

TROJAN HORSES:

ALL HANDOUTS

This document comprises the six sets of handouts prepared for the “Trojan Horse” series I presented at the 2009 GYC meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. Below is a description of the series, as it appeared in the GYC brochure.

TROJAN HORSES:

Counterfeit Revivals, The Emerging Church, & the New Spirituality Movements

Presented by: Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, PhD

Have you heard of any of the following: Prayer walks & prayer warriors, the prayer labyrinth, Christian yoga, spiritual disciplines & spiritual formation, the silence & sacred spaces of meditation, contemplative prayer, centering prayer, breath prayer, and Jesus prayer? Welcome to the new age of mystical spirituality—and its many ways of *encountering* God. These are being woven into Christian churches, youth organizations, and educational institutions. Could these new ways of being “spiritual” be actually old-fashioned spiritualism disguised in new clothes? Are we honestly-mistaken about today’s “God-encounters” and other attempts to reach higher levels of spirituality? Could these be “the Omega” of deadly heresies? Be informed—and warned—about the new Trojan horses being wheeled into our churches.

Topics:

1. True Revival: What It Is and What It's Not
2. True Spirituality: The Walk of Holiness
3. Understanding Post Modernism & The Emergent Church
4. Contemplative Spirituality & Its Many Ways of Encountering God
5. New Spiritual Warfare: Prayer Warriors, Prayer Walks, & Prayer Offensives.
6. Ancient Future: Which Way To Revival & Spirituality?

You may listen to or download the entire series from the GYC website: www.gycweb.org (look under resources).

NOTE:

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Part 1-- Trojan Horses: *Counterfeit Revivals, The Emerging Church, & the New Spirituality Movements*

TRUE REVIVAL: WHAT IT IS & WHAT IT'S NOT

GYC Seminar Handout, Louisville, Kentucky, December 30, 2009-January 3, 2010 .

By

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Introduction. Have you heard any of the following terms: Prayer labyrinth, taizé prayer, spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and spiritual directors? What about God-encounters, the silence, sacred spaces of meditation, contemplative prayer, centering prayer, breath prayer, and Jesus prayer?

Welcome to the new age of inter-spirituality, mystical or contemplative spirituality—and its many ways of *encountering* God. Currently championed by advocates and sympathizers of the “signs and wonders,” “emergent church,” and “worship renewal” movements, these new spiritualities are being woven into the beliefs and practices of Christian churches, youth organizations, and educational institutions.

The Trojan Horse. The term describes how the ancient Greeks used a large hollow wooden horse filled with soldiers to help destroy the fortified city of Troy. The phrase has come to refer to deception and treachery disguised as a blessing.

There are many Trojan Horses creeping into our church today—evolution, homosexuality, divorce and remarriage, new forms of worship and church growth, ordination of elders or pastors, etc. (see book *Here We Stand*). Our seminar series is about *Spiritualism's* Trojan Horses that have crept into the church in the guise of *spirituality*. Spirituality is the work of the Holy Spirit on human hearts, while spiritualism is Satan's work of deception. We're going to look at some of the major Trojan horses of spiritualism that are being wheeled into the church by some otherwise well-meaning thought leaders and members.

Writes, E. G. White: “Today there are coming into educational institutions and into the churches everywhere spiritualistic teachings that undermine faith in God and in His word.... [B]ut however beautifully clothed, this theory is a most dangerous deception.... The result of accepting it is separation from God” (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 428).

These Seminar presentations will show how mystical and spiritualistic teachings are subtly making inroads into Christian churches, under the guise of revival, spirituality, and postmodern approach to Christianity. You may be surprised at where the Emergent Church and spiritual formation movements are leading the church!

Everyone Is Into "revival."

Revival is everywhere. Outside our church, there are also many movements that seek or claim to be into revival. In our own church there's a lot of talk about revival (revival retreats, weekends, before evangelistic meetings, etc.). This interest in revival could be an indication that God is about to do something marvelous in our time—a true revival is about to break out.

True Revival. "Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children" (*GC*, 464).

But is the talk about revival these days really an indication of true revival? Or has Satan hijacked the term for his sinister purpose? After all he has also hijacked other Christian terms too—love, faith, church growth, worship, etc.). Given this fact, it should come as no surprise that Satan would seek to abort or sabotage a true movement of God's Spirit.

Counterfeit Revival. "The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work [of revival]; and before the time for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it by introducing a counterfeit. In those churches

which he can bring under his deceptive power he will make it appear that *God's special blessing* is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be *great religious interest*. Multitudes will *exult that God is working marvelously* for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his *influence over the Christian world*" (*Great Controversy*, 464)

That is why it is important to know what true revival is and what it is not. "Any new outburst of activity in the church, any cloud of dust raised by the stamping of excited feet, will be hailed as renewal [revival] by somebody."

Mistaken Notions About Revival: The following are some highlights from Nancy DeMoss's insightful article "Is This Revival?" (**Note:** In *The Great Controversy*, p. 558, E. G. White gives some additional characteristics of the counterfeit revival).

1. Not everything that is called "revival" is revival.
2. The fact that a lot of people are talking about and promoting "revival" doesn't necessarily mean that we are, therefore, in the midst of revival.
3. Large crowds, intense enthusiasm, stirred emotions, energetic activity, and "signs and wonders" are not necessarily evidence of revival.
4. Genuine revival will not be a bandwagon. So-called "revival" is a popular movement in the church today.
5. We must guard against "revival" becoming just another popular program or emphasis in the church.
6. Revival is not an end in itself. That mind set ultimately leads to self-absorption, which is a form of idolatry. Corporate revival is no substitute for personal revival.
7. There are no shortcuts to revival.
8. We may be so eager to experience the fruit of revival that we bypass God's conditions for revival: humility, repentance, contrition, prayer, and obedience.
9. God is unlikely to send revival to those whose real heart motive is to build or enhance their own reputations or ministries or to reap blessing for themselves.
10. The fact that we agree about the need for repentance in the church does not mean that we have, in fact, repented.
11. There is no revival where there is not deep brokenness and contrition over the seriousness of our sin against a holy God.
12. Not all prayers and prayer meetings bring us closer to experiencing revival.
13. We have no right to expect to enjoy the fruit of revival if we are not personally willing to pay the price for it.

Hence, we must not cheapen the term "revival" by prematurely or carelessly applying it to every contemporary religious movement. We must reserve its use for that which is truly heaven-sent and God-initiated. We must find out what true revival is all about, how to experience it, and how it impacts our lives as students, young people, and church members.

Definition of Revival

There are a group of words that are often used for (or in association with) revival. They include: spiritual renewal, awakening, visitation, outpouring of the Spirit, and reformation. These terms trace back to biblical metaphors *for the infusion of spiritual life in Christian experience by the Holy Spirit* (See Romans 6:4; 8:2-11; Eph 1:17-23, 3:14-19, 5:14).

These words carry the idea of bring back to life that which was dead or dying. It is a resurrection from death to life. Perhaps the most noted example of this metaphor is found in Ezekiel 37. From a study of this account we may glean the following definition of revival: "*Revival is God's work, through His Word and His Holy Spirit in bringing to life the spiritually dead so that they can do God's work ('fight as an army').*"

Two Kinds of Revival. There's a distinction between reviving and a revival, and between personal and corporate revival.

1. Reviving and Revival. While this may be a little artificial, we can view *reviving* refers to the initial visitation of God that sparks off the renewal or resurrection experience. On the other hand, *revival* may refer to the state

of the revivedness in which God's people continue. We may call this ongoing revival (this state of revivedness) reformation.

2. Personal and Corporate Revival. Revival can also be understood in its *narrow* and *broad* sense. In its narrow sense, the term refers to *personal* quickening of an individual. In its broad sense it refers to a collective *body of people*--God's church. Thus, we have personal revival and corporate revival.

There cannot be a corporate revival unless individuals constituting the church experience personal revival. But personal revivals do constantly occur without it being part of any larger local church.

Nature of True of Revival

There are four major ways by which we can characterize or describe true revival. Four things happen when a person is revived:

1. Heaven Becomes Real (*An Eschatological Reality*). Revival is a taste of heaven. The experiential deepening of a person's life during revival is a foretaste and first installment of heaven itself.

2. Jesus Becomes Real (*A Christological Reality*). Jesus also becomes very real *subjectively and objectively*. In other words in a true revival there is a change in a person's spiritual life and ethical life (Christian piety and Christian lifestyle). One is subjective and the other is objective.

Subjectively, Christ's presence is felt in a very personal way. He becomes the object of our personal love, affection, devotion, and desire. We fall in love with Him. Examples: Fanny Crosby's "Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine"; John Newton's "*How sweet the name of Jesus sounds*"; Charles "*Jesus, lover of my Soul*" and the final stanzas of "Thou hidden source of calm repose." Bernard of Clairvaux's "*Jessus, the very thought of thee.*"

What is common in all these songs of renewal is that Jesus is very real--*subjectively*. Many of today's contemporary "praise music" cannot compare to these songs of old. That fact alone indicates puts a question mark on our contemporary revivals.

In true revival, Jesus also becomes very real *objectively*. It is Christocentric in the sense that through such a revival, the Christian dies with Christ in repentance and rises with Him to live a righteous life, a life of loving obedience to God's law. In other words there is an *ethical* component to true revival. There is a lifestyle change

Therefore, when we say that in revival Jesus becomes real subjectively and objectively, what we mean is that such a renewed individual walks with the two legs of holiness--*spirituality and ethics*. Spirituality is the subjective component and ethics and the objective. Both legs are important. Without one of these legs, a person either limps in his spiritual walk, or is crippled. (NOTE: I'll discuss further in my next presentation on true spirituality).

3. The Spirit Becomes Real (*Pneumatological Reality*). A truly revived person lives a life in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit not only has changed his or her life, but dwells within their hearts. The Spirit is given them as an abiding "Gift" (Acts 2:38). The individual is no longer his own, but the Holy Spirit's (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19).

When the Spirit becomes real in a revived person the result is not some wild laughter, exotic experiences or manifestations (speaking in unintelligible gibberish, falling on the ground, bizarre behaviour, such as is characteristic of much of the Pentecostal, Charismatic, or Signs and Wonders movement).

Instead, the Spirit becomes real in the person's life in that the person does not walk in the flesh, but instead bears the fruit of the Spirit. The apostle Paul says: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit" (Gal 5:22, 25).

Finally, a person who has been revived is also empowered by the Spirit—through the endowment of specific spiritual *gifts* (plural)—to do God’s work or witness (1 Cor 12; Eph 4; Rom 12). They are active in soulwinning and evangelism.

Also, notice what the Bible says in Psalm 85:4-6 happens when God visits us in this special way of revival:

Ps 85:4 *Restore* us again, O God our Savior,
and put away your displeasure toward us.
5 Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
6 Will you not *revive* us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?

First, this revival is experienced as *the ending of God’s wrath* (vv. 4, 5) Sin brought God’s wrath. Hence He couldn’t bless us, as much as He would have wanted to. But with revival, there is no longer the displeasure of God. Now that we’re back in fellowship with Him, now that we seek to be faithful, His blessings are poured out upon us.

According to David, when there is revival, God’s glorious presence "shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth" (Psalm 72:6).

Second, when revival is experienced there is an *exaltation of God’s people* (Ps 85:6). Joy replaces distress. There is a genuine joy in the Lord, not some gloomy, monk-life existence (cf. Philippians).

All these are possible through the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. But there is another reality that takes place when there is a revival.

4. Soulwinning Becomes Real (*Missiological Reality*). Scripture informs us that where there is revival there is an *extending of God’s kingdom*—soulwinning takes place and there is an active community involvement for the salvation of souls.

Psalm 51:7-13

Ps. 51:7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
51:8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; [that] the bones [which] thou hast broken may rejoice.
51:9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.
51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
51:11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.
51:12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me [with thy] free spirit.
51:13 **[Then]** will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Verses 7-12 is on revival; verse 13 is the reason. The first impulse of a converted heart is soulwinning.

When God revives the church, the new life overflows from the individual to the church, and from church to outsiders. There’s a conversion of outsiders and renovation of society. Christians become fearless in witness and tireless in their Savior’s service. They proclaim by word and deed the power of the new life, souls are won, and a community conscience informed by Christian values emerges. Also in revival times God acts quickly; his work accelerates. Truth spreads, and people are born again and grow in Christ, with amazing rapidity.

In the words of the prophet Zechariah, who foresaw this in terms of the post-exilic restoration of Israel:

“This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, “Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.”’” (Zech 8:23)

Summary: Such is the nature of true revival—heaven becomes real, Jesus becomes real, the Holy Spirit becomes real. The result is that God blesses the individual abundantly, and all with whom he comes in contact.

Though revival movements have varied throughout history and even from place to place, one can discern the above key characteristics in all biblical and post-biblical revivals, whatever their historical, racial, and cultural settings.

When there is a *true* revival, Christians not only live in God's presence (*coram Deo*), attending to His word, and feeling acute concern about sin and righteousness, but there is rejoicing in the assurance of Christ's love and their own salvation, spontaneously constant in worship, and tirelessly active in witness and service, fueling these activities by praise and prayer.

The Urgency of Now. “A revival of true godliness among us *is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work*” (*Last Day Events*, 189).

“*The time has come* for a thorough reformation to take place. When this reformation begins, the spirit of prayer will actuate every believer, and will banish from the church the spirit of discord and strife” (8T 251).

Our Responsibility in Encouraging Revival

We have an obligation to remove obstacles to revival and reformation. If, indeed, “there will be” a revival among the people of God before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth” (FLB 326.2), then *we should be part of it.*

If, indeed, revival of true godliness “is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs,” *we must make it our first priority;*

And if, indeed, “the time has come” for such a revival and reformation work, *it must allow ourselves to be part of it now.*

We must earnestly pray to the Lord, using the words of Edwin Orr’s chorus: “*send a revival—start the work in me.*” *True revival begins with our acknowledgement of our true condition and repenting of our sins.* Like King David, the leader of Israel, we must say “search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-24).

Throughout this GYC meeting (and beyond), each of us must say with the prophet Habakkuk:

*“O Lord, I have heard the report of thee, and thy work, O Lord, do I fear. In the midst of the years **renew** it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy”* (Hab 3:2).

Part 2-- Trojan Horses: *Counterfeit Revivals, The Emerging Church, & the New Spirituality Movements*

TRUE SPIRITUALITY: THE WALK OF HOLINESS

GYC Seminar Handout, Louisville, Kentucky, December 30, 2009-January 3, 2010 .

By

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Introduction. Have you heard any of the following terms: Prayer labyrinth, taizé prayer, spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and spiritual directors? What about God-encounters, the silence, sacred spaces of meditation, contemplative prayer, centering prayer, breath prayer, and Jesus prayer?

Welcome to the new age of inter-spirituality, mystical or contemplative spirituality, postmodern spirituality, creative or rediscovered spirituality, spiritual formation, spiritual tourism, etc. —and its many ways of *encountering* God. Currently championed by advocates and sympathizers of the “signs and wonders,” “emergent church,” and “worship renewal” movements, these new spiritualities are being woven into the beliefs and practices of Christian churches, youth organizations, and educational institutions.

We cannot fully evaluate what’s going on, until we know what the Bible teaches about true spirituality.

This hour’s presentation on spirituality (and the previous lecture on revival) will form a backdrop for my two subsequent presentations on “Post Modernism & the Emergent Church” and the “New Spiritualities.” We cannot know the counterfeit unless we know the original. This is why our first two presentations deal with authentic revival and spirituality.

Trojan Horse in Computing. In computing, a Trojan horse, or *trojan* for short, is a term used to describe malware—i.e., malicious software designed to infiltrate or damage a computer system without the owner's informed consent. A computing Trojan horse appears, to the user, to perform a desirable function but, in fact, facilitates unauthorized access to the user's computer system.

Satan has installed his deceptive version of computer Trojan horse in the Christian church’s operating system. This deadly Trojan horse has the potential of wiping out authentic Christian spirituality and replace it with spiritualism.

In order that we may be able to discern Spiritualism’s Trojan horses that are making their rounds in the church, we must know what the Bible teaches about authentic spirituality.

Christian Spirituality

The word “spirituality” does not appear in the Bible. However, the concept is taught using a number of expressions to describe the entire range of the salvation process—past present and future.

Salvation is the divine work of deliverance. God saves us from death and gives us a new life. There is a past, present, and future aspect of this deliverance or salvation. Perhaps the best analogy to describe this process is to use a statement from the apostle Paul in which he describes a literal deliverance from death by God while he (Paul) was traveling from Ephesus to Troas.

Paul reckoned his position to be like that of a man whose request for mercy had been denied and who was condemned to die. So futile did the situation appear that when deliverance occurred it was tantamount to resurrection: *God, who raises the dead . . . delivered us :*

9Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, **10** who *delivered* us from so great a death, and *does deliver* us; in whom we trust that He *will still deliver us* (2 Corinthians 1:9, 10NKJV)

From verse 9, we gather that salvation is a divine work. (We can’t save ourselves—alcohol, tobacco, greed,

lust etc. God has to do to it)—the God who raises dead (cf. Ezekiel 37). Also, verse 10 suggests that there are three tenses in salvation: past, present, and future. (We shall come to this later).

Biblical spirituality describes how we cooperate with God in this process of salvation. The Bible uses different expressions to explain or teach us about spirituality. Among these are: a walk with God, holiness, justification, sanctification, and perfection. We shall briefly look at these

Spirituality As A Journey of Salvation

One frequent expression used to describe the spiritual journey of salvation is a “walk”—the Christian walk:

- walking “in newness of life” (Rom 6:4)
- “walking by faith” (2 Cor 5:7)
- “walking in Him [Christ]” (Col 2:6)
- “walking in the Spirit” (Gal 5:16)
- “walking in the light” (1 John 1:7)
- “walking in truth” (2 John 4)
- “walking as children of light” (Eph 5:8)

The Bible uses the imagery of a “walk” to emphasize *motion*. The Christian life is a *movement* towards a particular goal. It is a journey towards a particular destination. That destination or goal is to be *Christlike or godliness*.

Notice that the goal of biblical spirituality is to be Christlike. It doesn’t mean you become Christ, but Christlike. It means reflecting Christ’s life of love and humility, courage and self-control, and His compassion and purity; you reflect the character of Christ. In spirituality, you pursue godliness. You don’t become God, but you exhibit godlike characteristics.

In other words, the Christian walk or Christian life is a *process* of spiritual growth. The person who is born again as a child of God does not remain as a baby. As he is nourished by the Word of God, the child grows day by day until he matures into the full stature of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian experience is never flat or at a plateau. Either you are growing up or growing down. If you are not growing, you are regressing.

Other Expressions. Other expressions and imageries used in the New Testament for this Christian walk or the pursuit of spirituality are:

- “following after righteousness” (1 Tim 6:11)
- being “transformed” (Rom 12:2)
- “perfecting holiness” (2 Cor 7:1)
- “growing up . . . into the full stature of Christ” (Eph 4:15)
- “pressing toward the mark” (Phil 3:12-15)
- being “built up in Christ” (Col 2:7)
- becoming “complete in all the will of God” (Col 4:12)
- fighting “the good fight of faith” (1 Tim 6:12; cf. v. 11)
- “partaking of the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4)
- “growing in grace” (2 Pet 3:18).

