

DAVE FIEDLER

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Brought to Light

DAVE FIEDLER

**MODERN
MYSTICISM**

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“Stay away from non-biblical spiritual disciplines or methods of spiritual formation that are rooted in mysticism such as contemplative prayer, centering prayer, and the emerging church movement in which they are promoted.” —*Elder Ted Wilson, General Conference President, July 3, 2010*

Why would Elder Wilson issue such a warning? And what dangers might lurk in these *spiritual disciplines*? This booklet is a look at what we can learn from our own past, and what we are facing today. With limited space we have only scratched the surface, but ample information is readily available to anyone who wishes to delve deeper into the origins and the tendencies of the “new spirituality.”

Not only are some Adventists alarmed, but also other Christians who believe the Bible is the Word of God and “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” than Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

It is love of the Truth, and love for God’s people, that prompts us and many generous supporters to place this booklet in your hands.

—*the publishers*

The warnings of the word of God regarding the perils surrounding the Christian church belong to us today. As in the days of the apostles men tried by tradition and philosophy to destroy faith in the Scriptures, so today, by the pleasing sentiments of higher criticism, evolution, spiritualism, theosophy, and pantheism, the enemy of righteousness is seeking to lead souls into forbidden paths.

—*Acts of the Apostles, 474*

IN the late 1890s and early 1900s, the Seventh-day Adventist Church faced one of its greater challenges with the apostasy of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, who had been for many years a prominent leader in the medical work and in the pioneering manufacture of health foods.

We commonly speak of the doctor's "pantheism" as *the* issue which threatened the church and resulted in his loss of membership, although there were several other issues which seemed more important at the time. But the pantheism issue sticks in our minds for good reason:

I was instructed that certain sentiments in *Living Temple* were the Alpha of a long list of deceptive theories.¹

Be not deceived; many will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. We have now before us the alpha of this danger. The omega will be of a most startling nature.²

In the book *Living Temple* there is presented the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will fol-

1. *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, 343

2. *Selected Messages*, Book One, 197

low, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given.³

Living Temple contains the alpha of these theories. I knew that the omega would follow in a little while; and I trembled for our people.⁴

For anyone with faith in the Spirit of Prophecy, comments like these are a major concern. But what do they mean?

For starters, the “alpha” is a “theory” that is “contained” in Kellogg’s book. It is a “deceptive theory,” one on a long list. And one tied to “seducing spirits and doctrines of devils” at that. In comparison to the “alpha,” we’re told the “omega” will be “startling.”

Perhaps the most basic trait specified in her warnings is the names she used to describe the two heresies. Calling them the “alpha” and the “omega” implies a certain relationship between the two. Actually, these names are an allusion to four verses in Revelation.⁵ In each verse Jesus says “I am the Alpha and Omega.” Twice He goes on to say “the Beginning and the End,” and twice he says “the First and the Last.”

3. *Selected Messages*, Book One, 200

4. *Selected Messages*, Book One, 203

5. Revelation 1:8,11; 21:6; 22:13

Alpha and omega are the first and the last letters in the Greek alphabet, and that's the relationship between the two heresies—first and last. But they are also the beginning and the end, in other words, the one is the logical culmination of the other. This is clarified in another, similar comment she made:

Living Temple contains the alpha of a train of heresies.⁶

What is a “train” of heresies? Ellen White uses the word many times. Of course, sometimes she means a passenger train, but when she uses it in this sense, it means a progression of events or circumstances—usually going from bad to worse.

We cannot gather up the thoughts we have planted in human minds. If they have been evil, we may have set in motion a train of circumstances, a tide of evil, which we are powerless to stay.⁷

A single vindictive feeling indulged may open the way to a train of feelings which will end in murder.⁸

So the picture is this: A hundred years ago, Dr. Kellogg planted an acorn of heresy, and at

6. *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, 247

7. *Prophets and Kings*, 348

8. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, 578

the end of time, it's going to be a full-grown oak tree.

That *can't* be good, which is why Ellen White “trembled for our people.”

The sentiments in *Living Temple* regarding the personality of God have been received even by men who have had a long experience in the truth. When such men consent to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil we are no longer to regard the subject as a matter to be treated with the greatest delicacy. That those whom we thought sound in the faith should have failed to discern the specious, deadly influence of this science of evil, should alarm us as nothing else has alarmed us.⁹

One of these men was Dr. David Paulson. At the time, he was solidly on Kellogg's side. Once he went so far as to lecture the General Conference president that if he didn't accept the “new light” in *Living Temple*, the Lord was going to “roll him in the dust.”

Since Ellen White was certainly not in favor of pantheism, we might expect her to consider Paulson practically her enemy. She didn't though. He was a soul to be saved. More than that, she entrusted him and another doctor

9. *Battle Creek Letters*, 79

friend with the special task of trying to save Dr. Kellogg. She told the two,

I love Dr. Kellogg. He may be lost. I hope and pray not. If he is lost, let him go with you brethren standing by with your hands on his shoulders trying to save him.¹⁰

There's a lesson there that we need to learn. Even if someone is off track (as Kellogg and Paulson clearly were), we should do everything possible to save them from the cliff they are stepping off of—and to help others avoid following them like lemmings over the brink.¹¹

Pantheism? What is it anyway?

