

OPENING ANCIENT PATHWAYS TO SPIRITUALITY  
FOR MODERN DAY EVANGELICALS  
SEEKING A DEEPER EXPERIENCE OF GOD

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## Abstract

### OPENING ANCIENT PATHWAYS TO SPIRITUALITY FOR MODERN DAY EVANGELICALS SEEKING A DEEPER EXPERIENCE OF GOD

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop a training manual which can be used to present the way of spiritual disciplines to Christians from Evangelical, and charismatic churches. The need which generated this project is the exodus of people from the churches in which they have served for many years. These people have been in positions of leadership and remain committed to their faith, but they demonstrate by their departure that something is missing in what they need from church life and what they want for their service in the Kingdom of God.

A common desire expressed by these people is for deeper intimacy with God. They indicate that they are tired of working for God, or more exactly, for the church, and want to live their lives more from a simple, familiar relationship with him. They know that this leads them toward more holiness, but they do not know how to pursue this.

The lives of many saints of the church and the classic spiritual disciplines they practiced offer a viable guide to these modern seekers. The people who are targets of this paper are generally not familiar with either the saints or the disciplines, so this manual is a way to teach them about these.

The paper presents a brief history of Christian spirituality, a survey of theological premises for pursuing holiness, an argument for a theological necessity for pursuing holiness, a description of the pedagogy employed, and an outline of selected disciplines to be presented in the course for which the paper would serve as text.

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## INTRODUCTION

I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one. (Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-22)<sup>1</sup>

If you would truly know how these things (the deep truths of Christianity) come to pass ask it of grace, not of doctrine; of desire, not of intellect; of the ardours of prayer, not of the teachings of the schools; of the Bridegroom, not of the Master; of God, not of man; of the darkness, not of the day; not of illumination, but of that Fire which enflames all and wraps us in God with great sweetness and most ardent love. The which Fire most truly is God, and the hearth thereof is in Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus' prayer is my desire. To share in Jesus' union with the Father is the longing of my heart. It is my dream to see the church "be in Us," to experience the destiny Jesus bequeathed to it. In this paper I want to "point out the way that eventually leads there," as one of my encouragers from years past, Jeanne Guyon says. I have the privilege of teaching seeking souls who feel keenly the need of their hearts for union with God. This paper is the design of a course in which I point out the ways to deeper intimacy with God forged by seeking souls of years past, unto seekers of today. The aim of the course is to introduce the writings of Christian mystics and the classic spiritual disciplines to those individuals from Evangelical and charismatic churches who are in the circle of my context of ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted all Bible references are taken from New American Standard Bible, Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988, by the Lockman Foundation, all rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> Saint Bonaventura, "De Itinerario Mentis in Deo," cap. vii, quoted in Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism. The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), 124.

## The Project's Target Group

Who these seekers are is illustrated by Vince (not his real name, but a real person). Vince is in his early fifties and has been a Christian all his life. He was involved in church at different levels as a youth and attended a Christian college. Later, in his mid-twenties he grew into a deeper level of commitment to Christ, which he first expressed by serving in a Christian helping mission overseas for two years. As he followed the course of life as an adult he remained faithful in church participation, contributing wholeheartedly to church programs and community outreaches. He practices a regular, meaningful personal devotional life and participated in men's groups for support and accountability.

Now, however, his church involvement has dropped to minimal. One after another Vince stopped doing the things to which he had given so much of his life. He has visited services and events of other churches and groups during this lessening of activity, but nothing compels his commitment. The sermons he hears do not reach his soul. Worship, while still meaningful for Vince, is diluted by too many words and seems overly choreographed. The men's groups which sustained him do so no longer, and no one calls him to ask why he has dropped out. He has lost his energy for church life, and it seems to have made no difference, either to Vince or to those in the church.

Yet, Vince's hunger for God is strong, even desperate. He continues his practice of personal devotion and study. He is not being attracted to "the world." He is waiting for a purpose big enough to inspire him again.

I know many people like Vince – too many. They are Christians for whom faith in Christ and commitment to his Kingdom is the primary thing in their lives. They have been actively involved in churches, which for most included positions of leadership. They take active initiative for personal spiritual growth. They seek more of the knowledge of God and how to serve Him through reading, conferences, and intense interaction with other believers.

Yet, they are dissatisfied with what is offered to them in church for spiritual growth, and they are no longer motivated by the way mission is described. They find it makes little difference in their faith and Christian walk to be absent from church activity. After interviewing disillusioned people who had stopped attending services at mainline Protestant, Reformed, independent and charismatic churches, researcher William Hendricks observed,

Underneath it all, while they may be attracted to a particular worship format or youth program, the reason people go (to church) is because of an insatiable hunger for God. If they don't find that expectation satisfied in the

church or if God is talked about in ways that don't make sense to them, sooner or later they become disillusioned and look for an excuse to leave.<sup>3</sup>

They are evangelicals who are tired of busyness and programs. They are charismatics who are disillusioned with promises (a.k.a, "prophetic words") and the constant pursuit of "more power." They are Pentecostals who no longer believe that what they have attained is the fullness of the Spirit. They are members of mainline churches frustrated with structures which do not stimulate them nor deploy them in accordance with their own gifts and desires.

And they are thirsty for the water of Life. They are hungry for Bread which satisfies. They want to know God more deeply, more intimately. They want to serve him consistently and passionately in ways that are relevant to their own experience and to the world in which they live. Their need is being recognized by some in the church, such as Jeff Imbach, who writes of his concern in *The River Within*,

My heart goes out to the growing number of people who feel empty, frustrated, disappointed, or just plain disillusioned with what they have been given as spiritual food. Some have lived with this ache for years; others are just beginning to realize they have questions they wouldn't have dared to admit just a short time ago.<sup>4</sup>

They are people whom Ben Campbell Johnson describes as being "awakened to reality."<sup>5</sup> They may not have been deep in "lifesleep," as some of those Campbell describes, having "little, if any, awareness of either the depth of the world or their own personal depth,"<sup>6</sup> yet, they have not been stimulated to the life which is resident within their souls. They are waiting for someone to sound an alarm which awakens them to their own desires. They are announcing by their departure that the contemporary North American church is not reaching them with meaningful answers. They are the face of "a realization - confirmed now by many thorough and careful studies, as well as overpowering anecdotal

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<sup>3</sup> William D. Hendricks, *Exit Interviews: Revealing Stories of Why People Are Leaving the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Jeff Imbach, *The River Within* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998), 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Campbell Johnson, *Living Before God. Deepening Our Sense of the Divine Presence* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 9.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

evidence – that, in its current and recent public forms, Christianity has not been imparting effectual answers to the vital questions of human existence.”<sup>7</sup>

Also, these floundering Christians are symptomatic of a need in the world of nonChristians. There is an epidemic of dissatisfaction in Western culture. Job and career no longer present meaningful vocations. Family units no longer offer the promise of permanent security. Institutions of business, education, government, and religion no longer inspire confidence and respect. People feel thrown upon their own resources to find significance in life and to develop themselves. “The spiritual thirst of our time has become a social phenomenon. People from all walks of life and many faiths are searching with renewed intensity for a spiritual center.”<sup>8</sup>

It is this group of believers whom I seek to lead into the rich paths where earnest believers of the past have walked, the ways of holiness these have explored, the steps of disciplined spirituality which they have marked out. It is the dissatisfied ones in the culture who are waiting for someone to lead them on a journey of significance whom I hope to reach through a changed church and transformed Christians.

### **The Content of the Paper**

The paper is in two parts: Part I, Foundations, and Part II, The Manual. Chapter 1, Part I, will first outline the need in the members of the target group as well as in the churches from which they come. Chapter 2 will develop the biblical and theological foundations upon which the course is based. This chapter gives the theological imperatives which drive me in preparing the course, and discussion of these in the course will move participants toward a grasp of a theological necessity for their own pursuit of holiness. Chapter 3 presents material which, while foundational for the project, will also be used in the course proper, developing a definition of Christian spirituality which the target group will understand and a brief history of spirituality in the church. In chapter 4 the approach to the course is explained: the desired outcomes, the pedagogy which informs the teaching methods used, the style of implementation and the assessments employed. Part II presents the material for introducing the spiritual disciplines. Chapter 5 gives some basics about spiritual disciplines: definition, classification and general principles for practicing them. The Manual divides the disciplines presented into three categories: “Pursuing Holiness

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<sup>7</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart. Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 21.

<sup>8</sup> Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast. An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 2.



Alone,” Pursuing Holiness in Community,” and “Pursuing Holiness in Action.” These are outlined in Chapters 6,7, and 8, respectively.

The purpose of the course is to give participants experience in practices which have been proven over the years of Christian history to sustain seekers in their pursuit of holiness, of union with God. These practices are the classic spiritual disciplines.<sup>9</sup> There are three objectives of the course which serve this purpose. One, it will validate the participants’ longing for deeper intimacy with God. This longing has produced dissatisfaction in these people, and this has, in many cases, left them misunderstood and marginalized by their church communities. By learning about the intense hunger of seekers in every generation of the church and the desperate lengths to which this drove them, participants will recognize their own search as valid.

A second objective is to introduce participants to the seekers from history. Most of those in my target group are unfamiliar with church history. Evangelical and charismatic churches of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries focus strongly on the need for salvation today and work at being contemporary in style and aggressive in outreach. This keeps their emphasis on the present and, in consequence, does not teach their members to value the styles or practices of churches of past eras. This course will show participants that there are resources in this history which can help their own spirituality today.

The third objective is to motivate course participants to take initiative in their pursuit of holiness, in their spiritual growth. Those who enroll in the course (or come to a presentation or attend a retreat<sup>10</sup>) have already taken initiative, so this objective is to encourage this development. The need for such encouragement is because the approach to spiritual growth which is commonly practiced in Evangelical and charismatic churches uses group direction more than individual initiative. The language used calls for individual action, but the formats offered usually guide people to follow the group. These formats include exhortation preaching, in which the preacher sets the goal and the pattern to follow, group studies, in which a book defines the spirituality intended and the methods used, training classes in which a model is presented which students learn to emulate, and others.<sup>11</sup> These are useful methods to help believers grow, but they de-emphasize personal initiative in favor of following the group. It is

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 5 and Appendix III.

<sup>10</sup> Additional formats of presentation of the material, see Chapter 4.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Webber identifies as part of the “most significant problems of evangelical spirituality of the modern era” an “insistence on conformity to subculture standards” and “a focus on external rules (which) fails to help a person grow into a more holistic relationship with all of life.” Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith. Rethinking Evangelism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 123-124.

an objective of this course to release participants to set their own goals and determine their own forms of pursuing them.

The practical sections of the paper come in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. In these chapters the spiritual disciplines are described. They are organized into three groupings: 1) Pursuing holiness alone, 2) Pursuing holiness in community, and 3) Pursuing holiness in action. While this has been done by several authors in recent years (e.g. Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Marjorie Thompson, and I draw on the works of these authors in this paper), my purpose is to bring the information together in a form particularly suited to my target group. The course is likely the first exposure participants will have to Christian mystics and the spiritual disciplines in their formal descriptions. I want them to receive the teaching in the language of their own religious culture and to see the authors and practices as part of their own spiritual heritage. This is best done by containing the material within the course itself, using the contemporary writers for reference only.

An Appendix will outline steps for formulating a personal Rule of Life. Those in my target group tend to follow specific practices of devotion, but few have set these out as in intentional pattern which they share with someone else. This course will help them appreciate the value of a Rule of Life, so a class will be dedicated to preparing one. While I intend this to be part of the course, developing it in full is beyond the scope of this paper. Another Appendix gives an outline of suggested lesson plans for the course.

Supplemental material to this paper includes, a bibliography of Christian spirituality selected for the target group (this is separate from the bibliography for this paper) and an anthology of readings from selected Christian mystics. The anthology is a separate document from the paper because of its size and its intended use. While I could direct participants to published anthologies such as those by Collins and Foster and Smith<sup>12</sup> (and I will reference these) the anthology provided reflects my personal preferences, which I believe match significantly those of my target group. Providing it with the course material will attract the participants more quickly.

In the Supplemental material I also make available copies of Evelyn Underhill's "Conclusion" and "A Historical Sketch of European Mysticism from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Death of Blake," from, *Mysticism, The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*. These two documents are the best summary of Christian mysticism I know.

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<sup>12</sup> Kenneth L Collins, ed., *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000) and Richard Foster, and James Byran Smith, eds., *Devotional Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993).

The motivation of this paper comes from the fulfillment and direction I have found in my own pursuit of union with God through meeting (in their writings) Christian mystics and engaging in the classic spiritual disciplines. This experience stimulates me to share these discoveries with others in my familiar circle (my target group is based on the churches of my heritage). I want to set out the promise in Jesus' prayer of becoming one with him, with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, (reference John 17:21 at opening of this chapter) in richer concepts than my target group commonly knows but their hunger is pressing them toward. I want to direct them to paths to more complete holiness which already exist, which were opened by believers in earlier times and which hold promise for us today. I am uncovering lost paths for myself and my colleagues. "Those of us who want to find God do not need to constantly blaze new trails through the wilderness; the paths are already cut and marked, and though perhaps overgrown in some cases, they are nevertheless still negotiable."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Robin Mass & Gabriel O'Donnel, OP, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 20.

PART I

FOUNDATIONS: A NEW DAY WITH AN OLD HISTORY

## CHAPTER 1

### A NEW OLD PROBLEM

There is a quiet revolution going on in many Evangelical and charismatic churches in North America and Western Europe. It is not an open revolt but a simple rejection of the patterns of church life which have dominated this segment of the Christian church in the last few decades. Neither is it a harsh or vicious demonstration. Many members are just absenting themselves from the programs which they formerly supported. Like Vince, the representative described in the Introduction, these are strong believers who are letting a hunger for something more draw them away from what they formerly valued and religiously served. "The longing for direct, firsthand experience is the source of the tremendous interest on the part of Protestants in the mainstream denominations in the subject of spirituality."<sup>14</sup> This longing is pushing many believers like Vince right out of the doors of the churches. These absentees are the revolutionaries pressing for a new authenticity and vitality in the faith which began with this prayer and action by its first adherents:

"Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4:29-30)

#### **The Church's Weakening Impact on the Culture**

Like many revolutions in history, this one is a manifestation of dissatisfaction with the way things are and is a catalyst to bring change. This is good news for the church.<sup>15</sup> It is good news because change is needed. While

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<sup>14</sup> Howard Rice, *Reformed Spirituality: An Introduction for Believers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 7.

<sup>15</sup> Marjorie Thompson recognizes the potential of this revolution. "A sea change is occurring within and beyond our churches. Its current expressions have been building for at least a generation. In terms of its pervasive character in American society, I suspect

Evangelical and charismatic churches are very popular and many enjoy large attendances, the overall impact on the society has been minimal. Evaluations of the societies in North America and Western Europe, by almost any measure and survey, indicate that the Christian message is having little impact on social life and structures. Darrell L. Guder and his colleagues recognize this trend, prompting their advocacy of a major change in the approach of the church to its mission.

On the other hand, while modern missions have led to an expansion of world Christianity, Christianity in North America has moved (or been moved) away from its position of dominance as it has experienced the loss not only of numbers but of power and influence within society.<sup>16</sup>

The last four decades of the twentieth century were seen as a time of vigorous religious activity in America. Church attendance was easy, entertaining and popular. However, the impact on people's behavior and attitudes was not so apparent. Quoting a 1978 national survey<sup>17</sup>, Robert Wuthnow reports that

Of the people in that study who had been born between 1944 and 1960, ... two-thirds had stopped participating in religious organizations for a period of at least two years, and only 13 percent currently attended a church or synagogue weekly. The fact that only one in eight was an active church-goer was especially striking, given the fact that 66 percent had attended regularly as children.<sup>18</sup>

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what we are witnessing today may be close to the significance of the Great Awakening in the eighteenth century. The change represents a powerful impulse toward spiritual wholeness at a time of unprecedented personal and social fragmentation. The spiritual yearning is evident well beyond the boundaries of traditional faith communities. A sea change is occurring within and beyond our churches. Its current expressions have been building for at least a generation. In terms of its pervasive character in American society, I suspect what we are witnessing today may be close to the significance of the Great Awakening in the eighteenth century. The change represents a powerful impulse toward spiritual wholeness at a time of unprecedented personal and social fragmentation. The spiritual yearning is evident well beyond the boundaries of traditional faith communities." Thompson, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 1.

<sup>17</sup> George Gallup, "Unchurched America Study", *Religion in America*, 1978.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven. Spirituality in America since the 1950's* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 75-76.

Even when spiritual formation started to become a popular addition to church programs in the 1980's, the effort did not produce significant change in attenders' lifestyles. Wuthnow notes:

The way in which Americans came to understand spiritual disciplines in the 1980's scarcely deterred them from many of the secular pursuits in which they were actively engaged. ... the desire for discipline appears to have had little impact on the way most Americans live their lives.<sup>19</sup>

In another analysis, researcher George Barna, in one of his regular reports on the influence of religion in America, speaking about the role of Protestant churches, says that their impact is not measurable.

If we focus on the quantitative condition of the Church, the situation looks grave. There are few statistical measures, other than dollars contributed, which suggest that Christian churches are enjoying growth or success in impacting people's lives. Yes, the Church indisputably has a presence. However, it is a declining, leaderless presence. ...

Consider the fact that although Christian churches spent in excess of one-quarter of a trillion dollars on ministry in America in the Eighties, we saw no growth in the proportion of adults who accepted Christ as their Savior. ...

The image of the Church is taking a beating. People, for the most part, see the church as an outdated institution that means well, but has little to offer to a contemporary person.<sup>20</sup>

Even though Evangelical and charismatic churches are very active in North America and many have events and programs which look very good, an honest judgment of their influence on the society registers that this occurs mostly within the circle of local church members and does not penetrate the general society around them. The need for significant change is urgent.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>20</sup> George Barna, *The Church Today: Insightful Statistics and Commentary*, (Glendale, CA: The Barna Research Group, 1990), 25, 26, 53.

<sup>21</sup> The call for change is coming from many current authors, among them Guder, Sweet, Newbigin, Webber, Willard, see Works Cited.

## Discouragement Among Believers and Seekers

### Disillusioned Christians

The Christians in the group I am targeting for this course are dissatisfied with their church experience and the state of their own spirituality, but they are not bitter or hostile toward either. They recognize that there is more to a faith-walk than they are now practicing, and they are aware that the sources they have been using are not adequate to push them further along it. They are looking for something more.

These seeking ones feel let down by the Christian guidance they have received, but they are not accusing the church of failure. They want to serve the cause of the Kingdom of God, but they feel that their churches are serving themselves more than the Kingdom, and they are tired of working in programs which produce meager results.

In a survey taken of participants in a retreat on Christian spirituality which I hosted, most expected their "next stage of spiritual growth" (survey question) to be outside a local church. One respondent said "There seems to be politics involved (in church activities) and I find that anti-Kingdom and not to my liking." Another said that her "involvement in a local church" (question) had decreased because she has "felt the Father call me out of all the meetings to Meet with Him." Still another answered the question about where "have you sought spiritual development" with, "I spend more time alone with the Lord being taught by Him." These answers reflect a thread common through seventy five percent of the replies.

These are not passive believers depending on someone else to lead them into faith and Christian practice. They are intentional about and committed to their own spiritual development. Yet, they find resistance rather than encouragement when they depart from the prescribed programs of the church.<sup>22</sup> They are not withdrawing from church life in order to pursue selfish interests, they just do not feel that what they have been doing through the church is

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<sup>22</sup> Alan Jamieson found this encounter of resistance in the group of church "leavers" which he calls "Reflective exiles," p 70. He then notes how this correlates with Fowler's observation that most Evangelical and charismatic churches in North America are stuck in stage three of faith development, in which loyalty is rewarded and doubt is frowned on, p114. Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith. Faith Journeys Beyond the Churches* (London: SPCK, 2002).



challenging enough for their spiritual quest or significant for mission. In his thoughtful study of believers who have left Pentecostal, Evangelical and charismatic churches, Alan Jamieson found Stuart and Michelle to be typical.

Central figures in the life of their own church, Stuart and Michelle were also involved in a number of Christian organizations around the city and were seen as respected leaders within the Christian community. Yet, they decided to leave the church they had helped establish and lead.<sup>23</sup>

This group is the dedicated reflection of a phenomenon growing in the larger religious culture. In general, across North America people still believe in the value of faith and church but are becoming less involved in the institutional expressions of them. In his regular survey of religion in America, George Barna notes, "people are increasingly less likely to view manifestations of their faith, such as evangelism and discipleship and church involvement, as personal responsibilities which they bear."<sup>24</sup> A survey by the City University of New York which tracks how people name their religious affiliation found that in 2001, 29 million Americans chose the category "None," up from 14 million in 1990. The reporter commenting on this finding wrote, "Many of the nation's religious nones have become dissatisfied with the beliefs and practices of the Judeo-Christian mainstream."<sup>25</sup>

However, the people I am working with are much more than "Sunday Christians." They read literature, both Christian and secular, on the state of the culture and the church. They attend conferences outside their own church and pay attention to spiritual movements such as the growing attraction of Evangelicals to the Orthodox church,<sup>26</sup> the "Toronto blessing,"<sup>27</sup> "the new apostolic reformation" (a term coined by C. Peter Wagner in *The New Apostolic Churches*<sup>28</sup>), They have been leaders of small groups in their churches, have served on worship teams and prayer-ministry teams, and have participated in community-wide outreach events.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>24</sup> George Barna, *What Americans Believe* (Ventura, Regal Books, 1991), 30.

<sup>25</sup> Don Lattin, San Francisco Chronicle, Dec. 4, 2003, referencing America's Religious Affiliation Survey.

<sup>26</sup> Ref. article, "New orthodox attract evangelicals", Julia Duin. *Christianity Today*, May 18, 1992, 50(2).

<sup>27</sup> A renewal movement which began in the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship in January, 1994, and has influenced hundreds of thousands of Christians around the world.

<sup>28</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *The New Apostolic Churches* (Ventura: Regal, 1998).

They are people who want a deeper experience of their faith and want to see this result in transformation of their lives, their networks of relationships, and their cities. They are willing to work for growth in themselves and in the church. Second, many people are restless and dissatisfied with the church as they have experienced it. God has not come alive for them through traditional religious institutions. ... All of them know a deep hunger for direct experience of God rather than "second-hand faith."<sup>29</sup>

They are searching for something, yet, they are not clear what that is, nor where to seek it. Keith Anderson and Randy Reese found this in themselves and in others, observing,

There is a yearning, however, that isn't satisfied by the normal fare of personal study, prayer and worship. It is a desire for more, a "more" that is impossible to define or explicate; it is a longing to know the richness of "the deeper life" or "mature faith" or "spiritual power."<sup>30</sup>

The programs of most evangelical and charismatic churches are not satisfying the search of these believers. Business-as-usual, as it has been done for the last several decades, will not bring them to their desire. Twentieth century Protestantism in America tended to equate spirituality with church activity. "By the 1950's, religious leaders had succeeded in rendering spirituality virtually equivalent to participating in a local congregation."<sup>31</sup> Rather than quenching the spiritual thirst of seekers this served merely to minimize it, maybe even hinder it. Dallas Willard asserts as much:

We must flatly say that one of the greatest contemporary barriers to meaningful spiritual formation in Christlikeness is overconfidence in the spiritual efficacy of "regular church services," of whatever kind they may be. Though they are vital, they are not enough. It is that simple.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Thompson, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Keith R. Anderson & Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring. A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 18.

<sup>31</sup> Wuthnow, 30.

<sup>32</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 249-'50.

## Seekers in the World

There are seekers in the world as well as in the church. They are at Starbucks or fitness centers on Sunday mornings instead of a church. They have careers but are casting their eyes toward alternatives to their present jobs. Some are refusing transfers and promotions in their jobs in order to try a simpler lifestyle. Singles who can manage to do so are waiting longer between jobs in order to volunteer in social service agencies, travel, or pursue other activities of interest. They are the postmoderns who “have replaced the work ethic with an experience ethic,”<sup>33</sup> and they are looking for something which will offer a significant religious experience.

They do not rely on institutions to shape their futures, as generations of the last century did. George Barna describes the challenge to the church.

The local churches of America face a tenuous future, given the deteriorating image they possess. While half of the population strongly believes that the Christian faith remains relevant to the way we live today, only half as many believe that local Christian churches possess such relevance.<sup>34</sup>

To postmoderns, institutions are merely tolerated. They see them as needed for structure, but too flawed to be accepted uncritically. Wade Clark Roof records the results of a 1985 Gallup poll concerning boomer attitudes that “alienation and estrangement born of the period continue to express themselves as generalized distrust of government, or major institutions, and of leaders”.<sup>35</sup> A church which makes its appeal by demonstrating a strong institutional program will not reach a generation which places a higher value on relationship networks.

These secular seekers recognize that they are responsible for their own future (for example, a popular 1994 book on job placement is entitled, *We Are All Self-Employed*<sup>36</sup>), yet they are not able to rely on their own investments to bring

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<sup>33</sup> Leonard Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000), 45.

<sup>34</sup> Barna. In his 1994 survey, reported in *Virtual America* (Ventura: Regal, 1994), Barna notes that there was “almost no change” in attitudes toward local churches (p100).

<sup>35</sup> Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 41-45; quoted from Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 68.

<sup>36</sup> Cliff Hakim, *We Are All Self-Employed: The New Social Contract for Working in a Changed World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1994).

the return they desire, whether it be financial investment<sup>37</sup>, education, career, or family. They want to live life richly – demonstrated in one arena by the rapid increase in participation sports and “extreme” recreation such as rock climbing, yet they do not know how to find the depth of meaning which they seek – consider the variety of religious and self-actualizing programs to which people in the culture are attracted, and the frequency with which they switch. In his study of changing American values in 1981 Daniel Yankelovich described the dilemma of aspiring Americans.

To Abby, and to Mark as well (participants in his survey), self-fulfillment means having a career and marriage and children and sexual freedom and autonomy and being liberal and having money and choosing nonconformity and insisting on social justice and enjoying city life and country living and travel and on and on. All are seen as needs they are morally obliged to fill.<sup>38</sup>

Darrell Guder and his colleagues describe some of the characteristics of today’s culture.

The seemingly rational, objective, and managed world of modernity has undergone deep, significant shifts in recent decades. ... The very foundations have changed. ... Often referred to as the ‘postmodern condition,’ this new world includes patterns such as:

- endless choices made available by technology
- loss of shared experiences
- meanings conveyed as surfaces and images
- transient relationships
- ...
- personal spirituality without the necessity of organized religion<sup>39</sup>

These people outside the church are also seeking for something deeper in life. Theirs is a quest for meaningful spirituality. When Christians experience the spirituality of Jesus Christ in a vital way, they will have a compelling

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<sup>37</sup> A report in *American Demographics* (Dec 1, 2001 p22) showed that American consumer confidence was slumping before the Sep. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and it continues to decline.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel Yankelovich, *New Rules. Searching for Self-Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down* (New York: Random House, 1981), 238.

