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The Roman Catholic Connection with Spiritual Formation & the Emerging Church

(Part-2)

B. Spiritual Formation: This is a term “loaded” with many connotations. To some, Spiritual Formation is regarded as a loosely defined term that can mean Christian maturity or Spiritual growth and development. For them, there is good Spiritual Formation and bad Spiritual Formation. For them, the “bad” Spiritual Formation comes from the oriental religions, but they see in it no connection to the Roman Catholic agenda for today. However, this term has come to mean much more—it is a “new spirituality” which uses a mystical approach to understanding God.

(1) *“Spiritual formation is a rather general term referring to all attempts, means, instructions, and disciplines intended towards deepening of faith and furtherance of spiritual growth. It includes educational endeavors as well as the more intimate and in-depth process of spiritual direction. (Gerald G. May, Care of Mind, Care of Spirit, Harper, 1982, p. 6)*

(2) It involves a “tsunami” of books, DVDs, Christian celebrity endorsements, classes, and retreats for this cultural phenomenon.

(3) We are told that we must do certain things, certain exercises, attend retreats and seminars, and specifically read certain incredibly important books in order to become “Spiritually Formed, mature, and enlightened Christians.

(4) Many of the books written on Spiritual Formation by the modern proponents say that they are only “re-discovering” the rich spiritual heritage of the Desert Fathers and certain Christian mystics from the Dark Ages.

(5) Most people who have studied this movement, agree its current popularity in this country started when **Richard Foster**, a Quaker, wrote the book, *The Path to Spiritual Growth*, Harper, San Francisco, 1978). In his book he gives the “lost” spiritual disciplines that are necessary for Spiritual Formation. Much

of what he wrote was not controversial (we should pray more, slow down, become less materialistic and do community service). Most Christians would believe these acts are the RESULT OR FRUITS of a born-again Christian lifestyle. The big problem with Spiritual Formation is that it makes these activities the WAY to spirituality and not the RESULT. The proponents of Spiritual Formation would say that practicing these spiritual disciplines is learning how to be more spiritual, not trying to earn salvation by works. But, it is almost completely self-focused and works-based.

(6) Richard Foster appears to be considered the current living guru of the Spiritual Formation movement. He is the best-known Quaker in the world today. Considered one of the leading contemporary writers and speakers on Christian spirituality, he is the one most of our Adventist theologians quote and read today. We are told that unless we read his books, we will not really understand God or grow as Christians. Of course he does not accept or teach the foundational pillars of our Seventh-day Adventist beliefs.

(7) Foster lives in Denver, Colorado, graduated from George Fox University in Oregon, received his Doctor of Pastoral Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, and received an honorary doctorate from Houghton College, a Wesleyan college in New York State. His best-known book is *Celebration of Discipline*, where he talks about the disciplines of prayer, fasting, meditation, study, and the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission and service, and the corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance, and celebration. He has written many books, which are considered to be like “holy grail” by many of our Adventist theologians and pastors.

(8) Quakers received that name in derision, because when some of them spoke in a moving way they sometimes shook or trembled “in the power of the Lord.” They have been practicing mysticism for hundreds of years. That’s the whole point of their religion.

(9) Foster is the founder of Renovaré, an organization which holds ecumenical conferences trying to unify Christians across denominational lines for spiritual renewal.

(10) Foster’s Renovaré invites people to make the following commitment: “*In utter dependence upon Jesus Christ as my everliving Savior, Teacher, Lord, and Friend, I will seek continual renewal through: Spiritual exercises, Spiritual gifts, and Acts of service.*” (www.quaker.com)

(11) The Quaker movement began in the mid-17th century in England, when traveling preachers (like George Fox) broke from the Church of England, and tried to convert others to what they thought were the practices of the early church. They stressed personal, direct experience with Christ. Originally, Quakers were known for their noncombatancy in war, plain dress, refusal to swear oaths, and for not using alcohol. They stressed social justice (anti-slavery, prison reform, and taking care of the poor). The Quaker Oats Company was started in 1877 by Henry Seymour, owner of the Quaker Mill Company.

(12) Richard Foster is aggressively working for the worldwide ecumenical movement. He may not realize it, but he is playing totally into the hands of Rome.