Back in his day, people said Dr. Kellogg was a “pantheist.” Today, we’d probably call him a “panentheist,” just because we’ve split hairs a little more finely now.

Basically, pantheism is the belief that God and the creation (i.e., everything in the universe) are synonymous. God, therefore, is interstellar gas, rocks, water, dandelions, puppy dogs, and people. Plus everything else.

10. Sanford P.S. Edwards, *Memoirs of SDA Pioneers*, 13–14

11. See 2 Timothy 2:24–26

Panentheism says the same thing, but adds that God also has an existence independent of the material things of creation.

These ideas ought to raise at least a few questions in the mind of anyone who has studied the Bible. For starters, if God is everywhere, why did Jesus pray “Our Father which art in heaven?”¹² Where is heaven? And where is the sanctuary the Bible talks about?¹³

When Kellogg was asked that, he said, “heaven is where God is, and his temple is here,” and he patted his heart. That, actually, was the whole point of *The Living Temple*; the temple was the human body, and that’s where God lived—as well as in roses, meteorites, and dolphins, of course.

Clearly, both pantheism and panentheism are incompatible with the Bible, and in more ways than in regard to heaven and the sanctuary. Ellen White put it this way:

In *Living Temple* the assertion is made that God is in the flower, in the leaf, in the sinner. But God does not live in the sinner. The Word declares that He abides only in the hearts of those who love Him and do righteousness. God

12. Matthew 6:9

13. See Hebrews 8:1–5

does not abide in the heart of the sinner; it is the enemy who abides there.¹⁴

This statement makes it plain that these beliefs make the mistake as old as mankind, of making no distinction between the sacred and the profane; between those things which God can approve, and those which are opposed to the holy character of His kingdom.

Some of the ideas went even further:

I am instructed to say, The sentiments of those who are searching for advanced scientific ideas are not to be trusted. Such representations as the following are made: "The Father is as the light invisible; the Son is as the light embodied; the Spirit is the light shed abroad." "The Father is like the dew, invisible vapor; the Son is like the dew gathered in beauteous form; the Spirit is like the dew fallen to the seat of life." Another representation: "The Father is like the invisible vapor; the Son is like the leaden cloud; the Spirit is rain fallen and working in refreshing power."

All these spiritualistic representations are simply nothingness. They are imperfect, untrue.¹⁵

Does any of this sound familiar? The train of heresies is still chugging along. The cars come

14. *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, 343

15. *Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 7, 62

from all kinds of religious and spiritualistic traditions. They have all kinds of names, like *meditation*. It is about mind control—an altered state of consciousness. When taken far enough, it ends up in a supposed sense of “oneness” with God and/or the universe. It is a supernatural experience—but who is the originator of this feeling? Some may believe it is God Himself. But it is, in fact, the god of this world—another spirit.

Today this ancient philosophy comes in everything from the obviously Hindu yoga, to children’s cartoons, to some Stress Control teachings, to supposedly “Christian” meditation and “centering prayer.” When carried out fully, the effect is to empty the mind of rational thought until another presence makes itself known.

The Lord made our minds to actively think along with His, not to be shifted into neutral. Other spiritual forces, however, delight to find a house swept clean but not filled with the Truth that sets us free.¹⁶

This opening of the mind to direct influence of the spirits is the underlying concern with all forms of mysticism as these practices gain acceptance among God’s remnant people.

16. Matthew 12:43–45; John 8:32

This meditation, or *contemplation*, is a big part of the “new spirituality” that has been rapidly gaining popularity in other Christian churches, as well as in worldly culture. Meditate and contemplate are words that used to simply mean *to think about*. Now they are mystical practices rooted in spiritualism.

Have you heard or read anyone saying “I’m spiritual, not religious,” lately, as if religion is a bad word? The very word *spiritual* has been hijacked. It used to mean a deep commitment to the God of the Bible. Now it is being redefined to mean an experience or belief in anything metaphysical. The emphasis is on feelings and impressions, not objective, scriptural truth.

The Bible tells us it is the Word that sanctifies;¹⁷ the truth of Jesus that makes our hearts burn within us.¹⁸ Note that it was not an altered state of consciousness that brought forth this response, it was a Bible study!

What are we talking about?