<sup>39</sup> Guder, 37.

testimony to their counterparts not yet in the faith. It is these outside whom I also want to reach, through the transformation of my life and of the lives of these disillusioned Christians.

### **A New-Old response to the Need**

This is a time of abundance for the church in North America. Church buildings are big and attractive. Good roads and easy access to parking make it easy for people to attend the numerous religious events offered each week in major metropolitan areas. Skilled technicians and prepackaged programs make the latest in video and sound techniques available to churches which can afford them. Resources for religious programs and for developing leaders abound. Seminar and conference opportunities seem limitless<sup>40</sup>. Books pour out of publishing houses to help the church leader in any conceivable situation and need<sup>41</sup>. The services and programs which churches offer have outstanding quality, good presentation and appeal, and healthy variety. The church of North America is more equipped and capable, in the area of technique for presentation, than ever in history.

However, all this activity has not fulfilled the desires of many church attenders. “When asked to rate their church on various aspects of ministry, there is not a single attribute among those tested for which at least half of all church attenders describe their church as doing an ‘excellent’ job. (1991)”<sup>42</sup> In conversation after conversation with acquaintances who have been active for many years in churches, I find dissatisfaction with their recent church experience. “Vince” (see Introduction) stopped going to the fast paced, video enhanced worship of his regular church and prefers the simple worship of a small store-front congregation. A friend who has “done it all” in two large churches in her community prefers her personal in-depth relationships and times of solitude to the pressured activities of the churches. A couple who has organized and led ministry teams and seminars on healing and prayer has found refuge from the intensity in a house church with a few other couples.

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<sup>40</sup> A check of the November, 2002, issues of just two magazines, *Christianity Today* and *Charisma Magazine*, located 6 different conferences being offered nationwide in the first 4 months of 2003. Local and denominationally sponsored seminars and conferences multiply this number immensely.

<sup>41</sup> A check of the Church Leadership category on ChristianBooks.com brought up 298 titles; the Fuller Seminary Bookstore has 40 feet of shelves crammed with titles under Pastoral Theology.

<sup>42</sup> Internet report, Barna Research Group of Ventura, California; website address [www.barna.org](http://www.barna.org).

Of course these descriptions are antidotal<sup>43</sup>, and I could find as many or more testimonies expressing satisfaction with the way things are in the church. There is much to honor in the life of the church today. But, the shift from active involvement to near indifference by leaders like those I interviewed demonstrates that something significant is lacking in what the church offers.<sup>44</sup> Their spirits are not rejuvenated by worship services, so they seek out more individual worship activities. Their faith and understanding are not built up by sermons which target the least mature believers in the congregation, and they long for help in exploring the meaning of faith today. Their relationships have not grown deeper or more meaningful, and they look for peers who share their souls' desires and the sufferings of their hearts. Their longing for spiritual nurture is directed not toward study guides but for a person who will invest time and understanding in them individually. Their efforts to contribute to the life and ministry of the churches have been squeezed into existing programs, and they find this strangling their gifts rather than releasing them. Dallas Willard addresses this lack of meaningful faith-experience in his recent book, *Renovation of the Heart*. He observes

I believe that one reason why so many people do in fact *fail* to immerse themselves in the words of the New Testament, and neglect or even avoid them, is that the life they see there is so unlike what they know from their own experience. This is true even though they may be quite faithful to their church in the ways prescribed and really do have Jesus Christ as their only hope. Therefore the clear New testament presentation of the life we are unmistakable offered in Christ only discourages them or makes them hopeless.<sup>45</sup>

There is a glut of opportunity for Christians in North America today. But in the experience of my target group, the flood runs wide but not very deep. They have quit looking across the waters seeking a current worth following. But

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<sup>43</sup> For a scholarly survey and analysis of those who have left Pentecostal, Evangelical and charismatic churches see Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith. Faith Journeys Beyond the Churches* (London: SPCK, 2002). His conclusions parallel those of this chapter.

<sup>44</sup> This phenomenon, noted by the authors already quoted, motivated Diogenes Allen: "One of the purposes of this book is to offer help to those people who cannot find what they are looking for in academic theology as it is usually practiced today, and for whom neither church worship nor the major activities of church life provide enough explicit spiritual guidance." Diogenes Allen, *Spiritual Theology. The Theology of Yesterday for Spiritual Help Today* ( Boston: Cowley Publications, 1997), 15.

<sup>45</sup> Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 10.

they have not relinquished hope. They are scanning for a ray of light which will show them where to look. They are listening for the cry of some who have found a source. They are waiting for guides who will direct them to the places of refreshing and replenishment. The lives, teachings, and habits of ancient pilgrims can meet these needs and can inspire these desires. It is the purpose of this course to introduce my friends to these pilgrims.

For those lounging at Starbucks or seeking out hi-tech entertainments, those who are completely outside the church, a testimony to the Christian life which is drawn from encounters with lives which have witnessed for centuries, through their writings and biographies, will also have appeal. The primary form of evangelism during the last few decades has been the personal testimony<sup>46</sup>: the story of what faith in Jesus Christ has done in one's own life. This remains a valuable expression, but to the postmodern culture, it is less compelling. For postmoderns, one person's experience is just that: that one person's experience. It is not considered normative for the listener nor for society. Postmoderns measure things by direct experience, and they are not eager to repeat what another person describes. They are "people who want to live within their own experience, not the experience of what they read or see."<sup>47</sup>

The message which will reach a seeking public in this generation will not come through the power of individual testimony nor through packaged rally presentations. It must reveal visible spiritual transformation in lives and it must demonstrate a healthy link to the historic roots of Christianity. The gospel of Jesus Christ has both contemporary relevance and continuity through history, and these elements are values which appeal to the postmodern generation.

There is a great danger for us in the historical amnesia that prevails in the church today. If things are contemporary, computer-driven or "seeker-effective," then we are apt to read them and get excited. Maybe that's the problem - we get excited by fads and trends and forget our identity as the body of Christ. The classical voices of our past call us back to that foundational identity.<sup>48</sup>

Analyst Robert E. Webber notes: "Postmodern spirituality will be characterized by an affirmation of all the (Christian) spiritualities throughout

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<sup>46</sup> "The majority of evangelistic activities in the U.S. for the past fifty years (at least) have focused on sudden conversion ...", of which personal testimony is one type. Richard Peace, *Conversion in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 286.

<sup>47</sup> Leonard Sweet, *Post-Modern Pilgrims* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2000), 66-67.

<sup>48</sup> Anderson & Reese, 23.

history."<sup>49</sup> When believers show that they are *being* transformed, continually, and that the source of their transformation is rooted in the reality of Jesus Christ incarnate and his continuing work through history, seekers will find living water flowing from a deep, reliable well which they will expect to be satisfying, and will, indeed, find to be so. This is available in the classical traditions of the church.

Furthermore, the classical tradition is sorely needed because so many people have come to the end of their patience with the modern version of evangelical faith and with current innovations that have no connection with the past. Rationalism and every new trick in the book need to be replaced by resurrected old treasures that still have meaning and can offer direction into the future.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Webber, 122.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.



## CHAPTER 2

### A NEW OLD ANSWER. THEOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES FOR PURSUING A DISCIPLINED SPIRITUALITY

The hunger which is driving the believers whom I want to reach out of their Evangelical and charismatic churches is a hunger for a deeper relationship with God. It is the burning of desire for intimacy. It is the quest for union with God. However they might name their search, it is my conviction that the central motivation for their movement outside the boundaries they have known is this hunger for a stronger bond with God Himself.<sup>51</sup> The way followed by a believer on this quest I am calling the *pursuit of holiness*. It is a holy intimacy with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which the believer's heart needs and desires. And this is the very thing which Jesus himself desires for us when he prays, "that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." (Jn. 17:21) The Flemish mystic John Ruusbroec describes this desire which arises in the person who has made progress in his spiritual growth, one who, "offers his entire life and all his activities to the glory and praise of God", then:

When such a person considers all this, he is moved by an extremely strong desire to see and to know Christ his Bridegroom as he is himself, for although he knows Christ in his works, this is not enough.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> This movement could also be described as one of the stages in faith development. In his classic study of faith development James Fowler places this kind of quest in Stage 5, Conjunctive Faith. He notes, "What the previous stage struggled to clarify, in terms of the boundaries of self and outlook, this stage now makes porous and permeable. ... Ready for closeness to that which is different and threatening to self and outlook (including new depths of experience in spirituality and religious revelation), this stage's commitment to justice is freed from the confines of tribe, class, religious community or nation." James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981, 1989).

<sup>52</sup> John Ruusbroec, trans., James A. Wiseman, O.S.B., *The Spiritual Espousals and Other Works* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985), 69.

Most of the seekers who will attend the course which this project outlines do not know that they are pursuing holiness. They just know they want "something," something more than they are experiencing.<sup>53</sup> This need has pushed them out of their settled place, but will it carry them to their desired goal? Is a hunger for "something" more sufficient motivation to maintain them on the journey?

It does not have to. This is not a private journey which each one must strive to complete on his/her own. This is the movement of all believers. It is the destiny of the church. The pursuit of holiness is the call of God and the purpose of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy. (Lev. 11:44)

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. (Eph. 1:4)

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 2:13-14)

There is both reason and resource for believers to pursue holiness, and these bring with them the motivation required to stay the course and pursue the goal.

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<sup>53</sup> Jamieson notes that most "leavers" (his term for those who are leaving churches) cannot clearly state why they left. They move slowly toward the back door, then exit, usually without deliberate decision. "Seventeen per cent of interviewees spoke of a sense of no longer fitting in at church. Another 25 per cent spoke of a parting of the ways where what was important to them, and was their growing edge, was simply foreign to the concerns and focus of their church community. This promoted a sense of alienation between the church's focus and journey and their own." Jamieson, 36.

## Answers From the Church's History<sup>54</sup>

### Theology of the Patristic Era

In the history of the church there have been different articulations of a theology of the pursuit of holiness. The early period of the church, the period after that of the New Testament, is known as the patristic era. It is generally counted from the late first century to the eighth century.<sup>55</sup> In this period the primary focus of theology was on the person of Christ, and this carried over into the pursuit of holiness. "In short, Christ was the measure, the model, and the goal of the spiritual life. He was the measure in that he defined the nature of that life by who he himself was."<sup>56</sup> The drive which impelled the believer was to be like Christ. "Patristic 'mysticism' is neither abstract nor systematic. It refers to the personal life of the Christian who knows God as revealed in Christ by belonging to the fellowship of the 'mystery.'"<sup>57</sup> This motivation is exemplified well by Ambrose of Milan:

Christ is the beginning of our virtue. He is the beginning of chastity, he who taught virgins not to look for men's embraces but to dedicate the chastity of their mind and body to the Holy Spirit rather than to a husband. Christ is the beginning of poverty, he who became poor even though he was rich. Christ is the beginning of patience, he who did not revile in return when he was reviled and did not strike back when he was struck. Christ is

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<sup>54</sup> Each of the periods reviewed produced a spiritual theology which is rich and varied and contributes much to the pursuit of spirituality by believers today. It is not my intent in this section to present an in-depth analysis of these spiritual theologies. Rather, my purpose is to show how these arguments for holiness influence those in my target group yet give them insufficient motivation for their own pursuit.

<sup>55</sup> So identified by Mass and O'Donnell, 25. However, cf. Philip Sheldrake: "There is disagreement about how long this period may be considered to have lasted. Some would limit it to the earliest centuries of the Christian era – so, for example, the Protestant tradition has tended to accept the Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E. as an approximate end. The Eastern Orthodox would include such figures as Gregory Palamas who lived from 1296-1359. Others use the term somewhat broadly, to describe the whole period up to the development of the 'new theology' of scholasticism in the West in the twelfth century." Philip Sheldrake, "What is Spirituality?" in Kenneth J. Collins, ed., *Exploring Christian Spirituality. An Ecumenical Reader* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 26.

<sup>56</sup> Mass and O'Donnell, 28.

<sup>57</sup> Sheldrake, in Collins, 27.

the beginning of humility, he who took the form of a slave although he was equal to God the Father because of his majestic power. From him each virtue has taken its beginning.<sup>58</sup>

In this era, in which the church had little wealth, power, or prestige in society, this single-focus motivation carried believers through poverty and persecution, helping them see their suffering as their identity with Christ. It also was the motivation which drove ascetics into the desert, leading them to abandon all forms of worldly life and comfort, as well as formal religious practices, so that in the depravation of the desert they might be purified to become like Christ. These early determined seekers

hungered for communion with God and peace with one another. Theirs, however, was not moderate hunger. Famished with the desire to love God and neighbor perfectly, the first generations of monks and nuns pushed themselves to the limits of their physical and psychological endurance in this great experiment in gospel living.<sup>59</sup>

It was a very basic theology, one which “encapsulates an idea of Christian knowledge in which biblical exegesis, speculative reasoning and mystical contemplation are fused in to a synthesis,”<sup>60</sup> and it gave clarity and simplicity to the direction of their Christian walk. The motivation was more on personal behavior than toward affecting society. It was on surviving, and in the most Christ-like way possible. “The church was pretty savagely persecuted in the early years, so language of transforming the world would not be the first thing that came to their minds: it would be more like surviving the world!”<sup>61</sup>

Studying the lives and practices of the earnest seekers of this period will recall modern believers to this unifying motivation of doing all to be like Christ. The issues and pressures faced by Christians today may be more complex than what the early Christians dealt with, yet the dedication to holiness in the face of persecution and violent changes which they practiced can strengthen the motivation of modern wills to stay the course. This motivation is stirred by hearing and reading the stories of these saints.

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<sup>58</sup> Ambrose of Milan, “On the Faith,” 3.7.52, quoted in Mass and O’Donnell, 28.

<sup>59</sup> Gabriel O’Donnell, O.P., “Monastic Life and the Search for God,” Mass and O’Donnell, 56.

<sup>60</sup> Sheldrake, in Collins, 26.

<sup>61</sup> James Bradley, personal correspondence.

## Theology of the Middle Ages

In the middle ages the situation of the Western church changed. It gained in power, wealth, and influence. Its theology moved from being centered on Christ to being centered on the church itself. Salvation and sanctification were equated with a believer's relationship to the church. Salvation was by confession of faith in Christ and baptism into the church (or vice versa). Sanctification then followed through works of righteousness and piety. Spirituality became primarily an issue of merit: one built up merit through works as the way to pursue holiness. Richard Lovelace cites the force of this theology on motivation for holiness.

Catholics believed that they were justified in the process of being sanctified. Since sanctification is never perfect and always in peril during our lifetime, they were imperfectly assured of their salvation. Serious believers could cure this uneasiness by martyrdom, or by the bloodless martyrdom of ascetic spirituality.<sup>62</sup>

While throughout this period there were voices advocating the single-hearted way of union with Christ gained through a purified love of him,<sup>63</sup> and these are the mystics whose writings continue to influence the church (see Appendix V, Index of Christian Spirituality Writers) the message which the common believer received was that holiness comes only through ambitious works of devotion and self-denial. For these believers, works were indeed necessary for full salvation. John Ruusbroec, one of the mystics just referred to, also reveals this pressure.

But those who choose other things, who turn their inward gaze from God to sin and to whatever is opposed to God, and who remain in this state suffer a different outcome: Even though their names were known and inscribed by God because of the righteousness which they had practiced in an earlier period of time, since they did not persevere in this until death

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<sup>62</sup> Richard F. Lovelace, "Evangelical Spirituality. A Church Historian's Perspective," Collins, 215.

<sup>63</sup> E.g. "Moreover, you should know that everything you can desire - and much more besides - will be given you by love without your having to do anything, for if you truly have divine love, you have all that you can desire. Having such love is nothing other than always and eternally loving God without ceasing. In this way you will die to all self-centeredness, and love will be your life." Ruusbroec, 191.

their names are stricken from the Book of Life and they will never again be able to savor God or any of the fruits of virtue.

It is for this reason incumbent upon all of us to examine ourselves carefully and to have our turning to God adorned with fervent interior affection and with exterior good works.<sup>64</sup>

The pursuit of holiness was motivated as much or more by the fear of not entering into Paradise as by love of God. The church presented salvation through grace, without any work by the recipient, received by baptism into the church, but it did not preach the same grace as a means of growing in the faith received. The way the church held out for this was by works, which came to be administered by the church through penances, indulgences and impartation of the merit of the saints. This appealed to the desperation of the believer for a secure eternity, not to her/his joy in the salvation which she/he had received.

Spiritual theology wants to offer meaningful incentives to believers to pursue godliness. The medieval church was earnest in its desire to see members inherit the blessings of holiness, in this life and the next. This earnestness should also mark the spiritual theology of churches today, and reading the writers of this era will expose the ease with which moderns excuse the modesty of their pursuit. However, separated from the grace of justification by faith, it cannot lead the way into a joy-filled life. "Spirituality comes not through laborious cultivation of the human spirit but through the gracious gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a spirituality that flourishes in the atmosphere of faith."<sup>65</sup>

## Theology of the Reformers

### *Gratitude: Martin Luther*

The influence of Martin Luther continues very strong in traditional and evangelical Protestant churches, and his rationale for growth in godliness is still prominent. He articulates this common motive: gratitude to God.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>65</sup> Lovelace, in Collins, 217.

<sup>66</sup> Luther's teaching on spirituality is more complex than simply gratitude, as Hoffman points out: "The formation of a Christian life occurs, for Luther, in 'conformation to Christ' - the soul being 'formed in Christ.' From this spiritual communion with Christ comes active service and the doing of justice." Bengt Hoffman, "Lutheran Spirituality," in Collins, 133. However, it is the motive of gratitude which has carried into popular evangelical teaching today.

The believer “ought to think: ‘Although I am an unworthy and condemned man, my God has given me in Christ all the riches of righteousness and salvation without any merit on my part, out of pure, free mercy, so that from now on I need nothing except faith which believes that this is true. Why should I not therefore freely, joyfully, and with all my heart, and with an eager will to do all things which I know are pleasing and acceptable to such a Father who has overwhelmed me with his inestimable riches? I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ.’”<sup>67</sup>

A believer should give attention and energy to holy living out of gratitude for what he/she has received by faith in Christ. Gratitude is the force which propels her/him forward in spiritual growth.

The motive of gratitude is natural to the human heart. The more we appreciate what God has done for us the more we want to express our love to Him, and this moves us to shape our lives into what pleases Him. Gratitude is a vital component in the motivation for the pursuit of holiness by the believer, and the writings of Luther and his followers will refresh this desire in us. The problem is, gratitude does not have the power to win the victory over opposition from our inner corruption or the temptations of life. We start strong, but we cannot finish by drawing only on gratitude. “Gratitude is not a sufficient motivator for people to live the good life.”<sup>68</sup>

### *Subdue the Flesh*

Luther presents a second reason for working at holiness: that the believer might bring his/her flesh, or carnal nature, into submission to the Spirit of God.

Here the works begin; here a man cannot enjoy leisure; here he must indeed take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors, and other reasonable discipline and to subject it to the Spirit so that it will obey and

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<sup>67</sup> Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1957), 304.

<sup>68</sup> James Bradley, class notes, 2001.

conform to the inner man and faith and not revolt against faith and hinder the inner man, as it is the nature of the body to do if it is not held in check.<sup>69</sup>

The flesh is the enemy of godliness, pulling the believer toward defeat in her/his pursuit of a life pleasing to God. To win the goal of holiness he/she must strive to bring the flesh into subjection to the Holy Spirit, and acts of devotion and self-denial are means to do this.

Ever since the writing of the first Epistles of the New Testament the church has challenged believers to bring their flesh, their old nature, into subjection to the Spirit of Jesus. This is a true work of faith, and essential to spiritual growth. The struggle with the desires of the flesh keeps the believer aware of his/her need to grow in godliness. Yet, this struggle works both ways. It can fuel the desire for holiness and it can bring discouragement of ever achieving it. In the face of the fierce struggle which every believer experiences to grow, this motivation will usually fail unless supported by a larger vision.

### *God Expects It: John Calvin*

Like Luther, John Calvin's influence remains powerful. His most prominent rationale for pursuing personal holiness is that God's holiness deserves it.

Therefore, the principal requirement for doing good works is for us to understand that we are consecrated to the Lord; and from this it follows that we must cease to live to ourselves, and devote all the actions of this life to obedience to him. Thus, there are two things to consider: first, that we are the Lord's; secondly, that we ought for this reason to be holy; for it is an indignity to the holiness of God that anything should be offered to him unless it first becomes holy. Granted this, it follows that our whole life should be an exercise in holiness and that we would not be free from sacrilege if we lapsed into uncleanness; for sacrilege is nothing else than to profane what is consecrated.<sup>70</sup>

Obedience to the great demand of God, "you shall be holy for I am holy" (Lev. 11:45), is incumbent upon the follower of Christ, and will produce a life in conformity to that of Jesus Christ. "Reformed piety is characterized not by our seeking God but by seeking to do God's will, in the process of which the faithful

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<sup>69</sup> Luther, 294.

<sup>70</sup> John Calvin, commentary on Romans 12:1, *Commentaries*, Joseph Haroutunian, ed., (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1953), 314.



come to know, as something of a serendipity, fellowship with God and find their lives transformed.”<sup>71</sup> The way of will-directed obedience is what prevails in Evangelical and charismatic derivatives of Calvin’s teachings today, however, it should be noted that for Calvin, obedience is an outworking of the life received by the believer by faith and in the covenant of the church.

Once we have been received into God’s new people by baptism, we are given everything that Jesus Christ is and has and are enabled to appropriate it in increasing measure by sharing Christ in the preaching of the Word, in the receiving of his Supper, in the liturgical life of his body, the Church. From the power and strength which we receive in these ways, we are enabled and expected for obedient service to God in the world which is under his promise.<sup>72</sup>

It is the clear testimony of the Old Testament that God’s holiness requires holiness in our lives. This is a challenging motivation, but it is also the testimony of the history of Israel that this alone is not sufficient motivation to carry most individuals or the community into the level of holiness which sufficiently honors God. Conformity to the holy character of the God we serve holds a strong place in the believer’s heart and gives motivation to the pursuit of godliness, but experience shows that this alone will not hold her/him on the path.

### *Faith Produces It: John Wesley*

The “Holiness Movement” of the church has as its leading proponent John Wesley. The teaching of this movement is that by faith a believer can achieve “Christian Perfection.” This does not come by any work of the person, yet it must be sought. The motivation to do so is made by appeal to the believer’s desire to receive all that is possible from faith.

Indeed, how God may work, we cannot tell; but the general manner wherein he does work is this: Those who once trusted in themselves that they were righteous, that they were rich, and increased in goods, and had need of nothing, are, by the Spirit of God applying his word, convinced that

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<sup>71</sup> T. Hartley Hall IV, “The Shape of Reformed Piety,” in Mass and O’Donnell, 215.

<sup>72</sup> Howard G. Hageman, “Reformed Spirituality,” in Collins, 151. Hageman goes on to show how “the model of the ‘rugged individualist’ in America shifted traditional Calvinist spirituality away from its base in the community of faith to the efforts of the individual believer.

they are poor and naked. All the things that they have done are brought to their remembrance and set in array before them, so that they see the wrath of God hanging over their heads, and feel that they deserve the damnation of hell. In their trouble they cry unto the Lord, and he shows them. that he hath taken away their sins, and opens the kingdom of heaven in their hearts, righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' Sorrow and pain are fled away, and sin has no more dominion over' them<sup>73</sup>.

This motivation rests on the believer's desire to receive what is promised<sup>74</sup> and, by strength of his/her will, to press in "till there is added the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing his entire sanctification, as clearly as his justification."<sup>75</sup>

The teachings and example of Wesley and of others in the holiness movement call our attention to the goal of perfection in holiness, or completion of that to which we are called when we receive Christ. These keep before believers the vision that there is a style of life which is more full and beautiful than commonly practiced. It holds out the motivation for seeking such a life in the lifetime one has on earth. This does help draw the believer forward in her/his daily walk and it does build hope for life habits which are better than those practiced before conversion. However, in holiness teaching, the ability to achieve perfection comes from the believer's will, from her/his determination to achieve it, and the will alone just does not have the power to carry the believer past all the obstacles which resist him/her in the way. A motivation beyond the self is needed.

## *Conclusion*

Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Wesley all pursued holiness in their own lives with dedication and zeal. Each of them practiced a form of personal spiritual discipline, and the fruit is evidenced in their lives. Their lives and practices are worth emulating. However, for each of them it seems that the

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<sup>73</sup> John Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 1872, vol. 11, pp. 366-446 (electronic edition).

<sup>74</sup> A 19th century advocate, Phoebe Palmer affirms the necessity of belief, of knowing: "If the primitive Christians had the assurance that their labors were in the Lord; and thus enjoyed the heart-inspiring confidence that their labors were not in vain, because performed in the might of the Spirit, then it is also your privilege to know that your labor is in the Lord." Phoebe Palmer, *The Way of Holiness*, 52nd. ed., (New York: Palmer & Hughes, 1867).

<sup>75</sup> John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection. The Works of John Wesley* (1872 ed. by Thomas Jackson), vol. 11 pp. 366-446 (electronic edition).

motivation to pursue godliness was their sense of obligation to live in conformity the scriptures. While worthy, this obligation rests primarily on obedience, on individual will, not on a basic theological necessity of holiness for the sake of the Kingdom of God. The theology they preached of complete justification by faith teaches believers to rest in their salvation, leaving them free to pursue or not pursue holiness based on the strength of each one's commitment to this obedience.

It is well known that the Lutheran reformation found itself extremely vulnerable at the point of the relation between faith and works. Even through Luther tried to find a place of good works as the fruit of faith, by his heavy emphasis on *justification by faith* alone, he was always open to the charge, which his Roman Catholic opponents did not hesitate to make, that his point of view made all good works unnecessary.<sup>76</sup>

It is not that the motivations espoused by Luther, Calvin, Wesley and others are invalid. They are crucial elements for entering into the full experience which faith in Jesus Christ promises. Yet, especially in the generations which followed after these pioneers, their teachings were often reduced to self-effort in some form. The believer has been urged to abide by certain precepts, in the power of her/his will or reason, in order to attain more of the promise. Charles Hodge, writing in the nineteenth century, points to where these teachings had led.

The attainment of holiness is often treated, by Christian writers, as a mere question of morals, or at most, of natural religion. Men are directed to control, by the force of reason, their vicious propensities; to set in array before the mind the motives to virtuous living, and to strengthen the will by acts of self-restraint. Conscience is summoned to sanction the dictates of reason, or to warn the sinner of the consequences of transgression. The doctrines of the presence and providence of God, and of future retribution, are more or less relied upon to prevent the indulgence of sin, and to stimulate to the practice of virtue. Special directions are given how to cultivate virtuous habits, or to correct those which are evil.

