritual focus. Fasting helps to **restore the belief that we, not our appetites, are in control of our lives.**” (*“How Can I Be More Compassionate and Centered?”*, iFollowdiscipleship.org, Discipleship Resource for Seventh-Day Adventists)



“Love unites all, whether created or uncreated. The heart of God, the heart of all creation, and our own hearts become one in love. That’s what all the great mystics have been trying to tell us through the ages. Benedict, Francis, Hildegard of Bingen, Hadewijch of Brabant, Meister Eckhart, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Dag Hammarskjeld, Thomas Merton, and many others, all in their own ways and their own languages, have witnessed to the **unifying power of the divine love.** All of them, however, spoke with a **knowledge that came to them** not through intellectual arguments but **through contemplative prayer.**” (Henri Nouwen, *“Bread for the Journey”*, page 16)

“Spiritual direction is “help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God’s personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.” (William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *“The Practice of Spiritual Direction”*, ignatianspirituality.com)

“Guidelines for Those Who Give the **Spiritual Exercises**-- Those who would give the *Exercises* to others will...be a **fully initiated Roman Catholic** in good standing for at least three years or a **similarly invested member of another Christian denomination who is respectful of, and comfortable with, Roman Catholicism...a basic understanding of Theology** (especially **Theology of the Trinity**, of Christ, of Salvation, of morality, and of the Church). <http://www.jrhcleland.org/Guidelines%20for%20the%20Sp%20Ex%20Oct%2012%202009.pdf>

“Renovare (founded by Richard Foster) is a Christian parachurch organization that provides resources related to **spiritual disciplines**: www.renovare.org (*“Meditation”*, iFollowdiscipleship.org, Discipleship for Seventh-Day Adventists)

“Lectio Divina, literally meaning "divine reading," is **an ancient practice of praying the scriptures.** During Lectio Divina, the practitioner listens to the text of the Bible with the **"ear of the heart,"** as if he or she is in conversation with God, and God is suggesting the topics for discussion. The method of Lectio Divina includes moments of reading (*lectio*), reflecting on (*meditatio*), responding to (*oratio*) and resting in (*contemplatio*) the Word of God with the aim of nourishing and deepening one’s relationship with the Divine... The current resurgence of Lectio Divina owes much to the reformations of **Vatican II** and the revival of the **contemplative dimension** of Christianity.” (contemplativeoutreach.org)

“Lectio Divina is the **ancient practice of praying and reading the Bible to encounter God.** This web site explains the simple process: www.valyermo.com/ld-art.html (*Ways To Encounter God*, iFollowdiscipleship.org, Discipleship Resource for Seventh-Day Adventists)

“Jesuits are called to be **contemplatives: seeing God in all.** The Spirituality of the Exercises enables us to **perceive the Divine at the heart of the secular.** Sensitivity to the unfolding of the Kingdom of God in all realms of life is the dynamics of **Jesuit spirituality.** This means a spiritual alertness to the grace and demands of the Spirit of God, a

discernment that makes us listen to what the Spirit is telling us in the concrete life situation.”
 (“*Jesuit Community, Leadership and Spirituality Today: S. Asian Perspective*”)
<http://www.ranjesu.org/getResources.php?newsid=7>

“**Ignatian (Jesuit) contemplation** makes use of **guided imagery** and **active imagination** within a selected **gospel text**. It is advisable to choose an action filled passage, so that it brings one’s personal desires, inclinations, emotions, problems, shadows, etc. into focus in prayer, without planning to air these. Choose an **action filled** passage from the gospel — one that has a lot of **colour and movement**. **Avoid** discourses, teachings and parables, for these will lead you to moralise or intellectualise. (Savio Rodrigues SJ, “*Pray: How*”)
<http://www.goajesuits.in/prayer/02ignatiancontemplation.htm>

“**Read the passage. Stop** for about five seconds for the scene to **settle in your mind. Read it once again** so as to take in some of the details you may have overlooked. **Stop and let it sink in. Read it once or twice more** in case you feel you need to do so. Do not struggle to remember details or words or passages. Be fully satisfied with whatever you remember. **Remembering the passage or its details is of no importance at all.**” (*Ibid*)