New spirituality, contemplative prayer, the silence, spiritual formation, the list goes on. Each term carries a slightly different meaning, or at

17. John 17:17

18. Luke 24:32

least a slightly different connotation, but there is a great deal of overlap and interconnectedness. One title for the whole package is *mysticism*. That may strike some readers as a negative term, the sort of thing a detractor or opponent of the movement might call it. That's true, but it is also a term that is sometimes claimed with pride by those in favor of these teachings. A particularly well-known example is this classic sound bite:

Mysticism, once cast to the sidelines of the Christian tradition, is now situated in postmodernist culture near the center... In the words of one of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century, Jesuit philosopher of religion/dogmatist Karl Rahner, "The Christian of tomorrow will be a mystic, one who has experienced something, or he will be nothing."¹⁹

Another sort of catch-all title is the "emerging church." Roughly synonymous would be "postmodern spirituality," which used to be called "New Age spirituality" (until "New Age" got a bad name in Christian circles), but then became simply "new spirituality." Closely related is "ancient-modern spirituality." Various practices include "spiritual formation," "spiri-

19. Leonard Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality*, 76

tual direction,” and “meditative” or “contemplative” or “centering prayer.”

What is *spiritual direction*? Different people mean somewhat different things when they use this term. But if we had to argue for a single “authoritative” definition, we probably couldn’t do much better than the one provided by the Coordinating Council of Spiritual Directors International. This is what their website says:

Spiritual direction is the contemplative practice of helping another person or group to awaken to the mystery called God in all of life, and to respond to that discovery in a growing relationship of freedom and commitment.²⁰

In contrast, inspired counsel tells us:

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.²¹

Occasionally you might run into an old fashioned Hindu term like “mantra,” but that has largely been replaced with the Latin term *lectio devina*. In this “divine reading” practice

20. sdiworld.org/find-a-spiritual-director/what-is-spiritual-direction

21. *The Gospel Herald*, March 1, 1901

you take one or two words from a passage of scripture, and repeat them over and over, (like a Hindu mantra) until they lose all meaning and the mind is emptied.

This experience itself has a number of names: centering, oneness, *the silence*. There is a tendency in these circles to change the language every few years. By the time concerned people start pointing out objectionable features, the terms may have changed. You might think it's gone extinct, but odds are it's just been reincarnated under another name.

Regardless of what it is called at any given moment, it can be discerned when something is not only unbiblical but based on pagan or ritualistic forms of religion. *The Jesus Prayer*, observing Lent, walking a labyrinth, chanting a mantra—all are forms of works that are rooted in darkness, like the “vain repetitions” of Matthew 6:7. And we are to have no fellowship with them.²²

Is this really in our church?

The history of modern-day mysticism within the Adventist Church is a bit mysterious, and yet parts of that history are easily found with an internet search. The mystery lies primarily in

22. Ephesians 5:11

the fact that it has been acknowledged so little in official church publications.

A prime example of that is a fascinating organization named The Leadership Institute.

- TLI was founded in 1989²³ and is a dba entity operated by College & Career Ministries Inc, of Orange, California.
- TLI's founder is "an ordained Adventist minister"²⁴ and an "Adjunct Assistant Professor of Leadership and Christian Formation and Spirituality in Contemporary Culture at Fuller Theological Seminary"²⁵ who "pioneered campus ministries in the Adventist Church for a total of sixteen years before starting the Institute in 1989."²⁶
- The Institute's flagship program—known as "The Journey"—was "set up by the administrators of the Southeastern California Conference.... [and] very significant funding was provided in the conference budget beginning in 1993 and has continued each year since." "Three times each year participants in 'The Journey' meet for a three-day retreat at Pine Springs Ranch, the Southeastern

23. spiritualleadership.com

24. *Adventist Today*, Nov.–Dec. 2002, 22;
atoday.org/article/668/magazine/magazine-pdf-archive

25. spiritualleadership.com/about-us/our-staff-team

26. <http://www.spiritualleadership.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Gen21Syllabus.pdf>, 5

California Conference camp and conference center in the San Jacinto mountains.”²⁷

The “Founder and Executive Director of The Leadership Institute” was listed as the “facilitator/speaker” for the “Principal Spiritual Retreat” held by the Southeastern California Conference Office of Education, March 4–5, 2011, at Pine Springs Ranch.²⁸

One other mention is from a May 23, 2011, article about the Pine Springs Ranch, in which it is said that

“We are privileged to host the Leadership Institute as they nurture the souls of many of SECC’s pastors through the ministry of The Journey (a program of spiritual formation and renewal for conference leaders).”²⁹

The TLI website’s “Our Team” page makes it clear that the organization has close connections to Fuller Theological Seminary. Of the eleven team members, six graduated with ad-

27. *Adventist Today*, Nov.–Dec. 2002, 22;
atoday.org/article/668/magazine/magazine-pdf-archive

28. This information is from a pdf document on secceducation.org. The document showed up as a normal result of a simple Google search, but since it appears to be the minutes of the Education Management Team, the full URL is not given here.

29. secc.adventistfaith.org/news_entries/6363

vanced degrees from Fuller, and four have served as faculty members there.³⁰

The other five team members have degrees or credentials from Pepperdine University, Denver Theological Seminary, the Graduate Theological Foundation, Azusa Pacific University, the Talbot School of Theology, and the Monastery of the Risen Christ.

Of particular note is the Azusa Pacific graduate, described as the senior pastor of a Seventh-day Adventist Church.³¹

Now you may or may not have found any of this interesting, but the point is that The Leadership Institute places a great deal of emphasis on the contemplative and meditative practices so often used to seek supernatural experiences.