It is no less true, that so long as the heart is unrenewed, all that reason and conscience can do is of little avail. ... A man may be brought, by reason and conscience, to change his conduct, but not to change his heart. A sense of duty may force him to give alms to a man he hates, but it cannot change

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<sup>76</sup> Howard Hageman, essay on "Reformed Spirituality," Collins, , 144, taken from *Protestant Spiritual Traditions*, Frank C. Senn, ed. (Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 1986).

hatred into love. The desire of happiness may induce him to engage externally in the service of God, but it cannot make that service a delight. The affections do not obey the dictates of reason, nor the commands of conscience. They may be measurably restrained in their manifestations, but cannot be changed in their nature.

The doctrine of sanctification, therefore, as taught in the Bible, is, that we are made holy not by the force of conscience, or of moral motives, nor by acts of discipline, but by being united to Christ so as to become reconciled to God, and partakers of the Holy Ghost.<sup>77</sup>

In too many places of American Protestant Christianity we have lost the foundational understanding of “united to Christ,” or the “union with God” of which the mystics speak, as the source for living the Christian life. Members are left to try on their own to increase in godliness, and they are giving up the struggle, while still retaining the hope that there is a way to enter into the fullness which their faith offers. “Perhaps underlying all of these matters is the obvious lack of a spiritual theology in Evangelicalism, even in Protestantism at-large.”<sup>78</sup>

## **An Answer for Today**

### A Theology of Necessity

#### ***Grow into Spiritual Wholeness: Dallas Willard***

Dallas Willard, in his pivotal book, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, deals with the same problem which I am addressing in this chapter. He claims that Protestantism does not offer an adequate motivation for believers to pursue holiness. Lamenting the loss of the spiritual disciplines in the life of Protestant believers Willard mourns, “So what is needed, then, is a theology of the disciplines for the spiritual life. We need a foundation, a practical, workable theology of them.”<sup>79</sup> He goes on to argue that the spiritual disciplines are necessary to bring

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<sup>77</sup> Charles Hodge, *The Way of Life* (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1841), quoted by Roger Lundin and Mark A. Nolls, eds., *Voices From the Heart: Four Centuries of American Piety* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 143-’44.

<sup>78</sup> David S. Dockery, “An Outline of Paul’s View of the Spiritual Life,” in Collins, 339.

<sup>79</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988), 25.

our whole selves into the salvation experience, and that it is including our bodies in spiritual development which brings us to maturity.

The vitality and power of Christianity is lost when we fail to integrate our bodies into its practice by intelligent, conscious choice and steadfast intent. It is with our *bodies* we receive the new life that comes as we enter his Kingdom.<sup>80</sup>

In order to experience the fullness of our salvation we must yield our bodies also up for transformation, and the spiritual disciplines are the way to do this.

It is precisely this appropriate recognition of the body and of its implications for theology that is missing in currently dominant views of Christian salvation or deliverance<sup>81</sup>.

Willard states that individual believers cannot mature to spiritual wholeness, and therefore society cannot receive the benefits from mature believers, without the practice of spiritual disciplines.

Willard's reason for Christians to pursue godliness is a significant correction, and it makes the pursuit critically important. It is that-without-which a believer cannot experience wholeness, and that-which-is-needed for society to experience the transforming effect of mature believers. This argument makes growth in godliness important, yet still not *essential* to the completion of God's redemption. The appeal is to do a better job with our role in God's work, but it does not *require* this role for the fulfillment of the Kingdom.

### Hastening the Kingdom. A Further Motivation

#### *Motivation Stated*

A further and stronger key to motivating the present generation of believers and Christian communities to pursue holiness earnestly is, I believe, the demonstration that individual and corporate godliness is a *necessary* element in God's work of salvation. The church, the people of God, has a critical role in bringing forth God's salvation of the nations and the earth. God's plan of redemption, while bounded by His sovereign authority, leaves a part for the church, and until this is fulfilled the End cannot come.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 29.

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fully sufficient work of God which brings complete salvation, yet the demonstration of the Kingdom, inaugurated by the incarnation of Christ, in the lives of His followers is an essential momentum toward final completion of this salvation. "Life in the Spirit is to be lived out between the polarities of what has been accomplished by the historical achievement of Jesus and what is yet to be fulfilled in the consummation of God's redemptive program."<sup>82</sup> Thus, when Christian believers develop the values of the Kingdom of God in their lives, both individually and corporately, they fuel this momentum and draw ever nearer the climax of Christ's Return. When the disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?", he answered by declaring their part in the coming of the Kingdom:

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:6-8)

The witness of Jesus' followers is integral to the coming of the Kingdom in fullness. The Father has fixed the time, but he has included the work of the church in his plan.

The development of Kingdom values, known by the terms sanctification, Christian perfection, or a life of godliness, requires the personal practice of disciplined spirituality. There is a cooperation by the believer in the manifestation of his/her full salvation:

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12-13)

The strong emphasis on holiness in the Scriptures shows that the intentional pursuit of godliness by believers is a vital element in the fulfillment of God's purpose. While there are many ways of engaging in this development, studying the lives and teachings of those who have demonstrated progress in this way, and practicing the disciplines which they learned, are resources which have proven value for all believers and can strongly encourage seekers today.

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<sup>82</sup>David S. Dockery, "An Outline of Paul's View of the Spiritual Life," in Collins, 346-47.

It is a very great thing for a person to associate with others who are walking in the right way: to mix not only with those whom he sees in the rooms where he himself is, but with those whom he knows to have entered the rooms nearer the center, for they will be of great help to him and he can get into such close touch with them that they will take him with them.<sup>83</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this paper to argue whether godliness can be quantified. Many movements in the history of the church have attempted to define godliness and to build structures which would bring in the Kingdom, as they define it. Most of these have ended in failure or have done as much damage to the work of God as they have brought good. The breakdown, it seems to me, comes in the prideful *conclusion* of what the Kingdom should look like in contrast to the humble *pursuit* of the lifestyle of the Kingdom. It is this pursuit which I argue is the momentum God has left to the church.

This concept of pursuit in contrast to conclusion can be demonstrated in an individual life. I use my own as example. I have been nurtured in the Christian church all my life. The nurture has been, in my judgment, for the most part healthy. In each decade of my life, and I am now in my sixth decade, I have had a picture of godliness, a conclusion of what holiness looks like in an individual believer. Yet, each time I crossed into a new decade, I saw the shortcomings of that picture and felt the self-centeredness and personal corruption in my pursuit of it. I enlarged my concept of godliness and pressed on, as I continue to do to this day.

If I had stopped at any of those decadal levels of spiritual attainment I would not have learned the richer, broader, fuller dimensions of God's character and of the life possible in Him. I believe it has been the pursuit of godliness which has manifest the Kingdom of God in my life, not a conclusion of what the Kingdom must look like. Even with the highest goal of spirituality, union with God, "perfection lies in the desire for God, not in the accomplishment of union."<sup>84</sup>

The role of the church, and every believer in it, then, is, by obedience to the commands of Christ and growth in godliness, to extend the manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth until God is satisfied and ready to reveal Himself in all His Glory. God has conceded to us a vital element in His eternal purpose.

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<sup>83</sup> Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, Allison Peers, ed. (New York Doubleday, 1989), 50.

<sup>84</sup> Urban T. Holmes, III, *A History of Christian Spirituality* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), 160.

## *A Consistent Pattern*

### Abraham

Making the actions of humans a vital, even necessary element in establishing His Kingdom, is consistent with the pattern which God has demonstrated in salvation history. He chose a man, Abram, through whom He would bring the salvation blessing to the earth,

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3)

Through the obedience of Abraham, Abram's Covenant name, and his demonstration of growth in godliness (witnessed in Heb. 11:8-11), God revealed His plan of redemption and set it in motion. Abraham's godly obedience, crystallized in the test of obedience with his son Isaac, carried God's plan of redemption forward to the next step.

### Israel

In carrying His plan forward, God assigned to a single nation the privilege of demonstrating His righteousness, the nation of Israel,

to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 9:4-5)

The Israelites did not prevail in the test of obedience. They did not show God's righteousness and the glory of the Law in the beauty and security which these promise. Without diminishing God's sovereignty in choosing Israel, it does seem that Israel's failures delayed the fulfillment of the Kingdom. They were forced to take the long way into the Promised Land, adding forty years to the journey. God's judgment on their disobedience led to the seventy years of captivity in Babylon. The slowness of their response to the prophets' admonitions after their return left them, and we who followed, with the



extended period where there was no prophet and no word from the Lord until John the Baptist. Israel demonstrates, in both its obedience and its failure, the powerful part the lifestyle of believers plays in the drama of salvation.

Jesus

God most profoundly demonstrates His use of humanity when He chose the way of weakness in human flesh to incarnate His message in Jesus,

Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)

By being fully obedient in his humanity, Jesus accomplished God's purpose in his life and brought the Kingdom to earth in a new and powerful way. Jesus' testimony was, "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do." (Jn. 17:4) Jesus' complete cooperation with the ways of God in his life, thus his growth in godliness, infused the momentum toward the full manifestation of the reign of God with the critical force which speeds it toward completion.

It continues to be true today that God's work of salvation involves the active participation of His people and depends, in some degree, on the fulfillment of their role. The desire of believers and the church to accomplish this role is a compelling motivation for pursuing a disciplined spirituality.

### *Support from Scripture*

The force of this motivation is that God has assigned to the church a necessary work in His plan of redemption, and that growth in godliness of individual believers and the church as a body is essential to fulfilling this work. I turn now to show how this principle is presented in the Scriptures.

The Old Testament

*The covenant with Adam and Eve.* In the Creation account there is recorded God's covenant with Adam and Eve, which is a covenant with all humanity.

And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the

birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth". (Genesis 1:28)

Here is given to humanity the responsibility of caring for the earth. The command, "and subdue it," shows that there is a need for governance of the earth. The earth needs the "rule" of Adam and Eve. When they sinned, the authority for godly rule was lost, and the earth came under a curse (Gen. 3:17). Thus began the subjection to futility which Paul identifies in Romans 8:20. Both the command given and the evidence from what followed the inability to keep it, demonstrate that God intended humanity to carry a significant role in His plan for the earth.

*The covenant with Abraham and Sarah.* In the covenant God made with Abram, we see that the man himself is critical to God's plan. It is not faith as an abstract, but faith of a man which opens the way into the kingdom.

For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. ... For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ... and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore also it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Now not for his sake only was it written, that it was reckoned to him, but for our sake also, to whom it will be reckoned, as those who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, (Rom. 4:13, 16, 22-24)

It is Abraham's faith, and the faith of all who are children of Abraham, by adopting his faith, that receives righteousness. It is a personal appropriation of the gift of God that God's kingdom is made manifest in the earth.

This blessing was to come through Abraham, through his own progeny. A servant would not do to carry the blessing (Gen. 15:1-5), nor a son who is not born of the covenant (Gen. 17:15-21). It must be by a demonstration of righteousness through faith that God's plan was to be carried forward (Rom. 4:18-22). The godly role of Abraham and Sarah was necessary for what God wanted to do to bless the nations, to redeem the world.

*The covenant with Israel.* God carried forward his plan with the nation of Israel. Israel is chosen to be a "kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:5-6), and through God's work in them the nations will know "how awesome is the work that I, the Lord, will do for you" (Ex. 34:10). In the faith and obedience of Israel, the

character and action of God was to be made evident to the world<sup>85</sup>. Israel's role as priest and servant of God for the world was to bring justice to the earth (Isa. 42:1-7, 66:1-3; Ps. 2, plus others). The work of God through the nation was to restore the land and set free those in darkness (Isa. 49:8-23). Through Israel, God reveals His intention to put the earth and the nations in order again. The obedience of the nation was critical to this demonstration. Even though Israel's failure is part of God's plan for revealing salvation by grace, that failure points to the critical role the nation had in this plan.

## The New Testament

*The teaching of Jesus: The Kingdom of God is at hand.* Jesus understood that he not only brought a message, but he inaugurated the Kingdom of God, and that his followers were to continue this Kingdom (e.g. Mark 1:15, Luke 4:43, 9:1-6). He demonstrated that his actions, and those of his followers, were activities of the Kingdom (e.g. Matt. 5:13-16, 12:28, Luke 7:18-23).

Jesus' use of language like, "the Kingdom of God is at hand," Mark 1:15, shows that it is not fulfilled. It is near, but there is something to be accomplished before it is complete. This tension continues in Jesus' teaching right to the end, when he tells his disciples to "wait for what the Father had promised," Acts 1:4. The disciples reception of this gift, the Holy Spirit, and their manifestation of his presence and work in their lives, was, and is, the way the work of the Kingdom will be completed.

*Peter: Hastening the coming of the day of God.* Peter is very direct in saying that the manifestation of holiness in the lives of believers affects the day of Christ's Return.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and *hastening the coming of the day of God*, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless. (2 Peter 3:10-14. emphasis mine.)

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<sup>85</sup> e.g. Deuteronomy 26:19, Ezekiel 36:22-23.

Peter calls upon his readers to pursue “holy conduct and godliness” because doing so will hasten the coming of the “day of God”, the fulfillment of His Kingdom. The Lord is showing patience, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance,” (2 Pet. 3:9) because there must be time for something to develop. This is, in part, the holiness of believers. The quality of life of believers has much to do with the promise they are looking for, “a new heavens and a new earth.”<sup>86</sup>

*Paul Creation set free from its slavery to corruption.* Paul identifies a critical reason for the children of God to pursue godliness, to come into their own “revealing.”

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the *revealing of the sons of God*. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Romans 8:19-21, emphasis mine)

All of creation, humanity, social orders, and the earth itself, is in “slavery to corruption.” This does not have to be argued. It is a universal experience.<sup>87</sup> Paul declares that release from this captivity waits for the “revealing of the sons of God.” He does not make clear what he means by this phrase, but it is clear that the sons of God, believers in Jesus Christ, have a role which only they can execute in bringing the creation out of its subjection.

When this text is taken in the whole of Paul’s teaching, we see his urgent desire that Christians grow in godliness in order to reveal the glory of God (e.g. Eph. 1:1-11, Col. 1:1-23). We read his declaration that the full victory will bring

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<sup>86</sup> Peter establishes the connection between believers’ growth in holiness and “entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord” in chapter 1, vv. 8-11. This is a theme of the Epistle.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. William Law: “Thus it is with the fall; we have no more occasion to go to Moses, to prove that man and the world are in a fallen state, than to prove that man is a poor, miserable, weak, vain, distressed, corrupt, depraved, selfish, self-tormenting, perishing creature, and that the world is a sad mixture of false goods, and real evils; a mere scene of all sorts of trials, vexations, and miseries; all arising from the frame, and nature, and condition both of man and the world. This is the full infallible proof of the fall of man; which is not a thing learnt from any history, but shows itself everywhere, and every day, with such clearness as we see the sun.” William Law, *The Way to Divine Knowledge, being several Dialogues between Humanus, Academicus, Rusticus, and Theophilus*, electronic copy, [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org), Way-1-59.

the world into the freedom of submission to its Creator (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:20-25). Christian believers are the sons of God living now in this freedom. As they do so more and more completely the momentum for full release builds. When this reaches climax, the Lord Jesus will declare the victory, and creation will know its glory.

*Revelation: A prepared bride.* The vision which John saw of the new Jerusalem is of a city beautiful and pure (21:1-3,27). The city represents a restored earth (v1) and reconciled nations (v26). The church, now “made ready as a bride,” (v2) has been brought into full expression of godliness. The Kingdom can now come. The church is an active force in God’s redemption of the world. We should not look at the ones who “overcome,” in chapters 2 and 3, as just survivors, those who maintain purity in the face of temptation and opposition. They (We) are those who will be able to carry authority.

'Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. 'And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; (Rev. 2:25-27)

'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (Rev. 3:21)

This authority is manifest in life as well, showing in the strength by which believers maintain holiness.

The message of John in the Revelation is that the church must remain pure and true and steadfast in the face of persecution (chapters 2 and 3), keeping the “word of their testimony” and not loving their life “even to death,” (12:11). In so doing the church opens the way for the Return of the victorious Lamb.

### ***Conclusion***

Salvation is more than changing the allegiance of individuals from satan or self to Jesus Christ. It is the establishment of a “new heavens and a new earth”, I Pet. 3:13. It is restoration of the failed dominion, Gen. 1 - 3. It is healing of the nations, Rev. 22:1-3. It is individuals in right relationship with Father God, nations in allegiance to Jesus Christ, and earth loosed from corruption to display the glory of God.

This apocalyptic breadth of the doctrine of justification must not be diminished by limiting the gospel of God’s righteousness to the message of

the forgiveness of sins for individual sinners who confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. What is involved in the demonstration of God's righteousness through the atoning death of Jesus Christ and in his resurrection for the justification of many and in his ongoing activity as Lord, Advocate, Savior and Judge of the world is nothing less than the establishment of the right of God over the whole cosmos.<sup>88</sup>

Throughout the biblical account of God's saving work, it is shown that it is for more than individuals. The Garden of Eden is a picture of harmony between all elements of creation, and Isaiah 66 carries this picture to the End. The promised destination for Israel is a land, a land of peace and prosperity, "flowing with milk and honey," Ex. 3:8, et. al. This is also pictured as restored in the End by Ezekiel, chapter 36. The triumph of God in Christ draws all nations under his benevolent reign, Ps. 2, 47, I Cor. 15:23-28, et. al. The climax of salvation is represented as a glorious city, where the nations of the earth walk by its light and the kings bring their glory into it, Rev. 21:24.

What is involved in the demonstration of God's righteousness through the atoning death of Christ and in his resurrection for the justification of many and in his ongoing activity as Lord, Advocate, Savior, and Judge of the world is nothing less than the establishment of the right of God over the whole cosmos.<sup>89</sup>

The church is an active participant with God in bringing this glorious conclusion. Believers have been born again into the Kingdom of God, John 3:3. The church is the child brought into life by the power of the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:8. Now the child must grow and develop, and as it does so, the characteristics of its parents, the Trinity, will emerge. Just as with a human child, so with the church, unless the child actively pursues development, it will not complete and bring to full manifestation what was conceived in it through the love of the parents.

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He

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<sup>88</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification* (Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 2001), 28.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. (Eph. 3:8-12)

This is a work meant to transform all of creation.

## CHAPTER 3

### A NEW NEED FOR AN OLD THEOLOGY. DEFINING CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY FOR THIS GENERATION

Thus says the LORD, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it; And you shall find rest for your souls." (Jer. 6:16)

#### **Definition of Christian Spirituality**

Isn't all of the Christian life "spiritual"? What makes "Christian spirituality" a special category? These are normal questions for a believer to ask. The message of Christianity calls a person into a whole-life experience, and this would seem to make all of life "spiritual." Yet, because Christianity encompasses a person's whole life it becomes helpful to distinguish aspects of life by different categories. "Dogma" and "doctrine" refer to the propositional formulations of the faith: what one believes. "Ministry" and "service" refer to the work or practices by which one acts out the values of the faith. "Ecclesiology" and "church life" refer to the form in which one joins others in the exercise of the faith: the kind of church or faith community in which one participates. Along with these categories, "spirituality" refers to the aspect of faith which is most personal and direct with God, the "life in the Spirit"<sup>90</sup>. "Spirituality" refers to individual practices and experiences, i.e. to the subjective and internal."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> "The Latin root of the word 'spirituality,' *spiritualitas*, attempts to translate the Greek noun for spirit, *pneuma*, and its adjective *pneumatikos* as they appear in the New Testament Pauline letters. Thus, 'to be united to Christ is to enter into the sphere of the Spirit' (I Cor. 6:17), or 'faith in the Lord is from and in the Spirit' (I Cor. 2:10f.). ... The 'spiritual' is what is under the influence of, or is a manifestation of, the Spirit of God. Phillip Sheldrake, "What is Spirituality?", in Collins, 23.

<sup>91</sup> Richard Peace, class notes.



The church has identified a distinct branch of theology as *spiritual theology*. Spiritual theology is distinguished from systematic theology, the classification of dogma into sets of propositions, from biblical theology, in which the scriptures are studied as a whole, and from historical theology, which interprets the meaning of Christianity expressed in the forms and practices of the church throughout history, and so on.

Spiritual theology studies the forms and progress of the individual's Christian life toward the goal of union with God.<sup>92</sup> "Spirituality," then, is the term used in the church to describe the inner life of the believer, although this is not intended to mean inner attitudes distinct from lifestyle.<sup>93</sup> A classic definition of spiritual theology reads:

Spiritual theology is that part of theology that, proceeding from the truths of revelation and the religious experiences of individual persons, defines the nature of the supernatural life, formulates directives for its growth and development, and explains the process by which souls advance from the beginning of the spiritual life to its full perfection.<sup>94</sup>

The definition of spirituality which I present to fit the context of this paper (and the course for which it is written) is:

Spirituality is the experience of a life in God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which flows from a growing inner knowledge of the love of God for me and of my love for God, and which results in actions which are genuine to who I am in God.

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<sup>92</sup> Sheldrake, in Collins, 33. Sheldrake notes that spiritual theology "was classically divided into ascetical theology, which dealt with the form and progress of the Christian life up to the beginnings of passive contemplation, and mystical theology which analysed further stages up to mystical union." "It appears that the Jesuit Giovanni Battista Scaramelli (1687-1752), with his *Direttorio ascetico* (1752) and *Direttorio mistico* (1754), was the first to establish the titles of 'ascetical' and 'mystical' theology in a way that subsequently became firmly established in Roman Catholic circles. During the following hundred and fifty years or so the vocabulary of 'Christian perfection' stabilized and a field defined as 'spiritual theology' became well-established."

<sup>93</sup> Sheldrake notes, "Many contemporary writers would explicitly reject the limitation of spirituality to interiority. Rather, 'the spiritual life is the life of the whole person directed towards God.'" Quote from Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend*, (London: , 1977), 34.

<sup>94</sup> Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1987, 5th printing), 22, quoted by Charles Andre Bernard, S.J., "The Nature of Spiritual Theology" in Collins, 234.

I elaborate on these phrases this way:

experience of a life: My life which I know, of which I have an awareness in mind, emotions and will.

in God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Christian spirituality is about knowing God as revealed in Jesus Christ and manifest in individual hearts by the Holy Spirit.

which flows from a growing inner: This life comes from an energy, a spiritual energy, from a person's soul, which is being filled with the Holy Spirit, the source of the energy.

knowledge: Understanding which is clear and enlarging, both in concepts and in emotional confidence.

the love of God for me: The quality of this love is described in the Bible and is demonstrated in the life of Jesus Christ.

my love for God: Love which incorporates trust, hope, joy, and eager obedience.

results in actions: My experience of God is expressed in my lifestyle, my attitudes, and behaviors.

which are genuine to who I am: These actions are expressions of the transformation occurring in me, of the character forming in me; they are not practices adopted because of external pressures.

in God: My true character is realized in a right, whole, mutual relationship with God; not simply an element of my nature.

The spirituality which this paper recognizes is not an innate quality, as is often implied in the statement, "I am a very spiritual person." Nor is it a gift which comes to one unasked, as could be reflected in the statement, "I don't know, I just have a spiritual sense about things." Rather, the spirituality I am endeavoring to encourage is a process, an intentional pursuit of an ever enlarging encounter with God and an ever deepening awareness of the self. The process has both initiative and response: initiative from the desire within one's soul and response to the impulses of God the Holy Spirit.

Spirituality is an energy, not a state. It is a journey, not a destination. It is known from within, not described by those without. It is a vehicle facilitating movement toward the soul's desire, not a trophy marking one's accomplishment. A seeker after union with God experiences spirituality in the process of the pursuit. It is a living, developing process which one both generates and follows. "Spirituality is the attention we give to our souls, to the invisible interior of our lives that is the core of our identity, these image-of-God souls that comprise our uniqueness and glory."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, "Saint Mark. The Basic Text for Christian Spirituality," in Collins, 330.

Spirituality connects us intimately with God, which means spirituality enters into mystery. Although there are many things written which attempt to explain spirituality and to define its steps (this paper among them), the experience of spirituality is personal, which means every journey is unique, and it partakes of the mysterious, which means there is more which cannot be explained and defined than that which can.<sup>96</sup> Evelyn Underhill points to this latter reality when she describes mystics as those:

More reasonable than the rationalists, they find in that very hunger for reality which is the mother of all metaphysics, an implicit proof that such reality exists; that there is something else, some final satisfaction, beyond the ceaseless stream of sensation which besieges consciousness.<sup>97</sup>

The seeker who practices a deliberate spirituality<sup>98</sup> will encounter realms which are outside familiar patterns of thought, explanation, and secure description. This need not frighten him or her. The very fact that the person touches these mysteries is evidence that she or he can engage them. Such engagements become their own teachers, and, in addition, great profit can come from sharing the encounters and learning with those who are a little more experienced in such things. In this paper I do not explore the subject of mystery, but I encourage the seeker to be prepared to encounter it along the way.

Now that I have distinguished spirituality from other aspects of the Christian life, I come around to say also that spirituality is the driving force for all of life. It is the heart-source of genuine faith and practice. The wisdom of Proverbs directs, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." (Prov. 4:23) One's pursuit of intimacy with God is what produces those effects in all areas of life which the seeker desires.

The spiritual life is not one slice of existence but leaven for the whole loaf. It is the broadest, most encompassing dimension of who we are, embracing in its mystery what we call physical, mental, emotional, and volitional aspects of life. Nothing that we do, think, or imagine is without its impact on our

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<sup>96</sup> Writers who delve more into the area of mystery include Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, and Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism. The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*.

<sup>97</sup> Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism. The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), 23.

<sup>98</sup> The phrase deliberate spirituality is explained in Chapter 5.

spiritual life, and the spiritual life influences every other dimension of our being. Spirituality is holistic.<sup>99</sup>

### **The History of Spirituality in the Church<sup>100</sup>**

The revolution of today (see Chapter 1) is the reappearance of a movement which has manifested several times in the history of the church. It is a desire for an authentic, personal experience of what is proclaimed in the church's dogma and ritual. It takes the form of revolution because dogma and ritual readily ossify into impersonal assent and unthinking habit. The foment of the revolution comes from the stirrings of desire in believers' hearts to know internally what they, in concert with the church, express outwardly. Marjorie Thompson describes what is happening today, which has happened time and again in the past:

There is a hunger abroad in our time, haunting lives and hearts. Like an empty stomach aching beneath the sleek coat of a seemingly well-fed creature, it reveals that something is missing from the diet of our rational, secular, and affluent culture.<sup>101</sup>

#### Early Period

In the fourth century this revolution took the form of flight into the desert by seekers who feared that the nationalization of the church after the triumph of Constantine was compromising the singularity of the Christian proclamation.

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<sup>99</sup> Thompson, 15.