In short, the Christian walk refers to living a *holy or sanctified life*. This walk of holiness is the only kind of life that fits a person for heaven. Thus, we find in the Old Testament that: “Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him” (Gen 5:24).

Spirituality As Holiness The Impossible Possibility

No Press or Bad Press on Holiness. By far the expression that is most commonly used to describe biblical spirituality is holiness. And yet, the biblical teaching about holiness has received either no press or bad press

today. We either do not talk about it, or if we do at all, our discussion of the subject is confusing, if not completely mistaken.¹

--Of the many self-help Christian books, "How To Be Holy" is conspicuously absent from the list of best sellers. (cf. books on how to be happy; marriage, raise children, get rich, pray, etc.)

--To the unconverted, the term *holy* conjures up images of monks or nuns languishing in some gloomy, killjoy monasteries. For others, the call to holiness evokes pictures of a vindictive celestial being who is harsh, arbitrary, and ready to punish his earthly subjects for the slightest infraction of his moral laws. Thus, today's hedonistic and relativistic culture does not want anyone to talk about holiness.

Besides the unconverted, some Christians also detest the Biblical teaching of holiness, believing that this teaching nullifies their assurance of being saved or justified by grace. To such, holiness conjures up images of either weird or straitlaced people with outdated clothing and hairstyles, or even people with judgmental attitudes to all who don't measure up to their standards. In this view, holiness is synonymous with *formalism* (a mere outward conformity to rules), or even with *perfectionism* or *legalism* (doing things to earn God's favor).

Regrettably, even within our own ranks, there are some Seventh-day Adventists who also loathe the Biblical doctrine of holiness. In the minds of "liberal" Adventists (which is the new label for old-fashioned, backslidden Adventists), the Biblical teaching about holiness is reminiscent of "our Victorian heritage, which has been well preserved through the work of Ellen G. White." To such, anyone who dares to talk about holiness is automatically tuned out or dismissed as a "fundamentalist," a "legalist," or even a "Pharisee."

Confusion: As a result of misunderstandings on this important Biblical teaching of holiness, many well-meaning Adventists today are confused about the subject. This observation is always borne out in the results of the following series of questions I posed to several Adventist groups—adults and young people:

How many of you believe that holiness is possible in our sinful world? Can weak, sinful human beings, fraught with inherited and cultivated tendencies to sin, actually be holy in today's world?

The response to the above question was overwhelmingly affirmative. Almost all in the audience indicated that they believed holiness is possible. But then, when I sharpened the question by way of application, the responses were disappointing. I asked:

Are you holy?

Notice that the question is not, "Do you believe in holiness?" Neither is it, "Do you hope to be holy one day?" The issue is of far greater import than what a person *thinks* or *feels* about holiness, or even whether the Bible speaks about holy men and women of old. The question is:

Are you yourself holy, or are you not? Are you holy this very moment? If you think you are holy right now, raise your hand.

Typically, I see only very few hands. When I probe further into why the hesitancy of my audiences in responding affirmatively to the specific questions, three types of groups soon emerge.

Three Mistaken Views About Holiness

Any time I have asked the above questions, there are always three type of responses: (1) Those those who make presumptuous claims about their holiness; (2) Those who essentially deny that God expects His people to be holy today; and (3) Those who are not sure how to answer.

¹ Besides the Ellen G. White's *The Sanctified Life* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1937), I have found the following two works on biblical holiness very helpful: John Charles Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (Greenwood, SC: Attic Press Inc., 1977; originally published in 1879); James I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant Publications, 1992)

The first two views are mistaken, and the last is unfortunate.

1. Boastfully claiming to be holy. The first major mistake we make about holiness is to boast about having attained it. Contrary to this mistaken view, the Bible teaches that true Christians will never make boastful claims of their own holiness, perfection, or sinlessness. When we fully understand the spiritual nature of God's moral law, we shall discover our true sinful condition—how far we fall short of God's expectation—and how much we must daily repent and ask God for help.

The apostle John therefore wrote:

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:8, 10).

Ellen White also warned that it is never safe for us to boastfully claim holiness:

“Let those who feel inclined to make a high profession of holiness, look into the mirror of God's law, which discovers to us the defects of our character. *Those who see the far-reaching claims of the law of God, those who realize that it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, will not presume to make the boast of sinlessness, and venture to declare, "I am perfect, I am holy."* "If we," John says, not separating himself from his brethren, "say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word 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." (*The Signs of the Times*, May 23, 1895, paragraph 10).

Again she wrote:

“No one who has an appreciation of the verity of the law of God will claim an exalted character for himself. Our true position, and the only one in which there is any safety, is that of repentance and confession of sins before God. . . . When the conflict of life is ended, when the armor is laid off at the feet of Jesus, when the saints of God are glorified, then and then only will it be safe to claim that we are saved and sinless. *True sanctification will not lead any human being to pronounce himself holy, sinless, and perfect. Let the Lord proclaim the truth of your character*” (*The Signs of the Times*, May 16, 1895)

These statements are not to question our assurance of salvation—which is grounded in the merits of Christ alone. Rather, they are warnings against the complacent notion of “once saved, always saved.” The closer you get to know the Lord, the more you see your sinfulness. When the prophet Isaiah saw the glory of God, he exclaimed: “*Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts*” (Isaiah 6:5).

A true Christian always recognizes that “we are all as an unclean thing, and *all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*” (Isaiah 64:6). This is why Ellen White explains that, “The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan's delusions have lost their power.” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 64).

Thus, there is no room at any time for a Christian to boast of his perfection or sinlessness. If there was anyone who could make the boastful claim of holiness or perfection, it should have been the apostle Paul. After all, in 2 Corinthians 12, we are told how he was given the unique privilege of being caught up to see and hear things in the third Heaven. He himself wrote about living a holy, unblamable, and perfect life (1 Thessalonians 2:10).

And yet, in Philippians 3:12 this exalted apostle confessed that he had not attained perfection: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12)

Writes Ellen G. White:

“The attitude of Paul is the attitude to be taken by every one of the followers of Christ; for we are ever to be urging our way, striving lawfully for the crown of immortality. *Not one may claim to be perfect.* Let the recording angels write the history of the holy struggles and conflicts of the people of God, let them record their prayers and tears; *but let not God be dishonored by the proclamation from human lips, declaring, "I am sinless. I am holy."* Sanctified lips will never give utterance to such presumptuous words. Paul had been caught up to the third heaven, and had seen and heard things that could not be uttered, and yet his modest statement is, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after." Let the angels of heaven write of Paul's victories in fighting the good fight of faith. Let heaven rejoice in his steadfast tread heavenward, keeping the prize in view for which he counts every other consideration as dross. Let the angels of heaven rejoice to tell his triumphs, but let Paul utter no vain praise of himself in making a boast of his attainments” (*The Signs of the Times*, May 23, 1895, paragraph 9).

In fact, the clearest evidence that a person is not holy or perfect is when they make such a claim. Writes Job:

“If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life” (Job 9:20-21).

2. Denying God’s demand for holiness. The second mistaken view of holiness is the denial of God’s demand for His people to be holy. Contrary to such teaching, the Bible clearly teaches that God expects His people to be holy and sanctified, or perfect. Let me share with you some pertinent Scriptural passages:

1. Holiness is necessary for salvation (Heb 12:14).
2. Holiness is God’s will for our lives. (1 Thess 5:3).
3. Holiness is a command from the Lord. (1 Pet 1:15, 16; Matt 5:48).
4. Jesus died so that we can be holy (2 Cor 7:1; Eph 5:25, 26; Titus 2:14).
5. Holiness or sanctification simply means godliness, or revealing Christlike character in a sinful world (Philippians 2:13-15; NIV).
6. Holiness is the preparation we need for Christ’s second coming (Titus 2:11-14, NIV).
7. Holiness is the polarization in the last days. (Rev 22:11).

The end-time polarization or division in the world and in the church will be over holiness. And this crisis over holiness will be over God's moral law. The final test will raise the following kinds of questions: *Are there some divinely prescribed moral absolutes to govern human decisions and conduct? Can human beings faithfully and lovingly obey God, even in the midst of coercion, torture, or persecution?*

While an overwhelming majority of people will disregard God’s universal moral absolutes, maintaining that God's Ten Commandments are not really *commandments* but merely *suggestions*, there are going to be a people who will faithfully and loving serve the Lord, regardless of consequences. The Lord will point to such people and say to the entire universe:

“Here is the patience of the saints; here are they who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus” (Rev 14:12).

Revelation 13:15-17 and Rev 14:9-11 (the warning against worshiping the beast and receiving his mark and number) teach that ultimately the crisis of holiness in the last days will be over worship—*who* you worship, *why* you worship, *how* you worship and *when* you worship. In short, it will be over the *day* you worship and also the *way* you worship.

Polarization/Shaking Has Begun. The end-time polarization or division in the world and in the church will be over holiness. This polarization or shaking has already begun in the church. Seventh-day Adventists call it a *shaking* or *sifting* process.

This polarization between the two camps is becoming clearer and wider with each passing day. Whereas in the past things were fuzzy, today the gap between truth and error, between godliness and worldliness, between

light and darkness, is becoming very clear for all to see. Each time you hear that there is polarization or division in the church, it simply evidences the fact that the shaking or sifting is going on. And each one of us will have to choose to belong to one group or the other. There is no neutrality.

Notice how Ellen White describes the two groups in *The Great Controversy*:

The power of godliness has well-nigh departed from many of the churches. Picnics, church theatricals, church fairs, fine houses, personal display, have banished thoughts of God. Lands and goods and worldly occupations engross the mind, and things of eternal interest receive hardly a passing notice.” (*The Great Controversy*, 463-464).

But observe the next few sentences:

Notwithstanding the widespread declension of faith and piety, there are true followers of Christ in these [popular] churches. Before the final visitation of God’s judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times (*The Great Controversy*, 464).

It is, therefore, encouraging that amidst the widespread worldliness sweeping our churches today, there is also a quest for godliness. We have gathered here today because we are seeking, by God’s grace, the revival of primitive godliness which will characterize God’s end-time people.

3. Uncertainty Over Holiness. Typically, very few hands go up whenever I ask the pointed question: “Are you *yourself* holy, or are you not? Are you holy *this very moment*?” Besides the two mistaken reasons for the hesitancy in responding to this question, the ultimate reason is that many are simply not sure how to answer this type of question.

But we don’t have to be uncertain about the Biblical teaching of holiness. We have assurance from the Word of God that, regardless of what our past may have been, God can take us sinful human beings—the dishonest, immoral, proud, fearful, violent, intemperate, and wild—and transform us so completely that we can actually reflect the character of a holy God! God can actually *make* and *keep* us clean or pure (Jude 24, 25; Philippians 2:13–15)! This is what holiness is all about.

The unique process by which sinners are transformed into saints is called *sanctification*; the result of this process is *holiness*; and the divine Agent responsible for this miraculous operation is called the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:3–5). He can do it because He Himself is holy!

Christian holiness is therefore the Biblical teaching that, within the limitations of our humanity, God’s sanctifying grace is able to enable us to overcome both our hereditary and cultivated tendencies to sin, and thus to live victorious Christian lives through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. This is good news!

This brief background should make us want to study some more about biblical holiness without being frightened about the term. We must discover the meaning and implications of that doctrine for our lives today.

Understanding Biblical Holiness

The noun *holiness*, together with the adjective *holy* and the verb *sanctify* (the word *holify* does not exist in English), belong to a single word group in Hebrew and Greek. In both biblical languages the words carry the meaning of *setting something apart, either because it has extraordinary value, or because it is intended by God for some extraordinarily special purpose*. Thus, although scholars sometimes make a distinction between

sanctification (the process of becoming holy) and holiness (the state of being sanctified), the two terms may be viewed as functional equivalents.²

When Scripture repeatedly emphasizes holiness as an attribute of God (Lev 19:2; Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8), it means that "God is pure and morally perfect, with a purity beyond any conception that we have. He is 'set apart' in the sense that He is removed from sin or evil; He is morally flawless. Therefore, He is the ultimate, perfect standard of right and wrong."

Things and people are not holy in themselves--except as they are associated with, or consecrated to the service of, the Holy God. As far as human beings are concerned, God's people are called the "holy ones" or "saints" because they have separated themselves from the world and its ways to a life of service and obedience to God (Ex 19:6; Lev 20:24; 1 Pet 2:9; Col 3:12).

A Definition of Holiness

"Holiness is . . . an entire surrender to the will of God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love" (*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 155).

Becoming & Remaining Holy

How can a drunkard, a liar, prostitute, adulterer, proud, bad-tempered individual become holy? How does a sinner become holy? And how does he/she remain holy?

The Bible teaches that we become and remain holy **not** by drinking some holy water, not by going for someone to lay hands on you, not going on long pilgrimages; burning incense, chanting, mystical experience, not some Christian yoga-exercise of breathing or meditation. But rather by two twin processes called justification and sanctification provide the answer.

1. Justification. You become holy, the very moment the Holy Spirit leads you to repent of your sins and to surrender your life to Jesus Christ. At that very instant, your sins are forgiven, and you are saved from sin's guilt. You are declared "not guilty," not because you are innocent (in the sense of being "not guilty as charged"), but because you have been pardoned. Christ's perfect and blameless life is credited to your account. No longer condemned to die, you are "justified" by God's grace and restored to favor with God. Justification cannot be earned—it is a free gift (Romans 5:16) that can only be received by faith.

In justifying the sinner God acquits him, *declares* him to be righteous, *regards* him as righteous, and proceeds to *treat* him as a righteous man. Justification is the act of acquittal and the accompanying declaration that a state of righteousness exists. Charges of wrongdoing are cancelled, and the sinner, now justified, is brought into a right relationship with God that Paul describes as being at "peace with God" (Romans 5:1) (*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 8, pp. 616-617).

It is in this sense of justification that a person can say with confidence that they are saved. Justification gives us the assurance of salvation.

- 11 "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
- 12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.
- 13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; *that ye may*

² Two sets of English words in the King James Version are used to translate a single word in the Old Testament Hebrew (*qadash*) and the New Testament Greek (*hagiasmos*). The first is derived from the Germanic roots of our English. It includes the verb to "hallow, make holy," the noun "holiness," and the adjective holy. The other set of English terms comes from the Latin roots of English. It includes the verb "to sanctify," the noun "sanctification," and the adjective "sanctify." Since both sets of English words are translated from the same term in the biblical languages, the words "holiness" and "sanctification" may be viewed as equivalent terms.

know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:11-13)³

2. Sanctification. But the Holy Spirit does more than just saving you from your past sin. He also saves you from the power or dominion of sin. He begins another exciting work of keeping you day by day from falling into sin. The process is called sanctification, and the purpose is to make us “partakers of holiness” (Hebrews 12:10; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:2).

Justification and sanctification—two processes in salvation—are the means by which a person becomes holy and is kept holy. A person *becomes* holy through justification, and he *remains* holy through sanctification. Both processes in salvation are the operations of the Holy Spirit in the life of a person. Justification describes the Spirit’s work *for us*, and sanctification is His work *in us*.

Note that while the terms *justification* and *sanctification* describe two different operations of the Spirit, the two are always together.

3. Glorification. There never comes a time when a person can claim he or she has arrived. While the Christian’s salvation is assured (through the justifying grace of Christ), and while the believer’s salvation is being sustained (through the sanctifying grace of Christ), there is a future aspect of salvation—when our Lord and Saviour will come and save us from this world (an act that we may call the glorifying grace of Christ)--*glorification*.

Here’s how the apostle Paul describes these three tenses of salvation through Christ:

“Who *delivered* us from so great a death, and *doth deliver*: in Whom we trust that He *will yet deliver* us” (2 Corinthians 1:10).

Salvation has three tenses: past, present, and future. Glorification describes the future tense of salvation (cf. Rom 8). It is that phase of salvation when Jesus comes to take us home, when we finally dwell in the presence of God for ever—is when we can say we have arrived. Even then, we shall continue growing as we behold the matchless character of God.

In short, holiness is the goal of our redemption. As Christ died in order that we may be justified, so we are justified in order that we may be sanctified and made holy. Both realities point to the eschatological reality—when we are glorified and are ushered into His very presence (Rev 21:1-5)

Analogies to Understand Holiness

1. Holiness As A School. Holiness is as a school from which we never graduate. It is an educational process designed by God to re-build, re-shape, and refine us progressively into conformity with His own character. Like every good school, we need some good teachers, textbooks, standards, goals, companions, helpers, and role models in the School of Holiness.

- Our teachers are the *holy* Trinity; because God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are holy, they can make us holy if we maintain a right relationship with them.
- Our textbook is the *holy* Scriptures (2 Tim 3:15); not some human books, opinions, junk magazines, sleazy magazines, etc. (we must preach and study from the Word, not internet sermons, jokes, etc.)
- Our standard is the *holy* Law (Rom 7:12); not comparing ourselves to others.
- Our goal for this education is *holy* service (Rom 12:1, 2; Luke 1:74-75); our professions, occupations, talents are all for a holy service.
- Our helpers and companions are the *holy* angels (Rev 14:10), and
- Our Role-Model is Jesus Christ, “the *Holy* one” (Acts 3:14; cf. 4:30; Mark 1:24; 1 Pet 2:21-23).

³ Besides the writings of Ellen G. White (notably *Steps to Christ*), one of the best Adventist works on the assurance of salvation is Philip Dunham’s *Sure Salvation: You Can Know You Have Eternal Life* (Pacific Press, 2007).

In God's school of holiness, every thing we experience in life—its joys and sorrows, its fulfillments and disappointments, its hopes and despair—are all part of God's curriculum to mold our character into conformity with the moral image of our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 12:5-11; Rom 8:28-39).

2. Holiness As a Spiritual Walk. We may also describe holiness as a spiritual walk using two legs: *Spirituality and Ethics*. Without one of these legs, a person either limps in his spiritual walk, or is crippled.

On the one hand, *spirituality* (or Christian piety) concerns itself with the things that encourage and enhance the development of a meaningful *relationship with Christ*. It includes such inward aspects of the Christian life as prayer, meditation, fasting, music, worship, devotional study of Scriptures, simplicity in life, etc.

Ethics (or Christian lifestyle), on the other hand, deals with the outward aspects of the Christian life that show a *commitment to Christ*. It concerns itself with delineating God's moral standards, determining His revealed will, and the development and display of such divine qualities as truthfulness, honesty, integrity, self-control, compassion, purity, etc.

While ethics deals with the *what* of holiness, spirituality addresses the *how* of holiness. Ethics is *prescriptive*, concerning itself with the basis upon which human decisions and actions are judged as morally right or morally wrong. Spirituality is *descriptive*, exploring how to live a morally upright life in a sinful world.

Another way of saying it is that ethics is *lovingly doing God's will*. Spirituality is *appropriating God's provision* to restore us to harmony with me; it is learning how to obey.

Using the analogy of a tree, spirituality is sinking your roots down into the soil and *growing deep*; ethics is *growing tall*.

Without ethics, spirituality is corrupted into antinomianism, insensitivity, or a privatized religion that is more concerned with experiencing God's presence than keeping His law. And without spirituality, ethics is corrupted into formalism, legalism, and pharisaical pride.

3. Holiness As the Science of Ethics. Holiness is a call to an ethical lifestyle. It is cultivating a character that is honest, just, and morally upright. It is doing what is morally right and avoiding what God has revealed as morally wrong. "Those who are truly sanctified will not set up their own opinion as a standard of right and wrong" (*The Sanctified Life*, p. 9).