(13) The spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting, quietude, and social justice issues) were originally practiced by Catholic mystics in the early centuries. Ignatius Loyola, the Catholic mystic and founder of the Jesuits, refined and codified these disciplines. Of his rules, Rule #1 was that these disciplines were to bring people to the true mother Church, the Roman Catholic Church. And of course, the order he formed was charged with the task of stopping the Protestant Reformation. The Jesuit order Loyola formed was responsible for killing millions of Christians during the Reformation times. Isn't it ironic that modern Protestants, including Seventh-day Adventists, would find it necessary to go back to Ignatius Loyola, and to the modern turn-coat Protestants who have drunk heavily from the corrupt fountains of Loyola's doctrines, to learn how to understand and know God?

(14) Most modern proponents of Spiritual Formation, including, Alex Bryan, love to frequently quote from many Catholic authors as the best source of growing in Christ and learning to understand God.

(15) Richard Foster's main mentor was Henri Nouwen. I purchased two books by Henri J. M. Nouwen at the Walla Walla University Bookstore a few weeks ago. When I attended WWC (1960-65) no such heretical books would ever have been permitted on the campus, much less in the college bookstore. In a book, which is often promoted by our brother, Alex Bryan, we find the following instruction, under the heading The Christian Way:

- *“It is my growing conviction that in Jesus the mystical and the revolutionary ways are not opposites, but two sides of the same human mode of experiential transcendence. I am increasingly convinced that conversion is the individual equivalent of revolution. Therefore every real revolutionary is challenged to be*

a mystic at heart, and one who walks the mystical way is called to unmask the illusory quality of human society... (Jesus) was also a mystic, who did not use his intimate relationship with God to avoid the social evils of his time, but shocked his milieu to the point of being executed as a rebel.” (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer, Ministry in Contemporary Society*, Image Doubleday, 2010; pp. 23-25)

(16) In Nouwen’s book, *Bread for the Journey, A Daybook of Wisdom and Faith*, Harper One, 1997, which is a devotional book with a reading for each day of the year, we find the following advice:

(16a) *“As we grow older we have more and more people to remember, people who have died before us... They can become part of our spiritual communities and gently help us as we make decisions on our journeys. Parents, spouses, children, and friends can become true spiritual companions after they have died. Sometimes they can become even more intimate to us after death than when they were with us in life.”* (August 29 reading) **Why are some Adventist leaders and theologians recommending these books for our young people to study and read?** It only causes confusion, and brings doubt about some of the 5 pillars of Adventist faith, including the non-immortality of the soul.

(16b) In the readings for September 30, and October 4-15, Nouwen explains the Eucharist as actually eating Christ’s Body and drinking His blood. We are here instructed subtly in the doctrine of transubstantiation, one of the main Roman Catholic doctrines for which millions of people were martyred during the Dark Ages!

(16c) In the November 12 reading, Nouwen admonishes us to have an intimate connection with departed saints, since they can inspire us, guide us, encourage us, and give us hope. **Why are our Adventist pastors admonishing us to read this foolishness? Do we want our young people to start praying to the departed “saints?”**

(16d) Henri Jozef Machiel Nouwen, born on 24 January 1932, was a Dutch Catholic priest, and is famous because he wrote about 40 books on spirituality. Many Catholic and Protestant pastors consider his books among their favorites. He taught for about 20 years in Topeka, Kansas, and at the University of Notre Dame, Yale University, and Harvard University. Then he worked with mentally challenged patients in Toronto, Canada. He suffered from serious clinical depression, and even wrote a book about it, the *Inner Voice of Love*. He struggled to reconcile his depression with his Christian faith. He also struggled with his priestly vows of celibacy with his human

desire for physical and emotional intimacy—a frequent theme in his writings. His most cherished books, *The Wounded Healer*, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, are classics. His influence as a teacher and author is considered equal to, or greater, than that of the popular spiritual writers, C. S. Lewis and Thomas Merton.

(16e) One fact that is either overlooked or hidden by those who love Henri Nouwen, is that he struggled with his sexuality. Only those close to him knew he was a homosexual, since he never publically claimed to be homosexual. He did, however, acknowledge his struggle to his friends and in his private journals. Michael Ford wrote the book, *Wounded Prophet*, which was published after Nouwen died. Ford thinks that Nouwen didn't become comfortable with his homosexual orientation until the last few years of his life, and that his homosexuality was at the root of his chronic depression. (Michael Ford, *The Wounded Prophet: A Portrait of Henri J. M. Nouwen*, Doubleday, 1999)

(16f) He died on 21 September 1996 of a sudden heart attack. Amazingly, although he wrote so much about what he considered true spirituality, Ford found that Nouwen never found consistent peace in his own life, rather he was tormented by anxiety, insecurity, loneliness, and struggles with his sexuality. This is hardly the person one would want to go to for advice on how to live a happy, peaceful, Christian life! Yet, Catholic and Protestant leaders (including SDA pastors and theologians) continue to insist that we cannot be “spiritually formed” unless we read and understand Nouwen’s version of spirituality and his understanding of God!