<sup>100</sup> While I present a history of spirituality as a discernable theme through the history of the Christian faith, I must note that the subject has not always been described as "spirituality." "The term *spirituality* is, in fact relatively new. Even through the word *spiritualitas* can be traced back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century, it was used much until the 17<sup>th</sup> century when it came to refer to the interior life ... ." (Peace, class notes). When discussing the history of spirituality we must be alert that "defined concepts of any kind with regard to 'the spiritual life,' let alone with reference to a distinct discipline, have a limited history." (Sheldrake, "What is Spirituality," in Collins, 25.) The history in this section is, therefore, a very generalized sketch of the how the inner life of spirit has been pursued in different eras.

<sup>101</sup> Thompson, 1.

These zealots sought a refuge from the pressure of an economized religion so they could pursue their passion for God with unrestricted fervor. These became the hermits and religious communities which we today call the Desert Fathers and Mothers, or Desert Abbas and Ammas.<sup>102</sup>

The most notable of these is St. Antony of the Desert. As a young man he was convicted upon hearing the reading of the text of Jesus' words to the rich young man in Mark 10, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." He immediately did as the words commanded, following the Spirit of Jesus into the desert. His solitary pursuit of godliness took him through remarkable agonies of soul and inexpressible ecstasies of spirit. His reputation for wisdom and for miracles brought many into the desert to consult him, receive healing and deliverance, or to stay as disciples. Through the fourth and fifth centuries hundreds of solitaries and communities arose in the deserts of Egypt and Syria, developing styles of life which satisfied their fervent, singular pursuit of holiness.

The form of spirituality which emerged from St. Antony and these others was characterized by 1) total commitment to the pursuit of holiness, abandoning all secular pursuits and all personal activities which were deemed to distract from this; 2) severe limitation of communication (silence was the norm in all relationships) so the heart and mind were always open to the voice of God; 3) participation in community as necessary for accountability and support, although several different forms of community developed in the desert; 4) subjugation of the body through severe ascetic practices, to leave the person free to receive all that can be known in the spirit. The results of these disciplines in their lives brought to the Desert Fathers and Mothers a reputation for wisdom which persists to this day, a power in miracles and with demonic forces that has been unrivaled until today, and a practice of humility and grace which, other than Jesus himself, sets the standard for believers.

The Desert Fathers and Mothers are an exclusive group. Their lifestyle is seldom followed today, if indeed it could be practiced at all. Their isolating passion for God alone let them disregard all functions of society, leaving these matters to others. The abrasiveness of their lifestyle, and of many personalities, blocked them from turning their insights into forms which might benefit the larger society. However, their passion for God and for holiness is an inspiration to every one who reads their lives and sayings. The fervency with which they sought God reveals the capacity which humans have and exposes the poverty of most believers' pursuit. The heights of spiritual experiences they gained and the depth of wisdom they learned, wisdom in matters of spirit, relationships,

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<sup>102</sup> Ref. Benedicta Ward, and Norman Russell, *The Lives of the Desert Fathers* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistersian Publications, 1981).

obedience, victory over the flesh and the devil, and application of the message of Jesus in the world, stir a godly envy in those who desire a dynamic spiritual life. Severe though their lives were, they demonstrate how

Ascetic practice sweeps out the clutter of the good-pretentious self, making ample space for Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; it embraces and prepares for a kind of death that the culture knows nothing about, making room for the dance of resurrection.<sup>103</sup>

### Monasticism

The communities founded by the Desert Fathers and Mothers are the forerunners of monastic communities. The influx of disciples into their desert hideaways compelled those who had fled the society of other humans to form entities for sustaining those who sought them out. These communities took many forms and structures of discipline and ritual. While fervency marked all of them, there was no common order. Then, in the sixth century Benedict of Nursia, head of a community in Italy, set out what has become *The Rule of St. Benedict*. Its simplicity yet sincerity of faith expression, its norm of discipline yet generosity of compassion, made it the preferred order for monastic communities. Under guidance of *The Rule* "houses," as individual monasteries are called, of men and of women could offer a demanding yet satisfactory way for seekers to pursue the life of holiness. The way of pursuing spirituality was still primarily through ascetic practices, now being called *spiritual disciplines*, and the emphasis was on habits of life which would bring the heart into submission to the Spirit of God. Life in a monastery was a regular rhythm of vocal prayer, through the liturgy, work, and individual contemplation. The vows taken by most monks and nuns – poverty, chastity, and obedience – discipline them in the way of spiritual life dictated by the order. The pursuit of holiness was an all-consuming desire.

Theirs, however, was no moderate hunger. Famished with the desire to love God and neighbor *perfectly*, the first generation of monks and nuns

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<sup>103</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, "Saint Mark. The Basic Text for Christian Spirituality," in Collins, 335.

pushed themselves to the limits of physical and psychological endurance in this great experiment in gospel living.<sup>104</sup>

The form of spirituality which developed in the monasteries directed the seeker toward development of the inner life, through contemplation, sustained in community, learned in the ritual of prayer (the Divine Office), and given outward expression in labor or service. The ideal is that the monk or nun lives his or her whole life before God and makes all of living into communion with him. The ritual (prayer), place (house) and community (order) compel and support this whole-life discipline.

The Franciscan and Dominican movements were not simply an attempt to answer the need of the Church at an institutional or theological level; they were also intended to draw the faithful into a life of increasingly intense spiritual growth in order to become more perfect disciples of the poor Christ.<sup>105</sup>

The encouraging testimony of monastic communities is that a life such as this is possible. A person can live the spiritual life in all aspects of living. The fruit of the monasteries has been thousands of dedicated, serving, holy representatives of the gospel of Christ. The monastic life also has its history of abuse and distorted spirituality, but its contributions to the development of spirituality are much stronger than the consequences of any distortions.

In the middle ages the monastic life was the *only* way toward spirituality. (While not literally true, this was so much the common perception that other paths were little considered.) The monastic pattern shows us that one can give one's whole life to the pursuit of godliness and let this consume all of one's living, and it makes clear the forms which are necessary to sustain this: ritual, disciplines and community. However, it implies that the only way to do so is by separating oneself from the world, including separating from normal relationships of family and general society. Thus, it does not offer a path to spirituality to all, but only to those few who are able and willing to abandon common life. Since a body of people serving the common life are necessary for societies to function, the monastic pattern is a vital illustration of the spiritual life but is not the norm. Yet, we all breathe a more pure air of the spirit because of

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<sup>104</sup> Gabriel O'Donnell, O.P. "Monastic Life and the Search for God," in Mass and O'Donnell, 56.

<sup>105</sup> Gabriel O'Donnell, O.P., "Mendicant Spirituality," in Mass and O'Donnell, 87.

their service. "In the night of our technological barbarism, monks must be trees which exist silently in the dark and by their vital presence purify the air."<sup>106</sup>

### Late Middle Ages

The separated life of monastic communities gave monks and nuns the opportunity to pursue spirituality in depth, to reflect on the process of spiritual growth, and to record their experiences and insights. The most notable writings on spirituality come from those who have followed the monastic way of life. In respect of quantity and quality these writings reached their high point in history in the fourteenth century.<sup>107</sup> Building on the work of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), the giant transition figure of the emergence of Christian Europe from the mid to the "high" middle ages, the mystics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries lifted spirituality beyond ritual and discipline into an intimacy of dwelling in union with God in the spirit.<sup>108</sup> These writers include Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), John Ruusbroec (or Ruysbroeck) (1293-1381), Julian of Norwich (1342-1423), Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) and Thomas a' Kempis (1380-1471).

The spirituality of monasticism taught that by discipline of the physical, emotional and mental elements of the self a person would move away from the corruptions of sin and human weakness toward a lifestyle consistent with the holiness demonstrated in Jesus' life. The mystics focused on the inner life, the life of one's spirit, and teach that through contemplation on the purity and love of God a person moves beyond dependence on disciplines to dwell in the light and freedom of God's presence. These teachers do not abandon the work of spiritual disciplines. They consider these primary, the foundation for growing

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<sup>106</sup> Thomas Merton, *The Monastic Vocation* (Gethsemane, KY: Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemane, 1957), 3.

<sup>107</sup> So writes Evelyn Underhill of the "waves" of mysticism, "reaching their highest points in the third, fourteenth, and seventeenth centuries. ... It rises to its highest point in the fourteenth century, and does not again approach the level it there attains, for the medieval period was more favorable to the development of mysticism than any subsequent epoch has been." Underhill, 454.

<sup>108</sup> "This was a time (the fourteenth century) when serious minded people everywhere criticized formalism and hypocrisy in religion, especially among the established religious orders; dissent from orthodoxy seemed to be in the air, and the most vigorous understanding of Christian life seemed to be found outside the formal structures of the Church." Benedicta Ward, "The English Mystics," in Ralph Waller and Benedicta Ward, eds., *An Introduction to Christian Spirituality* (London: SPCK, 1999), 47.



into the higher realm.<sup>109</sup> They then press the seeker, through solitude and contemplation, to let the intense light of God's holiness penetrate into the hidden places of his/her heart and reveal there the pure love of God. This lifts the person into a state where images and practices are no longer essential to hold her/him in union with God. Divine love holds one there. Love also so fills the person's heart that demonstrations of love toward one's fellow human beings are natural and effortless. A consistent theme in these writings is "that the value of one's spirituality before God is measured not by the loftiness of one's mystical experiences, but by the quality of one's love for neighbor."<sup>110</sup>

The spiritual practices of these high middle age mystics can look like the intense asceticism of the desert or the severe discipline of the monastery, but they do not originate in the person's will, driving spiritual habits by effort. Rather, their simple, focused habits flow from a renewed inner life after dying to the self-life and dwelling in their spirit in God. The romantic devotion of a bride and the mystery of intimacy in marriage give the mystics images and language for describing the intimacy and union with God which they experience and teach. Their expressions entice seekers toward an inner closeness with God that is marked by sweetness, endearing exchanges, spontaneous guidance, and freedom from attachment to material things.

It was natural and inevitable that the imagery of human love and marriage should have seemed to the mystic the best of all images of his own "fulfillment of life"; his soul's surrender, first to the call, finally to the embrace of Perfect Love. It lay ready to his hand; it was understood of all men: and moreover, it certainly does offer, upon lower levels, a strangely exact parallel to the sequence of states in which man's spiritual consciousness unfolds itself, and which form the consummation of the mystic life.<sup>111</sup>

The way to this high spirituality, as these devotees describe it, is both effort and gift. It is hard sought yet comes unasked. A person must want the life of union with God. It must be a desire which compels attention and action, overwhelming all other interests in life. Yet, one does not enter into the pursuit without receiving a revelation in her or his spirit.

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<sup>109</sup> E.g. Ruusbroec, "As I have said already, we must always live and be attentive in the practice of all the virtues, while above and beyond all virtues we must pass away and die in God.", 169.

<sup>110</sup> Steven Payne, O.C.D., "The Tradition of Prayer in Teresa and John of the Cross," in Mass and O'Donnell, 246-'47.

<sup>111</sup> Underhill, 136-'37.

It usually involves a sudden and acute realization of a splendour and adorable reality in the world – or sometimes of its obverse, the divine sorrow at the heart of things – never before perceived. ... In most cases, the onset of this new consciousness seems to the self so sudden, so clearly imposed from without rather than developed from within, as to have a supernatural character.<sup>112</sup>

Then, led upward by both an internal drive and further revelations, the seeker after union with God finds a way which is personal yet has key elements in common with others. These common elements are part of the teaching of spiritual theology.

The spirituality of union continues in writings after the fourteenth century, particularly in Teresa of Avila (1512-1582) and John of the Cross (1542-1591), and in the modern era in Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897) and Thomas Merton (1915-1968). These, and others, are the voices which call from the peaks of spirituality, reminding all that we too can breathe and live in the rarified air of spirit-to-spirit union with God. Their writings are markers on the way.

### The Reformation

The devotional practices of individuals during the Middle Ages did not always lead to lofty and pure spiritual experiences. Much of it was founded on superstition and fear, burying the desire for a tender union with God under a desperation to escape purgatory. “The thrust of medieval devotional concern was largely penitential – a concern for one’s own soul, either for its salvation or for shortening its travail in purgatory.”<sup>113</sup> Popular devotionalism came to be fed, and led, more by expected indulgences – through rites related to saints’ relics, pilgrimages to sacred sites, and penitential sacrifices (which came to involve payment of money) – than by biblical forms of obedience. It was to these distortions that the Reformation brought correction.

The key shift which the Reformers brought to the pursuit of spirituality was from an inward, strictly personal, orientation to an outward one, “characterized not by our seeking God but by seeking to do God’s will, in the process of which the faithful come to know, as something of a serendipity,

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>113</sup> T. Hartley Hall, IV, “The Shape of Reformed Piety,” in Mass and O’Donnell, 204.

fellowship with God and find their lives transformed.”<sup>114</sup> The emphasis in reformed spirituality is on the believer’s activity in the world and his/her participation in the community of faith, the church. It is by the work of serving a neighbor that one grows in spirituality, and it is by the strength of the body, the church, that one is held close to God.

The Reformers rediscovery and proclamation of the doctrine of justification by faith brought to believers freedom from the fear of hell and purgatory – one could be assured of salvation by faith in Christ and his atoning work – and made room for a practice of holiness which was rooted in life in this world more than the next. Piety could be a result not of intense pursuit but of firm conviction, and out of this would come practices of love of God, directed toward people. “The formation of a Christian life occurs, for Luther, in ‘conformation to Christ’ – the soul being ‘formed in Christ’. From this spiritual communion with Christ comes active service and the doing of justice.”<sup>115</sup>

The Reformers’ teaching on spirituality did not use the language of interiority and mystical union. Instead it speaks of obedience and tangible works. It “focuses upon a person’s behavior as regards the duties and obligations inherent to religion.”<sup>116</sup> It shows how the common work of living is sacred, when done “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17), and faithfulness in it will produce godliness.

The Reformed tradition leads its people to emphasize Christ as Lord rather than Christ as Savior; the world as the arena of God’s lordship in preference to the world as evil or the world as inherently good; truth as God’s rather than learning as suspect or learning for self-enhancement; Christian experience as nurture and growth in community in preference to Christian experience as individual conversion or spiritual quest; the Christian life as engagement rather than the Christian life as withdrawal; faithfulness more than faith.<sup>117</sup>

## The Modern Era

Surveys of Christian history deal with it in blocks of multiple centuries. Thus, the “Modern Era” of the church is here counted from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>115</sup> Bengt Hoffman, “Lutheran Spirituality,” in Mass and O’Donnell, 156.

<sup>116</sup> Hall, 202.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 210.

century, when Protestantism was firmly established, to the present. With the division of the Western church into Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Anti-baptist Protestant, expressions of spirituality also took multiple forms. In Roman Catholicism monasticism continues to propagate deliberate spirituality, manifest most vividly in the writings of Thomas Merton. Also, Quietism was an influential holiness movement, with Madame Jean Guyon (1648-1717) its most well-known representative.<sup>118</sup> In the Protestant church, the movements which most shaped spirituality have been Pietism, Quakerism, the Holiness Movement, Revivalism and Evangelicalism, along with the ongoing influence of Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican traditions.

Pietism, expressed in the writings of people like Philip Jakob Spener (1635-1705) and August Hermann Franke (1663-1727), brought again the significance of heart knowledge and feelings to Protestants who tended to move everything pertaining to faith into correct theology and dutiful action. In the face of "an increasingly cold and calcified orthodoxy and liturgy," Pietism's emphasis was on "faith manifested in heart and hands as well as head."<sup>119</sup> The Quakers, led by George Fox (1624-1690), were very deliberate about integrating an inner habit of communion with God and an outward life of humble service, and their writings, such as *The Journal of George Fox* and *The Journal of John Woolman* (1720-1772), are examples of this process.

The Holiness Movement centers around John Wesley. In his earnest journey to serve God, Wesley came to conclude:

The nature and extent of inward religion, the religion of the heart, now appeared to me in a stronger light than ever it had done before. I saw, that giving all my life to God (supposing it to be possible to do this, and go no farther) would profit me nothing, unless I gave my heart, yea, all my heart to Him. I saw that "simplicity of intention, purity of affection," one design in all we do, and one desire ruling all our tempers, are indeed the "wings of the soul," without which she can never ascend to the mount of God.<sup>120</sup>

In determining to give all his heart, Wesley adopted the theology and practice which he named "Christian Perfection." In his understanding of salvation, Wesley saw that "(I)t is not enough that we be *forgiven* our sins; we

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<sup>118</sup> There is dispute among historians whether it is fair to classify Guyon as a Quietist, a movement which was eventually declared heretical by the church.

<sup>119</sup> Lyle W. Dorsett, "The Pietistic Tradition in Evangelical Spirituality: A Bibliographic Essay," *The Christian Educator's Handbook on Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books), 297.

<sup>120</sup> John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: Epworth Press, 1968), 5-6.

must be *rid* of them.”<sup>121</sup> The pursuit of the people attracted to this movement was to come into a state of holiness in which they achieved “an absolute purity of intention that expressed itself in love for the good and an abhorrence of sin.”<sup>122</sup> The chief means of keeping the course in this way was gathering in “bands,” small groups where they practiced confession and mutual accountability and support. While the ideal of sinless perfection has received much criticism from its detractors, and has produced a measure of legalism and denial in its adherents, the challenge in it is a constant call to a deeper, more thorough spirituality.

The Revivalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the Evangelicalism it spawned, have not been known for contributions to spirituality<sup>123</sup>. The focus of the revivals and of evangelical religion has been on salvation. It is expected that salvation will produce a change in lifestyle, indeed major changes are expected, but, until the recent surge of attention to spiritual formation, little attention was given to the ongoing process of change. Yet, this movement produced Oswald Chambers, whose devotional book *My Utmost for His Highest* is a classic for those seeking holy living, and Andrew Murray, whose many books have led thousands of readers into a deeper relationship with God, as well as numerous other significant writers. The strong emphasis on *conversion*, on a *change of heart*, in Evangelicalism gives strength to the pursuit of holiness. It reminds seekers that they are not bound to old patterns and habits which hold them back and that there is power to change in the presence of the Holy Spirit within.

Finally, spirituality in the modern era has been regularly encouraged in the major Reformed traditions. Anglican commitment to the liturgy in worship and to daily morning and evening prayer keeps members immersed in the language of spirituality and gives them a form by which they can pursue it. In Lutheran and Reformed churches the catechetical process, Christian education, is an essential part of church life, establishing a foundational expectation in the young believer that spiritual life is a developmental process, an intentional developmental process. In churches formed by the Reformation the emphasis on spiritual growth is that it is a *corporate* process. “Whatever else Reformed piety may or may not be, it *is* a function of the entire community, making no distinction in this regard between clergy and laypersons (or, more properly,

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<sup>121</sup> Robin Mass, “Wesleyan Spirituality,” in Mass and O’Donnell, 310.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>123</sup> See Timothy George, Alistar McGrath and M. Dawn, editors, *For All the Saints: Evangelical Theology and Christian Spirituality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

officers and members) in the Church."<sup>124</sup> Believers in these communities (in healthy functioning churches) are moved toward deeper spirituality by the growth of the body as well as by their own private practices. They are also expected to share their growth with others, so building up the whole. While the more mystical elements of spirituality are given little attention, the spirituality of common life is constantly honored and developed.

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<sup>124</sup> Hall, 213.

## CHAPTER 4

### OLD STORIES FOR A NEW GENERATION

#### **The Nature of the Course**

Since one cannot attain union with God by his own labor, we do not pretend to introduce anyone to it. All one can do is point out the way that eventually leads there. Oh yes, and one other thing – one can beseech the seeking soul not to stop somewhere along the way.<sup>125</sup>

Anyone who takes this course is already on the pathway to holiness. Their decision to come is evidence that the yearning has moved them into the way. It is the purpose of the course to 1) validate their journey; 2) show how their journey follows in paths of other pilgrims throughout the history of Christianity; 3) offer lamps in the stories and writings of these earlier seekers; 4) give them a band to travel with a little way as encouragement; 5) practice some spiritual walking exercises together to build strength and skill for the full journey.

The content of the course depends on three sources: the knowledge, experience, and new insights of the participants; the resources of the writings studied; the knowledge and guidance of the instructor. It will be the responsibility and privilege of the instructor to draw out from these sources the information and experiences which will equip participants to go forward in their pursuit of godliness. The effectiveness of the course will depend as much on the participants as on the instructor. The depth of understanding will be a result of the group's interaction as much as the instructor's skill.

The format of the sessions will include introduction by the instructor; presentation by the instructor (or a guest, or student where appropriate); discussion; demonstrations of some disciplines; individual and group exercises. The design is not to deliver something from the instructor into the minds of the students, but to become participants together in a process of discovery which leads to growth in practice of truths learned by all. The course will be very

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<sup>125</sup> Jeanne Guyon, *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ* (Sargent, GA: Seed Sowers, 1975), 137.

interactive, will have freedom to focus more in depth on a segment of the material where called for, and will be always moving into heart-knowledge and realistic application.

### Outcomes Expected

#### 1. Participants Would Recognize that they Can Direct their Own Spiritual Growth Through Personal Initiative.

The approach to spiritual development which dominates in Evangelical and charismatic churches depends on the leader to give motivation and direction. This would seldom be acknowledged by such leaders, but the way in which services and classes are conducted in churches and conferences shapes such an expectation. First, the *event* is identified as the important thing, and the message advertised is, "Come and receive from the wonderful presenter(s)." Second, the motivation moves from those on the platform, or front of the classroom, to the audience. The implication is: "We have something which you need." Third, the presentation is by lecture (called "sermon" or "teaching"), which expects the listener to just take in instructions. The "expert teacher" style is based on what Parker Palmer calls the "objectivist myth" in education: the idea that there is "objective information" which can be delivered to uninformed minds which will lead to change. "In the objectivist myth, truth flows from the top down, from experts who are qualified to know truth (including some who claim that truth is an illusion) to amateurs who are qualified to receive truth."<sup>126</sup> This style tends to produce passive learners who think they are dependent on the "expert" for what is important and how they should direct their lives.

Rather than relying on the presumptions behind this style, this course is based on the confidence that

There is within each one of us a reservoir of spiritual energy that comes out of the very depths of our lives. It is like a deep well that never runs dry. It's source is the love of God. It's vehicle is the Christ who dwells in us.<sup>127</sup>

This is affirmed even more strongly as the way of grace by John Ruusbroec.

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<sup>126</sup> Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 101.

<sup>127</sup> James C. Fenagen, *More than Wanderers: Spiritual Disciplines for Christian Ministry* (New York: Seabury Press), 1978, quoted by Johnson, 102.



Now the grace which flows forth from God is an interior impulse or urging of the Holy Spirit which drives our own spirit from within and urges it out toward all the virtues. This grace flows from within, not from without, for God is more interior to us than we are to ourselves, and his interior urging and working in us, whether done naturally or supernaturally, is nearer and more intimate to us than are our own works. For this reason God works in us from within outward, whereas all creatures work from without inward. Grace and all God's gifts and inspirations thus come from within, in the unity of our spirit, and not from without, in the imagination by means of sensible things.<sup>128</sup>

It is a purpose of this course that participants will discover and trust the source of insight and understanding within their own souls and that they will find the motivation for learning and application which burns in this same place. This principle will be continually stated, and the instructor must model it in the class. Participants will be asked to form their own evaluations of the material and discussions, and make their own determinations of how to use them.

As a result, it is expected that participants will leave the course confident in their own powers of initiative for further study, for the practice of spiritual disciplines, and for implementation of the way of holiness in their own life situation.

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<sup>128</sup> Ruusbroec, 75.

## 2. Participants Would Develop a Plan for Pursuing a Disciplined Spirituality (Write a Rule of Life)

This course is not about *information* but *formation*. The reason for introducing writers of Christian spirituality and the spiritual disciplines to participants is so that they will gain confidence for their own journey toward holiness and learn specific modes of traveling. After working through the material and engaging in the discussions and exercises they will be ready to write their own plan for going on in the way. This plan is called, in the language of spiritual disciplines, a *rule of life*. "A rule of life is a pattern of spiritual disciplines that provides structure and direction for growth in holiness."<sup>129</sup> It is a written plan setting out the person's intention for regular practices for sustaining and building their spiritual life.<sup>130</sup> Near the end of the course students will be directed to formulate a rule of life and share it with a small group in the class.

A further recommendation for ongoing help will be that participants form a relationship with a spiritual director. Such a relationship provides support and accountability in the daily, yearly, indeed life-long journey which they have undertaken. Spiritual directors can be trained, certified persons who make themselves available professionally; they can be close friends, "soul-mates," who are trusted to be accepting and honest; they can be a group with which the person maintains a regular, open, and honest dialogue. Most of us are weak about keeping our "resolutions" and the accountability of a relationship for direction is a vital support.

## 3. Participants Would See Themselves as Fellow Pilgrims in the Line of Spiritual Pilgrims Since the Beginning of the Church

Arguably the primary emphases of Evangelical and charismatic churches are on individual salvation and the opportunity and power of every individual to share in the immediate blessings of salvation. This has been a life-giving infusion to the church in North America and Western Europe when it had become formalized and staid. However, a consequence of the emphasis on *this* believer and the power he/she can experience *now* has been a loss of contact with the church of history.

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<sup>129</sup> Thompson, 138.

<sup>130</sup> Marjorie Thompson gives simple, helpful guidelines for formulating a rule of life in Chapter 9, 137ff.

The emphases brought in by the Pentecostal and charismatic churches “involved a subtle but definite shift in worship from the focus on the church of history and the God of eternity to a focus on the needs, wants and concerns of the individual church attender.”<sup>131</sup>

A meaningful ingredient in feeding the hunger for deeper spirituality which this paper addresses is re-establishing this contact. Robert Webber calls this a “mandate” for this time: “Another ecclesial mandate for evangelicals in a postmodern world is to pay greater attention to breaking with our a-historical attitude and recover our connection to the entire visible church.”<sup>132</sup>

For persons discovering that their searching is not an isolated case of disgruntlement but is instead a symptom of desire shared by many, it should be enlightening to learn that the path they have “happened onto” has been traveled by hundreds before them. When these modern pilgrims see that they fall into a long historic line of seekers, the way will seem neither as foreign nor as difficult.

Those of us who want to find God do not need to constantly blaze new trails through the wilderness; the paths are already cut and marked, and though perhaps overgrown in some cases, they are nevertheless still negotiable.<sup>133</sup>

Though the old pilgrims may have reached the Eternal City, by their shared experience they can become companions to new pilgrims. One of the desired outcomes of this course is that participants will feel this and may even find in one or two of those who have gone before personalities and lessons which make them mentors even now.