Ellen G. White refers to ethics as "the science of holiness": "The *ethics* inculcated by the gospel acknowledge no standard but the perfection of God's mind, God's will. God requires from His creatures conformity to His will. Imperfection of character is sin, and sin is the transgression of the law. All righteous attributes of character dwell in God as a perfect, harmonious whole. Everyone who receives Christ as his personal Saviour is privileged to possess these attributes. *This is the science of holiness*" (*Testimonies*, 7:276; emphasis mine).

Through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to live lives of ethical holiness, exhibiting such Christian virtues as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, etc. (Gal 5:22). We are also led to develop the "mind of Christ," defined by the apostle Paul as the cultivation of self-emptying humility, sacrificial service, and obedience even unto death (Phil 2:1-11). As people being sanctified, we also cherish the principles of the Kingdom, as enunciated in Christ's Sermon on the Mount--poor in Spirit, meekness, being merciful, peacemaker, etc. (Matt 5:1-10). We feed the hungry, help the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the sick (Matt 25:31-46).

4. Holiness As A Walk of Perfection. Thus far, we have been explaining the meaning of the Christian walk by using different terms---holiness or sanctification. There is one final term we must briefly discuss. It is the word perfection.

In His sermon on the mount, Jesus said: "Be ye perfect, even as you Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt 5:48). But what does it mean to be perfect?

Perfection simply means walking in the fear of God, by living uprightly and avoiding evil. Throughout Bible times, God has always expected those who worship Him to maintain this kind of walk with Him. If the person maintains such a steady walk with the Lord, the Bible describes that person as *perfect*.

For example, in Genesis 6:8-9 we read: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah was a just and perfect [man] in his generations, and Noah *walked with God*” (Gen 6:9).

Observe that the reason why Noah was considered a just and perfect man was because he “walked with God.” Having found grace in the sight of the Lord (v. 8), he walked in the fear of the Lord.

Another example we can use is Abraham: “*walk before me and perfect*” (Gen 17:1). Notice once again that Christian perfection is linked with a steady “walk with God.” Being perfect does not mean that a person has necessarily arrived at the point of full maturity. Rather, it simply means that the individual, by the grace of God, has made a commitment to the Lord, and therefore is living daily up to the light God has revealed to him or her.

ILLUSTRATION: Rooted in Christ, we must grow like the small seed that germinates from the soil. When it begins to grow, there is first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. As long as the plant is responding to all the resources available for its development, it is considered perfect at each stage of its growth. Thus it is with the Christian life. Ellen White explains:

“We cannot expect instantaneous sanctification, but we must grow like the grain, as represented by Christ--first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain--and thus perfect a Christian character. We must become intelligent and earnest to know what our duty is and then walk in obedience to God's holy will” (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3. p. 68.1).

“The growth of Christian character is gradual-- like the advancement of the natural plant through its various stages of development. But nevertheless the progress is continual. As in nature, so it is in grace, the plant must either grow or die.

“Day by day the sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God almost imperceptibly leads those who love the ways of truth toward the perfection of righteousness, till finally the soul is ripe for the harvest, the life-work is ended, God gathers in his grain. *There is no period in the Christian life when there is no more to learn, no higher attainments to reach. Sanctification is the work of a life-time.* First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, then the ripening and the harvest; for when the fruit is perfect, it is ready for the sickle” (*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2, pp. 243-244).

And so, when the Bible describes a person as perfect, it does not mean that the person has arrived at a stage in his life where he cannot grow any further. Rather, it simply means that that individual walks in the fear of the Lord, living by all the light he knows. That person’s love for the Lord leads him to love righteousness and eschew evil. Such a person will serve God regardless of the trials that will come his way—whether it is loss, illness, or death.

Job, A Perfect Man. One noble example of a perfect man is Job. The Bible explains that the reason Job was considered by God as “a perfect man” was because he walked in the fear of God, living an upright life and eschewing evil. He was willing to follow God no matter what (*Job 1:1, 8; 2:3 READ*).

Holiness Is A Life of Total Surrender

The person who embarks upon the Christian journey seeks to live a *holy* or *sanctified* life. Such a life is marked by a life of humility, expressed by an absolute surrender to the will of God.

“Holiness is . . . an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; it is doing the will of our heavenly Father; it is trusting God in trial, in darkness as well as in light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love” (*Sons and Daughters*, p. 155).

Such a life is best exemplified by our Lord Jesus Christ, the Christian's perfect Role Model:

*"Jesus was a perfect pattern of what we should be,
He was the strictest observer of His Father's law,
yet He moved in perfect freedom.
He had all the fervor of the enthusiast,
yet He was calm, sober, and self-possessed.
He was elevated above the common affairs of the world,
yet He did not exclude Himself from society.
He dined with publicans and sinners,
played with little children,
and took them in His arms and blessed them.
He graced the wedding with His presence.
He shed tears at the grave of Lazarus.
He was a lover of the beautiful in nature
and used the lilies to illustrate the value of natural
simplicity in the sight of God, above artificial display.
He used the occupation of the husbandman to illustrate
the most sublime truths...*

*"His zeal never degenerated into passion
nor His consistency into selfish obstinacy.
His benevolence never savored of weakness
nor His sympathy of sentimentalism.
He combined the innocence and simplicity of the child
with manly strength,
[He combined an] all-absorbing devotion to God
with tender love for man.
He possessed commanding dignity combined
with winning grace of humility.
He manifested unyielding firmness with gentleness.*

*May we live daily in close connection
with this perfect, faultless character.*

*"We have not six patterns to follow, nor five;
we have only one, and that is Christ Jesus."
(In Heavenly Places, p. 54)*

May the Lord help us to walk the walk of holiness."

Biblical Spirituality: The Antivirus Software

Satan has installed his deceptive version of computer Trojan horse in the Christian church's operating system. This deadly Trojan horse has the potential of wiping out authentic Christian spirituality and replace it with spiritualism.

In order that we may be able to discern Spiritualism's Trojan horses that are making their rounds in the church, we must know what the Bible teaches about authentic spirituality.

When the Bible says "Be ye holy," it simply means we must be Christlike. *Be*-ing holy is our forgotten identity as Christians. It is also the preparation we need to meet our loving Lord. "Without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14, NIV):

Without holiness on Earth we shall never be prepared to enjoy Heaven. Heaven is a holy place. The Lord of Heaven is a holy Being. The angels are holy creatures. Holiness is written on everything in

Heaven. . . . How shall we ever be at home and happy in Heaven if we die [permit me to add “live”] unholy?⁴

In view of the holy home God is preparing for us, we must all respond to the invitation to “be holy:” “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (2 Peter 3:14; cf. Titus 2:11–14).

Have you been justified, and are you being sanctified? If so, you can rest assured that you will also be glorified: For God “is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). Yes, “we know that when He shall appear we shall *be* like Him” (1 John 3:2).

How To Be In A State of Holiness

The words of the song “Take Time to Be Holy” (found in our SDA Hymnal) sums it all up:

*1. Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in him always, and feed on his word.
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,
Forgetting in nothing, his blessing to seek.*

*2. Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.
By looking to Jesus, like him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct his likeness shall see.*

*3. Take time to be holy, let him be thy guide,
And run not before him, whatever betide.
In joy or in sorrow, still follow the Lord,
And, looking to Jesus, still trust in his word.*

*4. Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul,
Each thought and each motive, beneath his control.
Thus led by his spirit to fountains of love,
Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.*

⁴ Ryle, *Holiness*, p. 42.

POSTMODERNISM & THE EMERGENT CHURCH

GYC Seminar Handout, Louisville, Kentucky, December 30, 2009-January 3, 2010 .

By

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Introduction. Somewhere between 40-50 years ago, a fundamental shift took place in the way people think about reality. And with this shift in reality, the church has been greatly impacted on how it views itself and its mission in the world. Scholars refers to this seismic shift as post-modernism. And the Emergent Church is an attempt by some Christians to respond to this new reality.

Our presentation on “Postmodernism and the Emergent Church” is a little more difficult to explain. But it is critical to understand the foundations of this new worldview. The foundation of any building is more important than the actual structure or furnishing—carpets, painting, furniture, etc. Let me explain:

General Unawareness. Some of us are aware that there are some strange bizarre practices and teachings creeping into the church—new forms of prayer, creepy Yoga or mystical practices, return to ancient medieval church practices, worship styles and music, etc. etc. But we have no clue as to what is really behind them. We’re simply paranoid about what we see happening.

On the other hand, many church members may not even be aware that our theological house (our doctrinal beliefs and lifestyle) is in trouble, let alone realize that the cause of the problem is due to cracks in our theological foundation (our view of, and approach to, inspired Scriptures and Truth). They see everything as fine: new worship style, new approach music, new approaches to church growth, new kinds of leadership in the church, new (alternate) lifestyle, etc. In some cases, even when we think that those innovations are not right, we think it will go away by itself.

Foundation, Not Cosmetic Changes. The real problem is many church members do not have the time, or are too lazy, to dig into the foundations of issues. Thus, we tend to adopt approaches to the Bible whose visible structure appeals to us, and to forget that, if we adopt a theology/practice someone else has constructed without testing the foundation, we do so at our peril.

All too often, instead of mending the cracks in the foundation, more attention is given to painting the crumbling walls with new and bright colors, re-arranging the furniture in the house, changing the carpets and curtains, and installing modern technological gadgets to make the house more comfortable and "user-friendly." The dangers of this kind of response are like those described in Jesus' parable of the man who built his house on the sand: "The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash" (Matt 7:27 NIV).

What we need to do is to go beyond the cosmetic changes--the theological curtains, carpets, furniture, paint, and technological gadgets. We must dig through the dirt to the foundation (what scholars refer to as the assumptions or presuppositions) and discover the cracks that have resulted as otherwise talented architects of Christian/Adventist theology have slowly chipped away parts of the foundation.

We must get to the roots, not simply pluck off leaves. This is what I want to do in today’s presentation on “Postmodernism and the Emergent Church.” We shall attempt to get to the roots or foundation.

Despite the complexity of the subject, I’ll attempt to make it simple. But in case I miss you on the way, I’d like you to remember the following key thoughts of postmodernism.

Key Thoughts:

The two key concepts that define postmodernism are:

1. “THERE ARE NO *MORAL* ABSOLUTES”

--“There Is No Right or Wrong”

- “Morality is relative”
2. “THERE ARE NO ABSOLUTES”
--“There Is No Absolute Truth”
--“Truth is relative”

In other words, when people ask you, “What is postmodernism?” you can simply explain that it is worldview—a way of thinking—that says “There are no *moral* absolutes” and “There are no absolutes.”

The first claim deals with *ethics or morality*. The second concerns *truth or teachings/doctrines*. These two pillars of postmodernism are the Trojan horses that some seek to drag into the church.

Today, I’ll be looking at how our contemporary postmodern culture has sought to cut off the ethical leg of biblical holiness. I’ll also argue that the absence of *moral* absolutes (no objective basis of right or wrong) reflects a much bigger problem—namely, the loss of objective truth.

In my opinion, the Emergent Church (which is an attempt by some Christians to respond to the challenges of postmodernism) begins by relativizing Truth (doctrines/teachings). But before long, it will also relativize morality (ethics). And when ethics is cut loose from biblical holiness, the result

Trojan Horse in Urban Dictionary

Yesterday, we talked about the concept of Trojan horse in computing—whereby a malicious software is installed into another person’s computer without their informed consent. Once a Trojan horse has been installed on a target computer system it is possible for a hacker to access it remotely and perform undesirable operations.

But do you also know that there is a Trojan horse or a *Trojan* which has come to symbolize today’s immoral lifestyle of permissiveness? In urban dictionary, a Trojan horse or Trojan refers to *devious sexual act whereby the male pokes a small hole in the tip of the condom before intercourse. Women who believe their boyfriends are cheating on them do that, so if they are, they get the other woman pregnant*

People may think they are having safe-sex with their condoms, but in reality it is not safe after all. The results are: unwanted pregnancies, STDs (sexually transmitted diseases, HIV-AIDS, etc. Ironically, there is even a condom called TROJAN—which has a fascinating history:⁵

The urban dictionary’s use of the term “Trojan horse” to refer to a devious sexual act with unsuspecting pleasure seekers, and the packaging of TROJAN condoms, are both fitting symbols of the dangers of today’s immoral lifestyle of permissiveness.

In realms of both morality and truth, there is a Trojan horse. As I’ll be showing in today’s presentation, the notions that “there are no *moral* absolutes” and that “there are no absolutes” are the two pillars of our postmodern culture. The first claim deals with ethics or morality. The second concerns truth or teachings/doctrines. And these are where the emergent church movement is leading to.

Understanding Postmodernism

It is generally acknowledged that we live in a postmodern world. But what does that mean? What is postmodernism, and how does postmodernism perceive morality (ethics) and truth (doctrines/teachings)?

To understand the postmodern, we must first understand the *modern* and *pre-modern*. These are all descriptions of ways of thinking during different eras of Western history.

⁵ See *Slate* magazine article by Brendan I. Koerner, “The Other Trojan War: What’s the Best-selling Condom in America?”; <http://www.slate.com/id/2150552>. Posted Friday, Sept. 29, 2006, at 12:32 PM ET.

1. Pre-Modern—refers to the history of the Western world up to the 18thC Enlightenment. In this period, virtually everyone believed in the supernatural. They believed in God (or gods), and maintained that life in this world owed its existence and meaning to a spiritual realm beyond the senses.

Whether it was the mythological pagan cultures or the classical Greek thought leaders, or Christianity, all believed in some kind of God (or gods). Even intellectual giants like Plato and Aristotle who rejected the mythological worldview believed in some transcendent universal ideals. Aristotle, for example, traced back all causes to a First Cause, which itself is uncaused.

For over 1,000 years, Western Civilization believed this. Whether pagans, classical philosophers or Christians, they all believed in a God (gods) who was the cause of transcendent universal ideas of truth and morality. This was the pre-modern era.

2. Modern Era—Then came the modern age, around the 1700s. This was the period where the belief in supernaturalism was seriously undermined, if not totally denied. It was the time of scientific progress, where science sought to explain everything on the basis of human reason.

Initially, the Enlightenment era did not begin by questioning the existence of God. It affirmed His existence, but argued that there was no real need for God to be involved in His creation. With time, the deity also withered away. And with that the modern era gave rise to a mindset that questioned any teachings or practices based on a belief in God or the supernatural. Anything that cannot be proved or explained on the basis of natural causes cannot be true.

On this grounds, they rejected the claims of religion and Christianity as false—if these cannot be established on the basis of Science or human reason. Eg. Deity of Christ, inspiration of the Bible, existence Satan, angels, etc. They believed in the existence of truth and morality—but only truth and morality that can be empirically established.

3. Post Modern Era—All these changed, somewhere between the 1960s and 1990s when a new world view came in, which questioned the existence of truth and morality.⁶ Some see modernism ending with the counterculture of the 1960s when young people began questioning the fruits of modern civilization. The student protests against the Vietnam war, and the student revolts in Paris and other universities in Europe came to signal the change. Other see the fall of Berlin in 1991 as the final ending of modernism.

Regardless, of when the postmodern era started, the fact remains that by the end of the 20th century, Western civilization had entered another phase—a phase that challenges the essential worldview of modernism—and pre-modernism.

We must distinguish between the adjective *postmodern*, referring to a period of time, and the noun *postmodernism*, which refers to a distinct ideology or worldview. If the modern era is over, we are all postmodern, even though we reject the tenets of postmodernism.

According to postmodernists, the fundamental problem with the Enlightenment modernism is its belief that there is such a thing as objective truth. Postmodernists strongly disagree.

Definition of Postmodernism

The term “postmodernism” is defined in many different ways. The following are a sampling of definitions of postmodernism.

⁶ Reasons for the demise of modernism are not farfetched: Scientific progress seemed to go hand in hand with an increase in pollution and crime. While the Internet is one of the greatest advances in the history of the world, it is also the basis for a large increase in work-related stress and new forms of addiction. World War I, World War II, the Holocaust and other genocides, weapons of mass destruction and terrorism combined to wring the confidence out of scientific modernists. A new generation proclaims the god of secular modernism to be a false god. Humanity is turning away from the truth of science to look for truth in other directions.

In 1994, the then-President of the Czech Republic and renowned playwright Václav Havel gave a description of the postmodern world as one “where everything is possible *and almost nothing is certain*.”⁷

Josh McDowell & Bob Hostetler offer the following definition of postmodernism:

“A worldview characterized by *the belief that truth doesn’t exist in any objective sense but is created rather than discovered*.”... Truth is “created by the specific culture and exists only in that culture. Therefore, any system or statement that tries to communicate truth is a power play, an effort to dominate other cultures.”⁸

In the introduction to his *Treatise on Twelve Lights*, Robert Struble, Jr. states:

"The postmodernist worldview *dismisses all forms of absolutism from eras past, especially Judeo-Christian faith and morals; yet the postmodernists idolize absolutely their new secular trinity of tolerance–diversity–choice*.”⁹

In his book *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (1994), Gene Edwart Veith, Jr., Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and Associate Professor of English at Concordia University-Wisconsin, describes postmodernism as a worldview that is incompatible with Christianity. In this worldview,

The intellect is replaced by the will. Reason is replaced by emotion. Morality is replaced by relativism. Reality itself becomes a social construct.

Key Tenets of Postmodernism. Regardless of how one defines the term, it is generally agreed that the worldview of postmodernism is characterized by certain distinctive features. We shall now briefly look at the two key pillars of postmodernism—namely, .

1. “THERE ARE NO *MORAL* ABSOLUTES”

--“There Is No Right or Wrong”

--“Morality is relative”

2. “THERE ARE NO ABSOLUTES”

--“There Is No Absolute Truth”

--“Truth is relative”

These two pillars have to do with ethics/morality and truth/doctrines

Ethics/Morality in a Postmodern World

A. “THERE ARE NO *MORAL* ABSOLUTES”

(“There Is No Right or Wrong” or “Morality is relative”)

Crisis of Ethics Today. There is no doubt that today we face an ethical crisis. The crisis does not consist in the flagrant violation of morally accepted standards of behavior (every age has had its share of this). Rather today’s ethical crisis has to do with the fact that “for the first time, at least on a mass scale, the very possibility of such [moral] standards has been thrown into question, and with it, all essential distinctives between right and wrong.”¹⁰

⁷ Václav Havel, "The Need for Transcendence in the Postmodern World," speech in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, July 4, 1994.

⁸ Josh McDowell & Bob Hostetler, *The New Tolerance* (Carol Stream IL: Tyndale House, 1998), p. 208.

⁹ Robert Struble, Jr., *Treatise on Twelve Lights: To Restore America the Beautiful under God and the Written Constitution*, "Introduction."

¹⁰ Will Herberg, “What is the Moral Crisis of Our Time?” *Intercollegiate Review* (Fall 1986):9

In other words today's ethical crisis stems from the fact that unlike in previous times when people knew what was right and wrong but chose to practice the wrong, in our time people are not sure of whether there are universal moral absolutes to define what is right and wrong. We live in a culture of moral *relativism*.

While people have always committed sins, they at least acknowledged these were sins. A century ago a person may have committed adultery flagrantly and in defiance of God and man, but he would have admitted that what he was doing was a sin. What we have today is not only immoral behavior, but a lost of moral criteria. This is true even in the church. We face not only a moral collapse but a collapse of meaning. "There are no absolutes."¹¹

Why the Crisis of Ethics Today?