(17) Another big concern about Spiritual Formation is that one its main tenets is that for a person to be spiritually formed, you must have a “spiritual director.” This is about as Catholic as you can get. We don't need another human being to “direct” us in our spiritual life. This takes the place of the Bible and the Holy Spirit. This is why study of Scriptures is not heavily emphasized by the gurus of Spiritual Formation. While Catholics are to confess to their local priest, Protestants can now confess to their Spiritual Director. Amazingly, Adventists are even seeking out trained Spiritual Directors who know nothing of our unique SDA message of the Gospel, and even if they are acquainted with some of our beliefs, they do not accept or believe them. How crazy! People, who have been given a special end-time message of the Gospel in the context of the 3 Angels' Messages to the world, people favored greatly by a modern true prophet, are going to “spiritual directors” for spiritual guidance and coaching! Instead of sharing the good news of the Adventist doctrines with fallen Protestantism, we are going to them for advise and counsel. They

must laugh at our inconsistency and at our failure to understand our main unique mission to the world.

(18) The Roman Catholic ecumenical ideas of emphasizing feelings and limiting the teachings of important Bible doctrines (teachings of Jesus) makes reading and understanding the Holy Word of God a minor issue. This is exactly what Spiritual Formation does—another big tie-in with Catholicism. If doctrine isn't that important, then you might as well believe whatever you want about death, what day on which to worship, etc. There's no need to pay your tithe, since doctrine is not that important. We might as well join all the other churches in an ecumenical unity. Certainly, we wouldn't bother about keeping the Sabbath holy, since doctrines are not that important. If we can connect with Jesus anytime and anywhere in our inner place of divinity that we all supposedly have, there's no need to prepare for Christ's Second Coming.

(19) In Spiritual Formation, if you just follow the directions of your Director or Mentor, you will supposedly become like Jesus. The problem is, only Jesus can make you like Jesus, through the reading, understanding, and application of His Word, the Holy Bible, with the help of the promised Holy Spirit.

(20) This all reminds us of the quote from *Great Controversy*, p. 488: "Satan invents unnumbered schemes to occupy our minds, that they may not dwell upon the very work with which we ought to be best acquainted. The arch deceiver hates the great truths that bring to view an atoning sacrifice and an all-powerful mediator. He knows that with him everything depends on his diverting minds from Jesus and His truth."

(21) As far as the ecumenical designs of Rome and the Spiritual Formation/Emerging Church Movement is concerned, the connection is obvious and we have been warned many years ago what is actually happening right now: "When the leading churches of the United States, uniting upon such points of doctrine as are held by them in common, shall influence the state to enforce their decrees and to sustain their institutions, then Protestant America will have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy, and the infliction of civil penalties upon dissenters will inevitably result." (EGW, *The Great Controversy*, p. 445)

(22) The Emerging Church and Spiritual Formation constantly refers to the spirituality of the early century monks and mystics.

(23) Robert Eugene Webber (b. 27 November 1933, d. 27 April 2007) was one of the key people who started the Emerging Church/Spiritual Formation

Movement. He wrote over 40 books on worship. He said, “*The primary source of spiritual reading is the Bible. But we now recognize that in our love of Scripture we dare not avoid the mystics and the activists. Exposure to the great devotional literature of the church is essential. More and more people are turning to the great work of the mystics. Richard Foster has called us to recover Augustine’s Confessions, Bernard of Clairvaux’s The Steps of Humility...*” (Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*, Baker Academic, 1999; p. 135)

(24) Webber recommends books by many mystics: Thomas van Kempen (1380-1471) a late Medieval Catholic monk, who is most known for his book, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, London: 1783; Eckhart von Hochheim—commonly known as Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), a German theologian, philosopher and mystic, who wrote of the presence of God in the individual soul; Teresa of Avila (b. 28 March 1515, d. 4 October 1582), a prominent Spanish mystic Roman Catholic nun—who wrote the *Counter Reformation*; Juan de Yepes Álvarez—John of the Cross (b. 24 June 1542, d. 14 December 1591), a Spanish mystic, and major figure of the Counter Reformation; Thomas Aquinas (b. 1225, d. 7 March 1274, an Italian Dominican Catholic priest, very influential in scholastic theology, considered the model for those studying to be priests, considered the greatest Catholic theologian and philosopher, taught that heretics should be turned over to the state to be executed, he could supposedly levitate in ecstasy; Thomas Merton (b. 31 January 1915, d. 10 December 1968), an French-born, American Trappist monk of Kentucky, wrote over 70 books on spirituality and social justice, believed and taught interfaith understanding or ecumenism. Webber says these books are absolutely necessary to spirituality.