Really? How do you know that?

That's a good question. How can you know what someone teaches if you haven't been in the class? A look at curriculum materials is a pretty good guide, and some materials of that sort are

30. For comparison, only eight of the fifty-one "Regular Faculty" of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University have advanced degrees from Fuller.
andrews.edu/academics/bulletin/2012-2013/18personnel/18-09-sem-faculty.pdf

31. spiritualleadership.com/about-us/our-staff-team

available on the TLI website. One such example tells of an individual's experience while walking the path of a labyrinth, and how "God" spoke a series of two-word phrases to her. You might guess the perceived meaning of the following:

"I AM... you are... We are... they are... everything is... I AM."³²

Probably the best way to evaluate the overall tendency of the program, though, is to look at the materials they recommend their students go to for "spiritual growth."

Throughout the materials found on the website, there are frequent references to such publications. As a general matter, these are troubling, for they prominently feature all the main expositors of the fully developed contemplative practices of the emerging church movement. Among the contemporary authors most frequently cited are Henri Nouwen, Thomas Merton, Dallas Willard, Eugene Peterson, N.T. Wright, and Tilden Edwards.

Each of these authors is commonly considered an advocate of the emerging church

32. spiritualleadership.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/EPC_Journal_samples.pdf or web.archive.org/web/20131126061847/spiritualleadership.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/EPC_Journal_samples.pdf

movement. A couple of samples from Henri Nouwen may give an idea of the general direction of their writings:

The God who dwells in our inner sanctuary is the same as the one who dwells in the inner sanctuary of each human being.³³

The quiet repetition of a single word can help us to descend with the mind into the heart... This way of simple prayer... opens us to God's active presence.³⁴

Prayer is "soul work" because our souls are those sacred centers where all is one and God is with us in the most intimate way.³⁵

One troubling recommendation in the TLI literature is Sue Monk Kidd. She was a conservative Baptist... and then a friend gave her a book by Thomas Merton:

Merton's writings were perhaps the most formative works I've ever read. His famous autobiographical book, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, written when he was a young man, had a life-altering effect on me when I read it at the age of twenty-nine.... The book revealed to me the startling reality of the inner life, cracking open a raw longing

33. Henri Nouwen, *Here and Now: Living in the Spirit*, 22

34. Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart*, 81

35. Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey: A Daybook of Wisdom and Faith*, January 15

for the Divine and exposing an irrepressible hunger for that deepest thing in myself.³⁶

The introduction to contemplative life had a profound effect on her. Her perceptions and beliefs all changed drastically. It's really no surprise that she finally "found" what she was looking for:

Today I remember that event for the radiant mystery it was, how I felt myself embraced by Goddess, how I felt myself in touch with the deepest thing I am. It was the moment when, as playwright and poet Ntozake Shange put it, "I found god in myself/ and I loved her/ I loved her fiercely."³⁷

Today she advocates a sort of Unitarian, panentheistic Goddess worship:

Goddess forces us... to take our human lives in our arms and clasp it for the divine life it is....

We will discover the Divine deep within the earth and the cells of our bodies, and we will love her there with all our hearts and all our souls and all our minds.³⁸

But how did this happen? Perhaps her most revealing comment in this regard is the following vignette, set in the middle of a church service:

36. suemonkkidd.com/Firstlight/Excerpts.aspx

37. Sue Monk Kidd, *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, 136

38. Sue Monk Kidd, *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, 161

The minister was preaching. He was holding up a Bible. It was open, perched atop his raised hand as if a blackbird had landed there. He was saying that the Bible was the sole and ultimate authority of the Christian's life. The *sole* and *ultimate* authority.

I remember a feeling rising up from a place about two inches below my navel. It was a passionate, determined feeling, and it spread out from the core of me like a current so that my skin vibrated with it. If feelings could be translated into English, this feeling would have roughly been the word *no!*

It was the purest inner knowing I had experienced, and it was shouting in me *no, no, no!* The ultimate authority of my life is not the Bible; it is not confined between the covers of a book. It is not something written by men and frozen in time. It is not from a source outside myself. *My ultimate authority is the divine voice in my own soul. Period.*³⁹

Such a radical realignment of one's world view, one's confidence in Scripture, is a tragedy. It may seem strange to those who have never dabbled with the devil's bait, but in account after account it is this exhilarating sense of "*inner knowing*" that captivates the unwary.

39. Sue Monk Kidd, *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, 76

LET'S consider another significant proponent of emerging church concepts. In the November 11, 2010, issue of the *Advent Review*, the "Tools of the Trade" column announced a "new discipleship resource." Impressively large in scope and size, the resource is—

called *iFollow...* because it is largely an electronic system published on DVD and via a website, and its focus is "I follow Jesus." It's a resource designed for pastors and lay leaders in local churches to use in small groups, seminars, midweek meetings, new member classes, and one-on-one.

