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EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

## What a Marriage! Why Did Evangelicalism Marry Catholicism's Stepchild?

by G. Richard Fisher

John MacArthur has said, "It's frightening to realize our culture has more interest in emotion and pragmatism than in thinking."<sup>1</sup>

Evangelicalism is seething with confusion and lack of identity. Author and pastor John Piper distances himself from cessationism and believes in Peter Wagner's sign-gift ideas and the fallible-prophet notions of Wayne Grudem.

The airwaves resound with the voices of fallible prophets who fill their followers' heads with lies and guesswork and empty their wallets. Newly anointed "bishops" and "apostles" appear even though the limits for true Apostles — and their job description — restricted them to the first century (Acts 1, Ephesians 2:20). The average Christian is tossed about by winds of off-beat doctrine.

John Armstrong, a prominent author of apologetic articles and books, now embraces the so-called new — really very old — perspective on justification. "Covenantal nomism," as it is labeled, is a rehashing of progressive justification as taught by



Roman Catholicism and the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches.

The voices of Bill Hybels and Bruce Wilkinson can be heard in Robert Schuller's *Crystal Cathedral*. And if

that was not a kick in the Bible, Tim LaHaye, James Kennedy, and Michael Youseff appear on the Trinity Broadcasting Network to sell their ministries and wares. Test-marketing, not truth, is what many ministries are about today.

A new genre of books has emerged that find theological truth and direction in "R" rated movies. California's Fuller Seminary seems to be the leader in this move to impose theology on current films. *Christianity Today* magazine prints all the news that is unfit to print — and some that *is* fit — because everyone's side must be heard. Evangelicalism is caught in an identity struggle.

Meanwhile, *Charisma* magazine will sell advertising space for any book, (continues on page 13)

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## WHAT A MARRIAGE!

(continued from page 1)

ministry, or conference. Christian bookstores are infected with false teachings. People are looking for nudges, pushes, anointings, and voices they claim are from the Holy Spirit. All this comes in spite of the fact that the Holy Spirit's ministry is to spotlight the glory of Jesus, not give us our daily tingle (John 14-16).

In November 2003, The Evangelical Theological Society voted to retain Clark Pinnock and John Sanders as members. It has covenantal nomism champion N.T. Wright as a speaker.<sup>2</sup> Pluralism is in. Evangelicalism cannot call itself "evangelical" once it has embraced those (Pinnock and Sanders) who embrace views of a fallible God who does not know the future or who question the Apostle Paul's view of the Jews as Wright does. The growing and emerging god of Pinnock is a short step away from the exalted man-god of the Latter-day Saints. One Bible teacher says that all heresies begin with defective views of God. Since Jesus is God, this leaves Pinnock's and others' Christology in trouble. It is not sensible to be an "evangelical" anymore. No one knows what it is.

But that is only half of it.

### OFF THE RICHTER SCALE

We need to *first* analyze the theological earthquake that everyone missed. On Oct. 28, 1965, Pope Paul VI, as a part of Vatican Council II, issued a document called *Perfectae Caritatis*. It was a "Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life."<sup>3</sup>

The practical result of *Perfectae Caritatis* can hardly be measured. It empowered religious orders to embark on "wide-ranging experimentation" and to reinterpret "doctrine in startling ways."<sup>4</sup>

In 1972, David Wells said of the Roman Catholic Council, known as Vatican II (which began in 1962 under Pope John XXIII and culminated under Pope Paul VI with *Perfectae Caritatis*):

"...it is not yet clear which kind of progressive theology will finally emerge as dominant in Catholic teaching. ... The disintegration of institutional Catholicism may lead to a form of belief which is less sympathetic to biblical belief than was traditional Catholicism."<sup>5</sup>

*Perfectae Caritatis* was mistaken to mean that priests were allowed to do wholesale experimentation in any direction and so they began to interpret dogma and doctrine not only in startling ways, but in grossly heretical and evil ways. Brett M. Decker summarizes the devastating effects of the 1965 council:

"The Second Vatican Council was an ecclesiastical Woodstock. It unleashed forces inside the Catholic Church that genuflected to the delusions and experiments of the era rather than raise swords against them. The destruction continues to this day."<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, a do-it-yourself Catholicism began to emerge. It led to encounter groups (the rage in the 1960s and 1970s) where one could explore one's inner self. It led to changes in the liturgy; Latin was abandoned. This may have been one of the more benign results. Yet what followed was more frightening.

