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Emergent Worship: A Study on "Contemplation" in the Emerging Church

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Emergent Worship: A Study On
“Contemplation” In The Emerging Church

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Introduction

The Emerging church (EC) movement is a diverse movement in both practices and beliefs. It is a relatively young movement, with origins in the late 1990s.¹ It began on the west coast, but rapidly extended across the United States and abroad. Based on recent studies, the Emerging church leaders noticed a dramatic decline in church attendance among young adults, in particular ages 18-29 during the 1990s. These leaders were also aware of the major cultural shift that has been taking place since the mid-twentieth-century, often referred to by historians, sociologists and other academics as a shift from

¹ The EC is described differently by various groups, the following are differing perspectives:
--For a brief summary of the Emerging Church movement, its origins and major characteristics, see John Jovan Markovic, “The Emerging Church: a Call to Action and Authenticity (Part 1 of 2)” in *Ministry* 82 (March 2010): 18-21; and “The Emergent Theology: Voices of Confusion (Part 2 of 2) in *Ministry* 82 (May 2010): 10-12; and Mark Driscoll, “A Pastoral Perspective on the Emergent Church,” *Criswell Theological Review*, 2 (Spr 2006): 87-93.
--For more extensive original sources see the following works by some Emergent leaders: Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003); Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, eds. *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007); Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008); Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008); Brian D. McLaren, *A New Kind of Christianity: Ten Questions that Are Transforming the Faith* (New York: Harper, 2010). The official website of the Emergent Church is www.emergentvillage.com.
--For critical works on the Emerging church see Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone: the Emerging Church—a New Reformation or an End-time Deception* (Silverton, OR: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2007); and D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005); Joseph M. Schimmel *The Submerging Church: How the Emerging Church is Drawing Multitudes Away from Biblical Christianity*, (Fight the Good Fight, 2012, DVD).
--For a research based overview and analysis see Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).
--For some Adventist scholarly and some pastoral perspectives see John Markovic, mentioned above; Fernando Canale’s article for the *Adventist Review* (2010) and two part article for the *Journal for the Adventist Theological Society* (2011); Kwabena Donkor, *The Emerging Church and Adventist Ecclesiology*, Biblical Research Institute Release, no. 8 (Silver Springs, MD: Biblical Research Institute, October 2011); Rick Howard’s book *The Omega Rebellion: What Every Adventist Needs to Know...Now* (self publish, 2010); Howard Peth’s book *The Dangers of Contemplative Prayer*, (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2012).

modernity to postmodernity.² Therefore, these Emergent leaders were driven by a desire to reach the postmodern generation, especially the unchurched (those never associated with a faith tradition, religion, or church, though could be "spiritual") and those who were alienated from their Christian upbringing.³

The Emergent leaders believe that most of the traditional Christian methods in reaching the unchurched and estranged with the Gospel are outdated and ineffective.⁴ What is needed, they claim, is a new worship style and a new theology that would be experiential and participatory rather than the old dogmatic and static approach to spirituality. Hence, the movement seeks new and innovative worship styles that would both attract and retain the worshipers. The Emergent services emphasize multisensory worship, often embedded in its own local culture. Some of the innovative approaches to worship include ancient spiritual practices and non-traditional expressions in art, music and poetry. They freely blend innovative and exotic practices with traditional practices. In the corporate weekend services, Emerging churches promote Emergent contemplative practices, prayers accompanied with dance and music, all with an objective to *experience* God. A worship style of one Emerging church community will greatly differ from another, so labeling a set worship style poses a challenge, though similar elements may be present.

The search for experiential worship and a desire to experience God leads an ever increasing number of Emergents to experiment with various contemplative practices,

² Kimball, 32.

³ It should be noted that the Emergent church movement attracts a large number of the so-called "wounded" children of Christianity. They can be described as those who have been affected by either priests or pastors, or have had some negative experiences with the institutional church, and its members.

⁴ Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations*, "What is the "Church"?" chapter, which discusses moving from a consumer mindset of traditional churches, program centered to an emphasis on mission.

much of which are promoted by well known mystics and authors such as Father Richard Rohr (a Franciscan priest), Reverend Cynthia Bourgeault (an Episcopal priest), Brian McLaren (major Emergent figure), and others. At recent Emerging church conferences—the latest being “Emerging Christianity: HOW We Get there Determines WHERE We Arrive,” sponsored by the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC), an organization founded by Richard Rohr—contemplative practices have become a top priority and high attendance (600+ in 2010, and 400+ in 2009) testify that the contemplative approach to spirituality is becoming widespread among Christians across the United States and abroad.⁵

Paper Overview

Due to great interest and popularity of various contemplative practices among youth leaders, clergy, and church members across all denominational—including Seventh-day Adventism—and religious lines, this project will analyze the nature of selected Emergent contemplative practices, in particular those promulgated by the CAC. The primary goal is to find out whether “contemplation” and contemplative practices, as promoted by Richard Rohr, Cynthia Bourgeault, and their Emergent colleagues, are appropriate in Christian worship. This study will also contrast such contemplative practices and spirituality with the concept of contemplation in the Bible and in the writings of Ellen G. White. As a scientific addendum to this study, a short section will be dedicated to the effects contemplative practices have on the human mind. The study will

⁵ The approximate attendance at the “Emerging Christianity” conference/workshop, held from April 8-11, 2010, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was 600 Emergent leaders (clergy, teachers, social activists, nuns, monks, and others). According to CAC director, the previous 2009 conference/workshop was attended by some 1,100 Emergent leaders. It should be noted that these attendants at these CAC sponsored conferences/workshops go back to their respective communities to educate others in contemplative practices. For resources on the CAC and its respective conferences, workshops and published materials visit <http://www.cacradicalgrace.org>.

then look into the deeper purpose of the practice of contemplation from both the Emergent and Seventh-day Adventist perspective. The final portion of the study will suggest Biblical principles for prayer in the light of knowledge concerning contemplative prayer as advanced by the Emerging movement. The study will end with a final and post conclusion.

Personal Interest

Interest for this topic was an outgrowth of learning about the EC movement in my Church History course during my undergraduate studies, taught by Professor John Jovan Markovic—who then later became my mentor for this project. I have learned, along the way, that a more comprehensive and thorough understanding of this subject is crucial for safeguarding Biblical spiritual growth—which will be explored. Furthermore, by understanding the subject of contemplation in its origin, practice, ethics, and physiological effects, one may come to conclusions regarding the possible detrimental consequences that have and are currently affecting Christianity and Seventh-day Adventism as a result. The hypothesis or argument from the onset of this study has been that these practices subtly alter some of the key pillars of Christianity, such as the authority of the Bible in the life of a Christian, and the salvific character of Jesus' ministry in the salvation of an individual and lastly, that the Emergent contemplative practices lead people toward alternate spirituality (including demonic possession), self-worship, pluralism and mysticism.

Methodology

My research is based in two venues. First, I read and analyzed the works of leading Emergents, Brian McLaren, Dan Kimball, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, Phyllis

Tickle, Cynthia Bourgeault, Richard Rohr, and several others. Second, I had first hand observation by attending the 2010 “Emerging Christianity” conference, held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in April 2010. At this four-day long conference/workshop I carefully observed and took notes. I was fortunate enough to talk with Richard Rohr, who is a kind man. I was also able to sit down with Brian McLaren over a small group dinner, where I was able to ask him some pointed questions in reference to the practices of the Emerging church and its future—he’s quite a delightful man, and has a tender heart for people. This time with McLaren provided some answers to the reason behind why contemplation is a crucial teaching for the Emerging church. We also touched upon several key theological issues worth noting later in the paper.

Although I have listed two of the better known critical works of the Emerging church (see footnote 1 for Carson and Oakland), this study does not draw information about the movement from these works. I followed the advice of Professor Markovic, under whose guidance I have done this research, to go directly to the works of the Emergents themselves, study their own material, their own practices, and only then draw conclusions based on my own observations and analysis—I quote these works at the end. Those who may disagree with my findings may point out that I am not qualified to write about Emergent contemplative practices since I have not actually practiced it myself, lacking the first hand experience. As a result, my work may be perceived as a waste of time for Emergents as well, and those who practice contemplative practices as taught by Emergents. The well known mystic, Thomas Merton, would most likely chastise me, saying, "Nothing is more repellent" in what you are about to do Filip, with “a pseudo-scientific definition of the contemplative experience," which lacks first hand experience

of the "breakthrough" and "awakening" brought about by the contemplative practices. He would then expound on this to me, saying,

The only way to get rid of misconceptions about contemplation is to experience it. One who does not actually know, in his own life, the nature of this breakthrough and this awakening to a new level of reality cannot help being misled by most of the things that are said about it. For contemplation cannot be taught. It cannot even be clearly explained. It can only be hinted at, suggested, pointed to, symbolized. The more objectively and scientifically one tries to analyze it, the more he empties it of its real content, for this experience is beyond the reach of verbalization and of rationalization. Nothing is more repellent than a pseudo-scientific definition of the contemplative experience.⁶

While Merton may starkly object to my observation style research rather than participant/experience based research, I start the project with such an approach is so as not to prejudice or immerse myself before fully understanding its purpose and foundation.⁷ The advice of Apostle John seems quite fitting for such an endeavor, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."⁸

Defining Contemplation

Christians should know that "contemplation" means different things to different people. The traditional Christian and Western⁹ understanding of contemplation is deduced when simply checking a dictionary, any such definitions arise: an act of considering with attention; looking thoughtfully at something for a long time; a deep reflective thought; a thoughtful observation or study; meditation on spiritual matters as a

⁶ Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions, 1961), 6.

⁷ It did not take long to notice that the contemplation practices, as taught and promulgated by the CAC, are disagreeable with biblical principles. My answer to Thomas Merton and his friends would be that I do not have to "bite the apple" in order to understand the consequences.

⁸ 1 John 4:1 (NIV). Emerging church adherents are Christians as well (I assume most are), and they are trying to do what they believe is right in the eyes of God. Yet, there seems to be a lack of concerted emphasis on Biblical spirituality as opposed to tradition and man created spirituality apart from the Bible. These other avenues of spirituality seem to hold as much authority on spirituality, if not more than the Bible itself.

⁹ The traditional Western process of analytical thinking follows an "either/or" mode of processing information. A house is, red or green, small or large. An act is, good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate.

form of devotion. In other words, traditional Western or Christian contemplation practice would be an active engagement of the mind. In comparison, defining Emerging "contemplation" and its function (where it takes the mind) can be challenging on a rudimentary level because of the many synonyms, which could be added to significantly: contemplative prayer (CP, the most basic term), contemplative mind, contemplative consciousness, "third-eye" seeing, the ancient way, non-dualistic consciousness, non-dualistic thinking, centering prayer, unitive way, unitive consciousness, and second half of life. The Emergent definition of "contemplation" moves into an alternative direction from "traditional Christian and Western contemplation" with different practices, ideas and meanings. Emerging contemplation goes beyond dictionary definitions and digs deeper into a mystical past, and could be defined as: a form of prayer or meditation in which a person seeks to pass beyond mental images and concepts in order to achieve a direct experience with the divine. Accordingly, Emergent contemplation is a state of mystical awareness of God's presence, of divine being. It is a way of bypassing the perceiving of ordinary and entering into the divine awareness or divine indwelling.¹⁰ For Brian McLaren, contemplation is "a kind of prayer that culminates in silent attentiveness to God, a prayer that is about listening and receiving rather than speaking and expressing"—or thinking.¹¹ Cynthia Bourgeault defines it as "simply a wordless, trusting

¹⁰ Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* (Lanham, MD: Crowley Publications, 2004), 13.

¹¹ Brian McLaren, *Finding Our Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Practices* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008), 95. McLaren's definition of contemplative practices often comes unclear, but that is common in his writing. He offers more of a feeling and emotion. In his *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-yet-hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 22-23, McLaren states, "as in most of my other books . . . I have gone out of my way to be provocative, mischievous, and unclear, reflecting my belief that clarity is sometimes overrated." This type

opening of self to the divine presence, . . . it is about the simplest form of prayer there is.”¹² Richard Rohr is fond of using a plethora of terms to describe what contemplation is: contemplative prayer, contemplative mind, contemplative consciousness, “third-eye” seeing, the ancient way, non-dualistic consciousness, non-dualistic thinking, centering prayer, unitive way, unitive consciousness, and second half of life.¹³ (There are several streams of the Emerging Church, and not all of them would necessarily adhere to Emergent contemplation and its practices, but my guess would be that many, if not most, do.)