More than 100 units are included in the original release. Each unit has a presenter's guide, handouts for participants, discussion questions for groups, learning activities, and a PowerPoint presentation. The presenter's guide for each unit also includes a list of additional resources related to the particular topic. These tools are all designed to help local leaders encourage and support church members and others in learning to give their lives more fully to Christ and grow in their discipleship.

The complete set of materials addresses the whole of life and seeks to equip believers to share the gifts that Jesus has given them.

Roughly speaking, the purpose and goal expressed above is about the same as some defi-

nitions and explanations of spiritual formation. In what is said, there is nothing to cause concern. Circumstances being what they are in the world and in the church, it is nevertheless wise to consider the content of the *iFollow* program to see what it offers us.

This is easy to do, since—as the *Adventist Review* announcement went on to say—

Anyone who is interested can.... download the original set of materials on the DVD, as well as regular releases of new materials as they are developed.⁴⁰

The website is ifollowdiscipleship.org, and the materials are, indeed, available. These are the results from searches for the major proponents of the emerging church practices:

- Henri Nouwen—fourteen citations, one book recommended once, website listed once
- N.T. Wright—nine citations, four different books recommended a total of twenty-one times, website listed once
- Brian McLaren—six citations, five different books recommended a total of twenty-four times
- Leonard Sweet—four citations, one book recommendation, website listed once

40. *Adventist Review*, November 11, 2010, 28;
archives.adventistreview.org/issue_pdf.php?issue=2010-1536

- Richard Foster—three citations, two different books recommended a total of sixteen times, website listed five times
- Dallas Willard—two citations, six different books recommended a total of sixty-six times

And, if we move beyond personal names in our searching we find the following terms:

- Meditation—one hundred thirty-eight times
- Silence—twenty-two times

Some might say that any concern over these emerging church advocates is a case of guilt by association. But this is not a case of simple association; the figures cited above are not random associations between two publications. Rather, this is a matter of recommendation. These works advocate and provide instruction in dangerous practices commonly used to establish contact with spirits—and they have been recommended to the students of the *iFollow* materials without qualifications or warning.

Recommendations aside, the *iFollow* materials themselves—which should be acknowledged as very good in many respects—have troubling features of their own. Here are a few examples of the practices encouraged:

One essential is meditation. This refers to the mental practice of emptying the mind, quieting the chatter of my thoughts, and entering into mindfulness. I recommend doing it for two periods a day, about 20 minutes in the morning and again in the evening. I sit in an alert manner and concentrate on slowing my breathing. Distractions are noted and let go as I focus on inner quiet.⁴¹

There is a curious contradiction here that crops up several times in the lessons. Meditation is first called “emptying the mind,” but moments later it is described as “entering into mindfulness” (one of the seven factors of enlightenment in Buddhism). In another passage describing this process, we are told that “it takes practice to shift into neutral.”⁴²

The editors make frequent efforts to differentiate the meditation promoted in the lessons from “Eastern” or “New Age” meditation.

Others may try to meditate on nothingness or empty their mind, but Christians must meditate on something, actually, Someone. Fix Jesus’ face in your mind’s eye. Don’t worry, He knows you don’t know what He really looks like, and He doesn’t mind how you imagine Him. Appar-

41. *Mission Group Process, Part Three: Developing a Covenant*, 6

42. *Spiritual Disciplines: Meditation*, 6

ently in Bible times, people meditated out loud. So you could say, or murmur, or whisper one of the names of God.... If you're a visual person, gaze at a lake or stream, or a lit candle. The important thing is to think of something that will help you to concentrate on Him. Not on thoughts about Him or to Him or from Him, not yet, but just on Him. This is where the breathing exercise above can come in. You can concentrate on your breathing going in and out. When intruding thoughts come in, (and they will), calmly and patiently turn your mind back to its focal point. "In the strength of God the imagination can be disciplined to dwell upon things which are pure and heavenly." (White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, Vol 2. 1978, p 595) ⁴³

A careful reading of this instruction should ring some alarm bells. What is being taught is, in fact, in line with Catholic, Buddhist, and New Age practices. And did you notice the use of an inspired quote as if it supports the "spiritual exercise" being described? This is a sad example of mixing truth with error.

This next series of excerpts is from the directions provided for the facilitator of a group activity designed to "drive home the concept that prayer is a two-way conversation":

43. *Spiritual Disciplines: Meditation*, 7

Say the group will get a chance to practice two-way prayer with a Biblical meditation. They will imagine they are personally present at the scene of [whatever miracle you have chosen] and will be able to talk to Jesus about it and see what insights or blessings are revealed to them.

The question here is the source of whatever is “revealed” to the participants. Those “insights or blessings” must come from somewhere. The implication of being “able to talk to Jesus” is clearly that He will reply, hence “Christ” would be the source. This activity is, after all, supposed to “drive home the concept that prayer is a two-way conversation.”

The instructions continue:

Read the following sentence by Ellen White from *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*: “Let us in imagination go back to that scene, and... enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts. Understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons.”

The method suggested in this quotation is, of course, entirely different from that in the exercise. Ellen White encourages her readers to consider the point of view of the original

hearers as a means of more clearly understanding Christ's instruction. Her intent is *not* to "talk to Jesus" and receive *new* instruction.