“Place yourself in the presence of God. **Centre yourself** using any of the centering methods you feel suits you best. **Centering is a help to create an empty mind**, a mind free of worries and distractions. Have no fixed agenda or definite graces, but ask with an open mind and heart.” (*Ibid*)

“Now close the Bible and let yourself **sink into the scene** you have created for yourself through the reading of the passage. Let your self **get lost** in the scene and **identify yourself** with some person or something in the scene. Try and **re-live the actual situation**. You may soon **find your self in active conversation**, of **helping or sharing or just being with someone in the scene**. Be **passive, but alert**. Let the **others** in the scene **control the events**, you just go along, but always being a part of that reality that is re-enfolding.” (*Ibid*)

“**Do not try to find parallels in the scriptures**, or in your personal life. **Avoid moralising** like saying, “It should be like this”, “I must”, “We must”, “We could”, “It is better”, etc. No judgements or comparisons are to be made. When you get to your reflection later on, you will **find yourself automatically living** what you experienced in your **contemplation.**” (*Ibid*)

“**breathe deeply**- This is the simplest stress-management tool. It may sound a little silly since we obviously breathe all the time, but we usually take only shallow breaths, which means we don’t fill or use our lungs to their full capacity.” (Christopher Pitt, “*Stress Out!*”, Signs of the Times, March 2011)

“When we deliberately take slow, deep breaths, we increase the amount of air going in and this allows more oxygen to enter the bloodstream. This fuels our cells better and helps them do their jobs more efficiently. The special stress benefit is that this **deep breathing sets in motion a physiological mechanism** that slows our heart rates.” (*Ibid*)

“**Meditation takes the techniques of breathing one step further**. Meditation involves deliberately switching your brain’s focus to something simple, in the present, shutting off the cares of the world.” (*Ibid*)

“**Meditation practice focuses on stilling or emptying the mind**. Typically, **meditators concentrate on their breath or a sound (mantra) they repeat to themselves**. They may, alternatively, attempt to reach a state of “**detached observation**,” in which they are aware of

their environment but do not become involved in thinking about it. In meditation, the body remains alert and in an upright position. In addition to formal sitting meditation, patients can be taught mindfulness meditation, which involves bringing a sense of awareness and focus to their involvement in everyday activities.” (Andrew Vickers, Catherine Zollman, and David K Payne, “*Hypnosis and Relaxation Therapies*”)

“**imagination**- This is a **step beyond meditation**. Instead of focusing on something you can see or hear, **let your mind wander to images and feelings** that are not present to your senses. These images and feelings should be pleasant and relaxing. Some people describe this technique as a **vivid daydream**.” (Christopher Pitt, “*Stress Out!*”, Signs of the Times, March 2011)

“To get started, sit or lie in a comfortable position. **Close your eyes** and start to **breathe slowly and deeply**. Once you begin to relax, **imagine** your favourite scene. **Imagine** it in as much **detail** as possible and **try to involve all five of your senses**. Imagining these **soothing scenes** will replace the harassing thoughts of your daily routine with pleasant ones. Try thinking about a hike in the mountains with your family, an upcoming vacation or a time in the past when you enjoyed a hearty laugh over a good joke.” (*Ibid*)

“**Visualization** and **imagery techniques** involve the **induction of a relaxed state** followed by the development of a visual image, such as a pleasant scene that enhances the sense of relaxation. These **images** may be **generated** by the patient or **suggested** by the practitioner. In the context of this relaxing setting, patients can also choose to imagine themselves coping more effectively with the stressors in their lives.” (Andrew Vickers, Catherine Zollman, and David K Payne, “*Hypnosis and Relaxation Therapies*”)

“**Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is similar to meditation** except that you contract, hold and then relax your body’s various muscle groups in turn. You can **do this at the same time that you’re doing your breathing exercise**. Tighten and then relax the muscles in your feet first, then work your way up your calves and thighs, tummy, chest, arms and neck. This will help to pump the blood from your body into your lungs. The deep breathing oxygenates this extra blood, giving your brain a burst of oxygen, and that helps your nerves to work better. You can even do this while sitting in a stressful meeting; or if you’re tense while trying to get to an appointment on time, try tightening and relaxing your muscles as you sit at a stoplight.” (Christopher Pitt, “*Stress Out!*”, Signs of the Times, March 2011)