A number of factors have contributed to today's uncertainty over moral absolutes (NOTE: If this section is boring to you, you may simply skip it. The essential point to note is that today's ethical crisis is the result of a number of factors) :

1. *The Rise of Naturalism in the 18th C.* Naturalistic world view teaches that the universe and all the phenomenon in it are the product of natural laws, time and chance. In this world view there is essentially no room for a divine Being to prescribe moral absolutes. (cf. the ethics of utilitarianism, Nazism, Marxism, etc.).

2. *The Theory of Evolution in the 19th C.* Taking as its starting point the naturalistic theory of evolution, today's world greatly limits, if not totally denies, the existence of supernatural realities--God, Satan, angels--and miracles. It believes that humanity is inherently good and capable of improvement if only given opportunity--more evolutionary time. The only thing that is unchanging and unchangeable in the world is the physical laws of nature, not God's moral Ten Commandment law.

Thus, "Darwin's discovery of the principle of evolution sounded the death knell of religious and moral values. It removed the ground from under the feet of traditional religion,"¹² thereby throwing in doubt the very idea of moral absolutes to govern human lives.

3. *The Theory of Relativity in the 1920s.* The discovery of the law of relativity in physics, the theory that there are no absolute measurements of distance and time, was confused at the popular level with *relativism* in ideas and morality. Historian Paul Johnson writes: "At the beginning of the 1920s the belief began to circulate, for the first time at a popular level, that there were no longer any absolutes: of time and space, of good and evil, of knowledge, above all of value. Mistakenly but perhaps inevitably, relativity became confused with relativism."¹³

4. *The Influence of Secular Humanism in the 1930s and 40s.* The popularization of the ideas of secular humanism, particularly through the educational institutions, has been instrumental in spreading the naturalistic world view and morality of the Humanist Association, as set forth in the associations's 1933 and 1973 "Humanist Manifestos."

¹¹ Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), p. 18.

¹² *The Humanist* (September-October, 1964):151.

¹³ . Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Eighties* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), 4.

For example, the third tenet of the 1973 manifesto states that moral values do not derive from God, but from human experience. For secular humanists, “ethics is *autonomous* and *situational*.”¹⁴ The implication of this statement may be illustrated by calling attention to the *Humanist Manifesto II*’s statement on human sexuality. This is found in tenet six:

“In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitive, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered ‘evil.’ Without countenancing mindless permissiveness or unbridled promiscuity, a civilized society should be a *tolerant* one. Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue the life-styles as they desire. . . .”¹⁵

One cannot underestimate the impact of secular humanism, given the fact that signers and observers of the *Humanist Manifestos* include such well-known names as John Dewey (the father of modern education), Andrey Sakharov (of the Soviet Academy of Sciences), Joseph Fletcher (the father of situation ethics), Betty Friedan (of the National Organization of Women), B. F. Skinner (Harvard professor of psychology, and a key advocate of the theory of behaviorism), and a long list of college and university professors and presidents.

5. The Impact of Situation Ethics in the 1960s. Situationism or situation ethics maintains that the only moral absolute is “love.” In deciding what is morally right or wrong in any given situation, one must ask: “what is the most loving thing to do?”

Joseph Fletcher, the father of situation ethics and the recipient of the Humanist Association’s 1974 “Humanist of the Year Award,” writes: “It all depends on the situation. . . . In some situations unmarried love could be infinitely more moral than married unlove. Lying could be more Christian than telling the truth. Stealing could be better than respecting private property. No action is good or right in itself. It depends on whether it hurts or helps people, whether or not it serves love’s purpose—understanding love to be personal concern—in the situation.”¹⁶

6. The Teachings of Behaviorism and Sociobiology in the '60s and '70s. In the past, human beings were believed to have freedom of choice or self-determination, and thus they could be held accountable for their actions. However, as a result of the teachings of behaviorism and sociobiology, there is a prevalent view today that attitudes and actions which in the past were attributed to human choice or free will are now largely due to the influence of cultural, social, psychological, and genetic factors.

One unmistakable implication of the impact of behaviorism and sociobiology is the way in which certain phrases have gained currency—phrases such as, “it’s not my fault...,” “I had no choice...,” etc. Not unexpectedly, it has become very fashionable for people to shift responsibility from themselves and blame it on either their environment, backgrounds, parents, governments, or even church. Sometimes even the “Devil” is blamed for this (“the Devil made me do it”), and some Christians respond that “It is the Spirit who led me to do it.” In the view of many, the moral actions of human beings are all dependent on their environment, circumstances, or genetic code.

¹⁴ The third tenet of the 1973 manifesto reads: “We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is *autonomous* and *situational*, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest. To deny this distorts the whole basis of life. Human life has meaning because we create and develop our futures. Happiness and the creative realization of human needs and desires, individually and in shared enjoyment, are continuous themes of humanism. We strive for the good life, here and now. The goal is to pursue life’s enrichment despite debasing forces of vulgarization, commercialization, bureaucratization, and dehumanization.” See Paul Kurtz, ed., *Humanist Manifestos I and II* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1973), 17. *Humanist Manifesto I* first appeared in *The New Humanist* 6/3 (May/June 1933), and *Humanist Manifesto II* first appeared in *The Humanist* 33/5 (Sept/Oct 1973).

¹⁵ Kurtz, *Humanist Manifesto I and II*, 18.

¹⁶ Joseph Fletcher, *Moral Responsibility—Situation Ethics at Work* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1967), 34.

7. The Popularization of the Cult of Self since the 1970s. One major characteristic of today's culture is its deification of self. With an uncertainty regarding the existence of supernatural realities and even the existence of a transcendent God, "Self" has been exalted as the new god for many people.¹⁷ Consequently, the human self is perceived as capable of establishing its own moral norms, a sure recipe for relativism in ethical lifestyle.

Credit for this modern idolatry goes not only to the pervasiveness of the New Age philosophy and post-modern world view, but also to the anthropology of liberal theology. Words such as "self-discovery," "self-affirmation," "self-esteem," "self-actualization," "self-expression," and "self-acceptance" may reflect this mood. John Shelby Spong, the retired Episcopal bishop of Newark, offers a liberal expression of this world view when he dismisses the Biblical world view as "pre-scientific." He writes in his 1991 bestseller: "We look for and find meaning and divinity, not always so much in an external God as in the very depths of our humanity, but it is divinity nonetheless. . . . We have come to the dawning realization that God might not be separate from us but rather deep within us."¹⁸

8. Dominance of Moral Relativism in Contemporary Culture. As a result of such ethical theories as situationism, generalism, antinomianism, etc. "Don't judge me"; "Don't be judgmental" the myth of "tolerance" Within Christendom, different views on moral absolutes. Conflicting absolutism, hierarchicalism or pyramidalism, unqualified absolutism..

These all raise the following questions: Are God's moral laws *Ten Suggestions* or *Ten Commandments*? Is lying, stealing, killing, breaking the Sabbath, committing adultery, or disobeying God ever justified?

9. The Rejection of the Ten Commandments by Some Christians. Among Christians there is growing belief that inspired Scriptures do not provide clearly identifiable moral norms for the conduct of human lives. Some Evangelical Christians may have inadvertently contributed to this uncertainty over universal moral absolutes when, in their attempt to deny the validity of the seventh-day Sabbath, they are forced to teach that all of the Ten Commandments are not binding on believers.

10. Post-September 11 Religious Syncretism. A quest for some global ethic. Started in 1993, with Parliament of Religions Conference in Chicago. 6500 delegates present.

Implications of All These. As a result of the above factors (and, perhaps, many more), today many believe that "There are no *moral* absolutes." To them, "There is no right or wrong." "Morality is relative"

Absence of *moral* absolutes (no objective basis of right or wrong), however, reflects a much bigger problem—namely, the loss of objective truth—the second tenet of postmodernism.

Truth/Doctrines in a Postmodern World
B. "THERE ARE NO ABSOLUTES"
("There Is No Absolute Truth" or "Truth is relative")

Along side the crisis in ethics, is also a crisis over truth. We have now moved from a view that says, "There are no *moral* absolutes" to one which says, "There are no absolutes."

--From "There is no morality" to "There is no absolute *truth*."

--From "Morality is relative" to "Truth is relative"

¹⁷ Allan Bloom, describes the essence of "the self" in this way: "mysterious, ineffable, indefinable, unlimited, creative, known only by its deeds; in short, like God, of whom it is the impious mirror image. Above all, it is individual, unique, it is me, not some distant man in general or man-in-himself." (Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987], 173).

¹⁸ John Shelby Spong, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism: A Bishop Rethinks the Meaning of Scripture* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 33.

The first claim deals with ethics or morality. The second concerns truth or teachings/doctrines. Let me explain this:

It is hard to proclaim forgiveness of sins to people who believe that, since morality is relative, they have no sins to forgive. It is hard to witness to truth to people who believe that truth is relative (“Jesus works for you; crystals work for me”).

In 1991 (the year that the Berlin wall came down), an eye-opening poll revealed that anywhere between two-thirds and three-quarters of Americans believe that truth is relative. Specifically, 66% of Americans believe that “there is no such thing as absolute truth.” Among young adults, the percentage is even higher: 72% of those between 18 and 25 do not believe absolutes exist.¹⁹

Let’s think about the implications. First, this poll was taken *almost* 20 years ago. The young adults who were at that time between 18-25 are now 38-45 years. They are today’s teachers, professors, journalists, lawyers, doctors, politicians, pastors, etc. Their children are now about 20 years old—and are in college. And so, for all the lives of these children, they have been taught that “there is no such thing as absolute truth.” Truth is relative.

What George Barna found “most disheartening” about the poll results was that a majority of American Christians also believe that truth is relative:

“Even a majority of born again Christians (53%) and adults associated with evangelical churches (53%) concur with the sentiment [“there is no such thing as absolute truth”]. Unexpectedly, among the people groups most ardently supportive of this viewpoint are mainline [liberal] Protestants (73%).”²⁰

So, it is not just non-Christians who hold that truth is relative. Even Christians share the same view that “There is no absolute truth.”

Again, let’s think through this some more. To disbelieve in truth is self-contradictory. To believe something means to think something is true. Thus, when a person says, “I believe that there is no absolute truth,” that statement is intrinsically meaningless nonsense. The very statement—“there is no absolute truth”—is an absolute truth. And if that claim is true, then it is itself not true.

And yet, many do not seriously think through the implications of what they’re saying. Either people are ignorant or simply confused. But that is precisely another mark of postmodernism: *Believing in mutually inconsistent ideas*:

Implications

1. Inconsistency. In postmodernism,

--You can be a Christian and not believe that Jesus is the Son of God

--You can believe in Christ and Buddha at the same time

--You can be a Protestant and not believe that the Bible is the inspired and trustworthy rule of faith

--You can be an Adventist and not believe in a literal, visible, and audible second coming.

--You can be a *Seventh-day* Adventist and not believe that God created the world in six literal days and rested on the seventh; hence a *Seventh-day* Adventist. Today, it is possible to claim to be a good Adventist and believe in naturalistic evolution

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¹⁹ George Barna, *What Americans Believe: An Annual Survey of Values and Religious Views in the United States* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991), 83-85.

²⁰ Barna, *What Americans Believe*, pp. 36-37; cf. pp. 292-294.

2. Pluralism in Belief. While modernists would argue in various ways that Christianity is not true, one hardly hears this objection any more. Today, the common critique today is that: “Christians think they have the only truth.” The claims of Christianity are not denied; they are rejected *because* they purport to be true. Those who believe “there are no absolutes” will dismiss those who reject relativism as “intolerant,” as trying to force their beliefs on other people.

3. Hermeneutics of Suspicion. No historical text (e.g. Bible) can be absolutely true. We must approach the text, not to find out what it objectively means, but to unmask what it is hiding. We call this “the hermeneutics of suspicion.”

The hermeneutics of suspicion sees every text as a political creation, usually designed to function as a propaganda for the status quo. Examples:

- Bible vrs. Gnostic gospels,
- The “Missing Bible texts” and Da Vinci Code

Don’t believe any text. Instead, “interrogate the text” to uncover its hidden political or sexual agenda. For example, we must not humbly accept, but rather interrogate the

- Bible
- E.G White’s writings,
- Etc.

4. Revisionism in History (Deconstructionism). Since there is no objective truth, history is *not* a record of objective facts. They are simply the views of those who wrote them to accomplish their political objectives. At the very least, according to postmodernists, the so-called facts of history are rather “a series of metaphors.”

Because there is no objective truth, history must be re-written according to the needs of a particular group: Eurocentric history, Afro-centric history, feminist history, gay-lesbian history, etc. Even in our own church Adventist history is being revised—not on the basis of truth, but rather on the basis of ideological agenda (cf. the misrepresentation of biblical and EGW statements to justify ordaining women as elders/pastors).

5. Education & Pursuit of Truth. Since all truth claims are suspect we must “deconstruct” whatever purports to be truth. Universities are supposed to be devoted to cultivating truth. Now, since truth no longer exists, what is the purpose of the intellectual pursuit of knowledge? Very simple: We must re-define the whole enterprise of scholarship.

In the past we went to universities to pursue truth. In today’s postmodern world, it is not “what is true” but “what works.”

6. Religion or Desire? In the past—in both the modern and pre-modern eras—religion involved beliefs about what is real.

- There is either God or no God
- Jesus was either the incarnate Son of God, or He was just another human being
- Miracles happened or they didn’t
- There’s such a place as Heaven or Hell, or there isn’t
- Saturday is or is not the seventh-day Sabbath
- Etc.
- Etc.

And we disagreed and fought among ourselves. Today, however, in our postmodern world, religion is not seen as a set of beliefs about what is real and what is not. Rather, religion is seen as a preference, a choice. We believe in what we like. We believe what we want to believe. As Gene Edward Veith, has best summed up:

“Listen to the way people discuss religion. “I really like that church,” they will say. Agreeing with that church or believing in its teaching scarcely enters into it. People discuss tenets of faith in the same terms. “I really like the Bible passage that says, “God is love.” Faith enough and amen. There is much to like in Christianity—God’s love for us, Christ’s bearing our sins, His grace and help.

“But then we start hearing about what the person does *not* like. ‘I don’t like the idea of Hell.’ . . . The issue is not whether we like it, but whether there is such a place. (pp. 193-194).

In short, religion is no longer a matter of what is true, but what I like and what I want. (This explains why cults are attracting many intelligent people. Those who are too sophisticated to believe in the simple Gospel accounts are embracing all kinds of bizarre teachings, simply because they like them.). Liking something and wanting it to be true are the only criteria for belief.

7. *Morality or Desire*

For postmodernists, morality, like religion, is a matter of desire. What I want and what I choose is not only true (for me) but right (for me). And because different people want and desire different things means that truth and morality are relative.

Even more, “I have a right to my desires.” Conversely, “no one has the right” to criticize my desires and my choices. Postmodernists seem to feel that they have a right not to be criticized for what they are doing. They want not only license but approval.

For example, selfishness, reckless promiscuity and fulfillment of sexual desires, different kinds of sexual expressions are right no one can criticize—however gross it may be.

8. *Sin.* Tolerance is the cardinal virtue. The greatest sin in postmodernism is a lack of tolerance—being “judgmental,” “being narrow-minded,” “thinking that you have the only truth,” and “trying to force your values on others.”

9. *God, Gods, & Designer Religions.* People engineer their own god(s) and design their own religions. In this respect, our contemporary culture is *not* godless. On the contrary, it is filled with many gods.

Modernism sought to rid the world of religion. However postmodernism spawns many new ones. Without any constraints by objectivity, reason, morality, etc., these new religions draw on strains of the most ancient and primitive paganism. People pick and choose various aspects of the different faiths according to what they “like.”

Postmodernism, in its rejection of objective truth, has clear affinities with Hinduism and Buddhism, which teach that the external world is only an illusion spun by the human mind and that self is god.

In other words, Christians today find themselves in exactly the position of the ancient Israelites and the early church—having to hold on to their faith in the minds of hostile pagan neighbors. They face the same threats and temptations to follow the practices, values and beliefs of our pagan neighbors.

“**30** Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ **31** *You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way*; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.

32 “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.” (Deuteronomy 12:30-32).

10. *Spirituality Without Truth.* Modernists did not believe the Bible is true. Postmodernists have cast out the category of truth altogether. In doing so, they have opened up a Pandora’s box of New age religious, syncretism, and moral chaos.

Postmodernism believes that there is no objective truth, that the moral values are relative, and that reality is socially constructed by a host of diverse communities. These believes by no means rule out religion, as modernism tended to. But the religions and theologies they promote are very different from both Biblical orthodoxy and modernism.

The Challenge of Postmodernism

Can a society exist for long without morality or truth? Societies that are divided against themselves into fragmented warring factions (ideologies), lacking any cohesive frame of reference, are by definition unstable.

Postmodernism is dividing our societies. And that is dangerous.

Sir Arnold Joseph Toynbee (April 14, 1889 – October 22, 1975) was a British historian whose twelve-volume analysis of the rise and fall of civilizations. He argues that successful societies have some sort of *religious* consensus. When this consensus is lost, new objects of worship will rush in to fill the spiritual vacuum. According to Toynbee, when a society loses its transcendent faith, it turns to three alternatives, which he frankly terms “idolatries”:

1. Nationalism
2. Ecumenicalism
3. Technicalism

1. Nationalism—“*Deified Parochial Community*”

When a transcendent universal faith is lost, it gives way to the “deified parochial community. In this model, each little group considers itself to be divine. It idolizes itself and all outsiders are enemies. Examples:

- the rise of Renaissance nationalism after the medieval consensus collapsed
- Fascism of Mussolini and the National Socialism of Hitler

In today’s postmodern societies we see how new nationalisms are emerging, each at the other’s throats. The loss of a democratic consensus in the United States has led to racial politics, militant interest groups—abortion, feminist, gay rights, etc.—with hostility towards each other.

2. Ecumenicalism—“*Deified ecumenical empire*”

When there is a loss of a transcendent religious consensus, the community idolizes “unity” while still accommodating great diversity. For example:

- When Rome lost its localized ancestral religion and turned into a vast empire, it instituted emperor worship. The divinized Roman empire was “ecumenical,” that is worldwide Rome tolerated people of all religions, provided they worshipped Caesar as God. Christians who couldn’t do this were put to death.
- Toynbee sees something similar in ancient Egypt, Sumeria, Persia, the Ottoman Empire, the Imperial Dynasties of China, and even the trappings of the worldwide British Empire.

In Today’s postmodern society we are also seeing a new reality emerging—the worship of unity, which will ultimately result in the loss of liberty.

- Talks of “global unity” by environmentalists, New Age theologians, business gurus, rock stars, etc.
- Global economy
- Omenously, an ecumenical movement to unite all *religions*. The “ecumenical movement” that was constructed during the Modernist era (by liberal theologians) attempted to unite all churches by obliterating their distinct beliefs.

Note that the worship of unity inevitably results in a loss of liberty. Individuality, by definition, must be suppressed if there is to be unity. It has happened before—during the early church, medieval church, communist era. And may happen again—in our time—even in protestant America.