(25) Webber says, “*To immerse ourselves in these great works is to allow our vision to be expanded by a great treasure... the value of all these books as well as many not mentioned is indispensable to spirituality. Those who neglect these works do so to their harm, and those who read them do so for their inspiration and spiritual growth.*” (Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World*, Baker Academic, 1999; p. 135)

(26) In discussion with Dr. Dave Thomas and Henning Gulddammer from Walla Walla University this year, in answer to my question on whether or not a person can grow in Christ and be spiritually mature by only prayerfully reading the Holy Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, they both answered to me, that it is impossible without the benefit of these wonderful books that Alex Bryan is recommending (Rick Foster, Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, etc.)! I was

shocked, but after reading finding out that Robert E. Webber had said exactly the same thing in his 1999 book quoted above, I realized where they were coming from. Why are they given the responsibility to teach our young people at WWU? What an incredible statement coming from two of the most prominent theologians at Walla Walla University. Alex Bryan echoes the exact same thing, that's why he is frequently quoting the mystic authors as the best thing to read. Emily Flottman recently joined the WWU pastoral staff, and her main stated objective is to promote Spiritual Formation at WWU. It's too bad they doesn't focus on the Bible as the Book to read, instead of promoting all the mystic authors, Catholic priests, and pseudo-Protestant authors of the Emerging Church Movement.

(27) Webber says on p. 85, "A goal for evangelicals in the postmodern world is to accept diversity as a historical reality, but to seek unity in the midst of it. This perspective will allow us to see Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches as various forms of the one true church—all based on apostolic teaching and authority, finding common ground in the faith expressed by classical Christianity."

The Roman Catholic Connection with Spiritual Formation & the Emerging Church

(Part-3)

C. What is Contemplative Spirituality? This is a belief system that uses ancient mystical practices to induce altered states of consciousness ("the silence"). It is rooted in mysticism and the occult, but often is wrapped in Christian terminology. The premise is pantheistic—God in all. (*Lighthouse Trails Research Project*)

The elements of Contemplative Spirituality are:

(1) Spiritual Meditation (spiritual contemplation, centering prayer): This is used for personal renewal and peace. It involves emptying the mind of all thoughts and, mindlessly repeating a single word over and over. This technique of entering into a trance-like state comes from ancient Catholic mystics, who inherited it from Buddhist priests and Hindu gurus. This is essentially a form of self-hypnosis, striving to go deep within oneself, concentration on just one thing or word, disengagement from other stimuli, and a high degree of open-mindedness. "A single word may be repeated over and over for the purpose of "opening the heart up to communion with God."

(Vance Ferrell, *The Truth About Spiritual Formation*, Harvestime Books, 2011; p. 25.

(1a) This is not the same as genuine Biblical Meditation, which involves conscious thought processes as we thoughtfully read and apply the Biblical principles to our lives. It is a thinking mind that is in contact with God—directly with prayer, submitting to God’s control of our lives. When Satan deceived Eve,

(1b) “She seemed to feel a vivifying power, and imagined herself entering upon a higher state of existence. Without a fear she plucked and ate. And now, having herself transgressed, she became the agent of Satan in working the ruin of her husband. In a state of strange, unnatural excitement, with her hands filled with the forbidden fruit, she sought his presence...she felt no evidence of God’s displeasure, but on the contrary realized a delicious, exhilarating influence, thrilling every faculty with new life, such, she imagined, as inspired the heavenly messengers... After his transgression Adam at first imagined himself entering upon a higher state of existence.” (EGW, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 56

(1c) “The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience.” (EGW, *The Great Controversy*, p. 588)

(2) **Lectio Divina:** This involves repeating a word over and over to cause the mind to become confused, so a demon can enter. Brian Flynn was saved out of darkness of being a medium, only to find that some of the same practices he experienced as a medium were being introduced into the Christian Church as forms of legitimate meditation and spirituality. He immediately recognized Lectio Divina, labyrinths, contemplative prayer, and other activities as un-Christian methods of approaching God. The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola are based on this practice, in which certain Bible words are repeated over and over many times in a ‘meditative fashion.’ All other thoughts must be banished from the mind, and prayer directly to God is forbidden. Brian Flynn says that Lectio Divina is occult-based.