To more definitively define the divergent understandings of contemplation the *Encyclopedia of Religious and Spiritual Development* defines the term "meditation"—which was noted in both “traditional” and Emergent definitions and carries the same meaning as contemplation—in two groupings, 1) "meditations that attempt to transcend language and rational deliberation in order to calm the mind," and 2) "those that embrace language and deliberation in order to discern what is true according to the principles of religious teaching." While meditation itself may be nothing more than a “set of techniques designed to discipline the mind,” the closing remark in "meditation" in the *Encyclopedia of Religious and Spiritual Development* is very telling of the deeper significance to contemplation, "In either case, the meditation techniques taught by a religion will always be a product of the doctrines taught by that religion."¹⁴

of writing only makes things confusing about the intent of what is under discussion, and somewhat misleading as well, particularly for those eager know the truth.

¹² Growing up in a Quaker School, Bourgeault says, contemplative prayer was simply a part of the education, except no one had to teach them. “It was sensed among the Quakers to be so supremely natural.” Bourgeault, 5.

¹³ Author’s notes on Richard Rohr’s lectures. Also see Rohr’s *The Naked Now. Learning to See as the Mystics See* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 2009).

¹⁴ Joseph Walser, "Meditation," in *Encyclopedia of Religious and Spiritual Development*, eds. Elizabeth M. Dowling, and W. George Scarlett, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 282.

The next section will attempt to unearth what doctrine or teaching is being advocated in Emergent contemplation that leads to an opposing understanding and practice of contemplation from that of “traditional” contemplation.

Contemplative Prayer

Contemplative prayer is found within what is called the “contemplative practices” or “contemplative tradition.”¹⁵ For Emergents, there are a wide array of contemplative practices, consisting of: solitude, practicing God’s presence, fixed-hour prayer, contemplative prayer, fasting, Sabbath, journaling, gratitude, and other similar practices.¹⁶ Emergents claim contemplative practices draw from the wisdom of both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek philosophers—those who love wisdom, like Socrates and Aristotle. These philosophers spoke of the “examined life” and the “contemplative life.”¹⁷ In addition to these ancient sources, Rohr and McLaren claim to have found the main fount of inspiration for the contemplative tradition—as they understand it—within the writings of the New Testament as well. According to them, the incarnation of Christ is a key to unlock the full appreciation of contemplative prayer, the seemingly main contemplative practice. They liken the human experience with the Holy Spirit as with the mysterious incarnation of Christ. The latter is also sought to take place within the human experience—where “God desires to enter the human being, body and soul, so that, like Jesus, we become bearers of the Holy Spirit . . . being *filled to all the fullness of God*

¹⁵ McLaren, *Finding Our Way Again*, 91-92.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 95-97.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 91. It is a common knowledge that Aristotle held that happiness—living well and doing well in the affairs of the world—is the goal of life, and that such happiness is achievable through a contemplative and monastic way of life. See, <http://www.blupete.com/Literature/Biographies/Philosophy/Aristotle.htm>.

(Ephesians 3.19; Colossians 2.10).”¹⁸ This type of language sounds similar to what Jesus prayed in John 17:22, 23, that “they may be one as we are one: I in them and you [God the Father] in me (NIV).” The intended result of such a practice as contemplation is the unification of Christ and man, becoming one. McLaren uses and paraphrases texts like: Ephesians 4:4-6, 15-16, “we are “one” with and in Christ”; Colossians 1:27-28, “Christ is in us, and we are in Christ.”¹⁹ It seems that for Emergents, or anyone else, to truly be bearers of the Holy Spirit, one must engage in contemplative practices. The question that one must ask is, “Is that true?” “Must one really practice Emergent contemplation to have the Holy Spirit living in them?” The reader should know the answer to this question before continuing. Therefore, using the book of Ephesians, which McLaren quoted, one may deduce such an answer as to whether or not it is essential to participate in Emergent contemplation to have the Holy Spirit, the living God in them.

While Ephesians 4:4-6 does speak of being one *with* and *in* Christ, there is a larger context within the book that must be considered for how this “oneness” occurs. According to the book of Ephesians the process of how we receive the Holy Spirit though does not begin with contemplation and end with receiving the Holy Spirit, but rather it begins by accepting Jesus, and therefore receiving the seal, the deposit, which is the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13). The Ephesians were known to have lived quite sinful lives (Eph. 2:3-5), but they repented of their ways and were saved by Christ (Eph. 2:13), from their sins. Therefore, by Christ, they have access to the Father only because Jesus promised that He would send the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5), which is their conduit to the Father (Eph. 2:18).

¹⁸ McLaren, *Finding Our Way Again*, 92. Rohr mentions how Christ showed us the *unitive* way of non-dualistic thinking--reference is found in Filip Milosavljevic, author’s notes, *Emerging Christianity*, April 8, 2010 (material can be found on the CAC website, see footnote further on).

¹⁹ McLaren, *Ancient Practices*, 92.

Further, what should be noted is that they were considered “in” Christ when they believed, as Ephesians 1:3 says, “And you also were included *in* Christ when you *heard* the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” It must be emphasized that we also today receive the Holy Spirit and have access to the Father (Eph. 2:18) just as they did *only* when we *believe in* Jesus, which happens when we have “heard” the word of truth, which is our gospel of salvation. This is the only way to be “filled with the fullness of God.”²⁰

So, to answer the question plainly from the beginning, “Must one practice Emergent contemplation to have the Holy Spirit living in them?” No, not at all. Rather, one should believe in Jesus, and His truth, as spoken through the ages by the Word of God, the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit will then be planted in that person’s heart. We know that the Word is true because we know that God is true (Rom. 3:4), and it was God who wrote or rather “breathed” the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16) through men who wrote under the influence of the Holy Spirit what is in the Word (1 Pet. 1:20-21). Therefore the Scriptures also are true, as John 17:17 says, “Your Word is truth,” and can be one's guide today.

The Holy Spirit is a blessing for mankind, but the reception of the Spirit of God, as opposed to some other spirit, is based on obedience to the Word of God, the Scripture as shown in Acts 5.32, “the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” Obedience is a prerequisite because this is His truth, this is truly “believing in Him,” as stated earlier. Such devotion to The Truth, Jesus Christ, as portrayed in the totality of Scripture seems to be at odds with Emergents then. Emergents base much of their understanding on contemplation from a long history of tradition (which, to some may

²⁰ The danger of contemplation is that I believe it is a counterfeit method of spirituality, working against the Scriptures or trying to make the Scriptures work in their favor.

seem to be placed on a higher podium than the Bible), rather than practices found directly in Scripture or if used, they lack proper exegesis to tell the Bible author's intended meaning.

The Origins of Contemplation in the Emerging Church

Most of what is being taught on contemplative spirituality has a deep history. Emergent contemplative spirituality draws heavily from mystics of the past two centuries like French monk and priest Thomas Merton (who spent time with the Dalai Lama before his death in 1968),²¹ Canadian psychiatrist Richard M. Bucke,²² French philosopher and Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,²³ and Trappist monk and priest Thomas Keating.²⁴ Both Rohr and Bourgeault are students of Merton and Keating, who were students under Zen Buddhists for some time, according to Rohr (Rohr himself shared that he also spent time at a Zen monastery learning of their practices). Moreover, contemplative spirituality finds its origins even earlier, starting in the Desert Fathers ca. 270-500 A.D., then moving into the works of medieval mystics and writers of spirituality, such as Francis of Assisi, St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich and Ignatius of Loyola (who abounds in the writings of the Emergents) and finally in the

²¹ Thomas Merton (1915-1968) was born in southern France, studied at Columbia University in New York, experienced a dramatic conversion in 1938, and entered the Abbey of Gethsemani at Trappist, Kentucky, in 1941. His autobiography, titled *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948), has become a classic in literature on spirituality.

²² Richard Maurice Bucke (1837-1902), a Canadian psychiatrist and mystic. In 1872 he had an experience of illumination of cosmic consciousness, which prompted him to spend the rest of his life writing a book on people (of course, Jesus is one among many) he believed had reached cosmic consciousness. The work, *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study of the Evolution of the Human Mind* (1901), has become a classic in the study of modern mystical experiences.

²³ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), a French philosopher, a well-known geologist and paleontologist, a Jesuit priest and a mystic, who was a prolific writer, and a major intellectual influence on the twentieth century Catholic theology. His most influential work is *The Phenomenon of Man* (published posthumously in 1955, in French, and in English in 1959).

²⁴ Thomas Keating (b. 1923), is a founder of the contemplative practice of "centering prayer," which is now also a movement and has formed into a network of individuals known as Contemplative Outreach Ltd, founded in 1983.

19th and 20th century Catholic theologians (Thomas Merton, Thomas Keating, Basil Pennington, and Henri Nouwen). Many Emerging churches use the writings of these mystics and monks in their devotionals and worship services.²⁵

The Purpose of Contemplation in the Emerging Church

According to Emergents, contemplation was introduced into personal and corporate worship for a two-fold purpose: it is a tool for unification with God, but it is also a tool for transformation of how one thinks and processes about himself/herself and the world around them. Rohr further explains that the purpose of contemplative practices is, to enter into the contemplative mind, or non-dualistic way of seeing the world (not to be confused throughout this study and others, the final mindset is called many things, another example is “Absolute Unitary Being”²⁶).

As one of the plenary speakers at the 2010 Emergent conference in Albuquerque, Rohr began his lecture on the subject of “contemplation” by saying that we (humans, or specifically Christians) have not been taught to enter into the deep consciousness, and do not have the correct “software” to think properly. Without the “software” the individual cannot experience the divine awareness.²⁷ Further in Rohr’s lecture, he explains that humans are naturally one minded, living in the “False-Self,” and held within what he calls “dualistic minds.” We were created to be spiritual, he said, but as a result of the

²⁵ Gibbs and Bolger, 222.

²⁶ Scientists Newberg and d’Aquili were analyzing brain scans of meditation practitioners and created a continuum depicting the highest attainment as the “Absolute Unitary Being,” to which we will come back to later. Referenced in preeminent geneticist, author and Harvard Ph.D graduate Dean Hamer’s *The God Gene: How Faith is Hardwired into our Genes*, (New York: Anchor Books edition, 2005), 127-128.

²⁷ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now: Learning to see as the mystics see*. (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2009), p. 12. The idea of divine awareness is found in Bourgeault’s work, who shares that there are three types of awareness, the ordinary (which most of us are always in), the spiritual, and the divine awareness—which is the contemplative consciousness (see footnote 7 for other synonyms), which is the desired awareness. *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*, p. 7-18

Enlightenment and the Renaissance we have become trained to use reason, logic and engage the dualistic mind, and therefore, we have lost the connection with our divine awareness—found in the contemplative consciousness. Rohr describes the dualistic mind’s thought processing as: analytical, views reality as either/or,²⁸ divisive, competitive, judgmental, racist, fundamentalist, certain, categorical, black and white, and embraces the ego.²⁹ While, the non-dualistic mind’s thought process does the following: embraces, views reality as both/and,³⁰ tolerates, accepts paradox, thinks from the heart, sees truth in all religions, is mystical, resists the ego and embraces the True-Self.³¹ Rohr describes the True-Self awareness in his book *The Naked Now* by saying, “I am now on a solid viewing platform, apart from the usual level of small self, where I can see things as God might see them. This is the beginning of nondual thinking and is surely “the mind of Christ” that Paul says we can participate in (1 Corinthians 2:16).”³² According to Fr. Rohr and even McLaren, God has to use a process to transform in an individual to reach this point where he or she can live in this type of mind, the non-dualistic mind. Many times this process of transforming is initiated by the suffering of life. Rohr makes note that those who are educated and have not suffered have a more difficult time entering into the non-dualistic consciousness.

²⁸ Rohr, *Naked Now*, p. 10. Seeing reality with either/or is compared with both/and, which is what is found in Emergent thinking. Here are two statements to explain this: I am right *or* you are right. Compare with: I am right *and* you are right. One can see that the either/or thinking is divisive, so Emergents really emphasize a both/and reality, which allows for a greater tolerance of many denominations, religions, or beliefs.

²⁹ This is the defensive and protective nature of the false self. Rohr, *Contemplative Prayer*. Audio CD.

³⁰ Rohr, *The Naked Now*, p.10.

³¹ Richard Rohr, *Emerging Christianity: HOW we get there determines WHERE we arrive*. Conference in Albuquerque, NM 4/8/10; and Rohr, *Contemplative Prayer*. Audio CD; Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*, p. 10.

³² Rohr, *The Naked Now*, p. 137.