3. Technicalism—“*Idolization of the Invincible Technician.*”

A third alternative to the loss of a transcendent religious faith is the deification of technicians: Technology takes on the functions of religion. The divine attributes of omniscience and omnipotence are ascribed to technology and those who master it. In this scenario, the technicians who invent technology will form a new

priesthood with knowledge inaccessible to the laity—to whom the technology will be as incomprehensible as magic.

Technical experts become the new priests. “Some of our priest-experts are called psychiatrists, some psychologists, some sociologists, some statisticians. The god they serve does not speak of righteousness or goodness or mercy or grace. Their god speaks of efficiency, precision, objectivity. And that is why such concepts as sin and evil disappear in Technopoly. They come from a moral universe that is irrelevant to the theology of expertise. And so the priests of Technopoly call sin “social deviance,” which is a statistical concept, and they call evil “psychopathology,” which is a medical concept. Sin and evil disappear because they cannot be measured and objectified, and therefore cannot be dealt with by experts.” (Neil Postman)²¹

In this kind of culture, we evaluate not in terms of right and wrong, but by circling a number on a ten-point scale. People, feelings, ideas, values all must be *quantified*. We are in the age of statistics—opinion polls, standardized tests, and “assessment instruments”—which purport to measure everything from the quality of our work to our psychological condition.

Traditional symbols, such as those of religion, are not repudiated; rather they are trivialized. Statistics reduce beliefs to opinions and moral standards to personal preferences. The Word of God has been conveniently ignored as the basis of all doctrines and practices.

Where does the Emergent Church come into all these?

The Emergent Church

The Emerging church (sometimes referred to as the Emergent movement) is a Christian movement of the late 20th and early 21st century that crosses a number of theological boundaries: participants can be described as evangelical, post-evangelical, liberal, post-liberal, charismatic, neocharismatic and post-charismatic. Participants seek to live their faith in what they believe to be a "postmodern" society.

Proponents of this movement call it a "conversation" to emphasize its developing and decentralized nature, its vast range of standpoints and its commitment to dialogue. What those involved in the conversation mostly agree on is their disillusionment with the organized and institutional church and their support for the deconstruction of modern Christian worship, modern evangelism, and the nature of modern Christian community.

Emerging churches can be found throughout the globe, predominantly in North America, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Africa. Some attend local independent churches or house churches[1][2] labelled "emerging" while others worship in traditional Christian denominations.

The emerging church seeks a post-Christendom approach to being church and mission through: renouncing imperialistic approaches to language and cultural imposition; making 'truth claims' with humility and respect; overcoming the public/private dichotomy; moving church from the center to the margins; moving from a place of privilege in society to one voice amongst many; a transition from control to witness, maintenance to mission and institution to movement

Creative and rediscovered spirituality

This can involve everything from expressive, neocharismatic style of worship and the use of contemporary music and films to more ancient liturgical customs and eclectic expressions of spirituality, with the goal of making the church gathering reflect the local community's tastes.

Emerging church practitioners are happy to take elements of worship from a wide variety of historic traditions, including traditions of the Catholic Church, the Anglican churches, the Orthodox churches, and Celtic Christianity. From these and other religious traditions emerging church groups take, adapt and blend various historic church practices including liturgy, prayer beads, icons, spiritual direction, the labyrinth, and *lectio divina*. The Emerging Church is also sometimes called the "Ancient-Future" church.

²¹ Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 58.

One of the key social drives in Western Post-industrialised countries, is the rise in new/old forms of mysticism. This rise in spirituality appears to be driven by the effects of consumerism, globalisation and advances in information technology. Therefore, the Emerging Church is operating in a new context of postmodern spirituality, as *a new form of mysticism*. This capitalizes on the social shift in starting assumptions from the situation that most are regarded as materialist/atheist (the modern position), to the fact that many people now believe in and are searching for something more spiritual (postmodern view). This has been characterised as a major shift from religion to spirituality.

So, in the new world of 'spiritual tourism', the Emerging Church Movement is seeking to missionally assist people to shift from being spiritual tourists to Christian pilgrims. Many are drawing on ancient Christian resources recontextualised into the contemporary such as contemplation and contemplative forms of prayer, symbolic multi-sensory worship, story telling and many others. This again has required a change in focus as the majority of unchurched and dechurched people are seeking 'something that works' rather than something that is 'true'.

Challenges Raised By Emergent Church to Adventism

There is no doubt that the emergent theology and worldview is now being actively promoted in the certain quarters of the church.

- Innovative Conference, during which Emergent scholars and practitioners are being invited to teach and train our ministers
- Invited to our schools
- Articles are being published in our publications
- Websites promoting emerging church ideas

There are some major concerns we must raise about postmodernism

1. The way of worship and the practice of spirituality

- Books and Articles being published
- New forms of praying
- Spiritual formation, new buzzword for contemplative spirituality

2. Their view of Doctrines

- Doctrines are not important
- Non-dogmatic approach
- Deconstruct modern system so that a new reality will emerge
- On every doctrine, they ask: Is it a salvational issue? (NOTE: every Bible truth is salvational)
- Ridicule former zeal and devotion.
- Make fun of Adventist history.

3. Their view of Lifestyle

- Lifestyle issues are expendable
- Not to be judgmental
- Gospel of tolerance

4. Their view of Missions

- Missions is a dialogue, a conversation—not proclamation
- Evangelism is *missional* (incarnational); instead of a fortress mentality, we permeate and transform.
 - Evangelism is non-measurable; it takes years (hence millions of dollars spent on bogus experiments of church planting techniques)
 - Focus is on the unchurched
 - Kingdom of God is bigger than any denomination and religion (hence no need to emphasize “remnant” teaching of the church).

Downplay or belittle truth; hence they bring non-SDA speakers to show you can be a good Christian without being an SDA

PROCLAIMING MORALITY & TRUTH

In realms of both morality and truth, there is a Trojan horse: Postmodernism's notions that "there are no *moral* absolutes" and that "there are no absolutes" are deceptive Trojan horses constructed by the father of lies. The first claim deals with ethics or morality. The second concerns truth or teachings/doctrines. And these are where the emergent church movement is leading to.

The denial of morality and truth is an important sign of the last days. Have you noticed how we have moved now from relativism in lifestyle (ethics) to doctrine? Cf. 2 Peter 3:3-7:

3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, *walking according to their own lusts*, **4** and saying, "*Where is the promise of His coming?*" For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation." **5** For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, **6** by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. **7** But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

--Opportune time to proclaim the truth

--Rev 14:12—they keep the commandments of God (Ethics) and faith of Jesus (Doctrine)

CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRITUALITY & ITS MANY WAYS OF ENCOUNTERING GOD

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By

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Introduction. Increasingly today, we are hearing such phrases as: New spirituality, postmodern spirituality, creative or rediscovered spirituality, mystical spirituality, contemplative spirituality, spiritual formation, spiritual tourism, etc. What exactly do these mean? And are they compatible with what the Bible itself teaches about spirituality?

Trojan Horse In Business

In business, a **trojan horse** is an advertising offer made by a company that is designed to draw potential customers by offering them cash or something of value for acceptance, but following acceptance, the buyer is forced to spend a much larger amount of money, either by being signed into a lengthy contract, from which exit is difficult, or by having money automatically drawn in some other method. The harmful consequences faced by the customer may include spending far above market rate, large amount of debt, or identity theft.

Victims of trojan horses include those who are searching for bargains or the best price on an item, or those who are financially strapped. Many of these victims end up with overdrawn accounts or over-the-limit on their credit cards due to fees that are automatically charged.

Some of the businesses using trojan horse marketing include banks, internet and cell phone service providers, record and book clubs, and other companies in which the customer will be expected to have a continuing relationship. Banks often offer cash initially for opening an account, but later charge fees in much larger amounts to the account holder. Auto-manufacturers and car dealerships will often advertise free or subsidized gas to car buyers for a certain amount of time, but increase the cost of the car in other ways. Cell phone companies use trojan horse marketing by attempting to sell items like ringtones to customers, who unknowingly are sold many more ringtones over time.

Trojan Horse Marketing is also known as: **Bait and switch; freebie marketing, or teaser rate.** Today's new spiritualities promise Christians a real bargain in their spiritual experience. Tragically, however, they switch the offer, causing victims a tremendous cost.

Buyers Beware: We need to beware of the many "Trojan horses" that are being wheeled into our churches. As documented in the book *Here We Stand: New Trends in the Church*, the Trojan horses are the biblically questionable teachings and practices that are making their way into our institutions and churches.²²

In recent times, however, far more dangerous hollow horses are subtly rolling into the church in the guise of new *spirituality*. Today's Trojan horses have been wheeled from practices in Eastern religions (such as Buddhism and Hinduism), the rehabilitated medieval contemplative spirituality of the Catholic church, the "inner divine light" of Quakerism, and the emerging spirituality recommended by influential emergent theologians and leaders of some mega-churches.

²² "Trojan horses" include: the promotion of evolution as an acceptable doctrine of Creation, the acceptance of homosexuality, unbiblical divorce and remarriage as a valid form of morality, the embrace of new forms of worship, "gospel gimmicks," and entertainment as acceptable forms of worship renewal, church growth, and youth ministry, and a calculated campaign for new models of leadership in the church, in the name of "inclusiveness, balance, gender sensitivity, or diversity" in spiritual leadership at every level of church administration. For more on these, see Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Here We Stand: New Trends in the Church* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2005). See also my "Leadership in the Church: Are We Honestly Mistaken?" *Adventists Affirm* (Spring 2006), pp. 6-24; (available also on the author's website: <http://drpipim.org/leadership-contemporaryissues-97/55-leadership-in-the-church.html>).

Thus, today, we hear phrases such as: inter-spirituality, postmodern spirituality, creative or rediscovered spirituality, mystical spirituality, contemplative spirituality, spiritual directors, spiritual formation, spiritual tourism, experiential spirituality, the silence, the sacred spaces of meditation, and many new forms of enriching one's devotional life.

Could these new ways of being “spiritual” actually be old-fashioned spiritualism disguised in new clothes? Are we honestly-mistaken about today's “God-encounters” and the other attempts to reach higher levels of spirituality? Could these be “the Omega” of deadly heresies? Several years ago, in the face of pantheistic teachings threatening our church, Ellen G. White warned:

Today there are coming into educational institutions and into the churches everywhere spiritualistic teachings that undermine faith in God and in His word. . . . [B]ut however beautifully clothed, this theory is a most dangerous deception. . . . The result of accepting it is separation from God (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 428).

This warning may be more relevant to our times than we may think.²³

The Trojan Horses From the East

The foundation for the new spiritualities was laid in the 1960s and 70s by the pantheistic teachings of the New Age movement which is an adaptation of Buddhist and Hindu religious practices to the western world. This movement is syncretistic, in that it incorporates any number of spiritual and religious ideologies at one time.

The New Age movement is consistently *monistic* (the belief that all of reality is essentially one) and *pantheistic* (the belief that everything, including man himself, is divine). For, if all is one, and there are no distinctions, then all is God. Or, in the words of New Age leader Shirley Maclaine “I am God, because all energy is plugged in to the same source. . . . We are individualized reflections of the God source. God is us and we are God.”²⁴

In recent times, this New Age doctrine has been popularized by Unity minister Eric Butterworth, in his bestselling “inspirational classic” *Discover the Power Within You: A Guide to the Unexplored Depths Within*. He writes:

“The great sin of mankind is not to know the divinity that lies unexpressed within every individual. . . . This basic principle – the Divinity of Man – is the dynamism of Christianity that can save the world and lead mankind to a new level of ‘peace on earth, good will toward men.’”²⁵

Oprah Winfrey spoke for many who have embraced the New Age spirituality, when she endorsed Butterworth's book in the following words on the front cover of the paperback edition (1992)

“This book changed my perspective on life and religion. Eric Butterworth teaches that God isn't ‘up there.’ He exists inside each one of us, and it's up to us to seek the divine within.”

According to this pantheistic view, since human beings are essentially God, spirituality or process of salvation is essentially self-discovery or the quest for the oneness of life. It is seeking to be God. Not godlike, but God. The new spiritualities do not seek to be Christlike, but to develop a mystical “Christ-consciousness.”

²³ Non-Seventh-day Adventist authors are far ahead in documenting and warning against the dangers. See, for example, Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone* (Silverton, Oregon: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2007, 2008); Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing* (Silverton, Oregon: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2002, 2006). I'm indebted to these works for the leads they provide into what is going on.

²⁴ Shirley Maclaine, *Dancing in the Light* (New York: Bantam Doubleday, 1991), 339.

²⁵ Eric Butterworth, *Discover the Power Within You: A Guide to the Unexplored Depths Within* (New York: HarperCollins, 1968), pp. 233, 8.

It should be emphasized that when this new spirituality speaks about its *hunger* or *search* for God it is actually a quest to encounter a supernatural or divine influence (hence “God encounter”). It is also a quest for information about the afterlife, believed to be part of this universal “One” or “essence.”

Advocates believe that they can have their “God encounter” in any of the traditional organized religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.). They also claim that they can be in touch with the supernatural through “ancient religious faiths” like paganism, witchcraft, the occult, and magic. Others believe that the search for “the sacred” can take place within the depths of their very being (i.e., within their gender or sexuality) or in the environment—hence the promotion of feminist, gay/lesbian, and ecological spiritualities.

Since it is a syncretistic movement (i.e., a combination of different systems of philosophical or religious belief or practice), doctrinal teachings are not as important as the “experience” of God. In other words, this mystical spirituality often carries connotations of a believer having a faith more personal, less dogmatic, more open to new ideas and influences, and more pluralistic than the doctrinal/dogmatic faiths of mature religions.

The technical term used is *interspirituality*—the view that all the world’s religions are identical at the mystical level and there therefore, should be solidarity among them. Thus, the new spirituality is ecumenical in nature. It tries to unite all religious faiths at the level of a “God encounter” experience.²⁶

Meditation: The Way to Encounter God

In the new spirituality, the most popular means to encounter God is through *meditation*—understood to mean *the ridding of oneself of all thoughts in order to “still” the mind by putting it in the equivalent of pause or neutral*. Meditation is the mystical practice designed to experience altered states of consciousness that allow a person to have an esoteric experience. This religious experience is, however, deceptively disguised in secular society where meditation is promoted as a neutral exercise for personal benefits of health, relaxation, and improved productivity.

Observe that true Christian meditation, in contrast to the new forms of meditation, is an active thought process, in which the believer seeks to fill his or her mind with truths about God. It is not the emptying of one’s mind. Rather, it is thinking or reflecting on God’s Word, praying and asking God to give us understanding by the Spirit, who has promised to lead us “into all truth” (John 16:13). The product of Christian meditation must always be in harmony with the teachings of God’s Word. It must also lead to an authentic Christian spirituality, lifestyle, and an adoration, praise, and service for Christ.

But in the new spirituality movement, meditation is just the opposite. It is the process by which the mind becomes thoughtless, empty and void. It is like turning a fast-moving stream into a still pond.

The silence refers to the meditation practice of the absence of normal thought. The physical spot where a person goes to engage in the mystical practice of meditation is called the *sacred space*. The “sacred space” can also refer to the actual silence or the state of being during the mystical experience.

The two most common methods used to induce this thoughtless state are *breathing* exercises, where attention is focused on the breath, and *mantras*, which are repeated words or phrases.²⁷ (In the new spirituality within Christian circles these “mantras” go by the label “contemplative prayers.”)

The ultimate goal of the mystical meditation is to link oneself with God (or the divine part of man). It is to become one with the higher self. This “God encounter” experience is referred to by such names as: *awakening, transformation, enlightenment, self-realization, cosmic consciousness, Christ consciousness, and super-consciousness*.

²⁶ Another common expression used is *ancient wisdom*—the view that the supposed laws of the Universe, when mastered, enable one to see one’s own divinity—another word for occultism or metaphysics.

²⁷ The word *mantra* is a Sanskrit word. It comes from two words—*man* (to think) and *tra* (to be liberated from). Thus, the word *mantra* means to escape from thought. By repeating the mantra, either aloud or silently, the word or phrase begins to lose any meaning it once had.

The West Kisses the East

For justifiable reasons, in the 1980s the term New Age movement inspired a sense of dread among many Bible-believing Christians. However, by the end of the 1990s the fear and suspicion had almost abated, and at the beginning of the 21st century the pantheistic teachings and practices of the New Age movement quietly began filtering into Western culture and churches. Today (a decade into the 21st century), these practices of Eastern spirituality are beginning to define the essence of Christianity!

If the foundation for the new spirituality movement was laid by the New Age movement, the impetus for morphing the New Age spirituality into today's Christian churches was made possible by the meeting of a Zen Buddhist and some Roman Catholic monks. Since then Christian churches began adopting the mystical or "interspirituality" techniques of the New Age as valid ways of talking to or encountering God.

"Contemplative prayer" became the term of preference, even though it refers to the same practice of going beyond thought by the use of repeated words or phrases (almost like chanting—whether Eastern [as in mantras] or Western medieval [as in Gregorian chants]).

In 1992, *Newsweek* magazine did a cover story, informing readers about the rise of contemplative spirituality. In it Kenneth Woodward wrote an article titled "Talking to God" in which he observed a shift in Christian paradigm towards ancient mysticism. He described the rise of mystical prayer through the mediation of "spiritual directors"—a new term for what used to be "Gurus" in the Eastern religions and "spiritual guides" in medieval Catholic mysticism.

[S]ilence, appropriate body posture and, above all, emptying the mind through repetition of prayer – have been the practices of mystics in all the great world religions. And they form the basis on which *most modern spiritual directors guide*.²⁸

Again, in September 2005, *Newsweek* carried another special report called "Spirituality in America." The feature story, titled "In Search of the Spiritual," is seventeen pages long, and explains how the Christian mystical movement was growing. It also traces the contemporary prayer movement in the 1960s, to two Catholic monks in Massachusetts (Thomas Keating and William Meninger). It began with the monks' invitation to the great Zen Buddhist master Roshi Sasaki to teach them meditation, and their subsequent discovery in 1974 of a 14th-century Catholic guide to contemplative meditation:

Drawing on that work ["The Cloud of Unknowing"], as well as the writings of the contemplatives Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila, the two monks began teaching *a form of Christian meditation that grew into the worldwide phenomenon known as centering prayer*. Twice a day for 20 minutes, practitioners find a quiet place to sit with their eyes closed and surrender their minds to God. In more than a dozen books and in speeches and retreats that have attracted tens of thousands, Keating has spread the word to a world of "hungry people, looking for a deeper relationship with God."²⁹

Notice the link: Instruction of Catholic monks in the meditation of Zen Buddhism (by Roshi Sasaki), their re-discovery of medieval Roman Catholic mysticism, and now a new form of Christian spirituality ("centering prayer") for a world of "hungry people, looking for a deeper relationship with God."

In fact, Thomas Keating subsequently co-published a book, *Finding Grace at the Center*, with another Catholic monk, Basil Pennington (1931-2005), in which they stated:

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.

²⁸ Kenneth Woodward, "Talking to God," *Newsweek* (January 6, 1992), p. 44; emphasis mine.

²⁹ Jerry Adler, "In Search of the Spiritual," *Newsweek*, September 2005p. 48.

Many Christians who take their prayer life seriously have been greatly helped by Yoga, Zen, TM [Transcendental Meditation] and similar practices, especially where they have been initiated by reliable teachers and have a solidly developed Christian faith to find inner form and meaning to the resulting experiences.³⁰

Since the kiss between Eastern and Western mystical practices, there has been an increasing popularity of the use of rosaries, candles, incense, spiritual directors (a person who promotes or trains people in the spiritual disciplines, including “the silence”), prayer labyrinth, taizé prayer, “centering prayer,” and the *lectio divina*.