“Progressive Muscle Relaxation is **one of the most effective ways inducing hypnotic trance**, both in entertainment and clinical hypnosis settings. As a therapeutic tool, it is both easy to teach to clients and easy for clients to benefit physically and mentally.” (Richard K Nongard, “*How to use PMR techniques for more effective therapy and as a tool for hypnotic induction.*”)

“Here’s an interesting idea next time you have the remote control in your hand. If you’re watching a movie and you come to a scene that **stimulates in your heart the qualities you desire, rewind** that scene and **play it again**. **Watch** it carefully. **Allow yourself to feel the desire, longing, passion for the divine qualities being manifested. Rewind it again and play it. Watch it. Feel it. Reflect on it. Talk about it** with your partner or friend watching with you. Consider doing this throughout the whole movie, spending time **focusing** on the divine qualities being shown.” (“*How Can I Be More Compassionate and Centered?*”, iFollowdiscipleship.org, Discipleship Resource for Seventh-Day Adventists)

“Welcome to **Taize!** Prayer Around the Cross. Join us for an hour of prayer the first Sunday of each month beginning at 7pm. **Participating Churches:** Hillcrest Congregational Church;

Church of the Resurrection, Episcopal; **Christ the King Catholic Church**; St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church; **Seventh-Day Adventist Church.**" (Christ the King Catholic Church website, Pleasant Hill, California, <http://www.ctkph.org/>)

"**Taize** (pronounced tay-zay) consists of **sung and silent participatory prayers** accompanied by readings from Scripture. It is a time of contemplation of our Lord through music, song and silence. **Practicing the silence with icons, candles, incense and prayer stations**, this very **contemplative community** is **attracting young people** from around the world. Faithworks Magazine said, "Using just a few words, the **chants** express a basic reality of faith, quickly grasped by the mind. As the **words are sung over many times**, this **reality gradually penetrates the whole being.**" (Saint Matthew's Anglican Church website, "Where Spirit and Tradition Meet") <http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/taize.htm>

"**Taize** services...**mystical services of prayer and chanting** that originated in an ecumenical Christian **monastic order** in France." (Dan Johnson, Argus-Courier, "*Residents find solace, inspiration in contemplative, mystical tradition*", 12-04-2009)

"Spirituality is nothing complicated for the "emerging churches." They teach about prayer, and about other **spiritual disciplines** like simple living, fasting, community, and reading the Bible. This is where the "emerging churches" part company with the "seeker friendly" churches of prior decades...spiritual seekers don't want us to reproduce what they already have and know--if that were sufficient, they wouldn't be seeking! They don't want banal entertainment--they **seek transcendence**. And the "**emerging churches**" realize that **old Christian practices still have power.**" (Seventh-Day Adventist Pastor Bill Cork, "*What Can Adventists Learn From The Emerging Church?*")

What is Christian Mysticism?



"Very simply, **mysticism is our awareness of and response to divine love.** As human beings with senses, both physical and spiritual, we all are created to be mystics! As we become more aware of and cooperative with God's loving presence, our souls grow slowly from the inside out into the true-self-in-Christ (the "imago Dei") we were created to be." (imagodeifund.org)

"Christian mysticism is the pursuit of communion with, identity with, or conscious awareness of God through direct experience, intuition, instinct or insight. **Christian mysticism centers on the habitual practice of deep prayer** (i.e. meditation, contemplation) involving the person of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. This approach and lifestyle is distinguished from other forms of Christian practice by its aim of achieving **unity with the divine.**" ("*Christian Mysticism*", wikipedia)