To put everything together so far with the definition from the first section: the intent and purpose of contemplative practices, and more specifically contemplative prayer, is to enter into a non-dualistic consciousness by means of a form of prayer or meditation in which a person seeks to pass beyond mental images and concepts to a direct experience with the divine by means of a state of mystical or divine awareness of the divine presence (God's being), and calls for the individual to stop thinking, judging, and discerning, and allow God to do His work in the individual. This background can now be applied to the actual practice of contemplation as one continues to understand the deeper purpose of contemplative prayer, and how the non-dualistic consciousness is achieved.

The Practice of Contemplation

To show how one can attain the non-dualistic consciousness Rohr and his assistant gave a few practices to try—a step-by-step process—at the 2010 *Emerging Christianity* conference that I attended. The simplest practice is called the “Contemplative Sit.” The practitioner sits in a quiet environment, with both feet on the ground. A sacred word is chosen, a meaningful religious word like, faith, love, hope, so that each time a thought, judgment, worry, past event, etcetera, which comes into the mind, the sacred word can be repeated to keep the mind focused rather than distracted. The individual is to repeat the “sacred word” as many times as thoughts arise. The “Contemplative Sit” has two phases. The first phase is known as the shadow, because one will be dealing with issues of the False-Self (the dualistic part of the mind)³³ that arise (the hindering thoughts). This practice is done for twenty minutes. During this twenty-minute period, the individual will hopefully move from dualistic thought, and enter the

³³ Do not think of the False Self as a “bad self,” that is not the intended meaning of false, simply that it is not your true self.

second phase, the non-dualistic consciousness. It is in the second phase where God can finally speak to the individual, says Rohr. This is where transformation can finally take place, when we stop talking, and thinking (dialogue is not necessary with God in the non-dualistic consciousness) and God can now speak and do to us what He wishes. Rohr and Bourgeault stated at the conference that, what goes on in these times of intimate connection with the divine are “none of your business.” What happens in these moments are all God’s concern, not yours. Once again, we do not “think” during these exercises, especially phase two (and steps 2-4 in the next practice). The “Contemplative Sit” teaches the individual to seek for the divine in every individual. As Rohr said in a lecture entitled *Contemplative Prayer*, “it’s not you doing the seeing, it’s the divine, seeing in you and with you. You are seeing through Him, in Him, with Him, [and it is] nothing you can generate, not I, but it is being done to you, and all you need to do is get out of the way. “You” have to get out of the mind.” We have a new eye for seeing, hence this is where the term Rohr says, “third eye” seeing, comes from.³⁴

Another practice taught was “Walking Meditation.” Here are the steps that were laid out for the conference attendees, as noted from what was said from Rohr that day:

³⁴ Richard Rohr, *Contemplative Prayer*. Center for Action and Contemplation, 2004. CD.

Step 1) Walk around slowly outside, allowing your mind to slow down. As you begin to settle, find a place to come to rest, and let your eyes focus on one object that you see, no matter what the object is. Your heart will help you in finding an object. Simply focus on it until you stop saying, “this is silly” or “why am I staring at this.” You are learning to acknowledge life, but not obsess about it.

Step 2) Choose not to judge the object, judging comes from preference, and preference stops us from experiencing happiness. Therefore choose not to express any form of preference (ie. if it appeals to you, or if you would change the color). You will then begin to experience how you feel, a subtle incipient happiness will begin to permeate within.

Step 3) Listen to the object by giving it a soul—reanimate it. We have taken away the soul of all creation, and humans think only humans deserve a soul, but you need to re-soul the world. Now, allow the object to speak to you whatever it wants to speak to you. Maybe it will tell you a thought, idea, or tell you a story of what it has seen all these years. It can say anything. As it speaks to you it will share insightful things. This will lead you to true love. If you can’t do this you will not know God, because you will not be able to know reciprocity.

Step 4) A contented spaciousness will ensue – the non-dual consciousness. You find connectedness, and belonging. The problem is that people are disconnected therefore they cannot connect with the universe. In this space you find meaning in one another—you and the object—and your soul here must be transformed. You must receive life at a different level. This is the *unitive* way.

“We live in a lonely universe without reanimation,” said Rohr.³⁵ He went on to explain that much of the Enlightenment and the Renaissance took the soul out of everything, and it is our job to give it back. This practice teaches one to be drawn rather than driven, living in the moment, and connected to everything around oneself. It also teaches to let go, rather than hoarding or keeping things. By engaging in these various contemplative practices one can be taken to a higher level of thought. The outcome will be that one will then learn to use the new “software,”³⁶ in which one can experience the non-dualistic consciousness for processing this untapped divine awareness.

³⁵ Filip Milosavljevic, authors notes, *Emerging Christianity*, April 8, 2010.

³⁶ Richard Rohr, *Emerging Church: Christians Creating a New World Together*. CAC, 2009. DVD. Rohr even refers to *contemplation* as the contemplative mind, contemplative consciousness, or non-

Interestingly during the Q&A time following the lecture and time for trying the practices, Rohr refuted that this practice is pantheistic (God is everything) by saying it is rather pan-en-theistic (God is *in* everything).³⁷ Rohr went on to say, that in order to test your experience from the contemplative practice you must look at your life in the light of the Fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5.22, 23. If the fruit of the experience leads you to a separatist or elitist spirit, for instance, then it was a false spirit and therefore “bad fruit.” “So analyze your behavior and response in the days ahead,” he said. “By the fruits you will know; “Are you bearing good or bad fruit?” This is a good way to decipher,” said Rohr. The issue at hand with Rohr’s understanding of the Fruit of the Spirit as a “test” is that it comes as one package, one fruit, not many fruits to choose from. Also, if you have all the traits of the Spirit in Galatians 5, but still possess one of the many forms evil presents itself (see list on vss. 19-21) it shows “works of the flesh.” So, simply looking at the Fruit of the Spirit without looking at the various works of the flesh will not be a good indicator of growth because if you are becoming better on one side, but worse on another, you have not necessarily spiritually matured. “It takes all the Christ graces to make a man a true follower of Christ, but only one of the ‘works of the flesh’ to make a man a follower of the evil one.”³⁸ Experience must be judged based on a more sure footing than simply analyzing the “fruit.”

The practices given by Rohr were not only to be confined to a room, but were to be taken into one’s everyday existence where one can rest, which I delve into next.

dualistic thinking, so it can get a little confusing, but it refers to the same thing, see footnote 3 for more names.

³⁷ I was the one who asked Rohr about this. Dr. Markovic who was there with me when I asked this thought this was a very shallow refutation.

³⁸ *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Vol. 6.* Francis D. Nichol ed. (Washington D.C: Review and Herald, 1980) p. 982.

Contemplation as a Way of Life and Connection with the Divine

Contemplation is not just an exercise for those who practice it; it is a way of living. The way of contemplation, known as the contemplative tradition, McLaren says, is the way to reach the unimaginable “spiritual event horizon,” and it is “pushing the frontier of the spiritually erotic and beyond.”³⁹ The contemplative tradition is an intentional means to prepare “human beings...[to] *experience* the living God in this life in ways that range from gentle and subtle to dramatic, ravishing, and electrifying.”⁴⁰ By non-dualistic thinking we become prepared for “grace to surprise us.”⁴¹ Rohr says that there are many practices for different personalities, which are useful in leading one to the contemplative consciousness. So, one is not to get hung up on the procedure, posture, or program because contemplation is any procedure or program you use to contemplate.⁴² McLaren’s book *Finding our way again*, provides a long list of contemplative practices.⁴³ These practices are exercised in solitude, and silence, to ensure that the mind is at peace, and rest. Almost anything can be used to lift one up to the divine awareness by means of the non-dualistic consciousness.

Teachers of these practices will tell you that planning, thinking, worrying, and analyzing during these times of prayer will only make it harder to engage in the intimate connection that one can have with the divine.⁴⁴ This type of prayer teaches one how to, rest (a very important word in contemplation). By rest, one can then simply let go of the world holding them back, and more importantly to stop the dualistic mind. The point is to

³⁹ McLaren, *Ancient Practices*, p. 92

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 94.

⁴² Rohr, *Contemplative Prayer*. CD, audio chapter 16.

⁴³ McLaren, *Ancient Practices*, p. 95-97.

⁴⁴ See Rohr’s chapter “Yes, but,” p. 55-57 in *The Naked Now* to understand what he believes the mind can, and cannot do.

stop thinking about the world around an individual and simply allow God to speak to them. True “being” for those engaged in contemplation is when they are not thinking—as Rohr says, its opposite of Descartes who said, “I think therefore I am,” but rather as Rohr says, “I think therefore I am not!”⁴⁵ Also, it should be noted that repetition is crucial for these practices. This is why Emergent leaders recommend practicing contemplation with any form of mantra, chant, or sacred word that is repetitive (they say that even running can help one attain the contemplative mind).

Barriers to Reaching the Contemplative Mind

To train the False-Self to achieve the “non-dualistic way of seeing” one will have to work up to this point. As Rohr will tell anyone, it does not happen overnight, but by practice for weeks and months. “The early but learned pattern of dualistic thinking can get us only so far; so all religions at the more mature levels have discovered another “software” for processing the really big questions, like death, love, infinity, suffering, and God. Many of us call this access “contemplation.” *It is a non-dualistic way of seeing the moment.* Originally, the word was simply ‘prayer.’”⁴⁶ The issue at hand is that many leading Emergent leaders, mystics, and Eastern religions believe that there is no true transformation in Christianity with our current way of praying—which is seen by them as a manipulation of God. Rohr believes that what Christians call “prayer” has been altered from the time of the Early Church Fathers, where prayer was then understood in terms of the Emergent definition of contemplation. He says that Christians now pray by asking,

⁴⁵ Rohr, *Contemplative Prayer*. CD, audio chapter 13.

⁴⁶ Rohr, *Naked Now* p. 12. This is quite a bold statement from Fr. Rohr who says one has not understood what “God” means, what “love” means, what “suffering” means until one can unlocked this “contemplative” part of the brain. The Bible speaks of the forgiveness of God when sinners repent (a concept not spoken of much in the EC), the love of God is expressed in a way that is “beyond comprehension,” but not so beyond that one cannot understand. This is a very “real” realization of God and His love for us.

begging, and pleading, while Emergents believe all we need to do is be in silent contemplation. According to Rohr, 90 percent of human thought is repetitive and useless, which is the reason why he believes Christians pray the way they do. This is why Rohr believes contemplation is so important, “Every major religion at its mature level is trying to compartmentalize the mind, to put the mind to the side. Only Protestantism didn’t understand that anymore. It is the only religion that has not been able to free you from this addictive pattern of [dualistic] thinking.”⁴⁷

Again, Rohr explains how contemplation cannot be introduced to an individual by mere faith (an intellectual consent to believe), it must be experienced.⁴⁸ By entering into the contemplative consciousness the individual moves from the False Self, so that then the True-Self can emerge, which was always present, says Rohr, but was suppressed by the Ego, which allows the Self to live usually in the ordinary awareness, at times the spiritual awareness, but never the divine awareness. Contemplative spirituality is what people need to move the Self to spiritual awareness, but it is the most difficult to live and also it feels like, nothing, says Rohr. Which is why it is tough to explain as well. To try to provide a definition for this “nothing” Rohr uses, the Buddhist’s use “emptiness,” the Franciscan’s use “poverty,” the Carmelite’s use “nothingness,” and Jesus use of the “desert” to explain the place a person is in when they are engaged in the contemplative mind. Bourgeault, reflecting on Thomas Merton, the twentieth century Christian mystical writer, says that Merton understood that within the center of our being there is an “innermost point of truth which shares not only the likeness, but perhaps even the *substance* of God’s own being. Merton makes it absolutely clear that access to the center

⁴⁷ Rohr, *Contemplative Prayer*. CD, audio chapter 13.

⁴⁸ Ibid. I wonder how they render Ephesians 3:17 that says, “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through *faith*?”

is not at our command; it is entered only through the gateway of our complete poverty and nothingness.”⁴⁹

There will always be a tension, between the False and True Self, the dual and non-dual consciousness, “just don’t believe this False Self,” says Rohr.⁵⁰ Engaging in daily life will require one to use the dualistic mind, but when it comes to spiritual matters, one should then be drawn into the non-dualistic mind, awakening and falling into the True Self, and releasing the False Self. To connect with the contemplative mind is to become more aware of the surroundings, becoming awake to the world around you. Therefore, Rohr states, no one can always live in the non-dualistic mind, but engaging in a contemplative practice each 24-hour period is crucial to maintain your True Self, your humanness.

In this section one will hopefully will have seen that the purpose of the teaching of contemplation was to arrive at a non-dualistic mind/consciousness, a place where God alone works and the True Self lives. Next, we turn to understanding more fully this non-dualistic consciousness, which is the means of transformation for human life.