#### 4. Participants Would Adopt a Form of Christian Service Which Fits the Calling They Sense upon Themselves

Spirituality does not end in ecstatic states of glory. It ends in lowly acts of love for others. In showing his disciples the nature of the spiritual life, Jesus tells of those who do acts of ordinary kindness and concludes, “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’” (Matt. 25:40, see vv 31-46). The pursuit of holiness is not seeking after a singular experience, nor

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<sup>131</sup> Jamieson, 25.

<sup>132</sup> Webber, 84.

<sup>133</sup> Mass & O’Donnel, 20.

is it arriving at a certain emotional or spiritual state. Holiness which comes from union with the Christ who "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many," (Matt. 20:28) will be manifest in service. Holiness is walked out in the world, as Catherine of Siena heard when Jesus sent her out of seclusion:

I have no intention whatever of parting you from myself, but rather of making sure to bind you to me all the closer by the bond of your love for your neighbor. Remember that I have laid down two commandments of love: love of me and love of your neighbor. ...It is the *justice* of these two commandments that I want you now to fulfill. *On two feet you must walk my way.*<sup>134</sup>

The genius of Christ-like godliness is that the person's individuality is preserved. Peter's encouragement that each one serve with their gift as an expression of the grace of God "in its various forms," (1 Pet. 4:10, NIV) is but one reference to the individual character of a believer's walk. The form of service a Christian practices will be most effective and meaningful if it follows from that person's sense of calling.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Cor. 12:4-7)

Recognizing one's gift and accepting one's calling to service is a natural outcome of the pursuit of holiness. Likewise, it is a desired outcome of this course that participants will understand the desires and motivations of their own hearts sufficiently that they can identify the call of God for the service that is particularly their own and will include in their rule of life a plan to fulfill this.

## **Pedagogy**

A fundamental assumption of this course is that it serves a process in the participants which is already going on. The course has been developed on the premise that those who come are motivated to pursue deeper spirituality and have started down the path toward holiness. The assumption includes the confidence that participants have some of the tools of learning which will lead

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<sup>134</sup> Mary O'Driscoll, O.P., *Catherine of Siena. Selected Spiritual Writings* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1993), 9.

them to their goal. Therefore, the approach to the learning process, the pedagogy, includes the student, with his/her knowledge and insights, as an initiating element in the learning.

### How Members of the Target Group Learn

This course assumes that participants are motivated and are responsible for what they learn and how they extend this into life. "We are all responsible for our own learning. The teacher's responsibility is to create educational environments that permit the students to assume the responsibility that is rightfully and naturally theirs."<sup>135</sup> Thus, the conviction of this course is that students learn by being involved, by being thoroughly engaged in the classroom processes. The content of a session, indeed of the whole course, is important but only so far as it integrates with objectives, in this case heart-objectives, of the students. The methods used in a session are vital, but only so far as they catch hold of the desires rising in the participants. "Subject matter and situations provide the conditions for learning, but *the individual will-to-learn is the effective agent of change.*"<sup>136</sup>

The learning theory which describes the process employed by this course best is the "Constructionist Theory."<sup>137</sup> Constructionist theory was developed in the last quarter of the twentieth century from the work of Piaget<sup>138</sup> and Jerome Brunner (pioneer of "discovery learning"), who demonstrated that all human beings *construct* an understanding of the world around them using the perceptions they themselves make. In the learning process, it "emphasizes the

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<sup>135</sup> Jacqueline Grennon Brooks and Martin G. Brooks, *The Case for Constructionist Classrooms* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1993, 1999), 4.

<sup>136</sup> Nathaniel Cantor, *The Teaching Learning Process* (Holt-Dryden, 1953), 174.

<sup>137</sup> See Yount, below. For a description of other theories guiding education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see William S. Sahakian, *Psychology of Learning. Systems, Models, and Theories* (Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1970).

<sup>138</sup> Jean Piaget (1896-1980). Piaget's theory is foundational to constructionist perspectives of learning in his theory child development. Cognitive structures – patterns of physical or mental action that underlie specific acts of intelligence – "change through the process of adaptation: assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation involves the interpretation of events in terms of existing cognitive structure whereas accommodation refers to changing the cognitive structure to make sense of the environment. Cognitive development consists of a constant effort to adapt to the environment in terms of assimilation and accommodation." Quote from [www.tip.psychology.org/piaget.html](http://www.tip.psychology.org/piaget.html)

importance of active involvement of learners in constructing knowledge for themselves.”<sup>139</sup> Learning truth is an evolving process. It is not that “truth flows from the top down, from experts who are qualified to know truth (...) to armatures who are qualified only to receive truth,”<sup>140</sup> but that truth expands as the student engages in ongoing discovery. “When teachers recognize and honor the human impulse to construct new understandings, unlimited possibilities are created for students.”<sup>141</sup>

This open expectation is in contrast to the assumption which has dominated education in the “modern era” (predecessor of the “post-modern culture of the Western world today) which dictated the learning of those in my target group. In this system<sup>142</sup> the ideal was the encyclopedia. “An educated person is one who ‘knows’ as much of the contents of the encyclopedia (or the total fund of data) as possible.”<sup>143</sup> In the constructionist approach knowledge is not acquired and stuffed into a mental box but discovered and “opens out into the unknown infinitely, mysteriously, wondrously.”<sup>144</sup> It draws the learner ever outward into broader understanding, building new, larger constructions of truth.

The participants attending this course have already moved away from encyclopedic understandings of learning. They are interested in the mysterious, in spiritual values which are not quantifiable, and in how experience shapes understanding. These interests have pushed them outside the box-model of accepting truth. They are ready to enter actively into the learning process. The constructionist model fits their need and expectations well. It involves them in discovery through interaction. The idea of this course is to provide concepts and historic references for the discovery search. In this process “the teacher searches for students’ understanding of concepts, and then structures opportunities for students to refine or revise these understandings by posing contradictions, presenting new information, asking questions, encouraging research, and/or engaging students in inquiries designed to challenge current concepts.”<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Wm. R. Yount, *Created to Learn* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 202.

<sup>140</sup> Palmer, *Courage to Teach*, 101.

<sup>141</sup> Brooks and Brooks, 21.

<sup>142</sup> Palmer identifies this system as “objectivism,” which “portrays truth as something we can achieve only by disconnecting ourselves, physically and emotionally, from the thing we want to know.” Palmer, *Courage to Teach*, 51.

<sup>143</sup> Walter Wink, *Transforming Bible Study* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 85.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>145</sup> Brooks and Brooks, ix.

## Teaching Techniques Used in the Course

The key technique for this discovery process is the *transparency of the teacher*. The teacher must insert himself/herself fully into the learning process, which means being open about her/his ignorance and difficulties as well as about knowledge. He or she must enter into the discussions as openly as any student is expected to do (although being careful to not dominate them).

“Transformation is not just something we are trying to provide for others. It must be our own deepest desire as well.”<sup>146</sup> The teacher must be willing to pose questions to which she/he does not have an answer and present exercises for which the outcome is uncertain. Discovery takes place where there is free, open inquiry, and the teacher’s posture is critical in establishing this environment.

Discovery is also enhanced in a community of support and respect. The teacher’s transparency will invite the same from participants and invite them into relationships with himself/herself and with one another which stimulate learning. The class must become a self-conscious community of learning because “... real learning does not happen until students are brought into relationship with the teacher, with each other, and with the subject. We cannot learn deeply and well until a community of learning is created in the classroom.”<sup>147</sup> In this community of learning:

The leader’s function is like that of a conductor of an extemporaneous jazz ensemble at a jam session. the conductor does not know what a single member will play, but he must choose the key and keep the beat. There is a dynamic tension between discipline and spontaneity.<sup>148</sup>

There is content in the course which must be *presented*, must be delivered to the students in some form of lecture. This content includes historical material, interpretations of authors, and stories of the lives of saints. The lecture form should hold to the interactive priority and involve students where possible, as in asking for what some might already know, inviting well-read students to give part of the presentation, etc. The lectures are intended to be introductions to the subjects and persons studied. They do not carry the burden of developing the

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<sup>146</sup> Wink, 84.

<sup>147</sup> Parker Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known. Education As A Spiritual Journey* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1983, 1993), xvi.

<sup>148</sup> Wink, 67.

whole matter. They should do as much, or more, to provoke interest in personal inquiry by the participants as to give them information.

It will be primarily by *questions* that the teacher evokes understanding in the students. "Complex, thoughtful questions challenge students to look beyond the apparent, to delve into issues deeply and broadly, and to form their own understandings of events and phenomena."<sup>149</sup> The technique needed by the teacher is to develop and pose questions which challenge the participants to think in ways they have not thought before, to ask questions which they have not asked before, and to consider answers which are broader than those they have settled for before. By creative questions the teacher is abandoning control of the discovery and releasing the need to manipulate the class toward his/her predetermined answer.

But if the leader has forsworn the need to control the mystery of life with "right" answers, and instead has learned to live by the right questions – questions profound enough to spend five years, ten years, a lifetime struggling with – it will not be manipulative.<sup>150</sup>

Instead, the technique will lead not only the students but herself/himself into new areas of exploration and new treasures discovered.

The purpose of questions is to let the class seek its own level of understanding. It drops the necessity of certain ends and takes hold of the adventure of the unknown, it seeks truth as it is, not as someone needs it to be.

A spirituality of ends wants to dictate the desirable outcomes of education in the life of the student. It uses the spiritual tradition as a template against which the ideas, beliefs, and behaviors of the student are to be measured. The goal is to shape the student to the template by the time his or her formal education concludes.

But that sort of education never gets started; it is no education at all. Authentic spirituality wants to open us to truth – whatever truth may be, wherever truth may take us.<sup>151</sup>

The final pair of techniques to be used in the course are *exercises* and *reflecting on these exercises in small groups*. Since the course is built for transformation, not just information, practice will be an essential element. Concepts are not incorporated into lifestyle without implementation.

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<sup>149</sup> Brooks and Brooks, 110.

<sup>150</sup> Wink, 66.

<sup>151</sup> Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known*, xi.



Participation in the course provides students with opportunity to practice, literally *practice*, the spiritual disciplines they are examining and to give expression to forms of spirituality they are considering. Exercises are simply selected spiritual disciplines truncated to fit the time and situation of the class.

Since the class is to become a community of learning, there must be sharing of experiences and of reflections with others. Growth of individuals is stimulated by what they see happening with others. "God has so ordained things that we grow in faith only through the frail instrumentality of one another."<sup>152</sup> Also, individual growth stimulates growth of the group. "For the whole group to grow, every individual needs help to get in touch with his or her own individuality in God."<sup>153</sup> Learning is mutually dependent. The community of learning becomes what Parker Palmer calls a "community of truth" when understanding takes root in heart and mind and begins to be acted in lifestyle.

To teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced. This "community of truth" is what I originally meant by "obedience" – a rich and complex network of relationships in which we must both speak and listen, make claims on others, and make ourselves accountable.<sup>154</sup>

A further objective in using small groups is to give participants positive experience in such a group and encourage them to put themselves in some kind of supportive relationship group after the course. If real learning takes place in a community of truth and if genuine obedience is sustained in relationships of accountability, then such groups are necessary for participants to go on in the pursuit of holiness which they have started.

### **Implementation**

The mode of implementation for which this paper is written is a full course. The course could be presented in a church as part of its education or small groups programs. The course could be presented in a retreat center as part of its regular programming. It could be included in a school, university, or seminary curriculum. It could be a training course for Christian ministries such as Youth With A Mission.

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<sup>152</sup> St. John of the Cross, quote taken from *Weavings*, 2 No. 4 (July-Aug., 1987).

<sup>153</sup> John Ackerman, *Spiritual Awakening. A Guide to spiritual life in congregations* (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1994), 85.

<sup>154</sup> Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known*, xii.

The course is in ten units, and each unit will take approximately two and a half hours. The units will include the elements described in Teaching Techniques Used in the Course, above. An outline of lesson plans is included as Appendix I.

### Need for Follow-Up Group Support

This course is designed as an introduction to a disciplined spirituality. It does not presume that by it participants will become firmly established in the pursuit of godliness nor maintain a regular practice of disciplined spirituality. It does intend to give them a strong enough foundation and motivation so that they can and will continue their pursuit and practice. However, in order to continue in the way they have started it will be best if they attach to some kind of support community. The last one or two classes will try to encourage this by asking students to identify how they could see themselves locating such a group. Depending where the participants come from, some ongoing support groups could be formed from class members.

Then, as a further support to individuals and groups which may form, the instructor should follow-up with contacts at intervals of three months, nine months, and a year plus. These should be simple calls, e-mails, or letters to ask how students are doing and if a group has been found and, if so, how it is doing. The instructor may be able to make further suggestions of resources or contacts which can direct these students toward better support. However, just the demonstration of interest will be the strongest element in bringing encouragement to participants. No specific materials for these follow-up contacts are included in this paper.

### Assessment

Adjustments in the presentation drawn from first attempts at implementation.

A portion of the material to be used in this course was the basis of two retreats which I led in 2003. An evaluation of these retreats led to several observations which could help the instructor of this course make adjustments based on the particular group which attends.

While the course is designed for people who have a keen interest in spirituality and are strongly motivated to pursue it, the presence of some who are less interested and motivated can enliven the process. When spouses or friends of the primary students choose to come along, they may offer questions or make comments which are outside the "box" of more committed participants, and of the instructor. This could be a significant help to the goal of discovery, by

pushing participants into areas which would not have otherwise come up. Therefore, advertisement of the course should not discourage such less committed people from attending.

Retreat participants said that they would have appreciated being given some advance reading. They would have been able to move more quickly into the subject areas. How much advance assignment (or suggestion) can be given depends on the setting of the course. I hold to the conviction that in an introductory course “jumping in together” is a good teaching style, so any advance assignments should be minimal. What is assigned should be reading in the primary source authors rather than a survey of spirituality or of spiritual disciplines. It is the mood of these authors which will most stimulate interest in participants. I want them to come with more questions than suppositions, so plunging in “over their heads” would be a stimulating approach. The authors I would recommend are Jeanne Guyon, *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*, Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, and John Ruusbroec, *A Mirror of Eternal Blessedness, Part One*.

Spirituality is a subject involving the whole person, so the form of presentation in the class must involve the whole person. This means teaching into the mind, reason, and the heart, emotions, and the spirit, intuition. This is especially true in the post-modern culture where, “People want to live within their own experience, not the experience of what they read or see. They want to experience it for themselves, and help create what they experience.”<sup>155</sup> In my first two presentations of the material participants noted “a hint of over-intellectualizing.” It will take determination on the part of an instructor trained in the “objectivist model” to give ample emphasis to heart and spirit needs.

### Forms of Assessment of Outcomes

The type and quality of assessment for the course will depend on the setting in which it is offered. A school setting carries more authority for assessment than does a church home group. What follows are guidelines for evaluating the effectiveness of the outcomes desired. These will need to be adapted to the setting.

Outcome 1, Participants would recognize that they can direct their own spiritual growth through personal initiative.

In the final small group session have participants answer, “How has your sense of responsibility for your spiritual growth changed through this course?” The instructor will need to receive the answers in writing or in summary.

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<sup>155</sup> Sweet, 66-67.

Outcome 2, Participants would develop a plan for pursuing a disciplined spirituality (a Rule of Life).

Participants will be asked to write a Rule of Life in one of the last two classes and to share this with someone else in the class. The instructor should ask for copies of these.

Outcome 3, Participants would see themselves as fellow pilgrims in the line of spiritual pilgrims since the beginning of the church.

In one of the final small groups have participants answer, "With which of the persons studied do you most identify? Why?" An additional question to ask is, "How might your spiritual journey affect the lives of other people you know now and a generation to come?" The instructor will need to hear some of these answers to make an assessment of this outcome.

Outcome 4, Participants would adopt a form of Christian service which fits the calling they sense upon themselves.

The instructor could ask on an exit questionnaire, "How do you expect your Christian service to change because of this course?" Participants could be polled after six months and asked how this took shape.

PART II. THE MANUAL  
NEW JOURNEYS ALONG OLD PATHS

## CHAPTER 5

### A DISCIPLINED SPIRITUALITY

#### **Basics of a Disciplined Spirituality**

A disciplined spirituality is the pattern of life by which a person pursues his or her own spiritual formation. I also refer to this as the pursuit of godliness or the pursuit of holiness. As spiritual formation has been practiced over the centuries in the Christian church certain exercises have gained widespread respect as effective. These are known as the classic spiritual disciplines. In Part II of this paper I describe some of these disciplines and make recommendations for how to practice them. Before looking at the specific disciplines some basic considerations will be addressed.

The decision to enter into a disciplined spirituality is not a new or independent decision one makes at some critical juncture of life. Spirituality is native to human creation, to beings made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27).<sup>156</sup> Spirituality is the manifestation of this divine image, particularly in the desire and effort to remain connected to the Creator whose image it is. Acting on this desire, "spiritual practice involves intentional ways of seeking contact with the divine and of relating one's life to the divine."<sup>157</sup> Human beings have the urge to know God. However this is expressed is the person's spirituality.

We do not wake up in this world calm and serene, having the luxury of choosing to act or not act. We wake up crying, on fire with desire, with madness. What we do with that madness is our spirituality.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> "Spirituality refers to the human capacity for self-transcendence. We have been created by God in such a way that we have the capacity to know and experience God. So to be engaged in a spiritual quest is to explore those means and methods that put one in touch with the depths of one's own being where one touches God." Richard Peace, class notes.

<sup>157</sup> Wuthnow, 178.

<sup>158</sup> Roland Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing. The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 6. By "madness" Rolheiser refers to unnamed Greek philosophers who "used to say that we are fired into life with a madness that comes

The pursuit of disciplined spirituality, then, is the decision to engage in a conscious, intentional pursuit of the holiness revealed in and demanded by this Creator God.

The form of this pursuit will be as rigorous as the individual chooses. The history of spirituality shows us many patterns, from the severely ascetic to the gentle pattern of simple daily reading and prayer. In the chapters which follow I will be proposing a moderate model, which the participant can implement at the level his or her desire, constitution and situation indicate.

There is no norm for practicing disciplined spirituality in one's daily life. The God who created each one of us, in the wonderful variety that is evidenced throughout creation, draws out of each individual the pattern of discipline which honors the person best and builds the most intimate fellowship with Himself. There are, however, some common elements which show up in the lives of almost all those who are pursuing personal holiness. These elements are simple basics which allow a disciplined spirituality to enrich a person's life and not crush it.

### *Routine*

The exercises chosen are done in a consistent order at the same time each day and week. One may follow different exercises on different days, but the pattern remains consistent. Making an analogy to physical exercise, the benefit comes when it is done in a regular pattern, so that muscles are being constantly stretched and strengthened.

### *Cycle*

Disciplines of prayer, spiritual reading (including reading the Bible) and study should follow a cycle. Because these are disciplines, the seeker does not dive into a text or a subject area of prayer randomly or by the whim of the moment. Spontaneity is worthwhile, even in spirituality, but the disciplines call a person to remain steady on the course chosen until led to change by the Holy Spirit. For example, as part of my daily Bible reading I read two Psalms, following a pattern I have adopted of one praise Psalm and one other, in a cycle which takes me through the entire book every four months (I have identified thirty praise Psalms so these repeat every month).

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from the gods and that this energy is the root of all love, hate, creativity, joy, and sadness." 196.

### *Recall through the day*

The exercises have value in themselves, but they are also disciplines to keep one's mind and heart set on God at all times. A way of recall is usually adopted so that the way of holiness can be brought readily to consciousness throughout the day. The recall may be through an object that is worn or placed where it will be frequently seen, such as a cross or crucifix. It may be a phrase which, through practice, comes consistently into mind, such as the Jesus Prayer.

### *Special Days*

Regularly, for example once a quarter or twice a year, special days of extended discipline are taken. For example, a day to concentrate on worship, or silence, or service. These should be scheduled and not given up for other appointments.

### *Simplicity*

The pattern adopted is simple enough to be done readily and in joy. The amount of time given to the discipline is allowed to fit one's life schedule. Continuing the analogy with physical exercise, it is not the rigor of the workout but the consistency of it which builds up the person.



## *Grace*

The life of disciplined spirituality leads one deeper into the grace of God. Accepting grace from Him means giving grace to one's self. Thus, when you fail in the pattern you have adopted, you simply begin again.

### **The Classic Spiritual Disciplines**

There are different ways to name and classify the spiritual disciplines. Over the centuries different sets have received attention in different groups and different eras. Because of this, it is not really possible to list *the classic* spiritual disciplines, but most spiritual formation designs include three or more of the disciplines listed in each of the categories (using Foster's and my designations): Inward or Alone, Community or Corporate, and Outward or Action. The terms which have come into common use in the present day are used here. I list here the set of categories used in this course, selected to fit the teaching format of the course. See Appendix II for classifications of three popular contemporary authors from which this list was compiled<sup>159</sup>.

The course does not attempt to cover all the disciplines. It is designed to be an introduction to spirituality and the spiritual disciplines. It would overwhelm participants to give attention to all those listed here. Also, it will not be possible to give the same attention to each of the disciplines studied. Reference to literature on the disciplines will be included in course material so that students can pursue all the disciplines in greater depth on their own.

Classification for this course

Pursuing Holiness Alone

Recollection/ Noticing

Silence

Solitude

Fasting

Spiritual Reading

Simplicity

Pursuing Holiness in Community

Worship

Corporate Prayer/ the Liturgy

Submission

Fellowship

Celebration

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<sup>159</sup> Taken from a listing by Paul Jensen, class notes of Dr. Richard Peace.

Pursuing Holiness in Action  
Service  
Sacrifice  
Secrecy

A life of disciplined spirituality is not to be a burden. Even the desert ascetics who practiced severe self-denial did not find this burdensome (for the mature Fathers and Mothers, anyway), for their discipline gave them freedom to live the life they had discovered. They had learned that “ascetical practices such as prayer, fasting, reading, and almsgiving help us to gain sufficient mastery over ourselves so that we can bring our entire self into focus.”<sup>160</sup> Spirituality is this simple determination to set God first and always before one’s attention.

In his youth Abba John the Eunuch questioned an old man, “How have you been able to carry out the work of God in peace? For we cannot do it, not even with labor.” The old man said, “We were able to do it, because we considered the work of God to be primary, and bodily needs to be subsidiary; but you hold bodily necessities to be primary and the work of God to be secondary; that is why you labor, and that is why the Savior said to his disciples, ‘Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.’” (Matt. 6:33)<sup>161</sup>

Spirituality is being attentive to the spiritual reality in all of life. It teaches us to respond steadily to the divine which is always with us. “Our piety is the way we live our lives responding to God’s presence by attending carefully to that presence.”<sup>162</sup>

The practices studied in this course are not meant to saddle seekers with yet another laborious program for becoming good Christians. They are presented because they have shown over hundreds of years that believers are set free through their steady use. They are the safe, proven tools which will lead my target group members forward on their journey toward union with the God whose presence they seek, whose presence is their true joy and strength.

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<sup>160</sup> Allen, 81.

<sup>161</sup> Benedicta Ward SLG, trans., *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, The Alphabetical Collection* (Kalamazoo, MI, Cistercian Publications, 1975).

<sup>162</sup> Rice, 46.

## CHAPTER 6

### SEEKING THE PATH ALONE

#### **Pursuing Holiness Alone**

Peter therefore seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!" (John 21:21-22)

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man -- whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows -- was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. On behalf of such a man will I boast; (2 Cor. 12:2-5)<sup>163</sup>

The heart of spirituality is the individual's obedience to Jesus' command, "You follow me!" It is a journey which may lead the person unto heights where she/he hears things "which a man is not permitted to speak," or which a woman is not able to express. The pursuit of holiness is first of all a solo adventure. Every passionate seeker after godliness recognizes the need to say farewell to all others and go "to the mountain to pray" (Mark 6:46), as Jesus did again and again. The Desert Fathers and Mothers knew that they had to face and defeat their demons alone.

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<sup>163</sup> As a modern testimony to such an experience consider Richard Rolle: "When man's desires are fixed immovably on his Maker as far as for deadliness and corruption of the flesh he is let, then it is no marvel that his strength manly using, first as it were heaven being opened, with his understanding he beholds high heavenly citizens; and afterwards sweetest heat, as it were burning fire, he feels. Then with marvelous sweetness he is taught, and so forth in songful noise he is joyed. This, therefore, is perfect charity, which no man knows but he that hath it took. And he that it has taken, it never leaves: sweetly he lives and sickerly he shall die." Richard Rolle, *The Fire of Love*, R. Misyn, trans., F. Comper, ed., (London, 1914), Bk. I, Chap. xix; quote in Underhill, 264.

Abba Poemen said of Abba John the Dwarf that he had prayed God to take his passions away from him so that he might become free from care. He went and told an old man this: "I find myself in peace, without an enemy," he said. The old man said to him, "Go, beseech God to stir up warfare so that you may regain the affliction and humility that you used to have, for it is by warfare that the soul makes progress." So he besought God and when warfare came, he no longer prayed that it might be taken away, but said, "Lord, give me strength for the fight."<sup>164</sup>

It is in the solo journey where we learn our own weakness, and thus feel the necessity of spiritual formation, and also where we learn our own inner strength, and thus find the commitment for spiritual formation. While there is a risk of becoming lost when pursuing the journey alone,<sup>165</sup> nevertheless it is in the challenges faced in the solitary quest that the seeker gains the personal identification with godly character.

The way of disciplined spirituality offers exercises for this solitary pursuit. The primary ones are Recollection or Noticing, Silence, and Solitude. In addition, three other solitary exercises will be considered: Fasting, Spiritual Reading, and Simplicity. Meditation, Prayer, and Study are also solitary exercises but, because these are already common in my target group, they are not addressed here<sup>166</sup>.

### Recollection or Noticing

The starting point for a seeker who wants to develop a life of disciplined spirituality is not in some exotic religious ceremony but in the simple act of

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<sup>164</sup> Ward, *Sayings*, 87-88.

<sup>165</sup> "This act, it is true, is in the last resort a solitary experience, 'the flight of the Alone to the Alone'; even though no achievement of the soul truly takes place *in vacuo*, or leaves the universe of souls unchanged. At the same time, here as elsewhere, man cannot safely divorce his personal history from that of the race. The best and truest experience does not come to the eccentric and individual pilgrim whose intuitions are his only law: but rather to him who is willing to profit by the culture of the spiritual society in which he finds himself, and submit personal intuition to the guidance afforded by the general history of the mystic type. Those who refuse this guidance expose themselves to all the dangers which crowd about the individualist: from heresy at one end of the scale to madness at the other. *Vae Soli!* Nowhere more clearly than in the history of mysticism do we observe the essential solidarity of mankind, the penalty paid by those who will not acknowledge it." Underhill, 300; quote re "Alone" not cited.