“First of all, it must be said that **if the historical Jesus was a mystic**, then much of what he purportedly said is consistent with that Universal point of view. His teachings stressed compassion and love towards all....Jesus taught that we should not be judgmental, should love one's enemies as oneself. He taught that we should be compassionate towards all, and that as one treats the lowliest person, one is treating Christ. **Perennial philosophy** teaches that **God is looking out through all eyes**, and **the spark of the Divine is within every heart**. "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). (Professor Rafael Espericueta, "Christian Mystics")

“The **earliest Christian mystics were called Gnostics**, from the root meaning "knowing (of the heart)". For Gnostics, it's a matter of knowing, not just believing.” (*Ibid*)

“The **Rosicrucians are** a sect of **Christian mystics** with close connections to the **Western mystery traditions**, including **Qaballa** and **Alchemy**. Today there are various groups carrying on these traditions. **This tradition is closely related to the Masonic Order**, although most current members may be oblivious to the deeper meanings involved in their rituals. Many of the founding fathers of the United States of America were active Masons, and Rosicrucian teachings helped to guide the framers of our constitution.” (*Ibid*)

“St. Augustine (354–430) developed the conception of the **unity of the mental life**, the significance of the will in the life of both God and humans, and also he formulated the truths that **self-certainty** is more immediate than our knowledge of the external world and that **valid metaphysics** must be based on the **self-knowledge** of the finite personality. Not only did he put thought above things but he rightly valued the thinker above thought. **Augustine established the existence of the soul as a thinking and willing being**. In his *Confessions* and *De Trinitate*, he made much use of analogies between observed aspects of the human soul and the distinctions within the **Holy Trinity**, thus showing many times his belief in a profound kinship between the human soul and God, despite the mystery and transcendence which he also emphasized.” (Rev. Bogumił Zygmunt Gacka, Professor of Systematic Theology, “A Presentation of Personalism”) <http://www.personalism.pl/biannual/number-1/a-presentation-of-personalism/>

“Any **trinitarian theology**, Simon Chan believes, forms spirituality in . . . decisive ways. [B]ecause the triune God is a relational God, to know this God must be a relational knowledge of a “personal union with God” (*Spiritual Theology*, page 52). Chan believes this personal urgency **is reinforced by Augustine’s psychological understanding** of the Trinity, **where Christ and the Spirit are known as Word and Love descending from the Father**. This **personal immersion into the divine** has been the traditional province of **mystical and contemplative Christianity**, and more recently that of Pentecostal and charismatic expression.” (Roderick T. Leupp, “*The Renewal of Trinitarian Theology*,” page 105, 2008)

Some people infer Ellen White belongs in the Christian Mystic category. Even the Ellen G. White Estate does so, in this ever so subtle, make that blatant, allusion in the logo for their magazine for children. “Books of a new order” are already being written and published using her quotes to tout mystical and contemplative philosophy.

2009 Logo



Current Logo



“While **(Ellen) White’s conception of contemplation** does not fully concur with the modern definition of the term, it is a form of spiritual practice closely connected to one of the essential features of her spiritual thinking. **She seems to be aware of the classic tradition of contemplation**, i.e. the Catholic praxis of contemplative prayer, though the approach she takes to it is an independent one. Her use of the term contemplation allows us to assume that she has seen it in use and come to some understanding of it. **Her frequent references to contemplation indicate that she wants her readers to include it as an integral part of their spiritual practice. She is thus a follower**, if from afar, **of the contemplative tradition**, even though she cannot be regarded as an actual contemplative spiritual guide (SC 21, 70–71, 89, 103–104, 118.)” (Harri Kuhalampi, “*Holistic Spirituality in the Thinking of Ellen White*,” Academic Dissertation, University of Helsinki 2010) (<https://www.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/63691/holistic.pdf?sequence=1>)

“**Ellen White speaks about contemplation** even in conjunction with the most vital points of salvation, since **she seems to see** it as the means by which transforming grace pervades the whole person from within. **We can thus conclude** that for her **contemplation is** not only one option among many for executing spiritual praxis, but is rather an **essential** means of evocatively experiencing God’s invigorating presence and establishing a constant connectedness with him (DA 478.)” (*Ibid*)