The Non-dualistic Consciousness as a Means of Transformation

Contemplation for Emergents is not only a practice, but also a means to transform and correct the dualistic Self, in order to open up to the non-dualistic consciousness. Emergents use a phase or dimension schema to describe how one is growing in this regard. The dimensions or phases of the spiritual life are known as the ancient way. The

⁴⁹ Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*, p. 14. Also see, *A Merton Reader*, ed. Thomas P. McDonnell (New York: Image Books, 1989), p. 347.

⁵⁰ Filip Milosavljevic, authors notes, *Emerging Christianity*, April 8, 2010.

ancient way is based on “the threefold way”⁵¹ of spiritual life, developed by the Early Church Fathers and follows three steps: purgation, illumination, and contemplation. By working through the three steps one can become more aware of the need to shed the False self, entering the non-dualistic consciousness, and opening to the divine presence.

Suffering is how the dimensions are initiated, and they continue by brokenness, which can then be described as a way of living, by a broken heart, by pain. Emergents will use St. Francis as an example of one who lived by brokenness, pain and suffering, yet lived contemplatively.⁵² Each dimension has two names, one from the Western Church (Latin) and the other from the Eastern Church (Greek).

Via Purgativa / Katharsis – This is the dimension of self-examination known as the shadow or self-boxing. Here one is seeking to be purged, cleansed, and transformed. In this dimension one will encounter “the shadow” of Self, the evil that is within.

Via Illuminativa / Fotosis – After the shadow, now enters the dimension of receiving God’s truth, the enlightenment of the character and love of God. In *katharsis* the clouds were removed, so that now in *fotosis* one is basking in the sun, in the beauty of God.

Via Unitiva / Theosis – Finally our being can truly be in union with God, “so that we are taken into God and God fills us...by being harmonized with God, we also become harmonized with everything else that is harmonized with God.”⁵³

Similarly, a tool to practice contemplative prayer known as the Prayer Labyrinth⁵⁴ also works in three “journeys” that the practitioner walks through: the inward journey –

⁵¹ Pope Benedict XVI (then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) and Alberto Bovone, *Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger’s Letter on Christian Meditation*. “*Buddhist-Christian Studies*,” Vol. 11, (1991), (University of Hawai’i Press), pp. 123-138. JSTOR May 27, 2010. To put it simply, you suffer, you learn, and you draw near to God.

⁵² See chapter 20, p. 191-203, “Learning By (Broken) Heart” of McLaren’s *Ancient Practices*, to learn more about living by brokenness.

⁵³ McLaren, p. 147-179; and also Filip Milosavljevic, authors notes, *Emerging Christianity*, April 8, 2010.

⁵⁴ It looks like a walking type of maze that moves in a circular fashion. Originally it was used in Greek mythology, and also used as a pagan spiritual aide in ancient Egypt, India, and Peru. Later in the middle ages, the Prayer Labyrinth was adapted to Christianity from pagan culture as a tool for prayer,

“letting go” or shedding the False Self; the middle journey – “centering” one’s self to God; the outward journey – the “incarnation” taking place within the individual. In regard to the “ancient threefold way,” McLaren explains that the final dimension (theosis) will lead the practitioner to *Via Unitiva*—the non-dualistic consciousness—because the first two dimensions find their fulfillment in the third dimension (there are also seven ancient practices⁵⁵ that give actions to the mindsets of the three-fold way). The ancient way is not intended to “make us more religious. It is to make us more alive. Alive to God.”⁵⁶ The understanding is that only when one deals with their False Self, the shadow, they can then be aligned to God. Once the alignment occurs, and the practitioner enters into the divine awareness, God can then speak unhindered to the practitioner.

Currently, I have defined contemplation, discussed its purpose, and looked at various practices and their meanings. Now I begin a comparative analysis. I want to look at how the term “contemplation” is used the Bible, as well as in the writings of Ellen G. White, and how it compares to EC “contemplation.”

Contemplation in the Bible and the Writings of Ellen G. White

The Bible and Contemplation

Emergents would argue that even though the Bible does not explicitly teach contemplation as they explain and practice, it is still implied. Rohr in a lecture at the *Emerging Christianity* conference said that sometimes what is implied is more powerful than what is stated explicitly in regards to the Bible and contemplation. Though, for

meditation, and a means of connecting with God through some other higher spiritual way. They can still be seen in many cathedrals (the most famous being the Notre-Dame de Chartres Cathedral in France), outdoor parks, churches, and spiritual gatherings like the EC conference I attended.

⁵⁵ The seven practices are: fasting, pilgrimage, common daily prayers, a weekly day of rest, annual holy days and seasons, tithing, and the sacred meal, which “find their fulfillment in the ways they contribute to our purgation, illumination, and union with God” *Ancient Practices*, p. 148.

⁵⁶ McLaren, *Ancient Practices*, p. 182.

research purposes I cannot assume or interpret an implied use of contemplation in any narrative or teaching in the Bible. One cannot assume more than what is outright stated in a story or teaching in the Bible and then demand its legitimacy and or acceptance based on Biblical grounds when it is merely an assumptive analysis interposing current contemplative practices on to the past. Even so, out of 20 different modern Bible versions consulted on Biblegateway.com only two versions⁵⁷ used the word “contemplation” outright: The Message Bible by Eugene Peterson (a paraphrase Bible) is one and the other is the New King James Version. The first usage in The Message Bible reads,

1 Timothy 2:1-4 “Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know. Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble **contemplation**. This is the way our Savior God wants us to live. He wants not only us but *everyone* saved, you know, everyone to get to know the truth *we’ve* learned.”

While the verse seemingly begins with the topic of varied prayers, the content in which “contemplation” is referenced does not pertain to prayer. One must take note of the phrase, “so that we can be about our business of living simply” precedes “humble contemplation.” Therefore, “humble contemplation” is used here to further explain the phrase that preceded it, describing how one might be about “living simply,” in humble contemplation. The intent then of “humble” contemplation is living a respectful, modest and an unassuming type of life with others. There is no reference to “a higher level of consciousness” or “non-dualistic thinking.” Finally, the last verse gives the final reason for the prayers, as a means of salvation. The prayers for these rulers were for “everyone” to be “saved.” This type of prayer in 1 Timothy 2:1-4 had nothing in common with Emerging Church contemplation.

⁵⁷ These are translated and edited by people, so the argument stands that these are only renditions, but since these were Greek or Hebrew scholars who did this, they must have felt that the way they used “contemplation” points to its correct usage.

The second usage appears in titles to thirteen chapters in the book of Psalm in the NKJV Bible.⁵⁸ Psalm 142:1 provides an example, as they all have the same meaning:

Psalm 142:1 [*A Contemplation of David. A Prayer when he was in the cave.*] “I cry out to the LORD with my voice; With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication.”

“Contemplation” in these titles is used as a synonym for prayer, plea, petition, or supplication to God. It is used actively in dialogue, not passively, hence David says, “I cry out to the LORD with *my voice*.” Thinking, speaking, and dialogue with God is encouraged by these verses, rather than a one-way passive interaction, where God is the doer, while we are simply in “emptiness, poverty, or nothingness.” This seems to be what the overall intent of prayer is in the book of Psalm, a two way conversation with God. While both of these examples are Western translation using one definition, they do exhibit how the normal use of “contemplation” is used.

Various assumed EC “contemplation” usages in the Bible are falsely attributed. Emergents use Jesus in the desert (Matthew 4), or Paul’s conversion on Damascus road (Acts 9), or Peter in vision on the rooftop (Acts 10). Yet, one detail is overlooked in each of these. It is God Himself arbitrarily acting on His volition in the life of each of these cases. It does not necessarily have to do with the person being in a meditative state, but rather it is God choosing when He will act metaphysically in the life of humanity—this is apart from verses in the Bible where Jesus tells us He will be found in the reverse order of humanity search for God (Matthew 7.7-8). Jesus was seeking to prepare Himself for the coming years and upon the “Spirit’s guiding” He went to the desert. Paul or rather Saul, before he was converted, was on his own mission to kill Christians when God struck Him divinely, and these is the example of Peter, who was hungry, so he went to a

⁵⁸ Psalm 32:1, 42:1, 44:1, 45:1, 52:1, 53:1, 54:1, 55:1, 74:1, 78:1, 88:1, 89:1, 142:1

cool place on the roof when God chose to give Him a vision. If any similarity of EC contemplation is to be found in Scripture it is going to be misinterpreted and forced. In each case, normally referenced by Emergents, it is God acting under no compulsion from the individual—devoid of a meditative state, and rather humans doing the opposite—but God’s own choosing to reveal Himself mysteriously.

Next, I analyze the usage of “contemplation” in the writings of Ellen G. White.⁵⁹

The Writings of Ellen G. White and Contemplation

There were some 465 hits on the word “contemplation” in the writings of Ellen G. White in the official online catalogue of all her works.⁶⁰ Here is one of several quotations selected in “thought context” which can be easily analyzed, and compared to EC contemplation,

“The mind must be kept meditating upon pure and holy subjects... elevating thoughts, holy **contemplation**, be entertained, thus obtaining more and more knowledge of God, by training the mind in the **contemplation** of heavenly things.”⁶¹

In this quote the first use of contemplation does not give the full meaning, but the second use does. In the second use White refers to “contemplation” as meditating on holy thoughts and heavenly things or themes. This requires thinking, analyzing thoughts, and visualizing in the mind. This is quite the opposite of the Emergent meaning. Another quotation from the book, *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, offers further usage of “contemplation,”

⁵⁹ Ellen Gould Harmon was a 19th century proclaimed messenger of the Lord, who had a prophetic message for the modern times and wrote prolifically on Scripture. Her example is useful in this research because of this unique position she held and proclaimed. It is easy to analyze her writings for suggested EC contemplation practices. To understand more fully the life and ministry of Ellen G. White from a credible research platform see www.whiteestate.org/about/egwbio.asp.

⁶⁰ Go to <http://www.whiteestate.org/> to find out more on Ellen G. White, and also then click on the link “search EGW writings” to access all her writings or do searches for specific words or phrases.

⁶¹ Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places* (compilation), 1967. p. 197.5.

“If the Bible were studied as it should be, men would become strong in intellect. The subjects treated upon in the word of God, the dignified simplicity of its utterance, the noble themes which it presents to the mind, develop faculties in man which cannot otherwise be developed. In the Bible, a boundless field is opened for the imagination. The student will come from a **contemplation** of its grand themes, from association with its lofty imagery, more pure and elevated in thought and feeling than if he had spent the time in reading any work of mere human origin...”⁶²

Once again, this reference to “contemplation” has a notion that the individual will study and “think.” Not simply studying and thinking from the recesses of the mind, but more importantly from themes of the Bible. The Bible is highlighted as the main source of wisdom, above any work by “mere human origin.” A quotation from the same work reads,

“We are finite, but we are to have a sense of the infinite. The mind must be brought into exercise in **contemplating** God and his wonderful plan for our salvation....The thought that we are in God's world, in the presence of the great Creator of the universe, who made man after his own likeness, will lead the mind into broad, exalted fields for **meditation**. The thought that God's eye is watching over us, that he loves us, and cared so much for us as to give his dearly beloved Son to redeem us, that we might not miserably perish, is a great one; and he who opens his heart to the acceptance and **contemplation** of themes like these, will never be satisfied with trivial, sensational subjects.”⁶³

In this paragraph the words “contemplation, and contemplating,” along with “meditation” were all used. All three words are employed synonymously. Each is being preceded by themes of what one should “think” about in the Bible during “meditation” or “contemplation.” All three words are used as action verbs, which are active in their practical use. This passage outlines that the closest connection to Divinity is found in actively pursuing the mind of God as He expressed Himself in the grand themes of Scripture. Again, it is a partnership of human seeking, met with God’s wisdom as the mind dwells on heavenly things, rather than closing the mind to all thinking. There is no

⁶² Ellen G. White, *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, 1890. p. 126.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 125.

mention in any of these passages of “non-dualistic” principles that would side with the EC definition of contemplation.

Highlighted in all three excerpts when referring to “contemplation” or “meditation” is the use of the Bible. There is nothing that can elevate our spiritual being, in and of ourselves, but God can. And He has given us His Word as an extension of Himself to do so. Furthermore it should be noted, the Holy Spirit and the Bible are in harmony and not contrary to each other, as Emergents make it seem.⁶⁴ Therefore, when Isaiah 1.18 says “Come now, let us reason together,” why would the Holy Spirit contradict Himself, asking us to cease thought, cease reason, and cease discernment when it comes to spiritual matters or “true” living (and even cease a personal dialogue with God when in prayer)? It simply does not make sense. Firstly, Emergent contemplation undermines how “contemplation” is used in the Bible whether directly or in the implied references. Secondly, from the Writings of Ellen White one may notice that EC contemplation virtually closes off a one-on-one dialogue with Jesus, as one would speak to a friend, resorting rather to a sort of Eastern religion “emptiness” idea of prayer, which is not found in Scripture. EC contemplation is not what the Scriptures or even Ellen White advocate (a dialogue and active relationship with God) therefore simply on this note the reader should beware of the stark difference.