(2a) “By taking passages of Scripture, which have an intended meaning, and breaking them down into smaller, separate segments, often for the purpose of chanting over and over, the true meaning of the passages are lost. Rather a form of occult mysticism is practiced—with the hope and intention of gaining a

mystical experience that God never intended when He gave the inspired words to His servants.” (Brian Flynn, *Running Against the Wind: The Transformation of a New Age Medium and His Warning to the Church*, Lighthouse Trails Publishing Company, Silverton, Oregon, 2005; pp. 133-134)

(2b) The person begins by relaxing for a short period, then a single word or brief phrase is softly repeated over and over for up to 45 minutes. Suddenly, the person may experience an exhilarated or high feeling, and imagines that he/she is ‘breaking through to God and becoming holy.’

(2c) Henri Nouwen said, *“The quiet repetition of a single word can help us to descend with the mind into the heart. This repetition has nothing to do with magic. It is not meant to throw a spell on god or force him into hearing us. On the contrary, a word or sentence repeated frequently can help us concentrate, to move to the center, to create an inner stillness and thus to listen to the voice of God.”* (Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart*, pp. 80-81)

(2d) *“But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them.”* (Matthew 6:7-8 KJV) Here again, the Bible totally condemns the type of prayer advocated in Contemplative Prayer by the ancient and modern mystics.

(3) Centering Down and Re-Collection: These terms are often used by Spiritual Directors. The person is supposed to remain absolutely still and should not move any part of the body, focusing on the “silence of the universe.” This “recreating silence” is a New Age term, and has nothing to do with prayerfully seeking God.

(3a) *“This time is for learning to ‘center down,’ or what the contemplatives of the Middle Ages called ‘re-collection.’ It is a time to become still, to enter into the recreating silence, to allow the fragmentation of our minds to become centered.”* (Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, p. 24)

(3b) The mystics love to be silent and empty their minds, but true Christians love to talk to God.

(3c) Jesus said, *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with ALL THY MIND.”* (Matthew 22:37 KJV) How can you love Jesus with all your mind, if you are supposed to empty your mind of all thoughts as you meditate? Obviously, Contemplative Prayer is not Biblical.

(3d) The apostle Paul told Timothy, “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith.” (1 Timothy 6:20-21 KJV)

(4) **Labyrinth Walking:** Leonard Sweet explains this,

(4a) “*Labyrinth walking is an ancient way of praying. Read Lauren Artress’ book, Walking A Sacred Path...*” (Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, p. 432)

(4b) “*The labyrinth is a large, complex spiral circle which is an ancient symbol for the divine mother, the God within, the goddess, the holy in all creation... is truly a tool for transformation, a crucible for change, a blueprint for the sacred meeting of the psyche and the soul, a field of light, a cosmic dance. It is a center for empowering ritual.*” (Lauren Artress, *Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995; p. 67, 176)

(4c) “*You walk to the center of the labyrinth and there at the center, you meet the Divine.*” (Lauren Artress, *Veriditas*, Volume I, No. 2, Summer 1996; p. 18)

(4d) So, we see that the labyrinth teaches that God lives in us, and that God is a woman. This is the pantheistic ‘god within,’ which Satan has always taught.

(4e) “*Through the various myths, rites, and devices of spiritual formation, you become important; you become god.*” (Vance Ferrell, *The Truth About Spiritual Formation*, Harvestime Books, 2011; p. 36)

(4f) Churches all over the world are installing labyrinths in their yards and gardens. It is estimated that there are over 5,000 labyrinths in the United States alone.

(4g) Native American culture had the “medicine wheel and Man in the Maze, which is much like the labyrinth.

(4h) In Deuteronomy 12:1-14; 18:9-13 and Exodus 34:10-17, God forbids the use of anything used in pagan practices.

(5) All these methods and practices of inducing altered states of consciousness are used in an effort to have a spiritual experience with God.

The Roman Catholic Connection with Spiritual Formation & the Emerging Church

(Part-4)

(D) What is the real agenda in Spiritual Formation? The main agenda is to direct you to the Roman Catholic fathers, authors, mystics, and Roman Catholic practices, such as Contemplative Prayer.

(1) “Thomas Merton when asked, ‘How can we best help people attain union with God?’ said, ‘We must tell them that they are already united with God.’ Contemplative prayer is nothing other than ‘coming into consciousness’ of what is already there.” (Brennan Manning, *The Signature of Jesus*, p. 211)

(2) “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 20 minutes) until your heart seems to be repeating the word by itself, just as actually and involuntarily as breathing.” (Gary Thomas, *Sacred Pathways*, p. 185)

(3) “You will never find God by looking outside yourself, you will only find God within. It will only be when you have to experience God in your own heart and let God into the corridor of your heart (or rather found God there) that you will be able to ‘know’ that there is indeed a God, and that you are not separate from God.” (William Shannon, *Silence on Fire*, p. 99)

- William Shannon is an internationally known Thomas Merton Scholar.