“Finally, **White introduces contemplation as a way** to catch a real glimpse of divine love, which is beyond the description of human language. **Thus contemplation is an activity** which takes place at the spiritual level. She states that though **contemplation** has no transforming virtue in itself, it **is still a channel** by which the **mystery of divine love** can become personally meaningful, which in turn results in an **inner transformation** of the contemplator by God’s grace. On this basis **she insists that contemplation be regarded as a key spiritual practice** (MB 43.)” (*Ibid*)

“[Christopher] Bryant points out that contemplation as a concept is given varying meanings in different traditions. Thus its exact content in White’s writings cannot be definitely determined. **By speaking about contemplation** – which she does a number of times – **she does not automatically qualify as a follower of the contemplative tradition** which was represented in particular by Teutonic mysticism, the English mystics, St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross. **However, certain elements** of that approach **are also to be found in her spirituality.**” (*Ibid*)

“The **process of spiritual formation** is the respectful **engagement of** the experience and **wisdom already within the person**, not an attempt to “add” something but rather, to discover the **fullness of the inner life** that is **already present** deep within. Spiritual formation engages the whole person in response to the **life of the Indwelling Trinity** acting through the **community of disciples**. This formation in Christian life is going on all the time through family life, worship, scripture, prayer and meditation, simplicity and solitude, earthkeeping and justice making, etc.” (“*Making Us One Campaign*”, mittensynod.org)

“**Spiritual Formation is the process that takes place** in the believer, as the life of the Spirit of God transforms our spirit **through deepening intimacy with the Trinity**, changing our being from the inside out into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Spiritual formation also involves **the believer’s intentional response** to God in this transformation process. The goal of this **process** in the believer is the reflection of God’s glory in a relationship of love with God and toward the world for which He died. (“*Imago Christi, A Covenant Community of Spiritual Formation Ministry*”)

“Thus the **Trinitarian intentionality of Christian prayer** shapes and directs it as an expression of praise and desire for perfect union with God through Christ. This union is nothing less than a **sharing in the life of the Most Holy Trinity**. It is, as it were, an **'immersion' in the mystery of the Triune God**. Following the imagery of St. John of the Cross, the Holy Spirit, as the 'mutual breath of Father and Son' becomes the **'mutual breath of God and the one praying**. As baptized into Christ, **the Christian lives with his life and, together with Christ, approaches God as Father/Mother.**” (Shaun McCarty, *“Centering Prayer Trinitarian?”*)

“What has been said so far suggests a relationship between **Christian Centering Prayer** and other ways in which baptismal identity finds nourishment. Nowhere is **Trinitarian intentionality better expressed** and shaped than **in liturgical worship**. We cannot appreciate the Christian perspective of **contemplative prayer** apart from its relationship to all of life and the **liturgy** in particular. Again, we take our cue from **Thomas Merton**: “It would...be a serious error to ignore the true meaning of **inner meditative prayer** and its crucial importance for the whole Christian life, especially for the **full understanding of the liturgy**. In any case, we are not speaking here of the **prayer of the heart** as an isolated, particular exercise, as a separate department of the devout life. The prayer of the heart **must penetrate** every aspect and every activity of Christian existence. It **must flourish** above all **in the very heart of all liturgy.**” *Contemplative Prayer*, p.136. (*Ibid*)

“Subsequently, for many people seeking engagement with spirituality it means **“withdrawal”** into a **“solitary place”** and also from social interaction. Following the example of **St Antony** in third and fourth-century **Egypt**, many others have sought peace and solitude in order to find a more meaningful **relationship with God** through **disciplines such as prayer, contemplation and selfdenial**. (Keating 1999; Stewart 2005, 86–87) The origin of **mystic asceticism** can also be traced to the same root. These categories of **spiritual activity** have a long tradition... The **experience of God** can even now be **conceived** at the **core level in mystical terms** “not as a transcendent Other but **as an immanent Self.**” (Perrin 2007, 241) (Harri Kuhalampi, *“Holistic Spirituality in the Thinking of Ellen White”*, Academic Dissertation, University of Helsinki 2010)