Another prominent person who has explained the indebtedness of the new spirituality to other religions is Thomas Merton (1915-1968), a twentieth-century Roman Catholic who had so immersed himself in Buddhism that he claimed he saw no contradiction between Christianity and Buddhism. He writes:

Asia, Zen, Islam, etc. all these come together in my life. It would be *madness* for me to attempt to create a monastic life for myself by excluding all these. I would be less a monk.³¹

In one of his books, Merton sums up the essence of the new spirituality sweeping Christian churches:

“It is a glorious destiny to be a member of the human race, . . . now I realize *what we all are*. . . . If only [people] could 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 which is untouched by sin and by illusions, a point of pure truth. . . . This little point . . . is the pure *glory of God* in us. It is in everybody.³² (emphasis mine)

As a result of these factors, and perhaps many others, practices of contemplative spirituality that used to be in both Eastern religions and medieval Roman Catholic monasteries and convents are now becoming the staple of many Christians, including Protestants.

Mainstreaming the New Spirituality

Contemplative spirituality reaches far beyond the walls of the Catholic Church. Mainline Protestant churches—Episcopalians, United Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, United Church of Christ, etc.—are all into it too. Through them, terms such as contemplative prayer, silence, sacred spaces, centering prayer, breath prayer, and other ideas of Eastern mystical spirituality are making their way into Protestant vocabulary. Let me mention a few notable individuals and institutions that have propagated this new spirituality:

1. Mathew Fox—a writer and Episcopalian priest, is often spoken of as being the proponent of New Age mysticism within Christianity. In *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, he wrote “Divinity is found in all creatures. . . . The Cosmic Christ is the “I am” in every creature.”³³

2. Morton Kelsey—an Episcopal priest and a popular writer among certain Christian thinkers, wrote: “You can find most of the New Age practices in the depth of Christianity. . . . I believe that the Holy One lives in every soul.”³⁴ In his book *New Age Spirituality*, Morton Kelsey asked the question:

³⁰ M. Basil Pennington, Thomas Keating, Thomas El Clarke, *Finding Grace at the Center* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s Publ., 1978), pp. 5-6. According to the 2005 *Newsweek* article referred to earlier, in 1991 alone Keating taught 31,000 people how to “listen to God.” It is *centering prayer*. In fact he wrote a popular book on “centering prayer” titled *Open Mind, Open Heart*.

³¹ Rob Baker and Gray Henry, Editors, *Merton and Sufism* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 199), p. 41.

³² Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Publishers, 1989), pp. 157-158.

³³ Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1980), pp. 65; cf. p. 154. His popular books, *Original Blessing* and *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, are primers for what he calls “creation-centered spirituality.”

³⁴ Morton Kelsey, cited in Charles H. Simpkinson, “In the Spirit of the Early Christians,” *Common Boundary* magazine, Jan./Feb. 1992, p. 19.

How can the Christian community meet the religious needs of modern men and women pointed up by the New Age—needs that are not now being met by most Christian churches?

Each church needs to provide classes in forms of prayer. This is only possible if seminaries are training pastors in prayer, contemplation and meditation, and group process. . . . The church has nothing to fear from the New Age when it preaches, teaches, and heals.³⁵

3. *Spiritual Directors International*—The need to start training pastors in contemplative, New Age spirituality has been answered by the *Spiritual Directors International* (SDI). They offer workshops and training seminars on how to experience this new spirituality. In one national conference in 2005 titled “Exile or Return? Accompanying the Journey into Contemplative Prayer”, the following was presented:

This workshop offers an opportunity to study and experience the director’s role in a person’s move into the beginning and early stages of contemplative prayer, silence, and openness to new sorts of praying.³⁶

4. *Shalem Institute (for Spiritual Formation)*—located in Washington DC, is considered one of the leaders centers for contemplative spirituality. Founded by Dr. Tilden Edwards (Episcopal minister) and Gerald May (a psychiatrist), this center’s mission is to spread the practice of the new spirituality prayer to Christianity as a whole. Some Adventists within our ranks have trained at this institute and are teaching the practice to their fellow believers.³⁷

5. *Youth Specialties*—is a youth-oriented organization in North America. For years it has hosted an annual event called the National Pastors Convention, to which many contemplative speakers are invited. They also make available onsite to the conference attendees labyrinth, late-night contemplative prayer sessions, and workshops on yoga, “Creating Sacred Spaces,” “emerging worship,” and “God Encounters: Spiritual Exercise that Transform Students.” Tragically, some youth directors in the Seventh-day Adventist church have attended conferences by “Youth Specialties” and are modeling their youth ministry upon the practices they have learned in those places.

The Quaker Connection

While medieval contemplative spirituality managed to survive within small pockets of Roman Catholicism for centuries, it went largely unnoticed by Evangelicals. However, a few groups, such as the Quakers, the Pentecostal/Charismatic and Signs and Wonders movements, always kept some aspect of mystical spirituality within range of evangelical awareness.

But in 1978, when Richard J. Foster published *Celebration of Discipline, the Path to Spiritual Growth*, classical contemplative spirituality suddenly became popular within Evangelical circles. Hailed by *Christianity Today* as one of the ten best books of the twentieth century, this work and others by Foster,

³⁵ Morton Kelsey, *New Age Spirituality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1st edition, 1992) edited by Duncan S. Ferguson), pp. 56-58. His most influential book is *Other Side of Silence: The Guide to Christian Meditation*. Kelsey also wrote *Companions on the Inner Way: The Art of Spiritual Guidance*—which was considered as a “favorite among spiritual directors.”

³⁶ Spiritual Directors International, Conference Workshops: “Exile or Return? Accompanying the Journey into Contemplative Prayer” (http://www.sdiworld.org/conference_workshops.html). The Spiritual Directors International also offer courses and classes on this new spirituality. One curriculum of its courses and classes includes: Spiritual Practice in Various Faith Traditions; Building a Bridge to Buddhism Ignatian Exercises and Ecology/Cosmology: Spiritual Exercises; the Enneagram and Kabbalah; the Sacred Labyrinth: A New Spiritual Paradigm; Earth Prayer: Celebrating the Interconnection of all Living Beings; Trans-Faith Spirituality.

³⁷ For example, *Still Waters*, “a place for silence, solitude, and spiritual companionship,” is an influential retreat center near Berrien Springs, Michigan. Among the services it offers are worship and *Taijé*, spiritual companionship, etc. Its website indicates that it some of the “Spiritual Directors” at *Still Waters* received their training at the Shalem Institute. See, <http://comebestill.org/formation/direction/companions/>, accessed December 13, 2009.

introduced to the Protestant church the so-called “masters of the interior life” as he likes to call the medieval mystics.³⁸

More than any other person, it is Richard Foster who has been at the forefront of the contemporary contemplative movement since the 1970s. Through his books, seminars, and lectures on “Spiritual Formation” and “Spiritual Discipline”, he has provided a welcome bridge for Evangelicals into contemplative or mystical spirituality. He writes in his *Celebration of Discipline* [1978 edition]: “[W]e should all without shame enroll as apprentices in the school of contemplative prayer.”³⁹

Through his own personal influence, and through his recommendation of the books and works of ancient mystical authors, Richard Foster has helped to promote mystical spirituality among Protestants. The title of one article fittingly refers to Richard Foster as “Evangelicalism’s Mystical Sparkplug.” He himself stated:

When I first began writing in the field in the late 70s and early 80s the term “Spiritual Formation” was hardly known, except for highly specialized references in relation to the Catholic orders. Today it is a rare person who has not heard the term. Seminary courses in Spiritual Formation proliferate like baby rabbits. Huge numbers are seeking to become certified as Spiritual Directors to answer the cry of multiplied thousands for spiritual direction.⁴⁰

What many readers are, however, unaware of is that Foster is a Quaker (the Religious Society of Friends) minister and scholar. He was trained at George Fox College (now University)—the leading Quaker university in the USA. One website calls him “perhaps the best known Quaker in the world today.”

One unique Quaker doctrine is direct revelation via an “inner light.” 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.” In this respect, the teachings of Quakerism are substantially not different from the spirituality promoted in Eastern religions, and which are being imported to Christian churches.

Emerging Protestant Spirituality

It is not just in the Roman Catholic, mainline (liberal) Protestant churches, and the Quaker movement that we find the new (mystical) spirituality. We also find it spreading in Evangelical Protestant churches, including our own Seventh-day Adventist church. In my opinion, the stage for mystical spirituality within Evangelical Protestantism was prepared by three major bridges.

1. Signs and Wonders Movement. The first bridge is the “signs and wonders” movement (sometimes called the “gospel of power” revival movement). By means of its inordinate emphasis on speaking in tongues, visions, dreams, prophecies, healings, prayer warriors, laughing in the spirit, prayer walks, and other forms of prayer offensives, this movement of the 1980s created a fertile environment for people to embrace a mystical contemplative spirituality.⁴¹

³⁸ At least on nine separate occasions in *Celebration of Discipline* Foster cites approvingly of 20th C Roman Catholic mystic Thomas Merton’s *Contemplative Prayer*. Foster considers Merton’s *Contemplative Prayer*, “A must book,” and says of Merton, “Thomas Merton has perhaps done more than any other twentieth-century figure to make the life of prayer widely known and understood.” See, Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith, *Spiritual Classics* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 2000), p. 17. In earlier editions (1990, 1991, 1993), p. 61, he added that his (Merton’s) books are filled with “priceless wisdom for all Christians who long to go deeper in the spiritual life.”

³⁹ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1978 edition), p. 13.

⁴⁰ Richard Foster, “Spiritual Formation: A Pastoral Letter” (January 18, 2004, <http://www.theooze.com/articles/article.cfm?id=744>).

⁴¹ In the Seventh-day Adventist church, the stage was set with the celebration church movement, then celebration-style contemporary worship movement, and in recent times through the emergent scholars.

1. Mega-Churches. The second critical bridge has been constructed by some well-meaning Evangelical, mega-church leaders like Rick Warren (of the “Purpose Driven” fame). Through their influence, these Evangelical thought leaders have introduced many Protestants to mystical meditation practices, such as “contemplative meditation” or “contemplative prayer.” These practices are often disguised as new forms of prayer.

Among the “spiritual exercises” promoted by the new spirituality movement are three popular forms of prayer: “centering prayers,” Jesus Prayer,” and “breath prayers.” For example in the book *Sacred Pathways*, a work describing some “practical spiritual exercises,” and which has been endorsed by Rick Warren, the author teaches readers how to practice “centering prayers.”

It is particularly difficult to describe this type of prayer in writing, as it is best taught in person. In general however, centering prayer works like this: Choose a word (*Jesus* or *Father*, for example) as a focus for contemplative prayer. Repeat the word silently in your mind for a set amount of time (say, twenty minutes) until your heart seems to be repeating the word by itself, just as naturally and involuntarily as breathing.⁴²

Observe that, but for the Christian words used (*Jesus* or *Father*), the practice of “centering prayer” is essentially similar to that in Eastern-style meditation or chanting). One special form of the centering prayer is the “Jesus prayer.” Here, the prayer *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner* is often abbreviated to *Jesus*.

Rick Warren’s endorsement of “contemplative prayer” is also seen in his positive evaluation of the book *The Soul at Rest: A Journey into Contemplative Prayer*.⁴³ The author of the book gives the following instruction on how to prepare for prayer time:

Take deep breaths, concentrating on relaxing your body. Establish a slow, rhythmic pattern. Breathe in God’s peace, and breathe out your stresses, distractions, and fears. Breathe in God’s love, forgiveness, and compassion, and breathe out your sins, failures, and frustrations. Make every effort to “stop the flow of talking going on with you—to slow it down until it comes to a halt.”⁴⁴

One wonders where in the Bible we are asked to partake of God’s love by physically breathing it in or to rid ourselves of sin by breathing it out?

3. Emergent Church & the Call for Worship Renewal. The third major bridge linking the various mystical spiritualities to the Evangelical Protestant world is a theological movement called “the Emergent or Emerging Church”—a movement whose way was paved by a philosophical worldview called postmodernism.⁴⁵

⁴² Gary Thomas, *Sacred Pathways* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000, First Zondervan edition), p. 185. Concerning this book, Rick Warren writes: “Gary has spoken at Saddleback, and I think highly of his work . . . [H]e tells them [readers] how they can make the most of their spiritual journeys. He places an emphasis on practical spiritual exercises.” See, Rick Warren’s Ministry Toolbox, “Book Look” section (Issue #40, 2/20/2002, <http://www.pastors.com/RWMT?ID=40>, accessed 2/2006; See *A Time of Departing*, p. 152

⁴³ Tricia Rhodes, *The Soul at Rest: A Journey into Contemplative Prayer* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1996). Rick Warren endorsed this work in his weekly e-newsletter to pastors (September 3, 2003), when he wrote: “This book is a quiet-time companion for those who hunger for a *greater intimacy with God*. It offers fresh insight into little understood aspects of prayer and introduces a step-by-step journey of learning contemplative prayer” (emphasis mine).

⁴⁴ Tricia Rhodes, *The Soul at Rest: A Journey into Contemplative Prayer*, p. 28.

⁴⁵ Postmodernism believes that (a) there are no *moral* absolutes (i.e., there is no right or wrong or “morality is relative”) and (b) there are no absolutes (there is no absolute truth or “truth is relative”). The first claim deals with *ethics or morality*. The second concerns *truth or teachings/doctrines*.

Space would not allow me to document how the emergent church movement is re-shaping the landscape of biblical spirituality.⁴⁶ I can only refer readers to a special “Emerging Church” issue (Summer 2008) of this magazine for further reading on the subject.

Of particular interest to our discussion is the Emergent Church’s call for “worship renewal” through “sensory spirituality.” By “worship renewal” or “worship awakening,” they mean a worship experience in which the participants will actually “encounter” God through all their physical senses. Words like these are used to describe this: “multi-sensory spirituality,” “experiential spirituality,” “congregational spirituality” or “sensual spirituality.”

A leading Emergent leader, Leonard Sweet, sums it up: “Post-moderns want a God they can feel, taste, touch, hear and smell—a full sensory immersion in the divine.”⁴⁷ Elsewhere in his book *Postmodern Pilgrims*, Sweet refers to this “full sensory spirituality” as “EPIC culture: Experiential, Participatory, Image-Driven, Connected.”⁴⁸

For some, this EPIC culture may include such things as darkening sanctuaries and setting up prayer stations with candles (taizé prayer), use of incense, and icons. For others, the worship includes touch, chanting, *lectio divina* [a form of contemplative prayer], drumming and dancing and other forms of bodily expressions (“body prayer” or “body worship”). One article further backs up the idea that postmoderns are looking for sensual, experiential worship:

Post-moderns prefer to encounter Christ by using all their senses. That’s part of the appeal of classical liturgical or contemplative worship: the incense and candles, making the sign of the cross, the taste and smell of the bread and wine, touching icons and being anointed with oil.⁴⁹

Perceptive readers will recognize that these new forms of worship making their way into Protestant churches are actually a return of Protestants to Roman Catholic worship. When the Emergent church says “ancient future” (or “ancient new” “back to the future”), they are saying we need to look back to Catholicism and the early century monks and mystics for worship or liturgical renewal.

Surprisingly, many Evangelical Protestants are heeding the call to go back to Rome to rediscover spirituality. This fact is captured in an insightful article in *Christianity Today* (February 2008) titled “The Future Lies in the Past.” The caption reads: “Lost Secrets of the Ancient Church: How evangelicals started looking back to move forward.” This eye-opening article not only explains that the “ancient future” church is now a reality but also recognizes that before there can be a full ecumenism among the various religions (interspirituality), all ancient mystical religions must be brought in.⁵⁰

By the way, it is here—in the area of worship renewal and “full sensory spirituality”—that the “worship style” controversy in the Seventh-day Adventist church comes in. Given the fact that these worship renewal movements are leading to mystical spirituality, is it any wonder that we have been warned against such practices?

For example, E. G. White warned that “just before the close of probation,” “every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. . . . And this is called the moving of

⁴⁶ The emergent or emerging church is some Christian’s attempt to speak to the postmodern world. Despite its noble goals, this movement tends to hold Christian faith captive to the postmodern spirit. Thus, the emerging/emergent church movement begins by relativizing truth (doctrines/teachings). But before long, it will also relativize morality (ethics). And when ethics is cut loose from biblical holiness, the result is a mystical, New Age, ecumenical religion.

⁴⁷ From Leonard Sweet’s *Soul Tsunami*, cited by Julie B. Sevig, “Ancient New” (*The Lutheran*, September 2001).

⁴⁸ Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000), p. 28.

⁴⁹ Julie B. Sevig, “Ancient New” (*The Lutheran*, September 2001).

⁵⁰ Chris Armstrong, “The Future Lies in the Past,” *Christianity Today*, February 2008, online edition <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/february/22.22.html>.

the Holy Spirit.” She urged: “No encouragement should be given to this kind of worship.” (*Selected Messages*, 2:36-37).

Unfortunately, our church is already being assaulted by the forces hidden inside the Trojan horses of contemplative spirituality—at a time when prophecy is being fulfilled before our very eyes.

Trojan Horses in Our Church

Over a century ago, Ellen G. White, wrote about an end-time revival of spiritualism. Insightfully, she mentioned how Protestants will play a critical role in the union of the various forms of mystical spirituality:

“The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism [*and its forms of mystical spirituality*]; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power [*Contemplative Spirituality*]; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience. . . .

“While it [spiritualism] formerly denounced Christ and the Bible [*modernism*], it now professes to accept both [*postmodernisms*]. But the Bible is interpreted in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect. . . . Christ is as verily denied as before; but Satan has so blinded the eyes of the people that the deception is not discerned” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 558)

Regrettably, instead of warning the world of this danger, some within our Seventh-day Adventist ranks are actually wheeling the Trojan horses of spiritualism into our church. In the guise of promoting spirituality, they are knowingly or unknowingly promoting practices akin to ancient paganism, and Eastern and Western medieval mysticism.

It is no secret that some of our scholars, chaplains, and leaders have been trained in the schools of contemplative spirituality. Neither is it a secret that some of those promoting mystical spirituality continue to be invited to our national conferences to speak to our ministers. Still, others have been invited to give lectures and chapel services in our denominational institutions to the unsuspecting fertile minds of our young students. And some of our youth leaders are promoting such practices, having borrowed them from Youth Specialties conferences.⁵¹

Books and articles are also being published from our own denominational publishing houses that also promote some practices of contemplative spirituality. For example an article in our *Signs of the Times* magazine encourages the practice of centering prayer.⁵² Another thought leader published a book *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul* (Review & Herald, 2008), which leans heavily on “breath prayers,” *lectio divina* as a form of meditation, “centering down” as a means of avoiding distraction, and “spiritual guides” as “fellow pilgrims . . . help us on our way.” The book also frequently appeals to leaders in the emerging movement, such as Tony Campolo, Dallas Willard, Henri Nouwen, David Benner, Richard Foster, Morton Kelsey, Brother Lawrence, Thomas Keating, and M. Scott Peck.⁵³

⁵¹ The documentation of spiritualism’s Trojan horses disguised as spirituality will await a forthcoming book. A summary will be given at the presentations at this year’s (2009) GYC meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. Mention will be made of the National Conferences on Innovation, organized annually by the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Over the years, the speakers have included such individuals as: Doug Pagitt, Rabbi Marci Prager, Leonard Sweet, Kevin Kaiser, Leanne Kaiser Carlson, Samir Selmanovic, and others. The “National Conferences on Innovation” lists the following as supporters: the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventist, Center for Creative Ministry, Versacare, Kettering Medical Center, Leadership & Educational Administration Department, Andrews University.