On more practical and biological note, one might ask if there might be any actual scientific analysis of what is taking place in the mind and the brain in regards to “contemplation” in both the traditional Biblical sense and Emergent sense, and what

⁶⁴ *Listening to The Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives*, Robert Webber, ed., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), see contributors responses to Mark Driscoll’s chapter; also see Doug Pagitt’s chapter to understand how “some” Emergents view Scripture.

positive or negative effects that might have? There is scientific research, and it is a fascinating addition to the current study.

Contemplation on the Brain

Emergent “contemplation” is related, if not the same to that of Eastern meditation/prayer, which differs greatly from Western meditation/prayer. When studying the brain and brain activity (or lack of) in the frontal lobe of interesting findings are revealed concerning Eastern and Western meditation.

The frontal lobe is the largest lobe of the brain, and also the seat of judgment, reasoning, intellect, and the will.⁶⁵ To confirm the link between Eastern meditation and Emergent contemplation there is a study by Dr. Andrew Newberg, M.D. and Mark Robert Waldman recorded in their book *How God Changes Your Brain*.

One study they conducted was between Nuns engaged in Centering Prayer (another form of Emergent contemplation) and Buddhist Meditation. Both practices require the individual to have single-minded focus, quiet peaceful atmosphere, free of distractions, and a “passive attitude” (setting aside intruding thoughts by the repetition of a sacred word, i.e. mantra). This study between the two found that “the neurological changes were nearly the same” though each group “nurtured very different beliefs.”⁶⁶ Even though differing trajectories were sought after in the meditation experience and the

⁶⁵ Neil Nedley, *Proof Positive: How to Reliably Combat Disease and Achieve Optimal Health Through Nutrition and Lifestyle*. (Ardmore, OK: Neil Nedley, M.D., 1999), p. 259.

⁶⁶ Andrew Newberg, M.D., and Mark Robert Waldman, *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist*, (New York: Ballantine Trade Books paperback edition, 2010), 48-49. When discussing “centering prayer” later in their book they mention Catholic Friar Thomas Keating’s work *The Cloud of Unknowing*, they note the similarity between Eastern meditation again saying centering prayer “is very similar to various forms of Eastern contemplation, and as we discovered in our lab, the neurological effects of the Centering Prayer are nearly identical to the mindfulness practices in Buddhism,” p. 193. Originally written in *Born to Believe*, Newberg and Waldman, (The Free Press, 2007).

two groups are from different religions, the effects on the mind were the “same” because the type of meditation comes from the same tradition (the East).

To measure brain waves of a person engaged in contemplative prayer or Buddhist meditation, studies like the one above use an Electroencephalogram (EEG). During these prayer practices the EEG is particularly tracking two types of brain waves, beta and alpha waves (it can also track activity in the limbic system of the brain). When a practitioner is in contemplative prayer or Buddhist meditation, the EEG shows signs of increasing *beta* wave levels in the frontal lobe indicating that the brain is in a different state of consciousness. Why is that? Well, one might say the brain is in a weak state when *beta* waves are decreasing and low because when there is high *beta* wave activity it is indicative of sound thinking, and analysis of information coming into the brain, the brain is actively processing. Also interestingly, in this state of mind when *beta* waves are low, *alpha* waves are recorded as operative and high. This indicates that when *alpha* waves are functioning, as such during contemplation or Buddhist meditation, information is not being critically analyzed, and the individual will record information without filtering it through the frontal lobes as normal, hence the truthfulness of the notion of a “weak” mind during these forms of prayer.⁶⁷ Though, some neurobiologists refute the “weak” mind notion.⁶⁸ Neuroscientists would not say one area of the brain is “bypassed,” “weak,” or “shut off,” simply, brain activity has increased somewhere and decreased elsewhere, which is how the brain functions. Not all scientists agree with such refutations.

Noting the effects on the brain, researcher and medical doctor Neil Nedley says that during EC contemplation and Buddhist meditation “none of the information is

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 279.

⁶⁸ Personal interview with Dr. Karl Bailey, Ph.D, professor of Behavioral Neuroscience at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, April 2010.

filtered according to their sense of values or moral worth.”⁶⁹ His point is that the frontal lobe can enter into a different level of consciousness in which thinking and analysis can be thought to be somewhat “impaired.” Arguing against these types of prayer practices Dr. Nedley says, “Rather than striving for a passive state that *represses thoughts*, Christian [Western] meditation emphasizes communion with God, *thinking His thoughts*, sensing His presence, and knowing His will. [Aside from helping to reduce stress] This type of meditation also provides an opportunity to *get meaningful answers and solutions to problems* [by talking with Jesus, in dialogue, like in a relationship].”⁷⁰ What can be noted from this is that EC contemplation is passive, and represses thoughts, while Christian prayer is engaging fears and anxieties by communion with God, and “getting meaningful answers.” Aside from obtaining answers and meaningful dialogue, active Christian prayer can even help sick patients induce the bodies healing process, where other forms of meditation simply fall short in comparison. In *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine*, Dr. Larry Dossey, M.D., a deist physician while conducting research and later believer in Christ, conducted research on the frontal lobe and was unable to scientifically reconcile his findings on the brain. His findings noted a “strange” frontal lobe connection between patients engaged in active prayer to God and some of these patients even showed signs of Spontaneous Regression of Cancer (SRC). Dossey also noted how other studies, by a group of British researchers, showed Immune Weakening Stress (IWS) hormones decreased in those who engage in active prayer,

⁶⁹ Nedley, p. 279. He goes on to say, “. . . *their very reasoning powers are being bypassed. The frontal lobe has been short-circuited.*” A Neurobiologist would not concur with that statement fully, since the frontal lobe cannot be “short circuited” or “bypassed,” but a different level of consciousness can be engaged. Contact any other Neurobiologist concerning issues of “bypassing” or “shutting off” areas of the brain.

⁷⁰ Nedley, p. 341.

addressing concerns to God. Other meditations helped relax patients, but didn't reduce IWS hormones like active prayer.

There is still so much to learn as to what takes place in the brain during contemplation.⁷¹ Yet, there is enough correlation between Eastern meditation and EC contemplation because of their similar style in practice, and now, conclusive evidence of the frontal lobe activity as well. The question arises then, "Why do churches and Christian institutions still use Eastern meditation techniques which place Christians in a thoughtless state of mind if active prayer is more beneficial?"⁷²

Why Contemplate like an Emergent?: The Deeper Meaning

To answer the question as to why EC contemplative practices remain in Christian settings, two perspectives will be analyzed: the Emergent perspective and then in the following section the present author's Adventist perspective.

The Emergent Perspective

From an Emergent perspective, regardless of its difficulty to explain and practice contemplation, until people attain this level of non-dual thinking, they will always be measuring, judging, and fighting with themselves, and others, says Rohr. Emergents are eager for everyone to engage in this type of contemplation because of their belief that to will make people more tolerant and accepting of each other, and other religions and

⁷¹ For more on mystical experiences and the brain, and brain research see V.S. Ramachandran M.D. Ph. D., and Sandra Blakeslee's book *Phantoms in the Brain*, in which they concluded that, patients who suffer from temporal lobe epileptic seizures seem to involuntarily induce mystical experiences, encountering divine figures. Newberg and Waldman noted that "certain types of meditation can break down psychological resistance, leaving a person vulnerable to extraordinary feelings and thoughts," p. 77.

⁷² Pope Benedict XVI (then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger), wrote a letter in December 14, 1989 entitled *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation* which highlights even Catholics concerns with Eastern techniques merging into their faith. Yet, some Catholics seem to be quite in line with much of the Emergent contemplation teachings (hence Fr. Richard Rohr, Thomas Keating, Thomas Merton, and ect. are examples of Catholic monks who teach these practices).

groups. No one will be higher or lower than the other, all will be equal, and the problems and differences would not simply be ignored, but a notion would be accepted that “the greatest and fundamental problems...can never be solved, but outgrown,” as Rohr says, quoting the influential thinker and psychologist Carl Jung. As Rohr would intimate, to contemplate like an Emergent would solicit world peace, and harmony amongst all major religious groups, and bring these groups together by common prayer leading to transformation.⁷³ Newberg and Waldman believe that “the underlying mechanics of meditation [like EC contemplation] are theologically neutral” and therefore “can be integrated with any religious doctrine or creed or schools to improve social cooperation and cognitive performance.”⁷⁴ On the same lines, in an online survey of their research participants, Newberg and Waldman—who advocate for EC contemplation practices—created a “belief acceptance scale” which recorded individuals who “took up Eastern spiritual practices were more tolerant and accepting of other religions [and their beliefs] than those who adhered to Western monotheistic traditions.”⁷⁵ To achieve this on a greater scale in America where Western monotheistic tradition abounds, Newberg and Waldman suggest viewing “the Bible as metaphorical” taking it as “an inspirational text, not a literal document by which you should govern your life.”⁷⁶ What would such an attitude change towards the Bible achieve? The researchers go on saying, “This transforms Christianity into a tool through which people can transform their lives in the here-and-now. Religion becomes a guideline, not a truth, and this allows people to see

⁷³ Filip Milosavljevic, authors notes, *Emerging Christianity*, April 8, 2010.

⁷⁴ Newberg and Waldman, *How God Changes Your Brain*, p. 191.

⁷⁵ Newberg and Waldman, *How God Changes Your Brain*, p. 81, 122.

⁷⁶ Similar sentiments were shared by Brian McLaren during my private conversations with him at the *Emerging Christianity 2010* conference.

different traditions as paths that also lead to personal and spiritual growth”⁷⁷—while all the nuances of this statement may not be shared by all Emergents, the general idea is well accepted.⁷⁸ Again, the greater desire beyond just personal benefit from EC contemplation is social equality, acceptance, and tolerance—which are beneficial to human social peace and flourishing on a global scale.

From this viewing platform of equality and tolerance Emergents believe they can bring *shalom*, peace on earth, because everyone will truly love one another. Eventually, this will bring about the *kingdom of God*. McLaren, in his book, *A New Kind of Christian*, looks at this idea from eyes that reject two opposing sides who believe they are right, while the other is wrong (i.e. Christian vs. Muslim or any other pair who feel their side is right and another wrong) and looks at a third option, one that views it from Jesus’ option, that is building the “kingdom of heaven” here on earth, which will include all sides. McLaren highlighted a large painted poster of a tree as the backdrop on the stage at the 2010 *Emerging Christianity* conference that identified a trunk with many categorized branches. The trunk was the mother church, and each individual branch was an outcrop that split from the mother church. The tree was a symbol of the hope of what would be accomplished via means of the emerging church movement through “contemplative spirituality,” drawing all faiths and religions back together whether it is one organization or via a common belief emanating from within.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Newberg and Waldman, *How God Changes Your Brain*, p. 122.

⁷⁸ “Similar sentiments have been recently voiced by leaders of the Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim communities. For example, the Episcopalian bishop John Spong believes that Christianity must reinvent itself, and that “theism, as a way of defining God, is dead.” He argues that a ‘new way to speak of God must be found,’ quoted in Newberg and Waldman, p. 122. See also, J. Spong, *Why Christianity Must Change*, (HarperOne, 1998).

⁷⁹ Swami Vivekananda said at the Chicago “Parliament of Religions” session more than a century ago when touring the US in September of 1893 said, “The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others.”