Some of the experimental Catholic groups took on a more sinful and sinister change with sexual experimentation and the beginning of a sexual option called the "third way."<sup>7</sup>

Until that time, priests and nuns had two choices, either celibacy or sinfully (in their view) rejecting their vows of celibacy for marriage. The new third way offered sexual libertinism, experimentation, and an outlet while staying in the nunnery or priesthood: no marriage, no celibacy, do as you please. Encounter groups encouraged journaling so that nuns and priests could write out their sexual fantasies as they lived out the third way.

It is not surprising to find out that allegations of pederasty within the priesthood date back to abuse taking place in the mid-1960s when the third

way was beginning. This third way was not endorsed or approved by the Catholic Church, but came out of a perverted use of *Perfectae Caritatis*.

Out of this milieu came a widespread practice of mysticism and meditation.

Mysticism peaked during the Middle Ages and was contained. It was the practice of lesser numbers, some of whom were canonized.<sup>8</sup> Medieval mysticism had a monastic coloring and names like Thomas A. Kempis, Catherine of Siena, Catherine of Genoa, St. Thomas of the Cross, St. Francis of Assisi, and Theresa de Jesus of Avila are well known, even though they lived in the 15th and 16th centuries.<sup>9</sup> The rationale was that maybe days gone by had something to offer us. The Bible was abandoned and experiments and experiences ruled the day.

Occasionally, the mystics (such as Madame Guyon<sup>10</sup>) took mysticism to such levels that even the Catholic Church excommunicated them. Some mystics believed they were merging with God or Jesus. Extreme forms of mysticism are pure pantheism, teaching that all is God and God is all.

Other mystics of the Middle Ages claimed stigmata (crucifixion wounds in the hands, feet, and head) as if they were suffering as Jesus. B.B. Warfield called it a "morbid neurosis" and "pathological phenomena."<sup>11</sup> We know from Hebrews 10 (esp., v. 10) that Jesus only suffered once, so if there was no fraud, our only option would be stigmata or wounds which are the work of demons. Even the staunch Roman Catholic priest Ignatius Loyola declared that stigmata "might just as well have been the work of the devil as of God."<sup>12</sup>

We have considered the earthquake that was *Perfectae Caritatis* and its far-ranging and pervasive effects on the Catholic world. We must *secondly* consider the emergence of Catholic mysticism in our time.

Unfortunately, there are shallow and imprecise clichés that obscure meanings and confuse greatly. For instance, Warren Wiersbe quotes favorably an inaccurate statement of G.

Campbell Morgan which says, "Christianity is mysticism."<sup>13</sup> That is as wrong as saying all doctors practice medicine. Doctors of Music, Sociology, or Theology do not practice medicine. Generalizations in this area really confuse things. Belief in the supernatural or in miracles does not make one a mystic.

Though there are elements of true Christianity that are miraculous, mysterious, and mystical, this in no way constitutes mysticism. With pure mystics, feelings and experiences are first, foremost, and, in most cases, the only thing necessary. Mysticism is about the mystic; very little external content is required. It is a truncated view of the devotional life. With pure mysticism, doctrine is in most cases unnecessary, ignored, and considered something for unspiritual people. They refer to God and Jesus, but forge God and Jesus in subjective constructs.

Though mystics may tip their hat to the Bible, they believe that the presence of God is more direct and real *inside* them. It is not based on definitions of God, but on experiences *with* God that are better left undefined. They define God as undefinable, therefore unknowable, although they do not realize it. They believe that God is what one "feels" Him to be. They do not consider that God Himself wishes to be known in biblical categories, yet that is the way He Himself declares, discloses, and defines Himself.

They meet who they say is God through centering in, quieting down, and meditating in a trance. Followers are often told to "journal" these feelings and impressions, which they think may be God. The "journal" messages are not seen to be self or demonically inspired, but God's Word to and for them. Certainly this is a bogus re-enactment of revelation and inspiration; that is, in no other terms, new revelation. This is what the cults claim with their channel of divine communication and additional "scriptures" such as *The Book of Mormon*.