⁵² “Stillness Is Golden,” *Signs of the Times*—Australia/New Zealand, Vol. 119 (November 2004), <http://www.signsofthetimes.org.au/archives/2004/november/article5.shtml>.

⁵³ Jon Dybdahl, *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul* (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House Publishing [A division of Review and Herald], 2008), 52, 62, 63, 136, etc. For a devastating critique of this book see John Whitecombe, “How to Still the Hunger of the Soul,” *Adventists Affirm* (Spring 2008), pp. 38-53.

More recently, the book *God Encounters: Pursuing A 24-7 Experience of Jesus* (Pacific Press, 2009) was published, supposedly to enable young adults to explore the spiritual disciplines that will enable them to satisfy their hunger for God. The contributors to the volume share their “journeys”—“where we have found GOD and where we’ve been found by GOD.” A few excerpts from one of the entries in the book will show the extent to which the new spirituality is making its way into the church:

“GEc [GodEncounters] seek to stretch young adults to experience GOD in ways that might at first feel uncomfortable, but will hopefully bring blessing and deeper intimacy with Jesus...

“Prayer room coordinator [Name Given] believes that introducing people to corporate contemplative practices such as *lectio divina* and centering prayer, and also to experimental prayer rooms like the ones set up to allow visitors to pray through the different stations of the Cross and the Old Testament sanctuary, helps to stretch them out of their comfort zones. . . .

“The climax of the prayer experience at GEc was the Boiler Room, a prayer room that stayed open for twenty-four hours strait, through all the watches of the night. The individuals who faithfully kept up the continuous prayer did so privately and in groups; quietly and loudly; mournfully and joyfully; written, spoken, sung, or drawn. . . .

“When I had finished pouring out my heart, I felt free to turn up the celebratory music and dance before GOD, and my time closed with my fiancé and I taking Communion together. I was surprised that I easily spent two hours there.

“Others shared Boiler Room stories with me of finding healing and freedom from destructive thoughts of the past; of attending an anointing workshop and then almost immediately having the chance to anoint someone in the prayer room.”⁵⁴

I want to believe that those who are promoting these practices of contemplative spirituality mean well. But I ask again the questions I raised at the beginning of this article: Are we honestly-mistaken about today’s “God-encounters” and the other attempts to reach higher levels of spirituality? Could these new ways of being “spiritual” be actually old-fashioned spiritualism disguised in new clothes? Could we be witnessing “the Omega” of deadly heresies?

Already there are coming in among our people spiritualistic teachings that will undermine the faith of those who give heed to them. The theory that God is an essence pervading all nature is one of Satan's most subtle devices. It misrepresents God and is a dishonor to His greatness and majesty (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 291).

Our Church today finds itself in exactly the position of the ancient Israelites and the early church—having to hold on to its faith in the midst of hostile pagan neighbors. We face the same threats and temptations to follow the practices, values and beliefs of our neighbors.

Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, . . . [D]o not inquire after their gods, saying, “How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.” *You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way.* . . . “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it. (Deuteronomy 12:30-32).

In the days of our early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers, they had to confront Kellogg’s pantheistic teachings and the mystical spirituality that follows its train. Today, as the new spirituality Trojan horses are wheeled into our churches, we may all do well to heed the warnings we have been given:

“In the book *Living Temple* [promoting Kellogg’s pantheistic theories] there is presented the *alpha of deadly heresies*. The *omega will follow*, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the

⁵⁴ Erika Larson-Hueneke, “In the Presence of GOD and Each Other,” in A. Allan Martin, Shayna Bailey, Lynell LaMountain, eds., *God Encounters: Pursuing A 24-7 Experience of Jesus* (Pacific Press, 2009), p. 11.

warning God has given. . . . *Dangers that we do not now discern* will break upon us, and I greatly desire that they shall not be deceived” (1 *Selected Messages*, p. 200).

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

“This delusion [spiritualism/new spirituality] will spread, and we shall have to contend with it face to face; and *unless we are prepared for it, we shall be ensnared and overcome*. . . . I saw the rapidity with which this delusion was spreading. . . . It seemed that the *whole world was on board*, that there could not be one left” (*Early Writings*, p. 88).

The warnings of Laocöön and Cassandra to the leaders and citizens of Troy are applicable to our own times: “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts.” In our case, we may plead: “Beware of the new spirituality movements. They are Trojan horses.”

Part 5-- Trojan Horses: Counterfeit Revivals, The Emerging Church, & the New Spirituality Movements

PRAYER WARRIORS, PRAYER WALKS, & PRAYER WARFARE

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By

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Introduction. The Christian race is a spiritual warfare. It is a war over self. But this warfare is part of a bigger cosmic warfare between Christ and Satan, Truth and error, and between God's people and the agents of the Enemy. The way Christians engage in this spiritual warfare requires maximum diligence, for the enemy has planted within our ranks a "Trojan horse" filled with deceptive teachings and practices.

One of such practices is the new approach to spiritual warfare that is sweeping through many Christian churches and missions—including our own. One indication of this is the growing popularity of phrases such as: prayer warrior, prayer walk, prayer warfare, anointing, etc. One effective strategy in any kind of warfare is to steal the language of your enemy and use it to confuse his troops. The enemy of our souls has done similarly, by hijacking the biblical teaching of spiritual warfare. The new teaching on spiritual warfare is another Trojan horse being wheeled into our churches.

Trojan Horse Analogies

"Trojan horse" is a *toponym*—i.e., a word that is derived from the name of a place.

1. *In Greek Mythology*—Refers to the large hollow wooden figure of a horse, which was filled with Greek soldiers who helped to destroy the fortified city of Troy. The phrase refers to any deceptive practice. *Message:* Beware! Not everything that claims to be revival is true revival. In true revival, heaven becomes real, Jesus becomes real, the Holy Spirit becomes real, and Soulwinning becomes real.

2. *In Computing*—A bug introduced into a system to enable a hacker to perform undesirable operations to one's files. *Message:* Beware! Spirituality without Ethics leads to antinominianism and mystical, fuzzy, New Age spirituality.

3. *In Urban Dictionary & Realm of Morality*—You think your (Trojan) condoms are safe, but they really are not. *Message:* Beware of the worldview that says there are no moral absolutes, nor absolutes. It introduced postmodernism and the emergent church.

4. *In Business*—for an advertising offer that tricks potential customers into a contractual obligation, but later on forcing the customer to pay a much higher price. It is "bait & switch" advertising. *Message:* "Customer, beware of the new approaches to prayer. Today's contemplative spirituality and its breathing prayer, centering prayer, Jesus prayer, etc. all lead to mysticism and spiritualism.

5. *In Warfare*—a Trojan horse is a clandestine subversive group working within to advance the goals of the enemy without. "Trojan horse" in warfare language can be defined as a *fifth column*, a secret group of people who are willing to cooperate with an aggressor against their own country. Any clandestine group or faction of subversive agents who attempt to undermine a nation's solidarity. "Trojan horse" in warfare is, therefore, any group of secret sympathizers or supporters of an enemy that engage in espionage or sabotage within defense lines or national borders. In the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged, we must not only look out for the enemy out there, but also for the enemy within—the Trojan horse or "fifth column" of deception within God's city. In the words of Ellen G. White, "We have far more to fear from within, than from without." (*Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 122).

New Spiritual Warfare

Since the late 1960s a new approach to spiritual warfare has been sweeping through Christian churches and missions today. I say a "new approach" because, historically, Christians have always believed that there is a

conflict between Christ and Satan, good and evil, and truth and error. They have taught that the weapons of our warfare are:

- total surrender to the living Christ and an abiding faith in Him,
- a devotional life of persevering prayer,
- meditation on God's Word,
- a wholehearted response of worship and witnessing,
- a loving obedience to all of God's commandments,
- and a faithful adherence to the teachings of Scripture.

However, in the new approach to spiritual warfare, we are being told that the traditional Christian teaching on the subject is inadequate, and that we need some extraordinary techniques to combat the enemy who is controlling our lives, homes, neighborhoods, cities, and countries. The battle plan focuses on powerful weapons of prayer, and provides training sessions to prepare mighty warriors for combat against the powers of darkness. The new approach is called *Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare*, or simply "spiritual warfare."

New Fascination with Prayer

In this new approach to spiritual warfare, "*a new-found enthusiasm for prayer has swept many churches.*"

- Think, for example, about how the "Prayer of Jabez" has become very popular.
- Prayer ministries and prayer departments are popping up everywhere
- Warfare prayers are now popular.
- "Prayer warrior" is the name given to those engaged in this warfare prayer. These "prayer warriors" or "Generals of intercession" employ various types of perambulatory prayers to counteract the territorial spirits.
- Prayer walks, praise marches, prayer expeditions, and prayer journeys to "bind" or "break the strong holds of" demons controlling our neighborhoods, cities, regions, and nations, respectively.
- Special techniques or formulas of prayers are being taught. It includes phrases like: "I resist, I pull down, I smash, break and destroy the strongholds of Satan" of darkness. Can we bind Satan?

What really is this strategic-level spiritual warfare? Is it biblical? And should we be involved in it?

What is Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare? Strategic-level spiritual warfare (popular known as spiritual warfare) consists of two major components:

- (a) the *theory or doctrine* of 'strategic-level spirits'; this is a complete belief system about demons
- (b) the *practice* of 'spiritual warfare'; this is implementation or the new strategy designed specifically to defeat demons.

When, therefore, people talk about spiritual warfare or warfare prayer, they are referring to the implementation or the practice of combating the territorial demons. It must, however, be emphasized that behind warfare prayer, prayer warriors, and the different techniques of prayer, is a doctrine or theory of territorial demons.

Doctrine of Territorial Demons. Warfare praying is based on the fundamental assumption that specific demons control certain assigned territories, and that these demons not merely exercise authority over, but reside within, and are restricted to, that specified location. The territories included: geographical, ethnic regions, geopolitical institutions (e.g., nations or governments), topographical features, ecological features, smaller physical objects occupational enterprises, domestic

Implications. Belief in territorial demons suggest that in evangelism, instead of the proclamation of the one Word, we need to devise specialized techniques over each religion, each vocation, each voluntary association, etc.

The Practice of Warfare Prayer. Warfare prayer is an *aggressive* challenge, initiated by the Christian, and directed against the demons. The specific purposes of warfare prayers include:

1. Rebuking or binding the demons who have invaded or indwelt *Christian believers*, rendering them ineffective as Christians or depriving them of God's blessings of health, wealth, prosperity, or success.

2. Setting free *unbelievers* or unsaved souls and taking them “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God”
3. Effecting the receptivity of the gospel by rebuking, binding, or cursing the territorial demons that are believed to control or rule a particular home, region, or territory.

Techniques of Warfare Prayer. Spiritual warfare specialists believe that we must learn formulas to speak to, confront, command, cast out, and verbally assault evil spirits. There are three major steps in warfare prayer.

1. *Seek the name of the ruling spirit.* The proper name is preferable; but if it proves too difficult to obtain, a functional name is (e.g., “demon of lying,” “demon of anger,” “spirit of poverty,” etc.) is better than nothing.
2. *Identify the demon’s territory.* Identifying the territory ensures that the proper demon is selected, and establishes the boundaries for ministry once the demon is bound. Proponents do “spiritual mapping” by collating and plotting the information concerning territorial spirits and their “strongholds” for distribution and wider prayer. Once this is done, the prayer warriors will conduct their *on-site* prayers (such as “prayer walks,” “prayer marches,” “prayer expeditions,” and “prayer journeys”).
3. *Use the demon’s name in direct rebuke.* Their strategy includes speaking to, confronting, or rebuking demons, and commanding them to leave the person or location, and claiming that individual or region for God.

It must be pointed out that the above formula to confronting demons cannot be found in the Bible, but are often employed by spiritual warfare specialists are the same found in pagan and animistic religions. Writes Paul Hiebert:

“[In animism] most things that happen are brought about. . . by spirits, ancestors, ghosts, magic, witchcraft and the stars. It is a world in which God is distant and in which humans are at the mercy of good and evil powers and must defend themselves by means of prayers and chants, charms, medicines and incantations. Power, not truth, is the central human concern in this worldview (Paul Hiebert, “Healing and the Kingdom,” in *Wonders and the World*, p.117).

Some Key Questions

The theory and practice of strategic-level spiritual warfare raises a number of questions for Bible-believing Christians. The following are some of them:

1. Are there territorial demons? The Bible teaches that as a result of the Fall of Adam and Eve, Satan is now the good and ruler of this world. Proponents of spiritual warfare go beyond this teaching when they teach that specific demons control certain assigned territories, and that these demons not merely exercise authority over, but reside within, and are restricted to, that specified location. Among the texts often cited are:

Mark 5:10: “*Don’t send us out of the area*”

Objection: See Luke 8:31, Mark 5:7—the demons were not afraid of deportation, but of torment in Abyss

Acts 19:28, 35: “*Great is Artemis of the Ephesians*”

Objection: See Acts 19:35.

Rev 2:13: “*The place [Pergamum] where Satan dwells*”

Objection: If Pergamum is the assigned territory of Satan, then the whole world would be free from his attack. But the Bible teaches otherwise. Moreover, the book of Revelation makes similar comments about Smyrna, Thyatira, and Philadelphia. Smyrna and Philadelphia each contain a “synagogue of Satan” (Rev 2:9; 3:9), while Thyatira is “where Satan’s secrets” are taught within the Church (Rev 2:24). “By the logic of SLSW, if Satan resides in Pergamum but works in Smyrna, Thyatira and Philadelphia, he does a fair bit of commuting! Besides, if he is ruler of Pergamum, what is he doing interfering in the other cities? Of course this is all rather silly, but it demonstrates the absurdity of the woodenly literalistic interpretative method employed to substantiate SLSW.”

2. Should Christians Engage in Warfare Prayer? Proponents of warfare prayer confront Satan’s demons by (a) naming the spirits, and (b) using the names in direction confrontation and imprecation in an attempt to “bind” the spirits. They often point to the following biblical examples:

Dan 10:13: “*Daniel’s warfare prayer.*”

Objection:

Zech 3:1-2: Warfare prayer in Zechariah.

Objection:

Jude 9: Warfare prayer at burial ground of Moses.

Objection:

3. Should Christians initiate pre-emptive war to attack the “strong holds” of Satan? No!. While the book of Ephesians teaches that there is a war going on, in which “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12), Paul makes certain fact clear:

1. Christ has already defeated Satan.

(a) Through His death, resurrection, and exaltation at the right hand of the Father, Satan has been conquered (READ **Eph 1:20-21**). All power (*dunamis, energieia, kratos, isxus*) belongs not to the spirits or to their mediums, but to Christ, who uses it for the benefit and protection of His followers.

(b) Each person who turns to Christ marks an unmistakable break in the control of the demons over the world (**Eph 2:1-6**). Prior to conversion, the individual was under the control of the evil forces of the world and flesh. But at conversion Christ raises the individual up and exalts him to “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6; cf. Col 2:15; 1:13). We are on the throne with Christ, and conquerors through Him.

(c) The existence of the church, reconstituted from every nation, proclaims the wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities of the universe that Satan’s power has been broken (**Eph 3:8-11**).

Christ’s decisive victory over Satan, through His death on the cross, resurrection and exaltation of Christ, as well as through the conversion of each believer and the universally constituted church, suggests that Satan and his forces have no power or control over us—if we remain in Christ.

2. Though a defeated foe, Satan is still dangerous. Having lost his power and captives taken, Satan is waging a counter attack.

(a) He is like a wounded lion, seeking whom he will devour (1 Pet 5:8)

(b) He is making war with the saints (Rev 12)

3. The Christian’s role in the ongoing battle is to stand firm in the face of Satan’s counter attack. Our role is not offensive, but defensive. We are to “stand fast” or “stand firm”

--“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to **stand** against the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:11);

--“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to **withstand** in the evil day, and having done all to **stand** (Eph 6:13)

--“**Stand** therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of righteousness” (Eph 6:14)

The military metaphor of *standing firm* or *standing fast* portrays soldiers, threatened by the enemy, and engaged in close combat. Under fierce assault, the commander does not order them to launch an offensive, but to **hold their ground**. It is a defensive, not an offensive, posture: “*It involves standing firm, holding one’s position, resisting, not surrendering to the opposition but prevailing against it*” (Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Bible Commentary, p. 442).

Standing Firm: How to Fight the Enemy

Standing firm means to hold the ground already taken in the face of an enemy counter-offensive. This is the appropriate stance for Christians. Christ has won the battle; we are to stand firm in the face of Satanic counter attack.

Stand is a common exhortation in Paul’s writings, and always carries a defensive connotation.

–The Thessalonians are to “stand firm” in the midst of persecution (1Thess 3:8) and in the face of false teaching (2 Thess 2:15)

–The Philippians are to “stand firm” in the midst of persecution, and not to be cowed by fear of their opponents (Phil 1:27-28; 4:1)

- The Colossians are to “stand firm” in all the will of God, lest they be swayed by heresy or seduced by sin (Col 4:12).
- The Corinthians are to “stand firm” in the faith and do all things in the spirit of charity. (1 Corinthians 16:13, 14).

These exhortations to “stand” suggest that the Christians are under attack; it does not call them to initiate an attack against Satan. This is why James says we must “resist the devil” (Jas 4:7). Because the enemy prowls like a hungry lion, Peter says we must be vigilant, resisting and withstanding him (1 Pet 5:8, 9). This is what the Bible teaches about spiritual warfare.

1. The Weapons of Our Warfare. Ephesians 6:10-17 mentions the weapons of our warfare: “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

Indeed, the “weapons of warfare are not carnal” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5), for the combat equipment consists of:

1. The belt of truthfulness
2. The breastplate of righteousness
3. The shoes of the Gospel of peace
4. The shield faith
5. The helmet of salvation
6. The sword of the Spirit

These essential items emphasize the basic Christian disciplines that encourage true character development.

2. The Prayer of the Warfare. It is worthy of note that even though the Ephesians 6 passage mentions both warfare and prayer, it never uses “warfare prayer.” But even if the apostle Paul had mentioned “warfare prayer,” it is important to understand what such a prayer entails. He writes:

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:18-20).

Prayer is not an addition to the spiritual armor identified in Ephesians 6:14-17. Rather, it is the atmosphere in which all the fighting should take place. As we put on the full armor and as we undergo the demands of the warfare, we must at the same time (and at all times) be engaged in prayer. Since all of us are engaged in the spiritual battle, the prayer in the warfare is for all—not some elite “prayer warriors” or some “generals of intercession.”

We can only highlight certain aspects from the above passage:⁵⁵

1. Variety of prayer—“all prayer and supplication”—general and specific requests; prayer is not limited to some set formula.
2. Frequency of prayer—“praying always”—is not some 30-day “prayer of Jabez” formulas or techniques, but simply living a life in the presence of God and with an attitude of God-consciousness. Our whole life should be one of communion with God.
3. Power of prayer—“in the Spirit.” Prayer must be consistent with the mind and will of God.
4. Manner of prayer—“and watching thereunto”—vigilance. We are to “watch and pray” (cf. Matthew 26:40, 41).
5. Persistence in prayer—“with all perseverance”—steadfast, unshakable, etc.