An Adventist Critique and Perspective to Emergent Contemplation

The emergent perspective provides mixed messages in two major areas. First, there is a proclamation for religious unity, though, apart from doctrinal purity and practice, which is just not possible in Christianity. Said another way, it is having “mystical unity within religious diversity.”⁸⁰ Trappist Monk and contemplative, Basil Pennington confirms this sentiment, saying,

“In my sense, from having meditated with persons from many different traditions, that in the silence we experience a deep unity. When we go beyond the portals of the rational mind into the experience, there is only one God to be experienced.”⁸¹

Yes, Jesus does love all people and even has “other sheep that are not of this fold [Christianity],” as John 10.16 (ESV) says, but God also says, “repent and live” in Ezek. 18.32 (ESV) because “I have no pleasure in the death of anyone [those living in wickedness, living against God’s way especially], declares the Lord GOD” (personal additions). Therefore, if the Emerging church is accepting people of all faiths on the grounds of unity, who may worship themselves as god or any other god(s) or the universal oneness, this is out of bounds of monotheism, and is enters the realm of pluralism and heresy. The EC is not explaining to these practitioners of other faiths and beliefs that if we are to truly unite as one, as John 17.3, 6-19 claims, they no longer can worship themselves or other gods or seek oneness in the universe apart from the true God of the Bible, which is deemed part of the “world” and would therefore be inappropriate and wicked for a Christian, Jesus follower. The distinction is only made for those who know no better, as Romans 1.18-20 declares that the manifestation of God’s truth is made

⁸⁰ Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing: How Ancient Mystical Practices are Uniting Christians with the World’s Religions*, (Silverton, OR: Lighthouse Trails, 2nd ed 2006), 125.

⁸¹ Basil Pennington, *Centered Living*, (New York: Image Books, 1988), p. 192.

evident “within” humanity (via the conscience) and in “creation,” so no one is without excuse in knowing the true God. If given the opportunity to know God rightly, and refused or assimilated into false teachings, one is on dangerous ground. You and I cannot live the way we intend without repentance, and obedience to the ways that God has called for Himself to be known and worshiped via the Bible (the Bible as authority is contrary to some Emergents beliefs⁸²).

Jesus has already outlined a course of living that He deems acceptable based on his Word (and Commandments). Therefore, Emergents would do better in teaching clearly who God is, rather than assimilating and diminishing God by pluralistic means. Practitioners of EC contemplation are being led astray by non-dualistic thinking as advocated by the EC. We should have dualistic minds that analyze, criticize, judge and discern between right and wrong by the words of God found in Scripture. It cannot be ignored. “Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he has committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will save his life.” (Ezek 18.27).⁸³ We must understand fully that one day there will not be universal salvation as the Church Father Origen proposed,⁸⁴ but there will be sheep and goats, the righteous and the unrighteous it says in Matthew 25.31-46.⁸⁵ So if we are to fairly call people together of differing faiths, we must be sensitive, we must be loving and compassionate as our Savior Jesus was, but we cannot compromise doctrine, i.e. truth, to the benefit of being “one.”

This is pseudo “oneness” is detrimental of what Jesus stood for and advocated. Jesus did

⁸² See where Sue Monk Kidd responded to the Bible being the ultimate authority in the life of a Christian, and said, rather “the divine voice in my own soul” will be the ultimate authority. *God’s Joyful Surprise* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1987), p. 228.

⁸³ See also Ezek 3.16-21 on our accountability to God as Christians to share the gospel of Jesus

⁸⁴ See Origen’s *On First Principles*.

⁸⁵ Interestingly this passage speaks boldly of those who have served God. Christians must not forget the great value in Kingdom service here on earth. This is a concept so crucial to the Emerging Church, and for this no one can speak against them.

not advocate for violence as a means of conversion, but yes He did charge His disciples to a persuasive truthful teaching as necessary for true unification, “teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you,” (Matt. 28.18-20).

When an observer looks at the Emerging church movement as a whole and the purpose for teaching the non-dualistic consciousness, one can begin to realize the Emerging church is pushing their own interpretation of God’s will. It is not about being correct, it is about being connected, as Fr. Rohr said many times at the *Emerging Christianity* conference. By practicing contemplation, their hope is that individuals become connected to all faiths, all people, nature, and their True Self. The natural flow of non-dual thinking is that it leads to ecumenism (the desire for a one church globe, uniting all faiths), pluralism (multiple opposing or contradictory teachings that coexist somehow united i.e. being a Christian and a Buddhist at the same time), being non-analytical of other belief systems, and being non-judgmental of other believers, regardless how their beliefs, and actions might differ from what the Bible says is right and wrong.⁸⁶ From an Emergent’s perspective these things listed are not necessarily “bad,” yet as an Adventist Christian this list is not all that “good” either—pluralism, and ecumenism only waters down Christianity until it has no objective truth statements, only recommendations for living, as Newberg and Waldman advocated for by calling the Bible “mythological” and lacking authoritative truth. To the benefit of unity, connectedness, prayer to “god” is seemingly the only thing that can be agreed upon in interfaith gatherings, there is a

⁸⁶ Over dinner McLaren told me that he sees the Bible as the Word of God, but it isn’t applied literally because there are so many interpretations. Therefore what I understood from him is that it cannot necessarily be his authority, but his reference. He refers to the Bible as a narrative in his books (see *Generous Orthodoxy*). So, by interpreting the Bible more as a narrative you can be more inclusive and less judging and more “loving” because right and wrong is subjective more or less. This can be quite harmful because right doctrine will lead us to right action. This is like cutting the branch you are sitting on. The deeper question for Emergents is then, “Is the Bible the inspired Word of God, and can I take it for face value?” Look at 2 Pet. 1:20-21, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, Jn. 17:17, Heb. 4:12, and see what they have to say.

detriment to absolute, authoritative truth, and a detriment to the gospel. EC contemplation is not what Jesus advocated for as a means of advancing unity in the body of human beings on earth.

The second mixed message that the Emergent perspective relates is its pseudo-Biblical foundation. EC critic Ray Yungen declares rightly in his work *A Time of Departing* that contemplative spirituality is in error and is leading its Christian practitioners astray because it is not biblical (as much as Emergents try to prove it to be), it correlates with occult methods (i.e. mantras, vain repetitions), and, it is sympathetic to Eastern mystical perceptions (God in everything; all is One—Pantheism [which is contrary to Christian belief]).⁸⁷ As outlined in the prior section on “contemplation and the Bible,” these practices are not Biblical in any sense, rather EC contemplation is advocated from extra Biblical sources, and these sources also falsely prove contemplation using the Bible. Unassuming and naïve thinkers concerning contemplative spirituality will see the Scripture texts, they will notice the Jesus talk, and will slowly have their Christian framework shifted into an erring melting pot of spirituality devoid of true gospel. This will then lead certainly to “seeing Jesus as a model rather than a Savior, one of many manifestations of God rather than the *only* manifestation of God.”⁸⁸

Paul’s counsel long ago holds true today, “The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith.” Why? Because, they were “paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Timothy 4.1). The EC might be considered for such a verse.

The Heart of Adventism: 3 Angel’s Messages

⁸⁷ Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing: How Ancient Mystical Practices are Uniting Christians with the World’s Religions*, (Silverton, OR: Lighthouse Trails, 2nd ed 2006), 130.

⁸⁸ Yungen, *A Time of Departing*, p. 127.

Going a bit deeper into the Christian Adventist perspective one must take note of the heart of Adventist doctrine, “How does the message of non-dualism compare with the Three Angels message that Adventists highlight from Revelation 14.6-12?” If we analyze only the first angel’s message in light of this topic we find something very interesting. The first angel cries out to those living on the earth, “Fear God and give Him glory.” “Fear” is better understood as revere, or respect, hence giving glory to God will be to honor the character of God.⁸⁹ Therefore, all humanity is called to respect and honor His character, “give Him glory.” Well, how does one do this exactly? John 14.21 answers this by giving the basic form of respect, starting with love, saying, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him (NKJV).” Jesus says, if we keep His commandments He will manifest or show Himself to us. Obedience is crucial to knowing God deeply because only when obedience is displayed can the Holy Spirit be manifest in the believer.⁹⁰ John 14.15-17 expresses this teaching concerning the Holy Spirit and obedience, when Jesus says,

“If you love me, keep my commandments [i.e. obey Me]. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

There is no mention of contemplation to alter one’s consciousness in order to know, love and be loved by God, and no mental silence (though Jesus went to places where it was a

⁸⁹ In terms of glory meaning character, in Exodus 33.18 Moses asks God, "show me your glory," and then in Exodus 34.1, 2 we see that God gives Moses the Ten Commandments, which is a transcript of God's character. Finally in Exodus 34.6, 7 God proclaims His name and character traits, hence glory equals character. Also, in John 17.4-6 Jesus says, “I have glorified you on earth.” He did this by manifesting or showing God's name (character) to the twelve disciples. This is at least one meaning of glory.

⁹⁰ See Acts 5.32

quiet place, where there was an outer silence, not inner mental silence), but rather a direct teaching to obedience of God's written word and being filled with the Holy Spirit in order to truly be united with God.

Without obedience to God's written Word and being filled with the Holy Spirit one cannot fully know God or His character—we cannot then “give Him glory”—because the commandments are a transcript and revelation of His character. One can know other spirits or demons if other means are done though, as manifested in contemplative spirituality. In Isaiah 14.12-14 Lucifer says he will lift himself above God, lifting his throne above the stars of God to “make myself like the Most High.” Breaking this down to gain a better understanding one must ask, “What does throne mean?” Well, in Psalm 97.2 it says that the foundation of God's throne is made up of two things, righteousness and justice. Then in Psalm 119.172 it says that all of God's “commandments” are righteousness. Therefore, God's throne is also His commandments. So when Satan says, “I will lift my throne above the stars of God,” he is saying I am wiping away God's commandments and His character, and putting mine in place.

When we read Revelation 14.12, God finally has a people that keep His commandments, and earlier in Revelation 12.17 we see Satan is at war with the people that keep God's commandments, whoever is keeping the commandments, Adventists or not, Satan is against them particularly. The center of the battle between God and Satan is God's character (which also is His love), His law, and the very person of God, the Holy Spirit. That is why the first Angel says with a loud voice, “Fear God and give Him glory.” He's saying it is important to honor God and to reflect His character by obedience to His Word and of course His commandments. As Christians we know the blood of

Jesus has bought our salvation, but Jesus still demands our obedience. So when we obey Him by following His Commandments (because of our love for him), it is proof that we are God's children and are filled with the Holy Spirit. As EC critic and researcher Roger Oakland says "Blanking out one's mind to arrive at a meditative state has long been practiced as a means to contracting the spirit world." Which is something that is seemingly taking place in Emergent contemplation. He goes on to say, "While it is common to Eastern religion, it is foreign to Scripture; any references to Scripture to praying a mantra or going into self-induced altered states of mind are condemned (Matthew 6:7; Deuteronomy 18:9-14)."⁹¹ Satan knows these practices conjure up other spirits not of God, so he is doing everything he can to wipe out God's commandments, and more simply, to wipe away Biblical authority, diminishing Jesus as God, so that such practices continue, as they ostensibly uplift Satan higher than God and keep people from a relationship with Jesus.

So, how do the commandments and being filled with the Holy Spirit as a result of following God via faithful obedience fit into non-dualistic thinking of the EC? The problem is that it does not. If one wants to adapt non-dualism as outlined so far, it will only lead people away from obedience to the Word of God to simply acceptance and toleration of everything, and everyone. The commandments show us right and wrong and our sins (Rom 3.20). In reality, non-dualistic thinking is another way of ignoring God's commandments because it lacks the ability to discern rightly beyond "common sense."

One cannot help but think, that "contemplation," as the Emergents know it, is an attack on the first Angel's message and the authority of the Scriptures. This might be a reason why contemplation is so popular with postmoderns because there is freedom from

⁹¹ Oakland, *Faith Undone*, p. 83-84.

guilt in “contemplation”—there is no accountability without objective truth. People want freedom from guilt. As Christians we want freedom as well. The only difference is that Christians find freedom in Jesus and from sin by the power of Jesus, manifested through the gift of the “Helper,” the Holy Spirit (John 14.26). When someone accepts Jesus, as his or her Savior, there is no condemnation in Christ (Rom 8.1). Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery, “I do not condemn you,” and He also said “go and sin no more,” this is packed with meaning. Jesus gives freedom, i.e. grace, as He did with this woman, but not license to break His commandments. The Emergent teaching of contemplation uses prayer as this medium to freedom, to unity, without concern for the commandments.

What is the logical conclusion if the commandments and Scriptural authority are forsaken or rather relegated to a lesser value? In this next section I explore such ideas.

Emergent Contemplation and its Logical Conclusion

What happens if there is no law, no distinct authority, no freedom found in the Biblical and real Jesus? There is no need of Jesus as Savior for the world. Jesus is simply than a moral teacher and mystic. Is this what the Scriptures taught Jesus to be? Is this what the disciples told pagans who worshiped other gods? Is this what Christians died and continue to die for in persecution, for a mystic-moral-prophet-who-can-teach-you-something Jesus? Or is He *the Messiah, Jesus Christ, Lord of the world* whom all should hear about, repent, and be saved by? This is what John chapter one is about, Jesus coming to the world, yet the World did not recognize Him, and His own did not receive Him for who He was. This continues to happen today with Emergents, and even with Christians and other belief systems alike. This is *the* issue before those in the forefront or simply

those in the EC, “What role does Jesus have in Emerging theology?” and “What role does Emergent contemplation play in advancing Emergent theology?”