<sup>166</sup> The student is referred to Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, "The Inward Disciplines" for these subjects.

noticing God anywhere. What does a flower, a petal, reveal of Him? What of Eternity to I hear in the singing of children? What tale of God's work unfolds in observation of a farmer? "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" affirms Psalm 19:1, and the discipline of Noticing is looking at the heavens, and all that is, in order to read there the glory of God. Noticing goes beyond observing nature. It includes discovering God in people: personalities and relationships; in events; in reading: scriptures, religious literature, but also all types of reading; in meditation: quiet reflection on whatever is present to the mind. It is what Brother Lawrence<sup>167</sup> called the "practice of the presence of God," becoming alert to the presence of God in any and every moment.

The early seekers called this *Recollection* because it is "the re-collecting or re-situating of the self *toward* God,"<sup>168</sup> a "first collecting or gathering in of the attention of the self to its 'most hidden cell.'"<sup>169</sup> It is a discipline of observing: looking at things for what they reveal about God, and it is a form of prayer: being "simply and lovingly *present* to God"<sup>170</sup> wherever one is. It is self-consciously "living before the face of God," in Luther's phrase.<sup>171</sup>

As a discipline of observing, Noticing alerts us to "look at the unfolding experiences of a typical day with expectant eyes and receptive hearts."<sup>172</sup> This usually means slowing down – your walk, your driving, your listening, your looking, your eating, your thinking. We consistently add to every moment something from the past or the future, usually unnecessary things. We walk to get somewhere, not taking in all that is present to us along the way. We eat to finish a meal, not receive the wonder of tastes and textures in the food, to say nothing of the fullness of relationship in sharing a meal with another. We listen without absorbing all that the other is offering. We look without seeing. Noticing is finding the pace for these common activities which allows one to receive all that is in them. It requires no special time or exercise to do it. It is a discipline for every moment.

As a form of prayer, *Recollection* is entering into the presence of God without an agenda of our own. It is opening our heart and mind to a

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<sup>167</sup> Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, trans. John Delaney (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Image Books, 1977).

<sup>168</sup> Robin Mass, "Practicing the Presence of God: *Recollection* in the Carmelite Tradition," Mass and O'Donnell, 259.

<sup>169</sup> Underhill, 314; "most hidden cell" not cited.

<sup>170</sup> Robin Mass, Mass and O'Donnell, 259.

<sup>171</sup> Peace, class notes.

<sup>172</sup> Johnson, 69.

conversation with him in which we let him take the lead. The first step in this form of prayer is *renunciation*: renunciation of anything that is not of God. It is to mentally renounce the love of or desire for anything that is not of God. This is to make that opening in one's soul into which the presence of God can come.

I know that to achieve this [the presence of God] the heart must be emptied of all other things, for God wishes to possess it alone; and as He cannot possess it alone without emptying it of everything that is not Himself, so neither can He act there and do what He wishes there unless it is empty of all else.<sup>173</sup>

The second step in Recollection prayer is to *acknowledge God's presence* to me and my presence before him with conversation: prayer as simple, unaffected conversation about whatever I am experiencing. It is the goal of Recollection that one would be constantly aware of God's presence as a companion, and so be free to engage in conversation with him at any and all times. This would be one demonstration of Paul's admonition to "pray without ceasing." (1 Thess. 5:17) In the process of building up to this constancy, we call attention to God's presence by short "ejaculations," as they are called in this tradition. These are "abbreviated prayers that can be said in a moment's time as a method of reminding ourselves of God's presence during the day's activities: 'My God, I am all yours' or 'Lord, make me according to your heart.'"<sup>174</sup>

Making the exercises of calling one's attention to God in observations and experiences and of ejaculation prayers is the training for the constant awareness of the presence of God. In the beginning one is usually beset by distractions and by the recognition that one "has forgotten about God." The writings about Recollection are filled with encouragements to not be overly discouraged nor be too hard on oneself. The attitude should be one of simply beginning again.

Brother Lawrence explains that when he sometimes went for a considerable period of time without thinking of God, "he did not let it bother him, but after having acknowledged his wretchedness to God, he returned to Him with even more confidence for having suffered such misery in forgetting Him so."<sup>175</sup>

While the goal of the discipline of Noticing is to become aware of God in all the moments of a day, it is seldom that we are able to do so. One way to

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<sup>173</sup> Bro. Lawrence, 60.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 110.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 45.

progress toward this, and at to recognize how God's presence was with us in a day, is, at the end of the day, to make a list of the day's events, thought-segments and people. Then one can reflect on how God was at work in each of these. Ben Campbell Johnson suggests a set of questions for this exercise<sup>176</sup>.

1. As I look back over this day, what was the flow of the events?
2. What hungers of the heart did I feel?
3. What questions grew out of my experience of life today?
4. Did anything puzzle me today?
5. Did I have moments that left me with a sense of the mystery of life?
6. Did I have any recurring thoughts?
7. Were there *kairos* moments, moments when I felt that God was presenting godself to me in a special way?
8. What was God doing in my ordinary life today?

The discipline of Recollection is a form of prayer, so this reflection should be in the form of a conversation with God. At the end of all noticing and recollecting a simple prayer of thanksgiving is lifted to God, such as, "Thank you, Father, for the precious gift of your presence in \_\_\_\_\_." This concludes the exercise with the focus on God and not on oneself, which easily descends into self-deprecation for not being more aware. The degree of alertness is not the point. Acknowledging the presence of God is the point.

### Silence

If I were a doctor and I had to prescribe one remedy for all the ills of the modern world, I would say, "Create silence." For even if the Word of God were proclaimed in all its splendor, it would not be heard among all the panoply of noise in the modern world. Therefore, create silence.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Johnson, 75-76.

<sup>177</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, quoted by Peter Kreft, *Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1980), 263.

A key principle of a life of disciplined spirituality is that the source is within: it is in one's inner being that one comes near to God. In order to draw from this source one must enter into silence. It is in silence that one hears her own heart best and learns to recognize its voice. It is in silence that one sorts which feelings are his own and which are the imposed by those around him. It is in silence that one recognizes the conflict between one's heart and mind. It is in silence that one can discern the light pulses of God's touch and the whispers of his tender voice. "Interior silence should produce self-knowledge and self-acceptance, which, when experienced in the light of the gospel, must bring inner peace and joy."<sup>178</sup>

The discipline of silence is the art of drawing a cocoon around one's hearing and thinking so that she/he can discern the voices and movements within. It is to shut out all external noise, or as much as is possible in the moment. It requires that one not speak aloud, even to self or God. It does not demand that a person hide himself/herself away; that is done in the discipline of Solitude (see description following), but it does mean that one limits activity and contact with others, or severely slows down the pace, so that one is aware of inner movement. When learning this discipline it is best to be alone for the time dedicated to silence. However, when silence has become a familiar – and treasured – habit, then it can be practiced even in the midst of normal activities and with others around.

In the beginning of practicing the discipline of silence one will be shocked at how difficult it is to find silence, and then to be comfortable in it when one has entered.

Total silence is rare, and what we today call "quiet" usually only amounts to a little less noise. Many people have *never* experienced silence and do not even know that they do *not* know what it is. Our households and offices are filled with the whirring, buzzing, murmuring, chattering, and whining of the multiple contraptions that are supposed to make life easier. Their noise comforts us in some curious way. In fact, we may find complete silence shocking because it leaves us with the impression that nothing is happening.<sup>179</sup>

So, finding and making silence takes deliberate effort. One refuses to turn on sound producers, like the radio, TV and music player. One asks permission of those around to not speak with them for the designated period of silence. One takes steps to shut out the common noises of a day: alarms, traffic, neighbors'

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<sup>178</sup> Gabriel O'Donnell, O.P., "Monastic Life and the Search for God," Mass and O'Donnell, 60.

<sup>179</sup> Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 163.



radios, conversations, telephones, etc. In our culture which is overly saturated with advertising, one must learn also a visual silence, keeping one's gaze away from the words and images of signs and placards which tend to fill one's mind with unwanted thought-sounds.

The objective of this silence is to receive what arises from one's heart or what is given by God. In the discipline of silence one does not work at thinking, reflecting, even meditating. These practices are part of other disciplines, and silence is usually helpful in pursuing them, but in the discipline of silence, the seeker waits, listens, gathers, and allows thoughts to go where they will. Thoughts will wander in unhelpful paths, but when they do, one just turns back into the simplicity of the silence and receives what comes next. A small notepad for recording things which demand attention can make this return easier.

In the silence, one will enter into dialogue, sometimes with self, sometimes with God, and sometimes with the remembered or projected comments of others. This dialogue is the way into self-knowledge and self-acceptance. Silence lets the inner self emerge, in thoughts, remembrances, and emotions. Processing these in the simple way of questioning, answering, and accepting will reveal more of one's self. Holding them gently, without self-judgment, before God will lead, through his grace, to self-understanding and acceptance.

Silence also opens the window of the soul to revelations from the Spirit of God. The intensity of external voices and sounds and the challenge of reading a text engage the mind more toward debate than enlightenment. In silence one is letting the soul listen, is allowing the inner eyes to review past observations. In this state of receptivity, as opposed to the state of competition brought on by much external stimuli, one is ready to receive insights from God and make discoveries in one's own heart.

Silence can be practiced for one minute with profit (usually after much practice in the discipline) and for many days, with rich rewards. In the exercise of silence one should set aside an amount of time for it. A basic rule which I use for the amount of time is "just a little more." I have learned that it is just the other side of the limit I have set that I find the full value of silence. Beginning exercises should be measured in minutes or hours. Second steps will be day-long disciplines. Then, when one is secure with silence, one can schedule a silent retreat of several days to experience the depths of this discipline.

### Solitude

And after He (Jesus) had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone. Matt. 14:23

Then I (Paul) went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. Gal. 1:21

“O beato solitude!” Athanasius’ quoting St. Anthony

Solitude is the closest of kin to Silence, and the two are inseparable. “All of the masters of the interior life speak of them in the same breath.”<sup>180</sup> Solitude is carrying the discipline of Silence to the extreme in which we isolate ourselves from all but essential functions and human contact. It is the step away from the relational structures which give us security into the abyss of the lonely self. It is taken so that we might find the true self and in him/her confront the true God.

For Jesus, solitude seemed to be a necessity for maintaining his relationship with the Father. For Paul it seemed to be the way in which he broke loose from his Pharisaic theology and found the freedom to proclaim the gospel of Jesus. For St. Anthony and the Desert Fathers and Mothers, solitude seemed to be their only escape from conformity with a decaying world and their best opportunity of being linked to the Eternal One. Thus, solitude is a radical step taken out of desperate need and deep desire. It is the willingness to leave all that is material, albeit temporarily, to find “the pearl of great value.”

In solitude, we purposely abstain from the interaction with other human beings, denying ourselves companionship and all that comes from our conscious interaction with others. We close ourselves away; go to the ocean, to the desert, the wilderness, or to the anonymity of the urban crowd. This is not just rest or refreshment from nature, though that too can contribute to our spiritual well-being. Solitude is choosing to be *alone* and to dwell on our experience of isolation from other human beings.

Solitude frees us, actually. This above all explains its primacy and priority among the disciplines. The normal course of day-to-day human interactions locks us into patterns of feeling, thought, and action that are geared to a world set against God. Nothing but solitude can allow the development of a freedom from the ingrained behaviors that hinder our integration into God’s order.<sup>181</sup>

This description defines why solitude is an essential spiritual discipline. Solitude is the place where we must face ourselves honestly. It may take a long time, but in the isolation of solitude the realities of our needs, our forms of self-deception, our deep fears force their way into consciousness. It is also in the

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<sup>180</sup> Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 86.

<sup>181</sup> Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 160.

desert of solitude that we discover depths of strength, hope, tenderness, desire, and other valuable qualities which we have not realized. Solitude is the gateway into the Dark Night of the Soul described by John of the Cross, that "divine appointment, a privileged opportunity to draw close to the Divine center."<sup>182</sup> It is in the Dark Night that the severe surgery is done on the elements of the false or hurtful self which block us from the depths of intimacy which the Father desires for us. Yet one cannot push his way into this desert, and she should not even try to find it, it is the Holy Spirit's choice, as with Jesus, Luke 4:1. The place of solitude is both preparation and possible entry point to this "experience to be welcomed as a sick person might welcome a surgery that promises health and well-being."<sup>183</sup>

The discipline of solitude is that of setting aside visits to a place where one can be completely alone. These will be of a frequency and a length that the temperament, need, and circumstances of a person dictate. It is good judgment to be in relationship with a spiritual director when undertaking extended times of solitude. The support and guidance from a spiritual director can bring helpful balance to one's experience in the desert of solitude. The discipline does not limit what a person does during the time of solitude. Resting, walking, prayer, liturgy, spiritual reading, hand work, journaling are all available, as well as other practices which open the spirit to the examination of the Holy Spirit. Fasting is commonly incorporated in solitude as a further way of separating oneself from the material demands of life.

### Fasting

For a beginner on the way of spiritual disciplines, fasting is the practice by which she/he discovers that it really takes *discipline*. The exercise of denying oneself food for a set period of time is an effort which engages body, mind, imagination, daily routine and relationships. The commitment to repeat this on a regular basis will challenge primal instincts, personal habits and cultural values. The practice of fasting places one firmly in the pattern of spiritual discipline.

Fasting is an assumed practice in the Bible. It is not introduced with reasons, purpose, or instructions, yet it is a frequent action. It is connected with repentance (1 Sam. 7:6), confession (Neh. 1:4), humbling oneself to receive God's protection (Eza. :21), petitioning the Lord (Dan. 9:3), seeking the Lord (Joel 2:12-17), worship (Lk. 2:37) and prayer (Matt. 6:5-18). It is practiced in the Old Testament and in the New, by leaders and commoners alike. The Israelites of

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<sup>182</sup> Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 89.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

Isaiah's day could confront God with their habit of fasting: "Why have we fasted and Thou dost not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and Thou dost not notice?" (Isa. 58:3) We find fasting by, among others, Moses, David, Esther, Nehemiah, Daniel, Anna, Paul, and by Jesus himself. The biblical expectation is that fasting is part of life and that those living the faith will know it and how to do it.

Fasting is not an assumed practice among Christians today. Richard Foster attributes this to "a bad reputation as a result of the excessive ascetic practices of the Middle Ages," and the "constant propaganda fed us today (which) has convinced us that if we do not have three large meals a day, with "several snacks in between, we are on the verge of starvation."<sup>184</sup> I add that fasting fails to gain acceptance because the whole idea of discipline meets disapproval in the Western church. There has been a resurgence of interest in the practice of fasting in charismatic churches, but I find that it is usually associated with persuading God to act in some desired way, rather than a way of seeking God for himself.

"Fasting must forever center on God."<sup>185</sup> It is a denial of what sustains our body so that we may focus on what sustains our soul. "Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in him a source of sustenance beyond food."<sup>186</sup> It is a way of physically experiencing "that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deut. 8:3 and Matt. 4:4). While fasting we feel hunger viscerally. We must deal with the sensations of desire which stretch us to the edge of self control. The physical and emotional effects of this are that we know we have desire and are dependent. The spiritual association is that we do desire God intensely and we are dependent on him for sustenance. While our faith teaches us these principles and we "know" them mentally, in the discipline of fasting we discover their truth in more of our person.

This is the simple purpose of fasting: to keep us aware of our desire for and dependence on God. A regular habit of fasting holds this awareness steady for us. An occasional experience of extended fasting pushes this perception deeper. The discipline which is normally followed for regular fasting is to abstain from food for one or two days a week. Water and other liquids are usually taken. It was customary in the early church for members, *all members*, to fast two days a week: Wednesdays and Fridays.<sup>187</sup> It is well for a beginner to start at a level which can be kept weekly: start with one meal. This can then be

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>186</sup> Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 166.

<sup>187</sup> This is taught in the Didache, see Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 44.

increased until the level is reached which fulfills the purpose of the person's discipline.

Fasting has additional salutary effects for the seeker after holiness. It reveals our instinct of craving and how many unnecessary things to which we attach this. "Fasting teaches temperance or self-control and therefore teaches moderation and restraint with regard to *all* our fundamental drives."<sup>188</sup> So, it helps us move toward balance in all things, not just our appetite for food. Fasting also opens the spirit to more easily receive from the Lord. The initial sensitivity in fasting is usually to the needs and demands of the body. When one presses through this temporary obsession, one will find that the sensitivity shifts to spiritual needs and to what is flowing toward these from God.

There are more rigorous forms of fasting and more intense spiritual labors in these, such as Jesus' fast of forty days in the desert (Lk. 4:2ff). Stronger discipline like this comes in a more advanced stage of the seeker's journey. To step into this more intense practice, the student should study the experiences of others and a treatise on how to conduct an extended fast.<sup>189</sup>

### Spiritual Reading

The believers in my target group are committed to the value of the Bible as the source of spiritual life and growth. They accept it as truth and most would agree that it is sufficient for instruction in faith and holiness. In addition, most are consistent readers of the Bible, making efforts to take its message to heart and apply it to their lives. However, the pursuit of holiness is a constant challenge and believers are well served by other sources of inspiration, instruction, and guidance. A worthy resource for these helps can be found in the discipline of spiritual reading.

Spiritual reading is the practice of regularly reading the writings of authors other than those of the Scriptures<sup>190</sup> whose teachings have been recognized for their spiritual value. The purpose of this reading is to assimilate

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<sup>188</sup> Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*, 167.

<sup>189</sup> Foster gives some guidelines for extended fasts; see also Arthur Wallis, *God's Chosen Fast. A Spiritual and Practical Guide to Fasting* (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1965).

<sup>190</sup> Marjorie Thompson includes reading the Scriptures in her description of spiritual reading and includes a section on lectio divina, see Thompson, 19-25. Lectio divina is well described in other sources and will be presented via a handout in the course.

into one's heart and mind the teachings of the authors, and also to absorb the attitudes and experiences of God and life which are revealed in the life of the author. The object is not to master a subject but to be addressed by the Holy Spirit through the words of an author. "The purpose of spiritual reading is to open ourselves to how God may be speaking to us in and through a particular text."<sup>191</sup>

In practicing the discipline of spiritual reading one locates a book which offers promise of spiritual motivation (even in the electronic-audio-video age this discipline remains of great value, and it asks that one *read*). Recommendations for spiritual reading are not hard to find,<sup>192</sup> and some are included the Supplemental Material, see Appendix VI. Ample time is set aside to read slowly and reflectively. "Spiritual reading is a meditative approach to the written word. It requires unhurried time and an open heart."<sup>193</sup> In spiritual reading the idea is to let the words penetrate into one's heart, allowing the text direct the pace and the words determine the stopping place. The length of text read is irrelevant. The reading is an avenue for the Spirit of God to speak to one's heart and mind.

Once a word or phrase "stops" the reader, by making a significant impression on him/her, she/he engages in a brief reflection. This can be through simply rereading the key words with expressions of gratitude, letting the words sink in as they will. Reflection can also be more intentional by pondering questions such as, "Why does this place impact me? What is the impact I feel?" "What desire in my heart does this touch?" Avoid the urge to "make an application" or to figure out what to "do" from the text. The effect of spiritual reading comes through a vulnerable, restful encounter with the material, not a study of it. It is like absorbing the values of a dear older friend while just sitting peacefully together talking.

I recommend that one read all the way through a selected text before going on to the next one. Not all parts of a book will be helpful, but the process forms a relationship with the author from which comes a deeper reception of the author's values. For this reason I prefer to use the full text of a book in the discipline, but anthologies<sup>194</sup> of shorter selections can be very good. These are

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<sup>191</sup> Thompson, 18.

<sup>192</sup> Two extensive lists are: Susan Annette Muto, *A Practical Guide to Spiritual Reading* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1976), and Eugene Peterson, *Take and Read. Spiritual Reading: An Annotated History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

<sup>193</sup> Thompson, 19.

<sup>194</sup> Two excellent anthologies are Kenneth L. Collins, ed., *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000), and Richard Foster and James Byran Smith, eds., *Devotional Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993).

good starting places for a beginner in spiritual reading and help one identify authors which she/he would like to read in more depth. The popular “daily devotionals” are usually not good sources for spiritual reading. In most of these the writer does the reflecting for the reader, which defeats the purpose of the discipline.

### Simplicity

Like silence, the discipline of simplicity shapes the context for the practice of all spiritual disciplines. Simplicity is the discipline of ordering one’s life so that her/his inner spiritual values guide it rather than outer demands. The discipline of simplicity is a person learning to live in the trust which Jesus describes when he says,

Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span? And why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith? Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. (Matt. 6:26-34)

Simplicity is first an attitude, then a lifestyle. It is based on the settled conviction that life consists not in “all these *things*,” (see above, emphasis mine), nor in power nor influence, nor preservation of the past or provision for the future, but in single-hearted submission to the values of the kingdom of God.

The person who has grown to the place where he or she can truly say with Paul, “This one thing I do” (Phil. 3:13) or who truly “seeks first the

kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33), is a person who has entered into simplicity.<sup>195</sup>

Simplicity begins in child-like confidence that God is sovereign and he is loving, so that I do not have to exercise control over my circumstances and life but can trust him with my provision and destiny. The expression of this starts in thought and word, letting go of "being anxious" and the need to think through every possibility, and dropping the need to justify or excuse self with words. "Make honesty and integrity the distinguishing characteristics of your speech."<sup>196</sup> These inner qualities then enable one to make choices of external action, particularly acquisitions, based on how the choice serves the value of kingdom-living. Freed from the *demands* of possessions and position one is able to *utilize* things and roles in service of the one thing primary: His Kingdom.

Simplicity recognizes the generous, faithful hand of God in all we have, and refuses to claim or possess anything as one's own. "If what we have we receive as a gift, and if what we have is to be cared for by God, and if what we have is available to others, then we will possess freedom from anxiety."<sup>197</sup> This freedom brings one to "a life of joyful unconcern for possessions."<sup>198</sup>

With this inward freedom an individual will find her/his own outward expression of simplicity. There is no rule of what this looks like. There is only the honest yielding of all choices to the primary focus on seeking the kingdom of God. However, the hallmark of the discipline of simplicity is *less*, making do with less, in every area of life. Either through a rigorous self-examination or in response to the Holy Spirit's prompting, one identifies an area of lifestyle and tests all possessions and practices in it by the power of their hold on him/her and their usefulness to sincere practice of kingdom values.<sup>199</sup> When one are is cleared, another is selected. The goal of this process is not to drop into poverty but to be freed from "concern and involvement with a multitude of desires that would make it impossible for us 'to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God' (Mic. 6:8)."<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 205.

<sup>196</sup> Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 81.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>199</sup> Richard Foster has ten suggestions for examining choices in light of the discipline of simplicity; see Foster, 78-83.

<sup>200</sup> Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 169.



## CHAPTER 7

### FOLLOWING THE PATH TOGETHER. PURSUING HOLINESS IN COMMUNITY

#### **The Necessity of Being in Community for the Pursuit of Holiness**

Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? ... for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. (1 Cor. 3:16-17)

... Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. (Eph. 4:16)

While the pursuit of holiness is a solo journey, one does not travel in isolation. The community of faith is a vital support to growth in godliness, and the community itself makes progress towards its destiny as each individual member grows.<sup>201</sup>

When a person is united to Jesus Christ through faith, he or she is joined to a body (see 1 Cor. 12, especially v.27, "Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it." et. al.). It is only in community that a believer will thrive and draw from the depths within her or his heart. "'In Christ' is in the community."<sup>202</sup> Commenting on Gal. 4:19, "My children, with whom I am again

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<sup>201</sup> "As a sign, foretaste, agent, and instrument of God's reconciling love and forgiveness, the church makes Jesus Christ visible in the world. The church is a social reality that continually engages in the practices that cultivate a people of truth, peace, wholeness, and holiness. The forming of Christian community is therefore not an option but the very lifestyle and vocation of the church." Guder, 153.

<sup>202</sup> C. Norman Kraus, *The Community of the Spirit* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1993), 53.

in labor until Christ is formed in you," Marjorie Thompson affirms that "Christ is formed in us not just personally but corporately."<sup>203</sup>

The new identity of Jesus' followers as children of God and participants in the messianic mission involved them in a *koinonia* under the new covenant which he initiated. Awareness of new individual identity before God inevitably and necessarily *involves one in community*.<sup>204</sup>

The individual believer depends on the community for support. "The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer."<sup>205</sup> The individual needs other believers to challenge her or him and admonish when necessary. "And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another" (Rom. 15:14). The individual needs other believers to encourage him or her. "But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13).

Even more significantly, it is only in the body of Christ, the church, that the individual believer partakes of the fullness of the Spirit. It was to the company of the disciples that Jesus promised to send His Spirit, John 14:16. It is in the gathered community that Jesus meets us, Matt. 18:20. It is in the family of the church that believers are able to "comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, (and) be filled up to all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:18-19).

## **The Spiritual Disciplines which Support Community**

### **Worship**

And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. (Acts 2:46-47)

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<sup>203</sup> Thompson, 7.

<sup>204</sup> Kraus, 51.

<sup>205</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 19.

From the very beginning the church was a community gathered in worship. Worship was the outflow of the joy which filled the hearts of the new believers from the revelation “that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus ...” (Acts 2:36). Worship is the bursting forth of gratitude and gladness which *will* emerge from a heart which has received good news, especially very good news. The news that in the risen Christ Jesus the way has been opened for each and all to enter eternal life (John 3:16) is the best news, and it will release expressions of thanksgiving and praise – worship – from the hearts of those who hear and receive it.

While worship is commanded by the Scriptures, see for example Psalm 96:7-9, it is the normal, natural manifestation of the emotions of faith. It really cannot be restrained from one who genuinely experiences good news. From the simple expression on the face of someone who receives a special gift to the explosive celebrations of a people liberated from oppression, worship is a common demonstration of life. What is made clear by the Scriptures and the words of Jesus is that true worship, the gratitude of faith, is reserved for the Lord God Almighty alone:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, (Ex. 20:2-5)

But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (Jn. 4:23-24)

Worship is both an individual and a corporate expression. Alone, the believer in pursuit of holiness gives exaltations of gratitude and praise to God out of the knowledge and emotions of his/her experiences of God’s presence and care. Gathered, the community of believers blends these individual feelings and builds them upon the foundation of the church’s present and historic knowledge of God and his ways to give forth a joint declaration of worship. There is a mutually supportive dynamic between individual and corporate worship. The open, worshipping heart of an individual lifts the corporate spirit of a gathered community and pulls others toward the center of “worship in ... truth.” The energy and vocalized (in music and movement as well as voices) worship of the community gives strength and direction to the individual’s expression.

Christian worship takes many forms, but it is not the form which defines worship. It is the heart of the individual believer and the corporate heart of the

gathered church. "Singing, praying, praising all may lead to worship, but worship is more than any of them. Our spirit must be ignited by divine fire."<sup>206</sup> Where worship is "in spirit and in truth" any form can provide a means of expression of what is within.