Mystics believe, or are told, that God is so accessible in this way that we can become absorbed into His being. They stop short of saying we

become God, though some mystics suggest this is possible.<sup>14</sup> This is supposedly more than just receiving inner joy from the truths of the Gospel and the promises of God. This is subjective immersion into God Himself, or vice versa. At times, it obscures Creator and creature, and has the clay somehow climbing into the potter, or just the opposite.

So the mystic wants direct, immediate, unmediated access to God *within himself* and believes God will talk to us from inside of ourselves. This is far removed from the biblical truth that all God's children can enjoy His promises and step into His throne room through prayer. We have been freed from ourselves to go to the Word and to our Heavenly Father in prayer. Mysticism is the equivalent of the child's, "My daddy loves me far more and gives me far more than all my brothers and sisters." Yet with it comes the added baggage of "But I am not quite sure of who my daddy is or what he looks like, and you can't be, either."

Winfried Corduan offers D.D. Martin's definition of mysticism as "an experienced, direct, nonabstract, unmediated knowing of God, a knowing or seeing so direct as to be called union with God."<sup>15</sup> It is a funhouse mirror distortion of elements of Christianity. Yes, God works in us as we work out our salvation (Philippians 2:12-13), and though that is marvelous and mysterious, it is not what the mystics are saying.

Mysticism is directed inward. True spirituality, while nurturing the inner man through the Bible and prayer, is primarily directed outward to God in worship and to service and holy living. Mysticism tries to be all Mary, all the time, while true spirituality seeks a balanced life of being both Mary and Martha.

One would think that the Christian would be leery of mysticism because forms of mysticism are embraced by Hindus, Indian medicine men, and Cabalists.<sup>16</sup> Scripture declares that what's inside us is a sinful heart and — in the case of Christian believers — an old nature. Our feelings are untrustworthy. Thinking (or really non-

thinking) without content is dangerous and may open the mind to deception or demons.

Unfortunately, throwing around clichés like "God spoke to me," "God told me," or the "Spirit spoke to me" are forms of mysticism<sup>17</sup> and a far cry from getting rich blessing and motivation to worship and grow from the Bible. Believers must not dismiss the subjective side of Christianity, but should not elevate it beyond what it is. Emotions are the "cart" as it were, and the Scriptures must be the "horse."

Though Jesus may communicate to us at deep levels, it is only as the Holy Spirit illumines the Word to our minds and spirits that we find real direction. Mystics do in fact (though quoting the Bible for support) marginalize the Bible, which is a serious and destructive thing. Healthy Christian growth must be directed by the Bible (Psalm 119). Real information and solid objective knowledge of God and Christ must come from God's Word, which gives us propositional revelation for life and godliness (2 Timothy 3:15-17, 2 Peter 1:3-4). It is only in a manner of speaking that we say God speaks to us through the Bible. We must process internally what God has given us externally. It is then to be lived out.

Real meditation always involves thinking deeply on God's work, God's ways, and God's Word. We must also remember the believer's direct relationship with God through mediation. Corduan reminds us:

"It is obvious that mediation plays a crucial role in the Bible. Paul states that the Old Testament law was mediated (Gal. 3:19-20). But most important, Jesus Christ is our mediator to God (1 Tim. 2:5). There is no access to God, except through him. Therefore it would appear that no unmediated link to God is possible for us."<sup>18</sup>

Jesus said, "No man comes to the Father but through Me." He did not say, "You can take the direct route on the express bus called meditation and contemplative prayer." Contemplative

prayer is a misnomer for trance-like quietness. No words are needed.

The Old Testament people could not live for one minute in the unmediated presence of God and shook with fear at Sinai. God gave them Moses, priests, a Tabernacle, sacrifices, and His Word to shield them, as it were, from His blinding awesome justice and holiness. Isaiah shares that his experience of God (with God obscured behind angels' wings) had him on his face in fear crying for cleansing (Isaiah 6).

A softening-up process was going on at the margins of Catholicism in the early 1900s with the writings of Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941). Her literary efforts exerted great influence. She is described by Willard Weinrich in this way:

"Underhill became an internationally recognized authority in mystical theology, and her book *Mysticism* (1911) became a standard text in that discipline. In *Worship* (1936), Underhill studied the nature and forms of Christian worship."<sup>19</sup>

## OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Catholic mysticism grew out of the ignorance and superstition of the Middle Ages and began to emerge in larger measures in the 1960s because of Perfectae Caritatis. It is no coincidence that the Catholic Charismatic Movement (CCM) gathered huge momentum at that time. The CCM was a stepsister to mysticism and had many claiming deeper devotion to Mary and dead saints, along with more commitment to the sacraments, the Eucharistic host, and the other mystical elements of priestcraft and the Eucharist.