The exercise continues:

Have them get comfortable and close their eyes. Tell them to try to imagine they are in Palestine in the time of Jesus. If the story you have in mind is in a particular season or place, let them know that. If they wish to try to imagine what it might have been like to be some particular person at the scene, they may do so, or they may simply be themselves, observing the miracle. Allowing them time to think about it, ask them to imagine what they might see (wait) hear (wait), touch (wait), smell (wait), and (if applicable) taste. Give a minute between each, for them to set the scene in their minds. Then, tell the story simply. Ask them to have a two-way conversation with Jesus about what they've just experienced, and remain silent for at least five minutes.⁴⁴

This is classic guided imagery, a well established technique for quieting the thoughts and opening the mind to receive input from an external spirit source. The *iFollow* materials contest this point, asserting that

This is different from what is commonly called "guided imagery," in which a leader actu-

44. *Recovery Ministry, Step Eleven: Keep in Touch*, 10

ally guides what the participants are to imagine, think, or “see.” What would be the dangers, if any, and how does biblical meditation guard against those dangers?⁴⁵

The definition given here is simply inaccurate; the danger is not from the content of what a leader might tell the participants to imagine. It’s from the relaxed mental state which opens the way for the possible mental/emotional/spiritual impact of a supernatural response from an undeniably external source. This doesn’t always happen with guided imagery, of course, just as Ouija boards don’t always exhibit supernatural behavior—but that’s no reason to play with either.

Consider two more passages:

Once a converted, saved, growing, forgiven child of God learns how to see the Bible in a personal light and read all the precious old stories as if they really were written for him, then he is ready to discover the next step. He is ready to learn how he can talk to God and “hear” God’s answer just like all those people in the Bible did.⁴⁶

Sitting quietly in meditation helps us learn to really listen. We may not hear a voice when God

45. *Spiritual Disciplines: Meditation*, 16

46. *Spiritual Disciplines: Meditation*, 8

speaks to us, but quieting the chatter will let us hear God.⁴⁷

What expectations are the editors hoping to raise with these two comments? They might have acknowledged that the prophets of old who heard God's voice didn't do so on their own schedule through means of their own arranging, but there is nothing of the sort.

An expectation that "I am going to hear God" is not a healthy frame of mind. At best, it will lead to disappointment; at worst, it will lead to satanic deception.

And why does the passage say to read the old stories "as if" they were written for us? We are told in no uncertain terms that they were written for us, and the Bible is the voice of God.⁴⁸

The Bible teaches the whole will of God concerning us. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The teaching of this word is exactly that needed in all circumstances in which we may be placed. It is a sufficient rule of faith and practise; for it is the voice of God speak-

47. *Spiritual Disciplines: Meditation*, 2

48. 1 Corinthians 10:11; *Testimonies* vol. 4, 441

ing to the soul....Guided by its precepts, we may render obedience to God's requirements.⁴⁹

We need not the mysticism that is in this book [*Living Temple*]. Those who entertain these sophistries will soon find themselves in a position where the enemy can talk with them, and lead them away from God.⁵⁰

The Search for Revival

There is a lot of call for revival in the church these days, but are we looking in the right places?

One of the most notable efforts to revive the church in recent years is an organization called the One Project. It is a classic case of networking—two friends from a rock band called “Big Face Grace,”⁵¹ two friends chatting over Japanese food,⁵² four post-graduate students from the same doctoral program,⁵³ five

49. *Review and Herald*, December 15, 1896

50. *Review and Herald*, October 22, 1903

51. delicatefade.com/biography.asp?ID=441; see also *Adventist Review*, May 5, 2005, 38; archives.adventistreview.org/issue_pdf.php?issue=2005-1518; registration required; [youtube.com/watch?v=s1ML2-V64_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1ML2-V64_I), or [youtube.com/watch?v=vhpl1Yj5iXY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vhpl1Yj5iXY)

52. *Lake Union Herald*, August 2011, 13; luc.adventist.org/Herald_Site_PDFs/Vol103-08.pdf

53. the1project.org/board/alex.html;
the1project.org/board/terry.html;

friends talking and praying in a hotel room.⁵⁴ They all worked at Adventist universities as pastor or chaplain, and as a group they set their sights on changing the Adventist church.

We need 18- to 22-year-olds trained so that 23- to 35-year-olds can start leading the church. Right away. Then. Now. We need pastorates, pulpits, committees, boards, and initiatives filled with very young adults. Not tokens. Not the one 27-year-old who is really a 77-year-old in a 20-something body. We need holy and hungry, spiritual and sassy, Christ-centered and creative young people. We need the kind who know a lot about the Bible and the culture. We need those who are friends of Jesus and who can easily make friends with those outside the church. A “piece of the pie” was okay in 1990. But times have changed, for the worse. Now we must give them the keys to the bakery before we have to put a going-out-of-business sign on the window.⁵⁵

georgefox.edu/offices/communications/public_info/journalists/09graduates/gradg_other.html;

thelproject.org/board/tim.html;

georgefox.edu/offices/communications/public_info/journalists/2011-spring-graduates/grad_california.html;

thelproject.org/board/sam.html

54. andrews.edu/news/2011/03/one_project.html

55. *Adventist Today*, Winter 2009, 10;

atoday.org/article/668/magazine/magazine-pdf-archive

The group had met in a Denver hotel room in July 2010, and thought others would enjoy the experience of setting time aside for prayer, reflection, and conversation. So they invited friends to Atlanta in February 2011—one hundred seventy came.