(4) “Our spiritual journey, especially contemplative prayer, together with its practices for daily life, are processes of becoming aware of just how profound that unity is with God, ourselves, other people, other living beings, the earth, and all creation.” (Thomas Keating, *The Transformation of Suffering*)

- Here you can see pantheism! This reminds us of all the Spirit of Prophecy warnings about pantheism in the last days.

(5) “It is a glorious destiny to be a member of the human race... now I realize what we all are... if only they could all see themselves as they really are...I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other... at the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusions, a point of pure truth...this little point... is the pure glory

of God in us. It is in everybody." (Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, pp. 157-158)

(5a) Here this famous Catholic monk explains to us that we are really not sinners like the Bible says, but that we are innately good, because God lives in us.

(5b) This is the opposite of what the Holy Bible says:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 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 KJV)

"Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth." (John 9:31 KJV)

"The Lord is far from the wicked: but He heareth the prayer of the righteous." (Proverbs 15:29 KJV)

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Proverbs 28:13 KJV)

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (Psalms 66:18 KJV)

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:20 KJV)

(5c) We "*should all without shame enroll as apprentices in the school of contemplative prayer.*" (Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, p. 13)

- Richard Foster is the Quaker who introduced Contemplative Prayer to the Evangelicals in the 1970s.

(5d) Fortunately, Ellen White was given some instruction on the right way to pray. She says,

"We may meditate upon His works, His mercies, His blessings; but this is not, in the fullest sense, communing with Him. In order to commune with God, we must have something to say to Him concerning our actual life. Prayer is

the opening of the heart to God as to a friend... Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him.” (EGW, *Steps To Christ*, p. 93)

(6) In Spiritual Formation you are taught that the best way to approach and understand God is through another person. This is a Roman Catholic principle.

(7) Students are told to model or imitate their Spiritual Director, and then to teach it to others. The basic idea is that we have to imitate another person to grow spiritually. This displaces Christ as our only Model.

(7a) *“Do not depend upon human beings for spiritual help. Resist the temptation to make flesh your arm. Look to God as children look to an earthly Father. Believe that He loves you and that He will help you, even as He has promised. If you will believe, you will have confidence, trust, reliance, and rich blessings, because you will realize that Christ is the foundation of your faith.”* (EGW, *Gospel Herald*, March 1, 1901)

(7b) We don't need a human priest-confessor. We just need Christ and the Bible. The only Spiritual Formation we need is the living faith in the Word of God, which works by love and purifies the soul. Our prayer life will be directed by the Holy Spirit, and should not involve mummery (the ridiculous repetition of words or phrases). That is all foolishness and pagan-oriented. We should drink from the pure Word of God. We should forget and ignore the desert pagan fathers who were the founders of the Roman Catholic Church, who allegorized Scripture and melded paganism with a false brand of Christianity.

(7c) *“Many will stand in our pulpits with the torch of false prophecy in their hands, kindled from the hellish torch of Satan. If doubts and unbelief are cherished, the faithful ministers will be removed from the people who think they know so much.”* (EGW, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 409-410)

(7d) *“It is a backsliding church that lessens the distance between itself and the Papacy.”* (EGW, *Signs of the Times*, February 19, 1894)

(8) The key element in Spiritual Formation is “Contemplative Spirituality (Contemplative Prayer). This is nothing more than a blend of New Age pagan practices of meditation, which the Roman Catholic monks have used for hundreds of years.

There was an article by Ellen G. White in the *Southern Watchman*, April 4, 1905, in which she given excellent advice, it is entitled, *Sound Doctrine*. I have taken the liberty to add some emphasis by bold letters:

“Living, as we are, in no less momentous a period than that just prior to Christ's second advent, we need to be especially careful to avoid making mistakes similar to those made by the Jews living in the time of Christ's first advent.

Like the Jewish leaders, who gradually devised a formal system of worship, in which the importance of unessential matters was greatly magnified, **some men are now in danger of losing sight of the important truths applicable to this generation, and of seeking for those things that are new, strange, entrancing.**

There is need of cherishing elevated principles. **Those who search after and advocate fanciful ideas need to be taught what is truth before they attempt to teach others. Man-made theories and suppositions are not to be sought after as truth...**

In this age of error, of day-dreaming and reverie, we need to learn the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. Let us strive to be able to say with the apostle, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Lord calls upon us to follow high and noble principles.