Vatican II opened Roman Catholicism to pluralism or the validity of each and every person's experience. The German priest Karl Rahner stepped up with a new, all-embracing view. With John Paul II validating Rahner's cliché of "anonymous Christians" (that is, everyone in the world has grace even if they don't know it), a new universalism emerged. Rahner became "one of the most influential theologians of Vatican II."<sup>20</sup> Cathol-

cism embraced the world, therefore the world was a Catholic of some sort whether it realized it or not.

To demonstrate Rahner's influence and longevity, one must only read Pope John Paul II's manifesto, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*:

"There is only one community and it consists of all peoples. ... trusting hearts, can become capable either of reaching a state of perfect liberation, or of attaining, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination."<sup>21</sup>

The Pope further said, when discussing Hinduism and Buddhism, there is "the existence of the so-called *semina Verbi* (seeds of the Word), present in all religions. ... a kind of *common soteriological root present in all religions. ... with God, man 'creates' his personal salvation.*"<sup>22</sup>

It was a shoo-in. Perfectae Caritatis, Rahner, and the Pope then and now were the axis of influence and power to create new fault lines in the Roman Catholic world. There are now a number of different Catholicisms.

Incidentally, during this period (1950s and 1960s) Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, and James M. Robinson introduced existential philosophy to the interpretation of the New Testament.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, biblical history was being dumbed down in neo-Orthodoxy.

The existential mindset (what works for each individual is acceptable) reasoned that because all experiences were valid and we could give subjective interpretations to them, the medieval mystics who scraped themselves inside and had superior experience with God, were perhaps deeper and more authentic versions of Christianity. No one thought or suggested that sleep-deprivation or malnutrition left them mentally unbalanced and emotionally unstable.

What eluded these experimenters was the fact that direct revelation and inspiration were unique in God's program. For instance, we would never want the plagues of Egypt repeated. Neither would we want local

churches emptied out (starting with the pulpit) with the Ananias and Sapphira treatment (Acts 5). Walking on water and multiplying food is a little unusual. Dipping in the Jordan no longer cures leprosy.

It is no surprise then to hear Catholic writer William Johnston (1991) say that "we are witnessing a spiritual revolution of great magnitude in the whole world ... the rise of a new school of mysticism within Christianity ... It is growing year by year."<sup>24</sup> Johnson calls this so-called revolution "Christian Zen" because of its affinity to Buddhism.

The underlying presupposition here is that we can only know God through the mystical path. After all, one pope said go experiment and another gives his approval to Hindus. To get onto the mystical path we just need to practice contemplative prayer. We can shut our minds down and wait for a peak experience or a *eureka* moment when we merge into God. Not only is it spine-tingling fun, but it is sure a lot easier than Bible study.

## WHERE IS GOD — REALLY?

Being born again is an act of God (John 1:12, 5:24) in which God changes us within and the new life is worked out in many practical ways. Because God's work in salvation is mysterious, it does not mean we have to constantly try to climb back into ourselves to try to find God there. As we think of the wonderful blessings of God, our prayer goes upward and outward. Prayer that works on a boomerang principle is not prayer at all. Prayer expresses trust and dependence, and if God blesses our prayers, it is only by His mercy and grace.

The cry of the mystical movement is that we must get back into the contemplative life. Catholic apologist Thomas Keating declared that, "The Pontiff declared that unless the Church rediscovered the contemplative life, renewal couldn't take place."<sup>25</sup> According to the Pope, there can be no genuine spirituality without mysticism.

Contemplative prayer is nothing more than the exercises of eastern religions and New Agers. It is slip-

ping into a trance-like state by quieting the mind. One may focus on some symbol or even chant a mantra, even though Jesus said that we are not to be involved with vain repetitions (Matthew 5:5-8).