After Atlanta, “gatherings” have been held in Helsinki (Finland), Seattle, Sydney (Australia), Copenhagen (Denmark), Chicago, Mjondalen (Norway), Newcastle (Australia), and Newbold College (England). That’s nine major venues in seven countries in two years.

This rapid rise to prominence turned out to be a two-edged sword. As they suddenly became more public personalities, the One Project members came under legitimate scrutiny: Why did four of them take their D.Min. degrees from the openly emergent George Fox Evangelical Seminary?

What was the influence of Leonard Sweet, the main “mentor” of the program at George Fox, and an advocate of contemplative and mystical Christianity?

How could a pastor who had left denominational employment to preside over an “independent, interdenominational, evangelical

church”⁵⁶ possibly be taken directly back into influential pastoral positions at two Adventist university churches, and then—within five years of coming back to the ministry—be seriously considered for a university presidency, and ultimately be appointed president of an Adventist medical college?

Indeed, there were questions. And when this same pastor wrote a book which was met with a rare negative review from the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, the questions increased. What were the concerns of the B.R.I.?

The Green Cord Dream is a book that will primarily appeal to young Adventists, and therein lies its danger.... [for] young and impressionable Adventists will come away from this book with a skewed picture of what Adventism is all about....

Throughout the book there is an implied denigration of the Adventist church and its teachings.... Creation, salvation, the remnant, the sanctuary, and the Spirit of Prophecy, are not opaque matters in Scripture. To give this impression to the young people is doing them a disser-

56. “‘Independent’ means we are our own organization, not legally connected to any other church”; see greatcontroversy.org/reportandreview/offshootpt7.php

vice. It will only further alienate them from studying these doctrines for themselves....

In summary, while *The Green Cord Dream* contains some excellent material, particularly on the issues of violence, health, and the need to put Jesus first, the over-all impression the book conveys of the church and its teachings is not favorable. Is this really what our young people need?⁵⁷

What the B.R.I. has picked up on is something that pervades much of the emerging church movement. The goal is nothing less than deconstruction of the church as we know it, and creation of an ecumenical “church” (more like a social club) that has few if any solid doctrines upon which to rest its foundations. The very word “doctrine” is anathema to many post-moderns, as if the teachings of the Bible are bad because they are divisive—in fact, a two-edged sword.⁵⁸

But the word *doctrine* simply means “teaching,” and Paul tells us that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”⁵⁹ He also writes that there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism,”⁶⁰ and in Romans 6:17 and 18 he

57. The BRI *Newsletter*, Number 42, April 2013;

docstoc.com/docs/document-preview.aspx?doc_id=164523221

58. Hebrews 4:12

59. Romans 10:17

60. Ephesians 4:5

emphasizes the essential nature of true doctrine: “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”

He counsels on the importance of sound doctrine extensively in 1 Timothy chapter 4. It is the source of wisdom and knowledge, and a hedge against the deceptions of the enemy. Indeed, it is by the doctrines of the Bible that we know who Jesus is and why we love and serve Him!

John takes it even further: “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”⁶¹

MUCH like the recommendations in the *iFollow* materials, the One Project frequently promotes ideas more radical than what they themselves explicitly say.

One of the simplest—and potentially most influential—things they do is generously give

61. 2 John 1:9

away books at their gatherings. But even the most cursory of examinations shows that the books given out nearly always go far beyond what is officially endorsed or advocated at the gatherings themselves.

The two most prominent of those gift books are *Simply Jesus* by N.T. Wright, and *I am a Follower* by Leonard Sweet.

According to one of the One Project leaders:

By reading, people will learn and change and transform their lives.⁶²

Since this is obviously true in at least some percentage of cases, why would anyone want to hand out, or even recommend, books tainted with error?

A great deal of ridicule has been directed at those who have encouraged cautious positions on this topic. But they are in good company—the messenger of the Lord said:

Suffer not yourselves to open the lids of a book that is questionable. There is a hellish fascination in the literature of Satan. It is the powerful battery by which he tears down a simple religious faith. Never feel that you are strong enough to read infidel books; for they contain a

62. *Adventist Review*, March 15, 2012;
archives.adventistreview.org/issue_pdf.php?issue=2012-1508

poison like that of asps. They can do you no good, and will assuredly do you harm.⁶³

But why stop with books? Leonard Sweet himself is listed among the speakers for the One Project gathering in Seattle, in February 2014.