Jesus seems to no longer be needed for the salvation of the whole world (not simply Christians), but simply for *shalom* (peace) and reconciliation. Yet, is this all that Jesus came for to this planet, to bring peace? If I accept non-dualistic teaching I can get to heaven anyway that I want, because I no longer need Christ (this assumes there is heaven in EC theology, which I believe there is not). This is huge. This is the capstone of our faith. Yet, this is what contemplation teaches, total acceptance of all faiths as a legitimate way to heaven, to Jesus.

I think this is where the line is drawn between non-dualism and the three angels message, Adventism. One glorifies Christ, and His character and commandments. The other uses Christ “in name” yet subtly does away with His sacrifice and love for sinners to be transformed. One is God centered and Christ dependent; the other is self-centered and self-dependent. The non-dualistic teaching permeates the character of Lucifer, who was thrown out of heaven for wanting his own way, and not God’s. So, if Emergents are experiencing God in a way that we cannot, it is not because they have unlocked a secret, but because they are blatantly disobedient to God’s Word. What is happening here is, a demise of objective truth. As Soviet nuclear physicist, dissenter, and human rights activist, Andrei Sakharov, said when analyzing the work he had done on the Soviet atomic bomb project, “The most powerful weapon is not a bomb, but the truth.”⁹² If we let go of objective truth, we lose the greatest power available to us.

⁹² Ravi Zacharias, *Unplugging Truth in a Morally Suicidal Culture, 1 of 3*. RZIM: Let My People Think, 6/20/2009. Audio.

The issue over relativism in the Emerging Church is not one that those propagating contemplation would say they are catalysts for, but rather they are above relativism, beyond it.⁹³ Contemplation seems to be at the heart of Emerging theology because if they can train you to think a certain way, they can train you to be a certain way, and lead you to a certain place—hence the subtitle of the latest conference, *Emerging Christianity-HOW you get there determines Where you arrive*. For the Christian this should cause some consternation, a deep anxiety to their teachings.⁹⁴ In essence even if the EC is not implicitly using relativism, I would describe what they are doing is building a bridge called “pluralism.” On one end is Christianity and the other end is relativism and they have someone blindfolded (those practicing Emergent contemplation) crossing “pluralism” and ending up on the side, relativism-which leads to spiritualism, paganism, and dangerous occult practices. The only way one can allow multiple belief systems to co-exist together is by ignoring, or closing their eyes to truth. This is existentialist living, created by ones own experience, referred to as subjectivity or relativism. Interestingly, subjectivity in the court of law would not hold up, but why can it in the area of faith and religion?

In Psalm 34.8 we are invited “to taste and see that the Lord is good,” to experience and participate in worship. Though contemplation is advised, per se, for spiritual growth, we should be aware of contemplative practices that call for non-dualistic (non-analytical) thinking as it is non-biblical. Christians are advised to test the spirits (1

⁹³ Richard Rohr, *A New Way of Seeing...A New Way of Being*. Center for Action and Contemplation, 2009. CD.

⁹⁴ Contemplation seen within the larger framework of the EC is the mode of transportation to what D. A. Carson calls, “philosophical pluralism,” which will lead Christians astray into non-biblical practices and faith. See D. A. Carson’s full article on, <http://www.modernreformation.org/default.php?page=articledisplay&var1=ArtRead&var2=128&var3=main>

John 4:1), that is, to differentiate, to distinguish, and to pass a judgment on things in life. Such practices as the contemplative sit, centering prayer, prayer labyrinth, etc. are designed to lead practitioners to the non-dualistic (monistic) consciousness, which is mystic and non-biblical. One should ask, “Do we want to become mystics or become like Jesus?” If becoming like Jesus is the answer, why would we want to adopt such practices with those purposes?⁹⁵ Christians should *have experiences with* God based on faith through obedience, not aim to *experience* God through ritualistic practices that disregard scripture and inadvertently lower *beta* waves in the frontal lobe by suppressing thoughts and opening oneself to control of potentially spirits not of God.

In the final days of earth’s history, Revelation 7.3 and 9.3-5 show that the character of God will be sealed on the foreheads of those who are God’s children, while those without it will be destroyed. We are in a battle for the mind, and we cannot allow the frontal lobe to enter a non-analytical state, where things going in are not analyzed for their truth value, but are passively acted upon. The final days are going to be a battle of great deception that even the elect would be convinced (Matthew 24.24). The teaching of “contemplation” as taught by the some of those in the EC needs to be countered with awareness of its grave shortcomings, and offer Biblical truth instead, before it enters further into the Christian and Adventist church (as some Adventist pastors would claim, it has already infiltrated the church)⁹⁶. Otherwise non-dualistic thinking will spread all over

⁹⁵ One may have some loose definition of what a mystic is and try to call Jesus a mystic. Yet such an understanding undermines who Jesus was, He was God not solely one who desired to have mystical encounters. Mystical things occurred around Christ, but He was not one who today is deemed a “mystic,” one who seeks out divine and mysterious encounters with God. Such mysterious occurrences in Scripture were gifts of God bestowed for a purpose of furthering the kingdom, like Peter on the roof sharing later with Cornelious about Jesus to save his whole family, not for personal edification.

⁹⁶ See Rick Howard, *The Omega Rebellion: What Every Adventist Needs to Know...Now*; Steve Wholberg’s sermon at the GYC Southeast 2013: *Called Apart* event in Collegedale, TN

the world just as the 19th century Canadian psychiatrist Richard M. Bucke, who was a forerunner to non-dualism had suggested such a notion back in the late 1800s.⁹⁷ The Emerging church's teaching on contemplation is one deception that is very subtle. At first hearing "contemplation" it sounds so true, and necessary for the transformation of humanity, yet what the world truly needs is total transformation through the Biblical, historical, and real Jesus and His teachings. Lifting Him up, by revealing Him to a world dying and starving for truth, by the way we conduct our lives, being examples of true Christianity, and offering practical help to those in need. This will draw all men unto Him (John 12.32). Jesus gives meaning, purpose, and true significance.

If Emergent contemplation is unbiblical, then how can the Christian believer connect with God? How does one practice true Biblical contemplation? These questions will be answered in the following and final section of this paper.

In the Light of Emergent Contemplation:

"How should a Christian Pray?"

Eastern meditation, which is what is occurring through the contemplative practices of the Emerging church leads to non-dualistic thinking, and is not acceptable for any religion, especially Christianity. Using the knowledge acquired so far, any practice that requires the eyes or mind to focus on a "sacred word," mantra, or object or specific focus point is dangerous because it will induce the contemplative consciousness.

<https://www.audioverse.org/english/sermons/recordings/5240/perils-of-the-emerging-church.html>; and the numerous sermons and articles targeting the One Project gathering as Emerging Church in Adventism.

⁹⁷ Richard M. Burke developed a theory that claimed that Cosmic Consciousness lies in a mystic state above and beyond Self-consciousness, the natural state of man's consciousness, just like animal consciousness lies below (very similar to non-dualistic conscious).

Practices such as the rosary, prayer labyrinths,⁹⁸ centering prayer, contemplative sit, walking meditations, and any repetitive chants and such that lead the practitioner to this altered state of mind are not advised for Christians. Also, any practices or spiritual movements that disregard the Scripture as the Word of God, but embrace the work of the “spirit” are dangerous (whether it is the Holy Spirit can be debated).

If we believe that God is the author of the Bible than we must trust it. The Bible must be our firm foundation in these last days, if not, we will simply rely on someone’s interpretation based solely on the “spirit” and not that of Scripture along with the Holy Spirit. Yes, this might be difficult since there are so many interpretations, but we should not lose hope. If the practice is not based on *sola scriptura*, as Luther spoke, then throw that idea away because scripture will prove scripture.⁹⁹ There must be an objective way of measuring truth. We cannot, as C. S. Lewis wrote in the *Abolition of Man*, let society construct what is right and wrong; and we also cannot simply assume that the Holy Spirit will tell us what is truth if we disregard Scripture as the Word of God and simply use it as a reference. We are not our own gods to deem what is right and wrong; this was Lucifer’s statement in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3.4, 5.

⁹⁸ Many Christians try to adapt the prayer labyrinth, unknowingly ignorant of its true design which has three journeys, which lead to (non-dualistic consciousness) the final stage of *theosis/unitiva* (sound familiar?). Adapting something to fit your context must be done with great care. There can be benefit of prayer stations to get the practitioner to connect with God through Biblical means (i.e. stations that get you to read a verse and think of a friend who it could apply to, drop a stone in a bowl to symbolize the sins that God has forgotten, or write a prayer to God, and move on to the next station, etc).

⁹⁹ Adventists participate in the practice of exegesis, such as: going into what the text *meant* for that culture, studying the social context, looking at the Greek and Hebrew meanings, doing word studies, analyzing the broader context in surrounding texts, chapter, book and the whole Bible, and then applying it to current culture, what it *means* today. Emergents use the notion that scripture can be misleading because it is interpreted incorrectly, and that there are so many interpretations, therefore many (not all) adherents to the EC do not regard scripture as God’s final authority, while many times rendering their own of meanings, while banishing and being intolerant of mainline Christian understandings. There is tolerance only in EC goals it seems. See Mark Driscoll’s chapter “The Emerging Church and Biblicist Theology,” p. 22-26 in *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

Jesus was from the East. Except, He was from the East of two thousand years ago in first century Palestine, which is starkly different from what we refer to as the East. When it is used today it is indicative of the Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, and pagan world, along with some Christian influence. The religious landscape of first century Palestine may have been similar to today's East, with other religions, paganism, and philosophy seeking Gnostics, but the Jews and Jesus were separate from them, and did not worship as they did. In Jesus, in the Scripture, the Christian have the words of Truth, so why then seek enlightenment elsewhere through other religions, or unbiblical Emergent or other practices created by humans? John 6.60-69 portrays a stark reality between the seeming disciple and the true disciple of Jesus. When Jesus was preaching a difficult teaching the onlookers who were seemingly interested abandoned Jesus, saying, "this is too hard." In His observation of the departure of the pseudo-disciples, Jesus asks His original twelve disciples, "Do you want to go away as well?" To this remark Peter thoughtfully replied such that we should take note when thinking of Emergent contemplation, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." Since the Christian will believe in Jesus and trust His "words" which lead to "eternal life," then what other supplement is needed for spiritual enlightenment?

Simply because Emergents think that Christian prayer has become a nagging and manipulative event does not mean all treat it like this, or that it then should be revamped by forms of prayer outside of Scripture. We should not "throw the baby out with the bathwater." It might be that some of our prayers are "not right" (if that can even be said), and this should be acknowledged and fixed. When something is broken, it can be fixed,

rather than replaced by foreign ideas that seem “similar” to Christianity that come with mystical “benefits” of some other source, gods, than God.

Rohr acknowledges, as was stated before, that non-dualistic thinking is not mentioned explicitly in the Bible, but says that non-dualistic thinking is implied, and that could possibly give Emergent contemplation more significance than if it were stated outright.¹⁰⁰ He also says that every major religion at its mature level is trying to compartmentalize the mind, to put the mind to the side, but Protestantism has lost this emphasis.¹⁰¹ One could say that Protestantism abandoned and rejected this emphasis rightfully so because the practice was never biblically based, never ordained by the early believers, even if it was practiced by ancient Christian mystics and others.¹⁰² Likewise “implied” teaching, as Rohr advocates, is not a sure footing to base your Christian practice on.

The disciples were not totally sure how to pray, and were envious of their friends who followed John the Baptist, who taught his disciples to pray (Luke 11.1). So one of Jesus’ disciples approached Him after Jesus finished a time of prayer asking, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples” (Luke 11.1). Jesus then shares with them a prayer, one that we could study and learn from and incorporate. We could learn from how Jesus Himself prayed, where He went to pray, how long He prayed, and what He said. We could study others in Scripture that prayed, and then apply these to our prayer, conversational life, with God. There is much to learn from in Scripture, and begin to

¹⁰⁰ Rohr, *Emerging Christianity*, conference in Albuquerque, NM 4/8/10.

¹⁰¹ Rohr, *Contemplative Prayer*. Audio CD.

¹⁰² It is recorded how one Christian mystic, St. Theresa of Avila, felt her heart being pierced by an arrow of an angel. I wonder how mystical experiences come about to mystics and those who practice “contemplation,” or some other form of Eastern meditation? Emergents (along with Catholics) label these mystical “experiences” simply as gifts of God. Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity Vol. 2: The reformation to the present day*. (New York: HarperOne, 1985) p. 116.

reorder our prayer life accordingly to be more meaningful, and less “manipulative and nagging.”