⁵⁵ For more on this see John MacArthur, Jr., *How to Meet the Enemy*, pp. 156-169.

6. Specificity in prayer—"and supplication"—specific needs of concern should be mentioned in our prayers.
7. Objects of prayer—"for all saints and for me"—not to Satan and his demons, but on behalf of members of the body of Christ.

3. The Site of the Warfare. The new approach to prayer territorializes not only the demons, but also the power of God. In this connection, it is particularly insightful that the apostle Paul didn't prescribe a particular *site* for prayer at which Christians must engage in some "prayer walks" (in neighborhoods), "praise marches" (in cities), "prayer journeys" (for certain regions), and "prayer expeditions" (to nations). On the contrary, Paul asked the Ephesians to "pray for all the saints and for me."

The fact that Paul regularly prays for people several months' journey away and requests their prayers for him (cf. Ephesians 1:17-19; 3:14-19; 6:18-20), raises questions about any supposed advantages to praying on location. "Not once does Paul pray against Artemis, the alleged territorial spirit of Ephesus. Never does he ask them to pray against the ruling spirit over Rome, from where he is likely to have written this letter. He asks merely that they pray for other Christians as he was praying for them, and that they pray for him to be bold in evangelism."⁵⁶

Conclusion

If ever there was time for God's people to pray, it is now. But the new approach to prayer, as taught by the spiritual warfare movement, is a deceptive ploy by the enemy to confuse and lead God's people to destruction. It is a "Trojan horse." The way to revive our churches is not to import such questionable forms of prayer from other churches.

When the risen Christ gave specific instructions to the lethargic and inactive church of Laodicea (a symbol of God's end-time church), Christ did not ask its pastors, scholars, and members to attend some spiritual warfare seminar to learn how to overcome their lukewarm condition.

--When He wanted to see a revival in the church, He didn't ask a few "prayer warriors" or "prayer coordinators" to be the "generals of intercession."

--And when He wanted His church to be successful in its missions to unentered territories, He didn't encourage some "prayer offensives" that require "prayer walks" around some neighborhoods to "command" or "rebuke" the demons believed to be in control of those neighborhood or houses.

--No one was encouraged to rebuke the "demon of hypocrisy" or the "demon of materialism" that had possessed the church members.

--And there was no need for anyone to conduct some "anointing services" for church members, pews, microphones, and other objects to ensure the receptivity of the Gospel message.

Instead, Christ simply pleaded with the Laodicean church to "**repent**," urging them to buy from Him spiritual resources that are free (Revelation 3:18, 19).

This is also our need today. For the real spiritual warfare is a battle over *self*—whether we shall totally surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and allow Him to transform our lives. Shall we surrender to Christ's teaching, instead of inventing our own? This warfare has to do with character development, and the site at which it is being waged is our hearts.

The Christian life is a battle and a march. But the victory to be gained is not won by human power. The field of conflict is the domain of the heart. The battle which we have to fight—the greatest battle that was ever fought by man—is the surrender of self to the will of God, the yielding of the heart to the sovereignty of love. The old nature, born of blood and of the will of the flesh, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The hereditary tendencies, the former habits, must be given up. (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 141.)

⁵⁶ Lowe, *Territorial Spirits and World Evangelisation*, p. 65.

Part 6-- Trojan Horses: *Counterfeit Revivals, The Emerging Church, & the New Spirituality Movements*

ANCIENT FUTURE: WHICH WAY TO REVIVAL & SPIRITUALITY?

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By

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Introduction. An increasing chorus of voices are calling for revival and spirituality through “worship renewal.” By “worship renewal” or “worship awakening,” they mean is a worship experience in which the participants will actually experience God—“God encounter” through all their physical senses. Words like these are used to describe this: “multi-sensory spirituality,” “experiential spirituality,” “congregational spirituality” or “sensual spirituality”

This quest for sensory spirituality is believed to be found in ancient or medieval liturgical worship. So proponents use the term “ancient future” to describe their effort. Ancient-future” or “ancient new” “back to the future” are some of the oxymoronic terms within postmodern Christianity and the Emergent church.

As we shall discover, this is another Trojan horse.

Recap of Trojan Horse Story

After fighting the soldiers of ancient Troy for 10 years, the Greeks became very weary from battle. They felt that a frontal attack will not do the job. They needed another approach which was more subtle. [Recap of story]

Only two Trojans, Laocoon and Cassandra, spoke out against the horse. They warned the leaders of Troy about the horse, saying, “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts.” But the citizens ignored the warning.

The Trojans celebrated what they thought was their victory, and wheeled the wooden horse into inside the walled city as a gesture of triumph over the Greeks.

That night, after most of Troy was asleep or in a drunken stupor, Sinon the spy let the Greek warriors out from the horse, and they slaughtered the Trojans. Thus, through a covert deception, the Greeks accomplished what they could not do by an overt or direct assault.

It is from this account that we get the “Trojan horse” phrase. The story, even as a parable, applies appropriately to our times—“Beware of Greeks bearing gifts.”

The warning by Laocoon and Cassandra (“Beware of Greeks bearing gifts”) gives us another meaning of the “Trojan Horse” expression. In this usage, a “Trojan horse” term can be invoked as a metaphor of warning in every situation. It is a warning *against a seemingly innocuous but treacherous gift from an enemy*. It refers to a *risky or costly endeavor, that initially looks good and wonderful*.

Additional Lessons from Trojan Horse

1. Courage Rewarded with Death. But before we leave the Trojan story, it is worth remembering the fact that Laocoon was put to death for his efforts to warn Troy. This lone priest lost his life for giving an unpopular

warning.⁵⁷ Parallels in contemporary Adventism, to be sure, need not be fabricated! (how faithful church members are being persecuted, and in some cases wrongly disfellowshipped)

2. Original Walls Removed. Another fascinating feature of the Trojan epic is that in order to take the horse within the walls, the Trojans had to remove the lintel over the Scean Gate because the horse was too large to otherwise fit. According to versions of the Trojan story, it had been prophesied that if ever the Scean lintel was taken down, Troy would fall. We can compare this to prophecies given to God's people for our protection against falsehood and disobedience, many of which we--like the Trojans--are sadly ignoring. In some cases, we are actually tearing down our own distinctive teachings in order to accommodate the new questionable teachings and practices.

3. Untouchable Sacred Horse. The Trojans considered the horse a sacred animal, which prevented them from breaking it open and discovering Odysseus and his companions. We can clearly see how Satan has used such a tactic against the Seventh-day Adventist Church. By using such sacred themes as love and grace, false teachings and the tolerance thereof have been introduced among us. Even more, some of us think that some ideas or opinions are untouchable simply because they are pushed by PhDs, DMin's, MDs, or some respected church leaders, or because they come from the industrialized regions of the world. In the SDA church, no view is sacrosanct. All must be tested by the Word of God (cf. Acts 17:11; GC 595)

Today's Final Message. Throughout this week, I've been using the "Trojan horse" story as a foil to warn against the dangerous practices and teachings that are making their way in the Christian churches—including our own.

In this final message I'll briefly look at the calls for revival and spirituality through "worship renewal." By "worship renewal" or "worship awakening," they mean a worship experience in which the participants will actually experience God—"God encounter" through all their physical senses. Words like these are used to describe this: "multi-sensory spirituality," "experiential spirituality," "congregational spirituality" or "sensual spirituality"

This quest for sensory spirituality is believed to be found in ancient or medieval liturgical or contemplative worship: the incense and candles, making the sign of the cross, the taste and smell of the bread and wine, touching icons and being anointed with oil. So proponents use the term "ancient future" to describe their effort. Ancient-future" or "ancient new" "back to the future" are some of the oxymoronic terms within postmodern Christianity and the Emergent church.

Ancient Future

When the Emergent church says "ancient future," they are saying we need to go back to former practices, but not as far back as the disciples and Jesus' teachings in the Bible. They say we need also look back to Catholicism and the early century monks and mystics. We must go to medieval practices—Roman Catholic festivals, images of Jesus hanging on the cross and of saints, touching icons of Mary and baby Jesus, smelling incense, and hearing chants and liturgical recitations.

(NB: See the handout on "New Spirituality"—Part 4, where I call attention to a significant conference in the Spring of 2007 at the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College. The theme for that conference was "The Ancient Faith for the Church's Future." This event was so important that *Christianity Today* released an insightful story article in its February 2008 issue, describing what took place. The article was written by Chris Armstrong and was titled "The Future Lies in the Past." The article explained that the "ancient future" church is now a reality. The caption reads: "Lost Secrets of the Ancient Church: How evangelicals started looking back to move forward." This insightful article is online [<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/february/22.22.html>].)

⁵⁷ Laocoon's role, of course, is not found in the original Homeric tale, but was added later by Arctinus in *The Sack of Ilium* and is included in other post-Aeneid versions of the story.) The alleged supernatural nature of his death (crushed by sea serpents) need not be debated; what seems clear is that this lone priest lost his life for giving an unpopular warning.

Is “sensory worship” the way to renew the church? Can we experience revival and reformation by returning to ancient traditions and medieval festivals? The Bible offers a better alternative.

In today’s presentation, I’ll argue that: Too Learn the way to revival & spirituality, (1) We must go all the way back to the Bible & (2) We must go back to the sanctuary message in the Bible. Instead of going back to early church fathers, medieval Eastern and Western mysticism, monks, etc., let’s go all the way back to the Bible times. And instead of going to medieval worship—feasts of Lent, Ash Wednesday, etc. candles, incense, chanting, etc., let’s go back to the ancient Sanctuary worship.

To illustrate what I mean, I’ll show how the first major Christian revival (Pentecost) was rooted in the above proposal.

Three Facts About the Revival on the Day of Pentecost

Without doubt, the day of Pentecost witnessed the greatest revival in Christian history. It is generally recognized as the birthday of the Christian church, launching the church as a spirit-filled missionary movement.

But do you know what significant event led to this revival? Can you explain why the Holy Spirit was poured out on that particular day?

A careful study of Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 reveals three important facts about the revival that took place on the day of Pentecost:

(i) It focused on Scripture; it was actually a Bible study; Peter’s Pentecostal sermon is captured in twenty-six verses (Acts 2:14-36, 38-40). Of the 26 verses that captures the sermon on the day of Pentecost, 13 verses (or half) consisted of direct quotations of Old Testament passages. He quoted from Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:16-21), Psalm 16:8-11 (Acts 2:25-28), and Psalm 110:1 (Acts 2:34-35). Of the remaining 13 verses, 11 are devoted to an exposition/explanation of those Old Testament passages, and 2 verses were direct appeal (vvs. 38-40).

In other words, the sermon that brought about a revival and 3,000 baptisms on the day of Pentecost, consisted of thirteen verses of Bible quotations and thirteen verses of exposition on those Old Testament Scriptures!! It was a Bible-based message. Peter did not waste the time of his congregation by telling jokes and stories.

(ii) It focused on “present truth”; the apostle explained to the people the prophetic significance of events taking place in their day. But Peter correctly understood that what had happened was a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. In Acts 2:14-18, Peter quoted from Joel 2:28-29—to show that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was prophesied by Joel the prophet. Notice that besides Joel, other prophets also prophesied about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (cf. Isaiah (32:15; 44:3); Ezekiel (39:28, 29); Hosea (6:3); John the Baptist (Luke 3:16; Mk 1:8), and Jesus Himself (Luke 24:44-49).

(iii) It focused on Jesus; the people saw Jesus Christ in His true light. On the day of Pentecost, as Peter preached his Bible-based sermon, those who listened to his message caught a glimpse of Jesus Christ in a completely new light. They saw Jesus as Savior and Lord. In **Acts 2:22-33**, Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-11 to show that Jesus of Nazareth, the Carpenter from Galilee who was crucified on passover Friday, was actually Israel’s promised Messiah. Unlike king David’s body which was buried and which saw decay, the body of Jesus Christ, the true “Son of David,” did not to see decay. For He rose triumphantly from the grave.

Later in **Acts 2:34-35**, Peter also quoted Psalm 110:1 to show that Jesus was not just the “Son of David,” but was greater than David. He was the “Lord of David,” who had been exalted in heaven, sitting on the His throne at the Father’s right hand. Notice carefully the use of the idiomatic expression “at the right hand” (or “on the throne”) in verses **25, 30, 33, 34**:

The idiomatic expression “at the right hand” indicates a place of honor and power. In the ancient world, *when a person is described as being “at the right hand” of someone, it suggests greatness, strength, unsurpassed superiority, favor, authority and power. Even today, when we speak of someone being the “right-hand man”*

we mean that that individual possesses tremendous ability or power; without him nothing can be done well.

Thus, to speak of Jesus as being on the right hand of the Father is to speak of His position of special honor and privilege (cf. Ps. 45:9-10; 1 Kings 2:19), and His unsurpassed strength, power and authority--especially His power to save and sustain (cf. Exo 15:6; Ps 74:10-11; 118:15-16; Lam 2:3). Peter summarized:

“Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36). By means of the Old Testament passages, Peter explained that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was *evidence* that Jesus was alive and was seated on the throne.

The Best Kept Secret About Pentecost. Can be found in the most comprehensive Old Testament prophecy about Christ-- prophecy about the major redemptive events in Christ's life--His death, resurrection, ascension, ministry in heaven, second coming? (Isaiah 53? Daniel 9? Psalm 110? Lev 23,? Etc.).

Brief study of Leviticus 23

1. Passover—Fulfilled by Christ (**1 Cor 5:7**)
2. First Fruits/Wave Sheaf—Fulfilled by Christ (**1 Cor 15:20-23**)
3. Pentecost—Fulfilled by Christ ((**Acts 1:4-5, 8; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 2:22ff.; Psalm 24:7-10**))

(DISCUSS FULLY):

The best kept secret regarding what actually took place on the day of Pentecost is that, on that day, in the courts of heaven above, the enthronement of Jesus Christ was completed. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was simply the *evidence* that Christ was now on the throne. It was the first “presidential” act of Christ signaling to the whole world that He was now on the throne, and He would do everything possible to save humanity.

“Christ's ascension to heaven was the signal that His followers were to receive the promised blessing. . . . When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. *As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents*, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. *The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's inauguration was accomplished.* According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as *a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people* (Acts of the Apostles, 38-39, emphasis mine).

“When Christ entered within the heavenly gates, *He was enthroned*, amid the songs of millions of angels. *As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon His followers in rich currents* according to Christ's promise, and they were no more orphans” (The Signs of the Times, May 17, 1899, emphasis mine; cf. Christ's Object Lessons, 120).

Illustration with Joseph: Genesis 45:23-28. The donkeys, wagons, and gifts sent to Jacob was a confirmation that Joseph was not dead, but alive; he was not simply alive, but on the throne. In the same way, the message of Pentecost is that Jesus is alive. . . . He is on the throne. . . and He Has given His Spirit as a Gift to the world.

“*The donation of the Holy Spirit was the greatest gift God could bestow upon finite man.* This is free to all and in this gift there could be no computation; *this endowment specially signaled the enthronement of the only begotten Son of God in His mediatorial kingdom.* In this the gift of the Comforter the Lord God of heaven demonstrates to man the perfect reconciliation which He had effected between Himself and men, which hope, says the apostle, ‘we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered’” (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 6, p. 224, emphasis mine).

“The Holy Spirit was to descend on those who love Christ. By this they would be qualified, in and through the glorification of their Head, to receive every endowment necessary for the fulfilling of their mission. *The Life-*

giver held in His hand not only the keys of death, but a whole heaven of rich blessings. All power in heaven and earth was given to Him, and having taken His place in the heavenly courts, He could dispense these blessings to all who receive Him. The church was baptised with the Spirit's power. The disciples were fitted to go forth and proclaim Christ, first in Jerusalem, where the shameful work of dishonouring the rightful King had been done, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. The evidence of the enthronement of Christ in His mediatorial kingdom was given. God testified to the great work of atonement in reconciling the world to Himself, by giving Christ's followers a true understanding of the kingdom which He was establishing upon the earth, the foundation of which His own hand had laid" (Bible Echo and Signs of the Times, May 22, 1899).

Illustration: Getting my children from Ghana to the USA. It was possible because I had friends in high places. In the same way, we have a Friend in high places—our Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

Some Relevant Implications. The knowledge that Jesus is alive and on the throne has some radical implications for Christians. *Because He is on the throne, all will be well.* No one needs to fear. All power in heaven and on earth has been given to Him. We are in safe hands. Let's look at ten (10) implications of this best kept secret regarding Pentecost (simply look at all the NT references about Christ being on the "right hand" or on the throne).

1. Jesus is now our Prince and Savior, offering repentance and forgiveness to us. Acts 5:30-31
2. Jesus is now our Heavenly High Priest; we can go boldly to the throne of grace. Hebrews 8:1-2; 7:25
3. Jesus is now interceding for us; He will not condemn, but will save all who call upon Him. Romans 8:34 (cf. 9:24)
4. Jesus is in control over all things—human and governmental affairs, angels, principalities, demons, etc. Hebrews 1:3, 13; Eph 1: 20-33; 1 Pet 3:22
5. Jesus can help us live victorious lives, as we set our eyes on things above. Colossians 3:1-2
6. Jesus will help us endure to the end, keeping us from being weary and discouraged in the Christian race Hebrews 12:1-3
7. Jesus will give us courage, even in the face of death; we can cherish a forgiving spirit towards those who are hurting us. Acts 7:55-60
8. Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit to guide us, comfort us, and equip us in all things. Acts 2:33
9. Because Jesus is on the throne, seated at the right hand of the Father, and because Jesus has given us His Holy Spirit, *we should not be moved.* Acts 2:25.
10. *We shall be overcomers*, even as Jesus also overcame and is seated on the throne. Revelation 3:21.

Martin Luther captured these implications of Jesus's sitting on the right: "Though my enemies and all the world oppress me, persecute me, and drive me out, I still have a Lord who is, and wants to be, my Lord because God has promised this to me. He sits higher and is more powerful than they all, and He occupies this high place in order to defend and protect me. Likewise, though I am often assailed by sin and God's wrath, which make my heart heavy and troubled, I shall not on that account be forced into despair. He sits up there also for the purpose of preventing sin, or anything whatever, from damning me or pushing me into hell. Thus, even though death attacks me and devours me, it cannot hold me. I must become alive again because this Lord sits on high and lives eternally" (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 13, p. 242).

Ellen White also understood this important truth:

"The Elder Brother of our race *is by the eternal throne.* He looks upon every soul who is turning his face toward Him as the Savior. He knows by experience what are the weaknesses of humanity, what are our wants, and where lies the strength of our temptations; for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. Are you tempted? He will deliver. Are you weak? He will strengthen. Are you ignorant? He will enlighten. Are you wounded? He will heal. The Lord 'telleteth the number of the stars;' and yet 'He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.' Ps. 147:4, 3. 'Come unto Me,' is His invitation. Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. The heavier your burdens, the more blessed the rest in casting them upon the Burden Bearer. The rest that Christ offers depends upon conditions, but these conditions are plainly specified. They are those which all can comply. He tells us just how His rest is to be found" (*DA*, 329).