Why would they grant him that platform? Perhaps because he has spoken previously at quite a number of Adventist institutions and special events. Few protested then. Will anyone stand up and be counted now?⁶⁴

Of course Dr. Sweet is a soul for whom Christ died as surely as any other. So is every other person mentioned in this booklet. The “battle,” so to speak, is not with them, but with darkness that is disguised as “light.” If anyone knows, it should be Seventh-day Adventists, who have had the Great Controversy laid out before them in clear and brilliant colors.

Our battle is “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers in darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”⁶⁵ Satan’s deceptions are ever more subtle as we near the end of time, but his methods

63. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 93

64. See Ezekiel 33:6

65. 2 Corinthians 11:14; Ephesians 6:12

are still lies and half-truths, just as he used with Eve, and with Jesus Himself.

He appears as an angel of light, and what he says may sound pretty good to those seeking a transcendental experience: “ye shall be as gods.”⁶⁶ But through the influence of false doctrine—the wine of Babylon—he can get us to doubt the true. Once we doubt that the Word of God is the infallible rule of faith and practice our anchor comes loose and we are set adrift.

Even if all the world is saying there are many paths to God, that everyone creates his own “truth,” and there is no absolute right or wrong, the faithful will adhere to “It is written,” for they know that:

The customs, traditions, and doctrines, even of professedly great and good men, must have no weight, until first brought to the infallible test of the law and the testimony. “If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”⁶⁷

Impressions and feelings are no sure evidence that a person is led by the Lord. Satan will, if he

66. Genesis 3:5

67. *Signs of the Times*, July 26, 1883

is unsuspected, give feelings and impressions. These are not safe guides.⁶⁸

Something quite different can be seen in the books previously mentioned, the practices which exalt feeling and subjective experience, and in words one of the One Project founders once wrote:

Scripture is not truth. Jesus is truth, and scripture merely speaks of Him. There is a difference. And He shall be revealed in many odd and interesting places. Are there greater revelations than Scripture? Yes. Jesus, for one. And the Holy Spirit, now, for another. Scripture is our “guide” to the Spirit.⁶⁹

This would leave us free to invent our own Jesus, and call whatever moves us “the Spirit.”

In contrast, here is the beautiful directive of Inspiration:

Christianity is simply living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. We are to believe in, and live in, Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. We have faith in God when we believe His word; we trust and obey

68. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 413

69. reinventingsdawheel.blogspot.ca/2007/07/thoughts-from-harry-potter-agnostic.html or web.archive.org/web/20131120011705/reinventingsdawheel.blogspot.ca/2007/07/thoughts-from-harry-potter-agnostic.html

God when we keep His commandments; and we love God when we love His law.⁷⁰

The new spirituality elevates the subjective “experience” of Jesus (or whatever is being sought) above Scripture, and especially above any “Law of God.” When experience becomes paramount, there is nothing to safeguard the believer from the wiles of Satan, for—much as Sue Monk Kidd said—*all authority comes from within.*

Is There any Word from the Lord?

In His word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative, infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. “Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, R.V.

Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to men through His word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the word to His servants, to

70. *The Review and Herald*, March 25, 1902

illuminate and apply its teachings. And since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the word.

The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. Says the apostle John, “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” 1 John 4:1. And Isaiah declares, “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.

Great reproach has been cast upon the work of the Holy Spirit by the errors of a class that, claiming its enlightenment, profess to have no further need of guidance from the word of God. They are governed by impressions which they regard as the voice of God in the soul. But the spirit that controls them is not the Spirit of God. This following of impressions, to the neglect of the Scriptures, can lead only to confusion, to deception and ruin. It serves only to further the designs of the evil one.⁷¹

71. *The Great Controversy*, (1911), vii–viii

The Seventh-day Adventist movement was raised up for a purpose: to give the final message of warning to a world perishing in sin.⁷² How can we call anyone out of Babylon if we are joined with her ourselves?

When I study the Scriptures, I am alarmed for the Israel of God in these last days. They are exhorted to flee from idolatry. I fear that they are asleep and so conformed to the world that it would be difficult to discern between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not. The distance is widening between Christ and His people, and lessening between them and the world. The marks of distinction between Christ's professed people and the world have almost disappeared. Like ancient Israel, they follow after the abominations of the nations around them.⁷³

God calls for *action*.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

72. Revelation 14:6-12

73. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 277

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.⁷⁴

When the reproach of indolence and slothfulness shall have been wiped away from the church, the Spirit of the Lord will be graciously manifested. Divine power will be revealed. The church will see the providential working of the Lord of hosts. The light of truth will shine forth in clear, strong rays, and, as in the time of the apostles, many souls will turn from error to truth. The earth will be lighted with the glory of the Lord.⁷⁵

In His infinite love God sends us warning after warning through his prophets.⁷⁶ Will we heed them, or will we yearn for Egypt and spend another forty years in the wilderness? May God help us to hasten and not delay His coming!

74. Revelation 3:18–19

75. *Testimonies*, vol. 9, 46

76. 2 Chronicles 20:20

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