Truth, present truth, is all that the word of God represents it to be. **The Lord would have his people keep themselves from all superfluities, from all that tends to mysticism. Let those who are tempted to indulge in fanciful, imaginary doctrines sink the shaft deep into the quarries of heavenly truth, and secure the treasure that means life eternal to the receiver.** In the word there are the most precious truths. These will be found by those who study with earnestness; for heavenly angels will direct the search.

Referring to those who are now living upon the earth, Paul declared: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (EGW, *the Southern Watchman*, April 4, 1905)

Another excellent article by Ellen White is appropriate to quote here:

“I have some things to say to our teachers in reference to the new book, "The Living Temple." Be careful how you sustain the sentiments of this book regarding the personality of God. As the Lord represents matters to me, these sentiments do not bear the endorsement of God. They are a snare that the enemy has prepared for these last days...

We need not the mysticism that is in this book. Those who entertain these sophistries will soon find themselves in a position where the enemy can talk with them, and lead them away from God. It is represented to me that the writer of this book is on a false track. He has lost sight of the distinguishing truths for this time. He knows not whither his steps are tending. **The track of truth lies close beside the track of error, and both tracks may seem to be one to minds which are not worked by the Holy Spirit, and which, therefore, are not quick to discern the difference between truth and error.**” (EGW, *The Review and Herald*, October 22, 1903)

Then we have the famous statement by Ellen White, which our brothers who are involved in Spiritual Formation do not like to hear:

“I am instructed to speak plainly. "Meet it," is the word spoken to me. "Meet it firmly, and without delay." But it is not to be met by our taking our working forces from the field to investigate doctrines and points of difference. We have no such investigation to make. **In the book Living Temple there is presented the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given.**

Our physicians, upon whom important responsibilities rest, should have clear spiritual discernment. They are to stand constantly on guard. Dangers that we do not now discern will soon break upon us, and I greatly desire that they shall not be deceived. I have an intense longing to see them standing free in the Lord. I pray that they may have courage to stand firm for the truth as it is in Jesus, holding fast the beginning of their confidence unto the end.” (EGW, *Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 2*, pp. 49-50)

The Roman Catholic Connection with Spiritual Formation & the Emerging Church

(Part-5)

CONCLUSION: The main concerns of the heroic Reformers, before, during, and after the Protestant Reformation had to do with:

1. Ignoring the Bible as the authoritative Word of God
2. The authority of the pope as ruler over all nations and peoples.
3. The corrupt spiritual practices of the Roman Catholic Church (meditation, flagellation, monkery, Eucharistic adoration, Mass, transubstantiation, Mary veneration, icons, images, wrong forms of prayer—use of *Lectio Divina*, and the ritualistic, liturgical forms of worship (formalism, vestments, etc.)

Because most people of the Dark Ages didn't have access to the Bible, the church gave them these spiritualistic experiences to keep them dependent upon the priests and the church.

So, why are we seeing a return to these mystical experiences and ritualism, when we have the Scriptures? Part of the problems, that we already alluded to, is that most people today have been led to think that all Bibles are the Word of God, and are equally reliable. The Catholic Church was successful in largely displacing the Authorized Version with corrupt modern versions based upon Catholic manuscripts, and now people have a hard time sorting out what is really the Word of God.

“Protestants are following in the steps of papists. Nay, more, they are opening the door for the papacy to regain in Protestant America the supremacy which she has lost in the Old World.” (EGW, *The Great Controversy*, p. 573)

We have been warned that the final test for all Christians will be about WORSHIP. This test coming to all Christians will be about WHO we worship, WHY we worship, WHEN we worship, and HOW we worship.

Spiritual Formation is undermining every foundation of our five pillars of faith of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We need to keep these foundational pillars (waymarks/landmarks) before our people at all times.

Second Coming of Jesus—the “Blessed Hope”

Sinai Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath of the 4th commandment—do not save anyone, but are still binding and protect against Satan

Special Three Angels' Messages—unique mission of Adventists

Sanctuary service in heaven—explains the whole plan of salvation.

State of the dead—protects against spiritualism and Satan's delusions.