One mystical trainer said it best:

"The classical experience of enlightenment as described by Buddhist monks, Hindu gurus, *Christian mystics*, Aboriginal shamans, Sufi sheiks and Hebrew kabalists is characterized by two universal elements: radiant light and an experience of oneness with creation."<sup>26</sup>

The LSD trippers and sacred mushroom consumers in the 1960s and 1970s did the same thing.

Thus, it is no big surprise then to see books like *Zen Contemplation for Christians* by Roman Catholic nun Elaine MacInnes or *Zen Catholicism* by Dom Aelred Graham. On the Catholic side, other writers carried the flag. John Main, Brennan Manning, and Matthew Fox are three of many.

We should be saying, "There is no evangelical that would be fooled by all this — not us." However, a number of so-called evangelicals are taking us down the road to the Contemplative Life. As evangelicalism abandons the belief in the sufficiency of Scripture, their undirected minds will be overtaken by mystical fads and trends.

Author Ray Yungen affirms:

"...moving towards the contemplative camp is the so-called mainline Protestant tradition (Episcopalians, United Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, United Church of Christ, etc.). ... A sales person at a bookstore that caters to these denominations once told me the contemplative prayer view has found a large audience in the Protestant mainstream and many pastors are open to these practices."<sup>27</sup>

## WEDDING EVANGELICALISM TO MYSTICISM

The more Evangelicalism creates problems arising from Bible abandon-

ment, the greater it will lust for its new bride as an answer. There are many bridesmaids and groomsmen. And while there is not enough space to catalog all of them, a limited sampling will be offered with a focus on one considered evangelical as a representative example. Our example is Richard Foster. We will see how Evangelicalism progressed — or rather digressed — to sanction Foster.

Bridging the way was M. Scott Peck. Peck was a Buddhist when he wrote his best-seller *The Road Less Traveled*. Nevertheless, this book, with its unbiblical concepts, ended up in Christian bookstores. Even though mammoth sales were the primary reason for its prominence in Christian bookstores, Peck gave the merchants another reason by claiming a conversion to Christianity. No one listened when PFO<sup>28</sup> and others issued sharp critiques. Even Wayne House and Richard Abanes' 1995 book-length critique *The Road Less Traveled and the Bible* was largely ignored. The two authors documented that when Peck was not "meditating," he was into swearing, pornography, and extra-marital sex.<sup>29</sup>

Peck was happy to write about his escapades in subsequent books. The above shows us that the mystical way is not a more deeply spiritual way. Peck softened up undiscerning minds to the free-for-all.

No one except the largely ignored counter-cult ministries stopped to check and uncover that Peck had simply moved toward old forms of mysticism that were beginning to emerge in Protestantism. His later books gave away the secret and it was too late for Christian bookstores to apologize. The money was already made.

Not surprisingly, the books of Trappist monk Thomas Merton began to sell briskly. Merton, who died in 1968, became the new spearhead of Catholic mysticism. He had been making forays into eastern mysticism for years. He was a profound mystic who ultimately became a recluse. His ideas were so old that many thought they were new. Merton merged Buddhism and Hinduism with non-violence and

Christianity, although Christianity got short shrift. His *The Seven Storey Mountain* (a spiritual autobiography) "became a world best-seller."<sup>30</sup> Marketing pushed Merton into formerly evangelical bookstores.

It is amazing that nearly no one objects when Merton is quoted favorably by one considered evangelical, namely Richard Foster.<sup>31</sup>

It came as no surprise to this writer when a brochure arrived from that former bastion of Methodism, the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association, advertising an interfaith seminar on two models of spiritual life and practice. The two-day seminar is called "Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen as Brothers: Contemplation, Community, and Compassion."<sup>32</sup> Nouwen, also a priest, has written on contemplative prayer. We can be assured that John Wesley, if he were alive, would have had a massive coronary.

Neither was it a surprise to read in the *Christian News* that Fatima was to become an interfaith shrine. The shrine's rector, Msgr. Luciano Guerra, met with contingents of Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and even African Pagans. At the ecumenical celebrations, Father Jacques Dupuis declared:

"The other religious traditions in the world are part of God's plan for humanity ... The universality of God's kingdom permits this, and this is nothing more than a diversified form of sharing in the same mystery of salvation. In the end it is hoped that the Christian will become a better Christian and each Hindu a better Hindu."<sup>33</sup>

*Christianity Today* reported that contemplative guru Brennan Manning is "arguably, evangelicals' favorite Catholic" and goes on to report: "Later this year, *CT* will feature an article on the way Manning has endeared himself to evangelicals. Among them are spiritual director and psychotherapist Larry Crabb, and musicians Michael W. Smith and Michael Card."<sup>34</sup>

Very few realize that the "Chicken Soup" series slips in stories that favor

metaphysical and New Age concepts. Also, modern mystical writers appeal to some of the somewhat mystical statements of people like John Wesley to soften criticisms, though Wesley was a universe away from Hinduism and the like.