“Silence fosters stillness; it is indispensable for stillness. **Inner stillness, however, goes beyond silence** insofar as its aim is to **purify the heart** and issue **in pure prayer**. That purification involves the body in its entirety, because **body and soul, like mind and heart, are ultimately inseparable**. In the words of **St Mark the Ascetic**, “The intellect cannot be still unless the body is still also; and the wall between them cannot be demolished without stillness and prayer.” (John Breck, *“On Silence and Stillness”*)

“To **silence the mind** is an **extremely difficult** task. How hard it is to keep the mind from thinking, thinking, thinking, forever thinking, forever producing thoughts in a never ending stream. Our **Hindu masters** in India have a saying: one thorn is removed by another. By this they mean that you will be wise to use one thought to rid yourself of all the other thoughts that crowd into your mind. **One thought, one image, one phrase or sentence or word that your mind can be made to fasten on.**” (Anthony de Mello, *“Sadhana: A Way to God”* (Institute of Jesuit Resources, 1978), p. 28)

“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 [Institute], I have been moved to affirm that statement.” (Tilden Edwards, *“Jesus and Buddha: Good Friends”*)

“How can we **help our hearts to grow** every day, to be able to **embrace everything**? The **Buddha** gave a very beautiful example. Suppose you have a bowl of water and someone put a handful of salt in the bowl of water; it would be too salty for you to drink. But suppose someone threw a handful of salt into a clear mountain river. The river is deep and wide enough that you can still drink the water without tasting the salt.” (*“How Can I Be More Compassionate and Centered?”*, iFollowdiscipleship.org, Discipleship Resource for Seventh-Day Adventists)

Zen Buddhist Monk, Thich Nhat Hahn, is quoted in the same lesson, “When your heart is small, you suffer a lot. But when your heart becomes bigger, very big, then the same thing does not make you suffer anymore. So the secret is how to help your heart to grow. If your heart is small, you can’t accept that person, you can’t tolerate him or her with his or her shortcomings. But when your heart is big, you have a lot of understanding and compassion, and then there is no problem, you don’t suffer, and you embrace him or her because your heart is so big.”

“Eastern Orthodox Christianity has an old form of **meditation practice** called **hesychastic practice**, that has been practiced by **Christian ascetics** and **Desert Fathers** from the earliest days of the church. Based on Christ’s injunction to “go into your closet to pray”, hesychasm (which translates as “stillness, rest, quiet, silence”) involves the process of **retiring inward, withdrawing from the senses**, so as to achieve a **direct experiential knowledge of God**. These practices even involve **physical postures** and **breathing exercises**, reminiscent of Hindu yogic practices.” (Professor Rafael Espericueta, *“Christian Mystics”*)

“A Jesuit friend once told me that he approached a **Hindu guru** for initiation in the art of prayer. The guru said to him, **“Concentrate on your breathing.”** My friend proceeded to do just that for about five minutes. Then the guru said, “The air you breathe is God. **You are breathing God in and out.** Become aware of that, and stay with that awareness.” My friend, after making a **slight theological adjustment** to that statement, followed these instructions-for hours on end, day after day-and discovered, to his amazement, that prayer can be as simple a matter as breathing in and out.” (Anthony de Mello, *“Sadhana: A Way To God, Christian Exercises in Eastern Form”*, Introduction)

Can We Discern The Times?

“And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.” - (Romans 13:11-12)

“No man drops in one day from perfect faith to gross error; much less do multitudes of people apostatize all at the same time. Error is insidious in its working, and the people who fall away are rarely conscious that any change is taking place in them.” (E.J. Waggoner, *“Present Truth”*, Jan. 30, 1902)

“A truth’s initial commotion is directly proportional to how deeply the lie was believed. It wasn’t the world being round that agitated people, but that the world wasn’t flat. When a well-packed web of lies has been sold gradually to the masses over generations, the truth will seem utterly preposterous and its speaker a raving lunatic.” (Dresden James)