As much as people who do evangelism like to say, “Change the methods, but never change the message,” it could also be argued that sometimes our methods can actually mislead people, such as the case with Emergent contemplation. So, if Emergent contemplation seems to be on the lines of Eastern meditation, which we do not want in our worship because it alters the thinking and analyzing state in the frontal lobe, then what are some principles for contemplation that the Bible does condone, which might just be revolutionary and an even more powerful experience than any other?

Biblically based “contemplation” must hold to these five tenants to be acceptable “contemplation.” First off, “contemplation” should be that which adheres to the first definition discussed in the beginning, which was a thoughtful reflection, study, deep thought. Secondly, “contemplation” should adhere to the intended meaning found in the Bible and writings of Ellen G. White. Thirdly, “contemplation” should be in line with engaging the *beta* waves of the frontal lobe, meaning that thinking, analysis, and reason are taking place. Fourth, “contemplation” should lead you to know Jesus as your Savior. Furthermore, if we take Jesus at His Word He should be the Savior of the world, (including other religions). Fifth, “contemplation” places the Word of God as an authority for truth and a medium for communication, along with the Holy Spirit (they will not contradict one another, the Word must be the defining line of truth, to which the Holy Spirit reminds us of, as John 14.26 tells us).

When asked by His disciples how to pray (Matthew 6) Jesus gave them a formulated pattern, which is common for petitionary prayer—the kind the disciples were

addressing—conducted in the Old Testament period.¹⁰³ Many of the recorded petitionary prayers in the Bible had the formulated pattern of: address, petition and then motivation.¹⁰⁴ Jesus was asking His disciples to address God verbally in this prayer, in communication. A two-way form of communication is central to creating and maintaining a relationship with God. When the “Spirit” led Jesus into the desert for forty days, one might ask, “What did Jesus do with His time?” A logical answer arises when Jesus responds to the devil that came to tempt Him. To each temptation Jesus rebuked the devil with “it is written” Scripture. Scripture was on the mind of Christ during His time in the desert. He was in prayer, the form known as “meditation” most likely. David says “Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Your sight” in Psalm 19.14 or “Let my meditation be sweet unto Him” in Psalm 104.34. The word for “meditate” can also be translated as “murmur” or “dull sound” or “faint speech.”¹⁰⁵ which can be observed when visiting the Western Wall in Jerusalem, as the many Jews are faintly speaking Scriptures of the Torah, Old Testament, and rocking back and forth. They are meditating on Scripture, and allowing its power to impact the mind.

There are plenty of good practices we can still do without moving into Emergent contemplation. We simply need to become students of Jesus and His Word and we will be led into all truth, found in the Word, as John 17.17 says, “your word is truth.”

¹⁰³ Moshe Greenberg, *Biblical Prose Prayer: As a Window the Popular Religion of Ancient Israel*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: UC Press, 1983), p. 11. During his visiting professorship as the UC Berkeley Taubman professor of Jewish studies, Moshe Greenberg gave a series of three lectures on Ancient Israel prayers, published as *Biblical Prose Prayer: As a Window the Popular Religion of Ancient Israel*. Greenberg writes that human communication in the Old Testament seemed to be “more contingent upon mediation and prescription; indeed the most prominent forms of worship and prayer in the Bible seem to leave little room for free, simple, spontaneous expression” p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁵ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, “Meditate,” (accessed online).

What happened to prayer as we commonly know it? Has it lost its powerful meaning? A sarcastically novel idea is that “God will actually listen when we speak” (see Jeremiah 29.12; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Matthew 6.8-10)! If Jesus prayed to His Father in audible words (whether in the mind or out loud, see Matthew 26.36-46), then that type of prayer is good enough for Christians today. Some are searching for the newest and best, just like the philosophers on Mars Hill that Paul addressed in Acts 17.21 who “spent their time doing nothing but talking and listening to the latest ideas.” It seems that we don’t like to pray like Jesus, or else we wouldn’t be resorting to needing unbiblical practices for prayer (whether we know they are or not). Even though Eastern meditation reduces stress, only active prayer to God reduces stress with all “reasoning powers fully in tact” as the God in heaven is actually listening. It also has the ability to change other people’s lives when we pray for them, unlike meditation of any religion (including Christianity).¹⁰⁶

What happened to reading the Scripture as we normally do? The Bible is the Word of God. Simply by reading it we will hear the voice of God speaking through the text. One can even read other Bible translations to get other perspectives, particularly the paraphrase translations, *The Message*, *The Clear Word*, or *New Living Translation*. Another tip might be to meditate on scripture passages by slowly reading and analyzing what each word means, and even form pictures to visualize what it looks like. Good books of the Bible to do this with are Psalms, Proverbs, Songs of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. Search the scripture for themes to focus on, such as heaven, the price Jesus had to pay for our salvation, being a good Samaritan, and so forth. Find passages that go along with these topics, and then read them slowly. Try and engage the five senses to

¹⁰⁶ Nedley, p. 279.

experience the story. There are a myriad of practices that we simply have not even considered, or practiced in a long time that would benefit our spiritual growth greatly.¹⁰⁷

To close this section, I pose one final question for the loophole individual, “Can these Emergent contemplative practices be adapted to fit my personal religious system without leading to the contemplative consciousness?” On first hearing one may think it be possible. Although, another question posed back might challenge this notion altogether, “for what reason would I want to adapt these practices?” Is there a lack within my own religious community of creative practices that can lead to deeper spiritual growth? As a Christian community we already have practices that are truthful to the Biblical text, and that are spiritually uplifting without being non-dualistic in origin and purpose. The issue at hand is that Christians are looking for what is “new” and “spiritual,” but instead Christians need to be very careful, ask more questions, and test new practices according to Scripture. Emergent contemplative practices are not like pagan Christmas rituals that were used in pagan worship some thousand years ago. People are doing these non-biblical practices now, and the similarity between Christian and non-Christian is far too similar.

Let me take a different approach to the question, “Can one practice Emergent contemplation as a Christian?” I would then ask a question back, a question not based in fear, but more caution, “Are you willing to be taught contemplative prayer by individuals who are perfectly fine with learning practices from Eastern religions?” Eastern religious monks trained Rohr and also Thomas Merton, the master mystic teacher who taught Fr.

¹⁰⁷ Disciplines like fasting, praying for others, observing the Sabbath, giving (tithing or gifts), service, meditation, Bible study, and ect. Just seek God and pray how you might make these part of your spiritual journey now.

Rohr much of what he knows in contemplation.¹⁰⁸ Asking the question again but differently, “Can a Christian practice some of these Emergent practices (for instance the Prayer Labyrinth, Centering Prayer, etc), or even adapt them to make them more Christian?” Sure you can, but where will this lead you several years from now? Will you know Jesus better as your personal Savior? Or call Him a possible stumbling block to know the “cosmic Christ” found in all religions? As you introduce these practices you will slowly begin to accept more and more unbiblical practices, some of which are simply down right pagan, and you will not even realize it.¹⁰⁹ One is led toward an alternate spirituality that is not founded on the Bible. This begins to undermine the value of the Bible, either as an authoritative source of truth to order one’s life by or simply a good book with suggestions for a better life. The difference is drastic. Contemplative practices that require us to analyze, think, dwell on, discern between good and evil, and look outside of ourselves (and not inside) to find the “spirit” that can come and dwell within us, is the beginning to a correct understanding of what are safe contemplative practices Christians can do.

The original hypothesis was that Emergent contemplative practices alter key pillars of Christianity, of which were hopefully proven in this study. The present author does not know everything on this subject, but the research on the various levels can help

¹⁰⁸ Rohr, at a lecture at the *Emerging Church Conference*, March 20-22 2009 makes mention of spending time with Zen masters in Asia, learning their techniques because they have the correct understanding of how to attain the highest spiritual mind/the contemplative mind/non-dualistic mind. He does admit that he didn’t agree with everything, but he took what he believed was “truth” and left the rest. He and other mystics, primarily Thomas Merton, say that, “truth is truth no matter where it is from” may hold some credence, but the way in which they filter truth from falsity has not been done well so far.

¹⁰⁹ At the *Emerging Christianity* conference I attended, on the final night, the “lamentation” service (people shared their hurts and grief) ended with a sort of “mourning session,” in which it was stated from the stage that it mirrors Native American practices. To be honest it seemed like a pagan ritual dance, in which more than a hundred people were beating drums, banging rocks, crying aloud, dancing and bowing in front of a vessel that symbolized the pain of the attendees. Uh...does this not seem pagan to anyone else? This is what Emergent contemplation leads people to, yet we seem to accept a lot of things with open arms, but with no idea where the practice might lead or its original purpose.

guide people to make wise, Biblical decisions in their desire for spiritual growth. Seek God through Jesus, because only He “so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life” John 3.16.

Conclusion

My point in critiquing the Emerging church in regards to contemplation is not to make the road to heaven narrower than it already is (see Matthew 7.13, 14)—though in obedience to Christ there is true freedom, and the road becomes wide—but simply to sound the warning bell that we are not called to lower God’s Word to a mythological or solely “narrative”¹¹⁰ status, while our minds act as our moral and spiritual compass. I believe that the desire to be inclusive that comes from the Emerging Church is commendable because I think it comes from a love for people and to see them share in God’s blessings. It is my desire, as I know it is that of many Emergents to be as inclusive as possible, but I would say we should be inclusive to a limit. A limit not based on numbers of seats in heaven, or race, or social status, or the coolness factor of our haircut, but rather on adherence to what Jesus has done for us on the cross, and trust that the Scriptures are God’s means of communication to ensure “checks and balances” to what we hear in our prayer time with Jesus, weekend sermons, devotional books, or conversations with our atheist friend on spirituality. Our time in prayer and meditation should always be in-line with God’s Word, otherwise we leave ourselves open to our own thoughts, and thoughts of teachers or spirits not of God (false prophecies of false

¹¹⁰ McLaren would love Christians to look at the Bible from a solely “narrative” perspective, *Generous Orthodoxy* (p.170), while other’s like Newberg and Waldman, as noted previously vouch for a “mythological” reading of Scripture. Both are lacking the important authoritative vantage, which says the Bible is “Truth” by which life is going to be ordered by.

prophets). Both our thoughts and people/things, which influence our mind, can be wolves dressed in sheep's clothing (See Matthew 7.15). This is why we must always align our lives, our moral compass, our decisions, and what we hear with the Word of God, which is objective truth, in order to guard against such things. This is not the final word, "Let God be true and every man a liar" (Rom. 3.4).

Post Conclusion Discussion

This conclusion does not follow behind anyone else's work on the topic of contemplation in the Honors program, but it does follow after a line of many who have done a critique on the Emerging church movement as a whole (D. A. Carson and Roger Oakland to name a few). If I had to say what are my strengths in the project I would say that it had to be in the topic itself. It was a very relevant topic for study in Christianity, and even more importantly the Seventh-day Adventist Church. My purpose was to bring awareness to those who didn't understand the origins and purposes of "contemplation" within our church that have already been moving to adopting and adapting EC methods in worship practices. My weakness might be found in the fact that the paper could have been more clearly written, and even simplified for those who do not have any background in the topic itself. My project hopes to spurn Andrews University, the larger Seventh-day Adventist community, and even fellow Christians to rethink spiritual practices in the church that might have begun or are beginning to adopt or adapt some of these dangerous contemplation methods. If I were to continue working on the project (which I hope to do!) I would try and find more research done on the brain to confirm the hypothesis on mystical experiences and the frontal lobe.

On a final personal note, let me mention 4 things: grace, proper research, terminology clarification, and evangelism. Too many are using assumptions and “Googling” rather than doing primary research, speaking to and with the sources for their facts. Also, many in our day now—particularly speaking of the Seventh-day Adventist community—have not allowed mistakes, growth, and forgiveness to be fostered for those who have gone a bit far in the area of “spiritual formation.” On the other side, there are some who in leadership positions should have used wisdom before advancing certain books and initiatives, and should have apologized for their mistakes. Also, now days clarify exactly what a term means when it is being used. “Spiritual formation” means “being formed into Christ,” but the “how” is the problem not the term, and this should be clarified. In the end we cannot allow heresy, or tangent issues a place in the church, nor should we allow it to preoccupy our minds. The goal of the Jesus follower is to seek the salvation of souls, not the defense against the emerging church. We cannot allow evangelism time, money, and energy to pass in the EC issues anymore, let’s move on.

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