Here is the best quote on our Pillars/Landmarks/Waymarks of our Adventist Faith:

“The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God's people upon the earth, [also] the First and Second Angels' Messages and the Third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, "The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." One of the landmarks under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. the light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God's law. The nonimmortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary.” (EGW, Counsels to Writers and Editors, p. 30)

“Let the truths that are the foundation of our faith be kept before the people. Some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. They talk science, and the enemy comes in and gives them an abundance of science; but it is not the science of salvation. It is not the science of humility, of consecration, or of the sanctification of the Spirit. We are now to understand what the pillars of our faith are--the truths that have made us as a people what we are, leading us on step by step.” (Ellen G. White, Review and Herald, May 25, 1905; Counsels to Writers and Editors, 1946, p. 29)

“We are not to receive the words of those who come with a message that contradicts the special points of our faith. They gather together a mass of Scripture, and pile it as proof around their asserted theories. This has been done over and over again during the past fifty years. And while the Scriptures are God's word, and are to be respected, the application of them, if such application moves one pillar from the foundation that God has sustained these

fifty years, is a great mistake. He who makes such an application knows not the wonderful demonstration of the Holy Spirit that gave power and force to the past messages that have come to the people of God.” (Ellen G. White, Manuscript 13, 1889; Counsels to Writers and Editors, p. 31-32)

“The great waymarks of truth, showing us our bearings in prophetic history, are to be carefully guarded, lest they be torn down, and replaced with theories that would bring confusion rather than genuine light. I have been cited to the very erroneous theories that have been presented over and over again. Those who advocated these theories presented Scripture quotations, but they misapplied and misinterpreted them. The theories supposed to be correct were incorrect, and yet many thought them the very theories to be brought before the people. The prophecies of Daniel and John are to be diligently studied...

The people now have a special message to give to the world, the third angel's message. Those who, in their experience, have passed over the ground, and acted a part in the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages, are not so liable to be led into false paths as are those who have not had an experimental knowledge of the people of God...

There have been one and another who in studying their Bibles thought they discovered great light, and new theories, but these have not been correct. The Scripture is all true, but by misapplying the Scripture men arrive at wrong conclusions. We are engaged in a mighty conflict, and it will become more close and determined, as we near the final struggle. We have a sleepless adversary, and he is constantly at work upon human minds that have not had a personal experience in the teachings of the people of God for the past fifty years. Some will take the truth applicable to their time, and place it in the future. Events in the train of prophecy that had their fulfillment away in the past are made future, and thus by these theories the faith of some is undermined...

The burden of the warning now to come to the people of God, nigh and afar off, is the third angel's message. And those who are seeking to understand this message will not be led by the Lord to make an application of the Word that will undermine the foundation and remove the pillars of the faith that has made Seventh-day Adventists what they are today. The truths that have been unfolding in their order, as we have advanced along the line of prophecy revealed in the Word of God, are truth, sacred, eternal truth today. Those who passed over the ground step by step in the past history of our experience, seeing the chain of truth in the prophecies, were prepared to

accept and obey every ray of light. They were praying, fasting, searching, digging for the truth as for hidden treasures, and the Holy Spirit, we know, was teaching and guiding us. Many theories were advanced, bearing a semblance of truth, but so mingled with misinterpreted and misapplied scriptures, that they led to dangerous errors. Very well do we know how every point of truth was established, and the seal set upon it by the Holy Spirit of God. And all the time voices were heard, "Here is the truth," "I have the truth; follow me." (Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, Volume 2, 101-103)

I have attempted to show from the writings of the proponents of Spiritual Formation and the Emerging Church, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the Holy Bible, **the inherent dangers in this type of spiritualism**. I have given evidence of the strong connection between the mysticism, traditionalism, and ritualism of Roman Catholicism and Spiritual Formation.

There's nothing wrong with reading books by non-inspired, or non-Adventist authors. But they have to be chosen for their faithfulness to Scripture, and they should not be promoting Roman Catholic traditions or corrupt doctrines.

One book that used to be in almost every Adventist pastor's library was an excellent book, *Father of the Catholic Church*, by Elliot Joseph Waggoner, Pacific Press, Oakland; 1888. (There are currently 86 of reprints of this book advertised on abebooks.com) Ellet Joseph Waggoner (1855-1916) was the son of Joseph Harvey Waggoner (1820-1189). Dr. Ellet Joseph Waggoner didn't practice medicine very long, and went into evangelism. He is famous for his series of sermons on righteousness by faith, starting in 1888. I would seriously recommend this book to you, since it will explain a lot of what is happening in our church today. I am fortunate to have an original copy in my antiquarian book collection of Reformation and church history books.

The website Keep the Faith, by Hal Mayer, has a sermon, "The Emerging Church and Spiritual Formation," which is very informative.

..... **The End**