“The truths most plainly revealed in the Bible have been involved in doubt and darkness by learned men, who, with a pretense of great wisdom, teach that the Scriptures have a mystical, a secret, spiritual meaning not apparent in the language employed. These men are false teachers. It was to such a class that Jesus declared, “Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God.” [Mark 12:24.] The language of the Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning, unless a symbol or figure is employed. Christ has given the promise, “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” [John 7:17.] If men would but take the Bible as it reads, if there were no false teachers to mislead and confuse their minds, a work would be accomplished that would make angels glad, and that would bring into the fold of Christ thousands upon thousands who are now wandering in error.” (Ellen G. White, “*Great Controversy*”, 1888 edition page 598 par. 3)

“Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?” - (Jeremiah 2:5)

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*.” - (Jeremiah 6:16)

“Hath a nation changed gods, which *are* yet no gods? but My people have changed their glory for *that which* doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, *and* hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” “Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead.” - (Jeremiah 2:10-13, 9)

“Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, *with* the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” - (Malachi 4:4-6)

“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)

“I am the good shepherd, and know My *sheep*, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.” – (John 10:14-16)

Can you or I say that as members of the Seventh-Day Adventist church we uphold the Scripture and beliefs handed down from the apostolic church to the Church in the Wilderness? Are we a remnant of that wilderness church, or are we wandering confused in the spiritual desert wastelands of Egypt after the Fathers of ancient thought in modern dress? Do we blend our faith with theirs in creeds and schools of Trinitarian philosophy, mystical contemplation and formation promoted through a metaphoric and allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures? Please think seriously about the answer to these questions. This is not a call to come out of the church our Saviour established. It is a call to earnestly contend with and return to the faith once delivered to the saints as found in the assembly of those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith and testimony of Jesus.

If we are out of harmony with our Heavenly Father and His eternal son Jesus then prayer and genuine repentance for ourselves and the church collectively are the key. A friend

shared something profound, “Israel was only released from Babylon when Daniel began to pray the prayer of repentance for His people **as one of them.**” “If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14). This is true revival and reformation for only then will Jesus bless us with a greater outpouring of His indwelling Spirit. Our prayer is that those leading the corporate Seventh-Day Adventist church are listening to the voice of the True Shepherd.

Edited from “Shall We Desert the Fathers of Ancient Thought in Modern Dress?”

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/45856756/Shall-We-Desert-the-Fathers-of-Ancient-Thought-in-Modern-Dress>

Resources

These resources have benefited my study and research. Because a resource is listed here does not mean that those involved endorse this examination. Inclusion is also not a blanket endorsement, on my part, of their content. All things we hold to be truth must be carefully studied in the light of Scripture preserved and handed down to us from the church in the wilderness.

- **Maranatha Media-** In Honour of the Father and His Son.
<http://www.maranathamedia.com/site/>
- **Identity Wars-** Value Through Family Relationships. <http://www.identitywars.org/>
- **Reclaim SDA-** Exposing The Dangers Of The “Emergent Contemplative Spirituality” In Adventism. <http://reclaimsda.org/reclaimsda/Welcome.html>
- **Lighthouse Trails Research Project-** This site alerts others about the contemplative belief system that has embedded itself into Christianity.
<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/index.html>
- **Ancient Thought Research-** Why is the mystery of the trinity so important to the Seventh-Day Adventist church? http://www.scribd.com/my_document_collections/2811227
- **Amazing Discoveries-** An organization committed to exposing deceptions and errors in the religious realm, history, science, media, and health. <http://amazingdiscoveries.org/>
- **Seventh-Day Adventist Archives-** A wonderful resource for research with records covering the entire period of Adventist church history.
<http://www.adventistarchives.org/DocArchives.asp>
- **Ellen G. White Database-** Access Ellen White’s complete published writings.
<http://egwdatabase.whiteestate.org/>
- **Spectrum Magazine-** If you want to see the heart of contemplative spirituality beating in Adventism, you’ll find it here. <http://www.spectrummagazine.org/>
- **Certain Sound Ministry-** Their mission is to encourage people to respond to YHWH’s trumpet call and to proclaim a certain sound of warning to their fellow man. Responding to the call of YHWH’s trumpet can be seen by the illustrations of marriage within the Bible. <http://certainsoundministry.com/>