Through the spiritual discipline of worship the one in pursuit of holiness establishes a pattern of both individual and corporate worship. The individual pattern can be developed in any way which serves the desire and situation of the person.<sup>207</sup> For the pattern of corporate worship I recommend two ways. One is regular participation in the worship of one's own faith community. This means to be identified with the community and to be present as a purposeful participant in worship. This attitude allows for the mutual dynamic described above to take place.

The second way of corporate worship is to experience forms of worship which are different from one's regular "style," and to do so frequently. High liturgy, low liturgy, ordered worship, spontaneous worship, "Black Gospel," charismatic "praise" worship, worship drawing on the classical music tradition, worship with jazz, worship directed by solemnly ordained leaders, worship guided by the enthusiasm of raw converts, all express aspects of the church's faith, hope, and joy. Participation in different forms will enlarge the seekers desire, understanding, and freedom for giving God "the glory due his name." (Psalm 96:8)

The "discipline" in the spiritual discipline of worship is that one sets a pattern that is his/her own. It is to make times of worship, both individual and corporate, intentional, not just follow whatever is normal for one's faith community. This involves learning about forms of worship,<sup>208</sup> experimenting, choosing expressions for one's self, and making a commitment to practice these regularly. Experiencing the richness of the worship of the church on earth is preparation and anticipation of the exceedingly great demonstration that all will join in Eternity.

And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things

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<sup>206</sup> Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 139.

<sup>207</sup> The way this will be developed in the course is by group discussion.

<sup>208</sup> Suggestions of resources will be drawn from group discussion in the course.

in them, I heard saying, " To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."  
(Rev. 5:11-13)

### Corporate Prayer: Praying the Liturgy

Prayer is a normative practice for a believer and one which most Christians come into readily, because prayer is our response to the voice of God speaking into our spirits. "Like the spiritual life itself, prayer is initiated by God. No matter what we think about the origin of our prayers, they are all a response to the hidden workings of the Spirit within."<sup>209</sup> Personal prayer is the central feature of the communion with God which establishes and matures the spiritual life of the believer. While personal prayer is included in the classic spiritual disciplines, it is not taken up as a topic in this paper because there are numerous resources available to and familiar to the target group on the subject.

Corporate prayer, however, is not so familiar to my target group. This is not to say that members of the target group do not practice prayer in conjunction with other believers. They do, and they do so frequently, passionately, and effectively. Yet, most of these prayer gatherings are not *corporate prayer* but rather the prayers of several individuals meeting together. Corporate prayer is the prayer of the community itself. It is indeed offered in individual and unison voices, but it is an expression of the common faith, need, or feeling of the whole body. Even though in group prayer (my term for the kind of prayer gatherings my target group is familiar with) the same theme may be addressed by all present, it is generally done so with spontaneous prayers expressing the perspective of the individual offering a specific prayer. Corporate prayer is normally guided by a liturgy, in which the words of prayer are written or memorized. The function of the liturgical form is to bond hearts, minds and voices of the body in the same prayer. When expressed by a community in strong relationship with one another and having a living faith in God, corporate prayer becomes the voice of its common faith and common life. "The community gathered in the name of the Lord makes present the mystery of the Church at prayer, and in prayer infused with faith it can perceive the heartbeat of the Church itself."<sup>210</sup>

Corporate prayer carries the individual beyond his/her own perspective or feelings into the conviction of the body. "The person praying becomes aware that his or her prayer is not just *his or hers alone* but is in fact the prayer of the

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<sup>209</sup> Thompson, 31.

<sup>210</sup> Anne M. Field, Editor, *The Monastic Hours*, Second edition. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1981, 2000, p. 13.

whole Church.”<sup>211</sup> In liturgical prayer the church prays as one, reflecting Jesus’ desire that we be in unity with one another (ref. John 17:21-23). In liturgical prayer, each voice is included equally (in the ideal, of course). No one is left out of the prayer, and one or two voices do not assert dominance in the time of prayer. In corporate, liturgical prayer each person knows himself/herself as one member of the body, one element in the cord of vocal prayer.

The liturgy establishes the themes of prayer, which have been carried through the history of the church’s life.<sup>212</sup> It ties prayer to the apostolic tradition which brings balance to prayer and guards against it being only an expression of the urgency of the present moment. The grounding of the liturgy in Scripture and commonly accepted tradition holds the contemporary believer in the faith, hope and mission of the full church, against the temptation to make one’s own needs or perceptions as the primary focus of prayer.

The content of the Daily Office has always been chiefly scriptural – psalms, hymns, canticles, and readings taken directly from the Bible. Other elements have been added over the centuries, such as antiphons, responsories, and nonscriptural hymns and readings, but the mainstay of the Daily Office is Scripture.<sup>213</sup>

In this way liturgical prayer links the living congregation which prays with the historic body which has uttered a version of the same prayers in years and ages past.<sup>214</sup>

In practicing the discipline of corporate prayer, in the way I suggest here, the seeker joins with a community which is praying the *Daily Office* (also called “The Prayer of the Hours”). It is not necessary that this be a daily routine. For the seekers in my target group this would not be possible. However, by locating

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<sup>211</sup> John N. Wall, “Anglican Spirituality: A Historical Introduction,” Mass & O’Donnell, 283.

<sup>212</sup> Corporate, liturgical prayer is evidenced by the second century. The *Didache*, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, recommends the praying of the Our Father three times daily. In the third century Clement of Alexandria daily prayers at 9 AM, Noon, and 3 PM. St. Anthony (250-356) & other hermits pray the Psalter daily. In the fourth century, Basil the Great (330-379) is credited with writing the daily office for his monastery; which later became a public service.

<sup>213</sup> Gabriel O’Donnell, O.P., “Praying the Office: Time Stolen for God,” Mass & O’Donnell, 288.

<sup>214</sup> For further information on the history of the liturgy see Marcel Metzger, *History of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997) and Byron D. Stuhlman, *A Good and Joyful Thing. The Evolution of the Eucharistic Prayer* (NY: Church Publications, Inc., 2000).

a monastic community nearby or another group which prays the *Office* daily one can participate often enough to enter into this historic expression of the church's life.<sup>215</sup> I also recommend taking retreats in monastic communities where one can participate in the *Office* for several days. These ways of fulfilling the discipline of corporate prayer bring the seeker into communion with the larger body of Christ and open her/his understanding to the corporate nature of the body extending beyond the faith community which is his/her weekly place of fellowship.

### Submission

The first degree of humility is obedience without delay. This becometh those who, on account of the holy subjection which they have promised, or of the fear of hell, or the glory of life everlasting, hold nothing dearer than Christ. As soon as anything hath been commanded by the Superior they permit no delay in the execution, as if the matter had been commanded by God Himself. Of these the Lord saith: "At the hearing of the ear he hath obeyed Me" (Ps 18:44). And again He saith to the teachers: "He that heareth you heareth Me" (Lk 10:16).<sup>216</sup>

The discipline of submission is simply a deliberate, practical way to move into obedience to Jesus' call, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me," (Mk 8:34). The way of holiness goes through the way of obedience to Jesus' commands (ref. Matt. c. 5, especially Jesus' statements, "But I say unto you ...," concluding with "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," v.48). This obedience is summed up in the words, "deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," so the way of obedience is the way of submission of self to Christ. The spiritual discipline called submission makes this practical by identifying specific persons to whom one submits "out of reverence for Christ," (Eph. 5:21, NIV).

Submission is "the condition of being submissive, humble, or compliant; an act of submitting to the authority or control of another."<sup>217</sup> "Be subject," as used in the New Testament, means "be under authority." (Titus 3:1) The discipline of submission is to yield authority over one's life to another. This is not done in an absolute sense (although in some distortions of the discipline of

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<sup>215</sup> As another opportunity, many Anglican/Episcopal Churches conduct a weekday Eucharist in the form of the *Daily Office* .

<sup>216</sup> Benedict of Nursia, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, c. V.

<sup>217</sup> *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MS: G.C. Merriam Co., 1976), 1160.

submission this has been/is practiced), but in acknowledgement to a specific person or group that one accepts guidance and correction and will respect their authority to the limits of conscience. Neither does submission mean giving up the integrity of responsibility for one's own decisions and actions, but rather being willing to test one's decisions and intended actions with the person or group under whose authority she/he is submitted.

In submission we engage the experience of those in our fellowship who are qualified to direct our efforts in growth and who then add the weight of their wise authority on the side of our willing spirit to help us to the things we would like to do and refrain from the things we don't want to do.<sup>218</sup>

Submission does not begin with an order of control or authority, but with the acknowledgement that we participate in a corporate body where the strength is in being bonded together. We need one another.<sup>219</sup> "The biblical teaching on submission focuses primarily on the spirit with which we view other people."<sup>220</sup> When this attitude of humility governs both the submitted one and the one practicing authority, serving one another in love (Gal. 5:13) will rule, not controlling another's actions.

Submission then begins with submission to God. "The first act of submission is to the Triune God."<sup>221</sup> As a discipline, this should be done intentionally and daily, with a simple prayer of submission, such as that of Thomas a' Kempis, "As thou wilt; what thou wilt; when thou wilt."<sup>222</sup> This is the reminder in the discipline that all of one's life is under the authority of God. The second element in submission is the decision to live in honesty with one's brothers and sisters in the body of Christ where by, "speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ," (Eph. 4:15). The practice of honesty in all relationships makes every relationship one of mutual submission, as Eph. 5:21 commands.

The discipline of submission then progresses to identifying one or more persons to whom the seeker will give authority to listen to him/her, question her/him, direct or offer suggestions to him/her, and confront her/him when the

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<sup>218</sup> Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 190.

<sup>219</sup> Ref. Eph. 4:1-16, as one reference.

<sup>220</sup> Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 97.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>222</sup> Thomas a' Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, in an anthology entitled *The Consolation of Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1943), 172, cited by Foster, 106.



authority deems it appropriate.<sup>223</sup> In monastic orders this is expressed through submission to the order and its rule and to a member senior in the order. This is the most extreme form of submission. For a believer not in a religious order or ordained hierarchy, submission is voluntary and will happen with persons of her/his own choosing. The degree of authority is by mutual agreement, as are the type and frequency of contacts.

The discipline of submission can be practiced in a relationship with a single person as authority, or it can be accomplished in multiple relationships. Both forms are subject to weaknesses, such as lack of broad enough perspective in the former and temptation to avoid issues in the latter. However, since the key is the commitment of the seeker, it is her/his honest *practice* of submission which will make either work, not the structure chosen. I myself find a combination of both to be most helpful. I am in submission to a spiritual director and also keep open, honest, long-term relationships with selected friends whom I have given permission to challenge me.

### Fellowship

And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)

Fellowship is something most people do not have to be commanded to do, nor must they formulate a plan to engage in it. It is a natural drive of the human spirit. The need to be with others is part of our make up, from the moment we are born into a family (even if the family is only one other person: mother). What is significant about Christian fellowship is that in it we experience not only other people, but our Father God.

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life -- and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us -- what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 Jn. 1:1-3)

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<sup>223</sup> Foster sees submission practiced in the social relationships of a believer's life (Foster, 106-108), but in the classical practice of the discipline is through submission to an individual.

In order for our gathering with other people to be more than a non-directed response to our primal need and to become an element in our pursuit of relationship with God, our pursuit of holiness, it must be intentional. The discipline of fellowship is a way of carrying out this intentional ideal. The discipline is formed by the acknowledgement that one needs interaction with other believers and by the decision of how to engage in this. It is an admission for one's self that "members of the body (of Christ) must be in contact if they are to sustain and be sustained by each other."<sup>224</sup> It is acceptance of one's need for others in order to attain

the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.  
(Eph, 4:12-13)

Fellowship becomes a discipline when the seeker determines how she/he will engage with others in the body on an ongoing basis. The normal way of doing this is by participation in a local church or faith community. Even when this exists, a disciplined seeker will choose his/her way of participation and will do so with the whole group in mind, not just his/her own needs. The seeker affirms that it is not only in receiving that one's spiritual growth benefits, but also in giving to others. In the discipline, one is honoring Paul's admonition: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God," (Col. 3:16).

The discipline of fellowship includes investing in relationships outside of one's church or community. The seeker recognizes that she/he is part of a body, a body of many elements and manifestations, and the pursuit of godliness will take him/her into contact with members of the body beyond those near at hand. In making one's plan for this discipline the seeker will incorporate ways of being in fellowship with this wider body, not just as an occasional visitor, but as one who becomes familiar with the extended family which is Christ's body.

### Celebration

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! (Phil. 4:4)

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<sup>224</sup> Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 186.

Celebration: Discipline. The two words do not seem to go together. We connote order and control with discipline and chaos and spontaneity with celebration. How can there be a discipline of celebration, and why?

Discipline, which is the practice of denying self indulgence, brings full life: "whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" (Mk. 8:35-36) Obedience, to Jesus Christ, brings freedom: "If you abide in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (Jn. 8:31-32) The experiences of full life and of freedom release one into joy and celebration. Richard Foster puts celebration at the end of his study of the spiritual disciplines because:

Joy is found in obedience. When the power that is in Jesus reaches into our work and play and redeems them, there will be joy where once there was mourning. To overlook that is to miss the meaning of the Incarnation.<sup>225</sup>

So celebration is not only compatible with discipline, it is the consummation of discipline.

The form celebration takes as a discipline is an elaboration of the disciplines of worship and fellowship. To celebrate is to join with others who are in the same experience of joy and to express this overtly. Celebration is the release into sight, sound and movement the gratitude within. "Worship, praise, adoration, dancing, laughing, flow from the inner chambers."<sup>226</sup> The discipline of celebration is to affirm this, to plan for this, to participate in these expressions.

To celebrate is "to party," in the popular vernacular. It will usually include music, feasting, decorating rooms and selves (in festive clothing) and vocal expressions of thanksgiving in songs and acclamations. It may include dancing, processing, waving flags and banners, and many other kinds of overt expression. Celebration joins the living community of faith to the celebrations of old, as in Psalm 150:

Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse. Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness. Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals. (Psalm 150:1-5)

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<sup>225</sup> Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 165-'66.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

It also joins those living in this age to the celebration in Eternity, as seen by John in Revelation, c. 5, climaxing in the great song of celebration: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." (v. 12)

How celebration is practiced can be developed by the seeker after holiness, in conjunction with her/his worshipping community. As a discipline it simply means that this is intentional and regular. The style and frequency are matters of freedom. It is the event of celebrating which brings seekers into a wider perspective of their pursuit of holiness.

Celebration gives us the strength to live in all the other disciplines. The other Disciplines faithfully pursued bring us deliverance from those things that have made our lives miserable for years, which in turn evokes increased celebration. Thus is formed an unbroken circle of life and power.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 171.

## CHAPTER 8

### TAKING THE PATH INTO THE WORLD. PURSUING HOLINESS IN ACTION

#### **The Outflow of the Pursuit of Holiness into Action**

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Pet. 2:9)

The pursuit of holiness *is* an ultimate goal for the follower of Jesus Christ, for it sums up the believer's destiny to live in the image of God, that image in which all were created in the beginning. Yet, it is a goal from which significant and essential manifestations result. One manifestation will be a relationship with God that is growing ever closer. The pursuit of holiness is the way to the unity with the Father and the Son for which Jesus prayed in his high priestly prayer: "And the glory which Thou hast given me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as we are one; I in them, and Thou in me, ..." (John 17:22-23).

A second manifestation will be works of righteousness. Holiness and righteousness necessarily go together, as Zacharias prophesied in his song, "To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days." (Lk. 1: 74-75) The pursuit of holiness, which purifies the heart from obsession with self and lifts it to knowledge of God, will turn the person outward into acts of service. The New Testament Epistles make clear that the life of the believer must flow out in acts of righteousness, as Peter affirms:

Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy. (1 Pet. 1:13-16)

A disciplined spirituality is the plan whereby the seeker after holiness makes definite and practical her/his desire to live in holiness, with all of its

manifestations. Thus, for the plan to be complete it must include practices which carry the seeker into service. As has become apparent in the descriptions of the spiritual disciplines in this paper, these practices are common to the Christian lifestyle that is outlined in the New Testament. The disciplines of action are not new demands on a believer. They are simply specific ways a seeker disciplines himself/herself to carry out the commands of Jesus and the Apostles. The descriptions which follow are not meant to be exhaustive. They are given as guidelines to a seeker who is developing a disciplined spirituality.

A seeker who endeavors to follow the way of Jesus Christ will be moved by Jesus' compassion integrating into her/his own holiness outward into care of others. The writers of spirituality always include this dimension in their teachings, as, for example, John Russbroec in his classic treatise, *The Spiritual Espousals*.

Recall that at the beginning of his parable Christ says, "See," by which he means that we should see by means of charity and a purified conscience, as you have already heard at the beginning of this treatise. Next he shows us what we are to see, namely, these three comings. Now he tells us what we are to do, when he says, "Go out," If you possess the first point and so are able to see by means of grace and charity, and if you have attentively observed your model, Christ, and his own going out, then from this charity and this loving observation of your Bridegroom there arises in you a righteousness which makes you desire to follow him in the practice of virtue.<sup>228</sup>

## **The Spiritual Disciplines Which Serve Action**

### **Service**

Jesus taught the attitude of service, humbly done as by a servant to the master, "let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant," (Lk. 22:26). He modeled the way of a servant,

Jesus, ... rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. (Jn. 13:3-5)

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<sup>228</sup> Russbroec, 54-55. Ref. to parable is to Matt. 25:6, "See, the bridegroom is coming. Go out to meet him."

Jesus expects his followers to do as he did, "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you," (Jn. 14: 14-15). Thus, service is one of the outflows of following Jesus in the way of holiness. It is to be a part of the life of every believer, whether actively pursuing a life of holiness or not.

To develop service as a practice of disciplined spirituality, means that the seeker determines his/her own ways of doing service and commits herself/himself to a regular habit of this action. The service may be directed through the program of a church or community service organization, but it may also be individual and private. It may be a response to an announced need or the inspiration of one's own observation. It may be a long term commitment to a single task or a variety of activities around the theme of service chosen. It can be done alone or in conjunction with others. It may involve training in skills or it may be the work of skills already gained. The objective of the discipline is not to fulfill a mission or build a ministry but to follow Jesus in a way of service.

The characteristics of service practiced as a discipline include these:

It seeks no attention or credit for the service done. "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven," (Matt. 6:1, see also vv. 2-4).

It thrives on that which brings humility instead of honor.

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; (Matt. 20:25-27)

It makes no distinction regarding the size or value of the service. "Where the difference is noted the true servant seems to be often drawn to the small service, not out of false modesty, but because he genuinely sees it as the important service."<sup>229</sup>

It focuses on the task and the satisfaction of doing it, not on the results. Jesus' testimony about the woman who gave her last coin demonstrates where he places value.

Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on. (Lk. 21:3-4)

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<sup>229</sup> Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 112.

It makes no distinction regarding who is served. "And sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, 'If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all,'" (Mk. 9:35). Francis of Assisi gives the example as he sought to follow the model of Jesus, "Being the servant of all, I am bound to serve all and to administer the balm-bearing words of my lord."<sup>230</sup>

The discipline of service can be practiced within the context of the seeker's life, such as making the way she/he does her/his job a form of service to the other employees, or it may be a task separate from normal functions. The discipline comes in doing service for the Lord Jesus and unto the Lord Jesus. "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father," (Col. 3:17). It is as a deliberate, regular practice consciously done for and with Jesus that service fulfills the purpose of a spiritual discipline.

### Sacrifice

Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done. (Lk. 22:42)

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:1-2)

The Christian life requires more than service. In the life and message of Jesus as well as in the lives and teachings of the Apostles there is the call to ultimate submission: sacrifice. Sacrifice is the trust to let go and lay down anything, including one's life, when asked to do so by the Lord. Abraham's willingness to put to death Isaac, his son of the promise (Gen. 22), is the preeminent example of sacrifice in the Bible, after Jesus' own. In Abraham's act we see that sacrifice renews our faith, purifying it to its simple core, and proves the will of God, by demonstrating that it is dependent not on ourselves nor anything we must preserve but only on His act.

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<sup>230</sup> St. Francis of Assisi, *Selections from the Writings of St. Francis of Assisi* (Nashville: The Upper Room Press, 1952). 25; quoted in Foster, 112.



Sacrifice is “a total abandonment to God, a stepping into the darkened abyss in the faith and hope that God will bear us up.”<sup>231</sup> As a part of the normal Christian life it is manifest when a believer releases all control of possessions, relationships, functions, and even life, when the work of God upon her/him asks for this. This is not anticipated nor planned. It is received when the call comes, by means of circumstances – as in a tragedy which takes things away – or in a clear word from the Holy Spirit – as in a call to lifetime service in missions.

Sacrifice as a practice in a disciplined spirituality is purposeful and planned. It can be understood as a step beyond simplicity. Simplicity is the discipline of living minimally, making life unencumbered so that attention can be focused more on knowing God and living by His Kingdom. The disciplined of sacrifice is the choice to relinquish some necessity for the sake of God and the Kingdom. The monks who follow the *Rule of Benedict* sacrifice sleep deliberately as part of their discipline. They do this so they can pray and can do so in the “night watches” prescribed by Scripture (Ps. 119:148, Ps. 134). Albert Schweitzer<sup>232</sup> sacrificed his position in family, profession and English society to serve humbly in the jungle of Africa. David Brainard<sup>233</sup> sacrificed his health in order to bring the gospel to American Indians. For each of these, the sacrifice was more than abandonment to a call to missions. It was pursuing the love of God and holiness in His service which were their passion.

The act of sacrifice in the disciplines is still submission. The seeker may ask for the privilege of giving it, but that which is to be sacrificed comes as a word from God. It is the voice of the Holy Spirit which must inspire the seeker how to make this ultimate act of obedience, as Paul expressed:

... that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. (Phil. 1:20-22)

The seeker, listening to the Holy Spirit, yields her/his will unto him and waits until the Spirit reveals what specific thing is to be laid down in sacrifice. It is wise to seek confirmation from a trusted spiritual friend or director because of the seriousness and long-term effects of this step. Once sacrifice is made, the seeker after holiness relies on the same Holy Spirit to care for him/her with this deficiency and to bring forth the fruit in her/his life.

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<sup>231</sup> Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 175.

<sup>232</sup> *Missionary in Africa* (1875- 1965).

<sup>233</sup> *Missionary to American Indians* (1718- 1747).

As with the discipline of service, the objective of sacrifice is not to accomplish *something*. It is moving into deeper relationship with *someone*. It is yielding to the invitation of God to depend on him in this ultimate area and discover the depth of His love in this place. Sacrifice should not be seen as a lever to compel God to act for us. It is rather an expression of love for him, resting in full dependence on his care and provision.

### Secrecy

And I will give you the treasures of darkness, And hidden wealth of secret places, In order that you may know that it is I, The LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name. (Isa. 45:3)

Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. (Matt. 6:1-6)

The discipline of secrecy wraps all spiritual practices in the cloak of privacy which is necessary for the intimacy which holiness desires. The discipline of secrecy is simply restraining from making known to anyone what one does and why. "In the discipline of secrecy, . . . , we abstain from causing our good deeds and qualities to be known. We may even take steps to prevent them from being known, if it doesn't involve deceit."<sup>234</sup> Secrecy honors the purity of the solo pursuit of holiness. It protects the integrity of the choices made in disciplined spirituality. It guards the delicacy of one's gifts to God from being contaminated by the admiration or jealousy of others.

In its primary form, this discipline does not require any action of its own. It is the absence of action, of any word or gesture which would call attention to

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<sup>234</sup> Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 172.

what one has done in her/his practice of spiritual discipline. This is its function as part of disciplined spirituality. It means fulfilling one's rule of life and keeping this quiet.

The discipline can be extended to a more intentional practice by choosing to do things deliberately which will not be known. Examples of such acts are giving gifts anonymously, doing a service for someone which they cannot know you did, taking care of a need in a time when no one is around. Exercising the discipline in this way makes secrecy real and intentional and brings one the joy of intimacy expressed in the feeling, "my Father alone knows." It also helps become accustomed to doing things without having to call attention to them – something most people will find harder than they expect. "Few things are more important in stabilizing our walk of faith than this discipline. In the practice of secrecy, we experience a continuing relationship with God independent of the opinions of others."<sup>235</sup> Becoming comfortable with secrecy is a sign that one has grown to the place where holiness is the preeminent desire and goal. The practice of disciplined spirituality is bringing maturity.

### Conclusion

The surest sign that we are keeping these two commandments is, I think, that we should really be loving our neighbour; for we cannot be sure if we are loving God, although we may have good reasons for believing that we are, but we can know quite well if we are loving our neighbour. And be certain that the farther advanced you find you are in this, the greater the love you will have for God; for so dearly does His Majesty love us that He will reward our love for our neighbour by increasing the love which we bear to Himself, and that in a thousand ways: this I cannot doubt.

It is most important that we should proceed in this matter very carefully, for, if we have attained great perfection here, we have done everything. Our nature being so evil, I do not believe we could ever attain perfect love for our neighbour unless it had its roots in the love of God.<sup>236</sup>

Pursuing a disciplined spirituality pulls together love of God, love of self, and love of neighbor, or service. As the pursuit of holiness draws the seeker nearer to God, love for God increases and also knowledge of self. Out of these loves flows service to others, and this putting love into action in turn strengthens love of God.

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>236</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, 115.

Because this is a personal pursuit, the ways of expressing love of God belong genuinely to the seeker, and from the confidence thus gained the forms of service chosen come from the authentic self. This is a way for fulfillment to come to the believer and for effective service to go out to the world. The church needs to encourage the pursuit of holiness, which path has been well worn by many, many seekers through the centuries. Their lives and their disciplines are a strong and vital resource for postmodern seekers.

Jesus Christ, Lord and Head of the church from all Eternity, fulfill your promise to the seekers whom this paper and course reach.

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord. (Jer. 29:13-14)

## APPENDIX I

### DEVELOPING A RULE OF LIFE

A serious pursuit needs a plan. The pursuit of holiness will not happen simply because it is a desire. The believer who wants to make disciplined spirituality an intentional focus of life must make the commitment of grounding this in a specific structure. While a heavy, rigid structure imposed on one by an institutional form may weaken him/her and restrict growth, a light, open structure established by the person himself/herself provides the support to grow as she/he desires. In the history of spiritual disciplines this structure is called a *rule of life*. "A rule of life, like a trellis, curbs our tendency to wander and supports our frail efforts to grow spiritually."<sup>237</sup>

"A rule of life is a pattern of spiritual disciplines that provides structure and direction for growth in holiness."<sup>238</sup> "It is meant to help us establish a rhythm of daily living, a basic order within which new freedoms can grow."<sup>239</sup> This pattern can be taken from a corporate rule or designed by the individual. The best known and most widely practiced corporate rule is *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, of which copies are available in Christian bookstores and on the internet. Benedict introduces the rule with its purpose:

We are about to open a school for God's service, in which we hope nothing harsh or oppressive will be directed. For preserving charity or correcting faults, it may be necessary at times, by reason of justice, to be slightly more

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<sup>237</sup> Thompson, 138.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 138. Thompson goes on to note that "the Latin term for 'rule' is *regula*, from which our words *regular* and *regulate* derive."

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 138.

severe. Do not fear this and retreat, for the path to salvation is long and the entrance is narrow.<sup>240</sup>

A rule of life for pursuit of holiness will honor the values and practices proven in the history of Christian spirituality and will adapt these to the contemporary and personal needs and desires of the seeker. A historic corporate rule should be studied and considered for the priorities it establishes. The rule of life adopted by a respected individual can serve as a guide in developing one's own.<sup>241</sup> The seeker then determines which disciplines to commit to and what form of practice is appropriate for herself/himself. There should be balance between what is manageable in one's life situation and what challenges one to stretch and grow.

The choice of disciplines to adopt will be governed by the seeker's desires and his/her sense of need. The *regula* of practice should be selected to enable a manageable habit of the discipline. Majorie Thompson suggests three questions to guide these choices:

What am I deeply attracted to, and why?

Where do I feel God is calling me to stretch and grow?

What kind of balance do I need in my life?<sup>242</sup>

The choices are made with proper respect for one's own limitations and opportunities, and in such a way that the structure is supportive and not restrictive. The personal rule should also include corporate disciplines, so the choice of these will follow what is reasonable within one's faith community.

Once a rule is set, it should be written down. "Commit yourself in print."<sup>243</sup> Recording one's rule is a step in sustaining it. However, one should not treat it as an unalterable requirement. The rule of life is a support to the pursuit of holiness, and, as in any journey, adjustments made in accordance with new circumstances or new understandings of one's life are not only necessary, they are essential and valuable.

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<sup>240</sup> *The Rule of St. Benedict*, quoted by Thompson, p. 139.

<sup>241</sup> Thompson has examples of two such individual rules, p. 139-140.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

Because this is part of discipline, the seeker will want to share his/her rule with a spiritual friend or director. Declaring one's commitment openly to another strengthens one's ability to maintain it and provides a level of accountability which is part of the support provided by the rule. This person can also provide helpful insight into what is realistic for the seeker and can give a challenge about where she/he sees the seeker avoiding a significant practice.

The steps in formulating a rule of life can be summarized in the following list.

1. While studying the spiritual disciplines, take notes on what is appealing, what is challenging, and what is threatening. These notes become grist for the later process of determining a rule for one's self.
2. When one comes to the time of writing a rule, review the disciplines, noting those to which he/she is drawn, either positively or negatively. Positive drawing is an indication of desire which should be respected. Negative pushing may be an indication of fear which should be confronted.
3. Make a list of the disciplines to follow in the first stage of living by a rule.
4. Evaluate the list to determine if it is realistic and sufficiently challenging.
5. Prepare a form of exercising each discipline.
6. Look at the whole set to understand if it works as a whole.
7. Record the rule, with as much detail as necessary. It is good if this record can be kept available as in one's Bible, journal, or daily scheduler.
8. Share the rule with a spiritual friend or director. Invite his/her response.
9. Go back and make adjustments in the rule from what is learned by sharing it with another and hearing the response.
10. Begin the practice of the rule.
11. After a period of three to six months, review the rule and its practicality for the pursuit of holiness. Make new adjustments. Share the new form of the rule with the spiritual friend or director.
12. Continue its practice.

## APPENDIX II

### COURSE LESSON PLAN

#### Lesson Plans

#### Readings

- students to read text
- lecture plus interactive discussion
- interaction with readings shared in small groups

#### 1. Taking the pursuit of holiness seriously

Engage students on What difference does your personal holiness make:

- in your daily life
- in your close relationships
- to your church & its mission
- to the world
- to the Kingdom of God

Francis of Assisi

Ignatius of Loyola  
Calvin

Lecture (ref. text): Christian Spirituality

- its ancient practice
- contemporary surge of interest
- discussion: seeking a meaningful, contemporary understanding

Intro Ignatius & discipline of Examine

Exercise: prayer of Examine

#### 2. Measuring my practice against the disciplined lives of Christians thru history

Engage students:

- What is your ideal of a spiritual life (practices/habits)?
- Who represents this? where did you learn of it?
- What do you really think of it (class argument)?
- Are Christians today more or less holy than those before? Why?

Bro. Lawrence  
Cassian



Lecture (ref. text): history of Spiritual Disciplines

- monasticism
- why they rose; why they fell (in usage)

Intro St. Antony & Desert Fathers & Mothers

Exercise: silence

Exercise: visit a monastery

### 3. The necessity of a disciplined spirituality

Engage students: the need for holiness today

- blocks to pursuing holiness
- consequences for: you; church; world;  
Kingdom

Lecture: The necessity of a disciplined spirituality

- theological imperatives
- rationale for the pursuit of holiness

Intro Calvin & Reformation's influence

Exercise: study

Luther

John Ruusbroec

### 4. Value of spiritual heritage

Engage students: What is your spiritual heritage?

- ref. Foster: Streams in the Desert
- the value (good and bad) of saints

Lecture: accepting our corporate spiritual heritage

- in different branches of the church
- in other denominations
- learning about our heritage

Intro Therese of Lisieux

Exercise: make a spiritual heritage tree

Exercise: spiritual reading

Origen

Bernard of

Clairvaux

Julian of Norwich

### 5. Pursuing holiness alone I

Engage students: Who are your spiritual heroes?

- what habits did they practice?
- how did they grow into these?

Lecture: importance of private holiness in self

- what happens in private discipline
- impact on others
- how vigorous to take them?

Mechthild of

Magdeburg

John Dunn

John Wesley

Present disciplines, group A  
Intro Catherine of Siena, et.al.  
Exercise: share your practice with others

- how does it help you?
- how does it fail you?

#### 6. Pursuing holiness alone II

Engage students: being alone/private in today's world

- need
- how

Catherine of Siena  
Thomas Kelly  
John of the Cross

Lecture: importance of private holiness for the community  
Present disciplines, group B  
Intro John of the Cross  
Exercise: write a rule of private life

#### 7. Pursuing holiness in community I

Engage students: What is community?

- what makes it work
- what makes it fail
- experiences of any from living in community

Bonhoeffer  
G. Herbert  
Benedict

Lecture: on being corporate

- corporate in Sc.
- sketch of communes in history
- corporate in contemporary culture

Present disciplines, group A  
Intro St. Benedict  
Exercise: Divine Office

#### 8. Pursuing holiness in community II

Engage students: What do you need from community?

- how try to get it
- how sabotage it

Ward, *Lives of the Desert Fathers*

Lecture: Kingdom as corporate

- the Kingdom present and future
- life as preparation for Eternity
- communion of the saints

Present disciplines, group B  
Intro Teresa of Avila  
Exercise: what is your plan for community (submission)

## 9. Pursuing holiness in action

Engage students: Were Jesus' works mission or spiritual disciplines?

Lecture: action as pursuit of holiness; the nature of obedience to his commands

Present spiritual disciplines

Intro John Woolman

Exercise: creative expression (looking for an outlet for each student)

Catherine of Genoa  
John Woolman  
Quakers

Hammar skjold

## 10. Developing a rule of life: putting it all together for myself

Engage students: Why have a rule?

What about accountability?

Lecture: What is a rule of life

Intro Ben Johnson

Exercise: Bring notes for a rule of life to class

- fill out personal rule
- share with small group
- include plan for ongoing accountability/support

Postema  
Thompson

## APPENDIX III

### CATEGORIES OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Classified by Dallas Willard in  
*The Spirit of the Disciplines*

#### **Disciplines of Abstinence**

Solitude

Silence

Fasting

Frugality

Chastity

Secrecy

Sacrifice

#### **Disciplines of Engagement**

Study

Worship

Service

Prayer

Celebration

Fellowship

Confession

Submission

Classified by Richard Foster in  
*Celebration of Discipline*

#### **The Inward Disciplines**

Meditation

Prayer

Fasting

Study

#### **The Outward Disciplines**

Simplicity

Solitude

Submission

Service

#### **The Corporate Disciplines**

Confession

Worship

Guidance

Celebration

Classified by Eugene  
Peterson in *Under the Unpredictable  
Plant*

The Regula (rule)  
Common worship  
Praying the Psalms  
Recollected Prayer

Disciplines – when needed  
Spiritual Reading  
Spiritual Direction  
Meditation  
Confession  
Bodily Exercise  
Fasting  
Sabbath-keeping  
Dream Interpretation  
Retreats  
Pilgrimage  
Almsgiving  
Journaling  
Sabbaticals  
Small Groups

Additional disciplines to be  
noted:

Self-examination, the way of  
St. Ignatius

Recollection or Noticing, the  
way of Brother Lawrence

Lectio Divina, a specific form  
of meditation on the Bible.

## APPENDIX IV

### PLAN FOR A RETREAT

#### A. Purpose

The purpose of the Intimacy with God Retreat is to give participants tools with which to deepen their own experience of intimacy with God, ways in which to pursue holiness more intentionally.

#### B. Objectives

The objectives of the retreat are:

1. That participants would find language for their spiritual hunger.
2. That participants would meet Christians from history who pursued their hunger for intimacy and holiness.
3. That participants would experience some of the basic classical spiritual disciplines.
4. That participants would clarify their experience and feel supported in their pursuit through sharing in a small group.

#### C. Format

The format of the retreat is a rhythm of practice of disciplines, processing in small groups, and teaching, with space for silence and personal reflection.

1. First session, Friday evening  
Begin with worship and communion; follow with introduction of one spiritual discipline; practice of the discipline; sharing the experience in small groups.
2. The discipline of corporate prayer by sharing in the divine office. Saturday's sessions would be ordered around a version of the divine office: Vigils, Lauds, Vespers, and Compline.
3. Second session, Saturday morning

Following Vigils and Lauds, a teaching, a time of discussion, introduction and practice of a discipline, sharing the experience in small groups, a teaching (if time).

4. Third session, Saturday afternoon  
Introduction and practice of a discipline, sharing in small groups, time of discussion, teaching.
5. Fourth session, Saturday evening  
A teaching, introduction and practice of a discipline, sharing in small groups
6. Fifth session, Sunday morning  
Worship, teaching, time of discussion, communion.

## RETREAT PLAN

### FRIDAY

7:15	Gathering	Gathering, around the Eucharist
		Present plan for the retreat
8:15	Practice	Introduction & practice: Lectio divina
		Share in small groups

### SATURDAY

6:30	Vigils	
7:00	Private time	
7:30	Lauds	
8:00	Breakfast	
9:00	Teaching	#1, Strengthening our soul's relationship with God
9:30	Discussion	What motivates you to pursue intimacy with God?
10:00	Practice	Introduction & practice: Silence & Solitude
		Share in small groups
11:30	Teaching	#2, Discovering ancient pathways
12:00	Lunch	followed by private time/recreation
2:30	Practice	Introduction & practice: Practice of The Presence of God
		Share in small groups
4:00	Discussion	Overcoming blocks to drawing from within.
	Teaching	#3, The ways of spiritual disciplines
5:00	Vespers	
5:30	Dinner	followed by private time
7:30	Discussion	Dealing with attitudes in the church.
8:30	Teaching	#4, More than a spiritual fitness program
9:00	Compline	

### SUNDAY

8:00	Breakfast	
9:00	Practice	Introduction & practice: Spiritual reading
		Share in small groups
10:00	Discussion	Finding motivation to continue in spiritual disciplines
11:00	Evaluation	Response to retreat
11:30	Closing	with the Eucharist

Times are approximate; breaks when needed



## APPENDIX V

### INDEX OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY WRITERS, WESTERN, BY TIME IN HISTORY\*

#### **The Early Fathers**

Ignatius of Antioch	d. 117
Irenaeus	115-202
Clement of Alexandria	150-216
Origen	185-251
Gregory of Nyssa	335-395

#### **The Desert Fathers and Mothers**

Antony	251-356
Pachomius	290-346
John Cassian	365-435

#### **The Latin Fathers**

Jerome	348-420
Ambrose	c.340-397
Augustine	354-439
Benedict of Nursia	480-550
Gregory the Great	540-604
John Scotus Eriugena	810-c.877

### **The Middle Ages**

Bernard of Clairvaux	1090-1153
Anselm of Canterbury	1093-1109
Francis of Assisi	1181-1226
Clare of Assisi	1193-1254
Mechthild of Magdeburg	1212-1297
Meister Eckhart	1260-1327
Dante Alighieri	1265-1321
John Ruusbroec (Ruysbroeck)	1293-1381
John Tauler	1300-1361
Julian of Norwich	1342-1423
Catherine of Siena	1347-1380
Thomas a' Kempis	1380-1471
The Cloud of Unknowing	late 14 <sup>th</sup> c.

### **The Reformation Era**

Catherine of Genoa	1447-1510
Martin Luther	1483-1546
Ignatius of Loyola	1491-1556
John Calvin	1509-1564
Teresa of Avila	1512-1582
John of the Cross	1542-1591
Johann Arndt	1555-1621
Francis de Sales	1567-1622
John Donne	1572-1631
George Herbert	1593-1633
Jeremy Taylor	1613-1667
Richard Baxter	1615-1691
Blaise Pascal	1623-1662

John Bunyan	1628-1688
George Fox	1624-1690
Francis Fenelon	1651-1715
William Law	1686-1761

### **Pietism**

Johann Arndt	1555-1621
Phillipp Jakob Spener	1635-1705
Jeanne Guyon	1648-1717
August Hermann Francke	1663-1727
Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf	1700-1760
Jonathan Edwards	1703-1758
John Wesley	1703-1791
Charles Wesley	1707-1788
John Woolman	1720-1772

### **Modern Era**

Gerard Manley Hopkins	1844-1889
Therese of Lisieux	1873-1897
Evelyn Underhill	1875-1941
Dag Hammarskjöld	1905-1961
Dietrich Bonhoeffer	1906-1945
Simone Weil	1909-1943
Thomas Merton	1915-1968
Henri Nouwen	1932-1996

\*This list is not meant to be exhaustive but is fairly representative

## APPENDIX VI

### INDEX OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY WRITERS, WESTERN, BY AFFILIATION\*

#### **The Apostolic Fathers**

Ignatius of Antioch	d. 117
Irenaeus	115-202
Clement of Aledandria	150-216
Origen	185-251
Gregory of Nyssa	335-395

#### **The Desert Fathers and Mothers**

Antony	251-356
Pachomius	290-346
John Cassian	365-435

#### **The Latin Fathers**

Ambrose	c.340-397
Jerome	348-420
Augustine	354-439
Benedict of Nusia	480-550
Gregory the Great	540-604
John Scotus Eriugena	810-c.877

### **Monasticism**

Bernard of Clairvaux	1090-1153
Anselm of Canterbury	1093-1109
Francis of Assisi	1181-1226
Clare of Assisi	1193-1254
Catherine of Siena	1347-1380
Catherine of Genoa	1447-1510
Ignatius of Loyola	1491-1556
Teresa of Avila	1512-1582
John of the Cross	1542-1591

### **The Rhineland Mystics**

Mechthild of Magdeberg	1212-1297
Meister Eckhart	1260-1327
John Ruusbroec (Ruysbroeck)	1293-1381
John Tauler	1300-1361

### **The Reformers**

Martin Luther	1483-1546
John Calvin	1509-1564

### **English Mystics**

The Cloud of Unknowing	late 14 <sup>th</sup> c.
Julian of Norwich	1342-1423
John Donne	1572-1631
George Herbert	1593-1633
Jeremy Taylor	1613-1667
Richard Baxter	1615-1691
George Fox	1624-1690
John Bunyan	1628-1688
William Law	1686-1761

### **Pietism**

Johann Arndt	1555-1621
Phillipp Jakob Spener	1635-1705
August Hermann Francke	1663-1727
Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf	1700-1760
Jonathan Edwards	1703-1758
John Wesley	1703-1791
Charles Wesley	1707-1788
John Woolman	1720-1772

### **Modern Era**

Gerard Manley Hopkins	1844-1889
Therese of Lisieux	1873-1897
Evelyn Underhill	1875-1941
Dag Hammarskjöld	1905-1961
Dietrich Bonhoeffer	1906-1945
Simone Weil	1909-1943
Thomas Merton	1915-1968
Henri Nouwen	1932-1996

### **Unclassified**

Dante Alighieri	1265-1321
Francis de Sales	1567-1622
Blaise Pascal	1623-1662
Jeanne Guyon	1648-1717
Francis Fenelon	1651-1715

\*This list is not meant to be exhaustive but is fairly representative

APPENDIX VII  
ANOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF READINGS  
IN CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

**GENERAL WORKS ON CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY**

George Appleton, ed. *The Oxford Book of Prayer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. Collection of prayers from all eras and segments of the church (and some outside the Christian church).

Kenneth L Collins, ed. *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000. Essays on the nature of spirituality, past and present.

Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*. San Francisco: Harper, 1988. Foundational book on learning about spiritual disciplines; gives reason for practicing them and expected spiritual influences.

Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith, eds., *Devotional Classics*. San Francisco: Harper, 1993. Collection of readings from writers of spirituality; readings are short, with devotional application suggested.

Jeff Imbach, *The River Within*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998. Strong invitation to draw from the river within your own soul; with discussion of pitfalls and obstacles.

Ben Campbell Johnson, *Living Before God.. Deepening Our Sense of the Divine Presence*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000. An encouragement to pursue holiness in all of life; good discussion of some spiritual disciplines.

Andre Louf, *Teach Us to Pray*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974. The most profound work on prayer I have read; treats prayer as life, not an activity; may cause you to want to join a monastery.

Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957, also available in Luther's works and online in sources of Luther's writings. The basic definition of the Protestant position; a must for every Christian.

Robin Mass & Gabriel O'Donnel, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990. A college/seminary level course on spirituality, drawing on the whole spectrum of church traditions, with essays on the value of each.

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973. A modern classic on seeking God in His holiness.

Richard Peace, *Contemplative Bible Reading*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998. Good presentation of lectio divina for both individuals and in groups.

Don Postema, *Space for God.*, Kalamazoo, MI: CRC Publications, 1983. Guide to spirituality using writings and art, like a devotional guide.

Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*. New York: Doubleday, 1999. A Catholic describes the need for spirituality in the church and in our lives today; practical applications that fit our lives today.

Marjorie Thompson, *Soul Feast. An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995. Introduction to spiritual disciplines, personalized through her own experience; practical, from a feminine perspective.

John R. Tyson, *Invitation to Christian Spirituality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Collection of readings, with brief biography of each person, covers all of church history; longer selections than in Foster and

Benedicta Ward, SLG, trans. *The Lives of the Desert Fathers and The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975. The biographies and sayings of the monks and sisters ("Abbas" and "Ammas") of the desert in the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1988. Excellent introduction to spiritual disciplines, and to why they are vital to believers and to the life of the church.

*Weavings: A Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life*. Periodical, The Upper Room, Nashville. [www.upperroom.org/weavings/](http://www.upperroom.org/weavings/), Ph. 800-925-6847.



## ORIGINAL WORKS IN CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Thomas a' Kempis (Germany, 1380-1471), *The Imitation of Christ*. This is the most widely read book ever, after the Bible; it influenced many writers of spirituality who lived later. You will see him referenced by many others you read.

Athanasius (Egypt, 296-373), *The Life of Antony*. Both Antony and Athanasius are among the earliest leaders in spirituality. Antony (or Anthony) is called "The Father of Monks" because he was the first to go into the desert to seek only God.

Bernard of Clairvaux (France, 1090-1153), Writes passionately of love for God; all good. My favorite is "On Loving God."

John Bunyan (England, 1628-1688), *The Pilgrim's Progress*. A very popular allegory; readable for all ages.

John Cassian (Egypt, 365-435), *The Conferences of John Cassian*, Trans., Edgar C.S. Gibson. *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Edition. Recorded the wisdom of the Desert Fathers; added commentary of his own; this work shaped the monastic orders.

Catherine of Genoa (Italy, 1447-1510), Converted out of a severe depression, she gives testimony to the spirituality of such a temperament; had a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus. *The Life and Sayings of Catherine of Genoa*, Alba House, 1964, is one source for her writings and sayings.

Catherine of Siena (Italy, 1347-1380). Catherine dedicated herself to God at an early age, refusing her family's encouragement to follow the normal course of marriage. After three years of self-imposed confinement she was directed by Jesus to act the love of neighbor which is companion to the law of love of God. She not only dedicated herself to this task but also became a counselor to religious leaders of her day.

Clare of Assisi (Italy, 1193-1254), Companion in faith and mission to St. Francis; one of the most radical expressions of the discipline of poverty out of total submission to Christ. The best source for Clare and St. Francis is *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*. Paulist Press, 1982.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Germany, 1906-1945), *The Cost of Discipleship* and other writings. A voice of conviction in our era. Reading this book in college set the course of my life.

Francis of Assisi (Italy, 1181-1226), Read his words (recorded by others and in letters), read about him; he is a true saint, for all. There are many books about him, including *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*. The best source for Clare and St. Francis is *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*. Paulist Press, 1982.

Francis DeSales (France, 1567-1622). *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Letters of counsel from a spiritual director; simple yet profound; makes the devout life seem possible and rewarding.

Henri Nouwen (Dutch, 20<sup>th</sup> c.). All of his writings are valuable (and short). Nouwen is probably the most influential writer in spirituality of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; he is read and loved by people from all segments of the church. His journals, *Genesee Diary* and *The Road to Daybreak* helped me through critical transitions in my life.

Ignatius of Loyola (Spain, 1491-1556), *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. Ignatius was founder of the Jesuit Order. The *Exercises* are rigorous, but press one into complete dedication to Jesus Christ; they are best done under the guidance of a spiritual director.

Madame Jeanne Guyon (France, 1648-1717). Writes on how to experience intimacy with God in an easy, enticing style. Her "Short and Easy Method of Prayer", now published as *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ* by Seedsowers, [www.seedsowers.com](http://www.seedsowers.com), Ph. 800-228-2665, is what I consider the classic on the personal devotional life. Every Christian should read it first, and again and again.

John of the Cross (Spain, 1542-1591), *Ascent of Mt. Carmel*, *Dark Night of the Soul* and other writings. John writes poetically, so it helps to read an edition with explanatory notes. He relates how in order to come into deepest union with Christ one must go through the "dark night" in which nothing one has experienced before is any longer effective; the most advanced work on spirituality I know.

Julian of Norwich (England, 1342-1423). Her *Showings* are records of the visions she received and interpreted. An oft-quoted mother in spirituality.

Thomas Kelly (American, 20<sup>th</sup> c.). *A Testament of Devotion*. San Francisco: Harper, 1992. Quaker breathes life into the Quaker way of knowing Christ within, with a modern voice.

Brother Lawrence (France, 1611-1691). *The Practice of the Presence of God*. This is probably the most read work on the spiritual life (alongside *The Imitation of*

*Christ*), because it is so readable and invites one into a refreshing, simple life of joy in Jesus – at all times.

Mechthild of Magdeburg (Germany, 1212-1297). Reveals a heart in love with Jesus totally; reflects her struggles with her humanity, her mortality (in weakness and sickness), and opposition. Paraclete Press has a nice edition of her writings. She is my personal favorite.

Teresa of Avila (Spain, 1515-1582), *The Interior Castle* and other writings. Writes of coming into union with Christ through spiritual marriage, through moving deeper into the “interior castles” of the heart – she has seven levels. Her style is delightful, with light touches of humor and gentle prodding’s of her fellow nuns, yet the message is complex and can be hard to grasp.

Therese of Lisieux (France, 1873-1897). Lived a simple and pure life of devotion to Jesus, influencing many by her life, words, and writings. My favorite is *The Story of a Soul*, her autobiography.

Many of these are available in a series, *The Classics of Western Spirituality*, published by Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ. They make a great find when browsing used book stores.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND JOURNALS

Augustine (Egypt, 354-430). *Confessions*. The classic in spiritual writing. He is philosophical, so it is hard reading in places; but contains many powerful insights and challenges which are easy to grasp – and be grasped by.

Dag Hammarskjold (Sweden, 1905-1961), *Markings*. As Secretary General of the United Nations he gives witness to a man in a position of international exposure, visibility and power living and growing in faith and spirituality.

Thomas Merton, (America, 1915-1968), *The Seven Storey Mountain*. His own story of coming to faith and into the monastic life; compelling, contemporary, insights into modern American culture.

John Woolman, (America, 1720-1772), *The Journal of John Woolman*, a classic in American literature. Quaker who lived what he professed; example of simplicity and obedience.

## POETS

John Donne (England, 1572-1631). Poet of passion, for life, love, and God. I find him more difficult than Herbert. “Batter my heart, three-person’d God” (Holy Sonnet #14) is well known.

George Herbert (England, 1593-1633). Rich insights into the spiritual life; gentle yet compelling poetry; considered one of the greatest writers of spiritual verse.

George MacDonald (Scotland, 1824-1905). *Diary of An Old Soul* and other writings of poetry, fiction and fantasy. Soothing reading, drawn from a deep knowledge of God, learned through his suffering.

### INTERNET LINKS

Collections of readings in spirituality:

General: [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org)

English mystics: [www.mindspring.com/~mccolman/unknowing.ht](http://www.mindspring.com/~mccolman/unknowing.ht)

John of the Cross: [www.oed.or.at/ics/others/cs6.html](http://www.oed.or.at/ics/others/cs6.html)

Thomas Merton: [www.acad.smumn.edu/merton/merton.html](http://www.acad.smumn.edu/merton/merton.html)

Therese of Lisieux: [www2.dcci.com/ocdokla/](http://www2.dcci.com/ocdokla/)

Teresa of Avila: [www.oed.or.at/lit/teresa/life/main.html](http://www.oed.or.at/lit/teresa/life/main.html)

John Donne: [www.users.csbsju.edu/~eknuth/jd/index.html](http://www.users.csbsju.edu/~eknuth/jd/index.html)

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Opening ancient pathways to spirituality for modern day evangelicals seeking a deeper experience of Olson. David W. Thesis (D.Min.)-- Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Theology, 2004. Includes bibliographical references (leaves 199-204). Read more. Article.

Christian Spirituality in the Background of Modern Conceptions of Spirituality Outline of Issues. January 2018. Marek Chmielewski. Read more. Article.

Book Review: III. Ministry Studies: Christian Spirituality: Post-Reformation and Modern. BRIDGES FOR EVANGELICALS JOURNEYING INTO CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRITUALITY AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION By Elsa McInnes A Research Project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Spiritual Director's Training Programme of Spiritual Growth Ministries CONTENTS Introduction 1 Basics of the Evangelical heritage 2 The Great divides Sacred or secular Knowing or feeling Doing or being Individualism or community Mastery or mystery 3 Composite. Since then I've discovered there are many evangelicals, like me, hungering for a deeper intimacy with God yet fearing to sell their heritage for a mess of pottage.