The wedding day was getting close. Peck and Merton carried the momentum generated by *Perfectae Caritatis*. More joined the wedding party with evangelicalism and eastern mysticism/meditation/centering prayer.

There are numerous other lesser-known writers and books, but one of the more obvious, as noted, is Richard Foster. He is a paradigm of the rest and a key figure in the marriage. Foster is the most insidious because he is the most widely accepted. He tries to be careful to massage and finesse his terms, but there is only so much he can do. He mentions sacraments and such things, and his *Renovare* (renewal) movement is highly ecumenical, encouraging all-inclusive community.

Foster is highly committed to Merton and the writings of French priest Fenelon (1651-1715). Fenelon was a fellow traveler with Madame Guyon. Foster was trained at George Fox College, which is a Quaker school and may explain some of his propensities. Quakers, also called The Society of Friends, were founded by George Fox (1624-1691), and taught "mystical theology" and had an emphasis on "the illumination of human minds by God's 'inner light' [which] led to a belief in continuing revelation."<sup>35</sup> In short, Quakers listen to God in their hearts, not necessarily in their Bibles. For them, faith comes not from the Word of God (Romans 10:17), but from somewhere inside.

Others certainly have sounded the warning about Foster. In his incredible book, *Occult Invasion*, Dave Hunt brings us the following:

"Richard Foster, whom we will discuss in more detail in a later chapter, became a new guru to evangelicals with his 1978 best-seller *Celebration of Discipline*. It opened many Christians to the occult by instructing readers in occult techniques (including vi-

sualization of Christ). Foster advocated 'centering down' through Eastern mystical techniques and meditating upon nature."<sup>36</sup>

Hunt further writes:

"Richard Foster advocates the visualization of Jesus, as do David Seamands, H. Norman Wright, and other Christian psychologists. Christians are badly deceived when they imagine that Christ will forsake the Father's right hand to appear to them when they visualize Him."<sup>37</sup>

Foster says, "*We of the New Age can risk going against the tide. Let us with abandon relish the fantasy games of children. Let's see visions and dream dreams.*"<sup>38</sup> Foster also gives kudos to occultist Agnes Sanford, saying, "I have been greatly helped in my understanding of the value of the imagination in praying for others by Agnes Sanford."<sup>39</sup>

Foster is a promoter of contemplative prayer. Contemplative prayer is:

"...the universal concept of becoming totally silent, of listening to 'God.' Used by Buddhist monks, Rosicrucians, the early Church mystics, New Agers, and many Christians, contemplative or meditative prayer is a method of becoming deeply quiet and going into the 'center of oneself, in order to merge with the divine.' The 'center' is an altered state of consciousness. The divine' varies, according to one's belief."<sup>40</sup>

Foster advocates practices that are familiar to occultists. Among them is a form of almost astral projection, meditation, visualization, and guided imagery.

Consider Foster's own words in his *Celebration of Discipline*:

"...lie down on your back looking up at blue sky and white clouds. ... After awhile there is a deep yearning within to go into the upper regions beyond the clouds. In your imagination allow your spiritual body, shining with light, to rise out of your physical body. Look back so that you can see

yourself lying in the grass and reassure your body that you will return momentarily. Imagine your spiritual self, alive and vibrant, rising up through the clouds and into the stratosphere. Observe your physical body, the knoll, and the forest shrink as you leave the earth. Go deeper and deeper into outer space until there is nothing except the warm presence of the eternal Creator. Rest in His presence. Listen quietly, anticipating the unanticipated. Note carefully any instruction given."<sup>41</sup>

Because this exercise is never commanded or advised in Scripture, it is frightening to imagine what realm we are putting ourselves into and who may be addressing us. However, because God has not instructed us that He communicates to us in this way, all that is left is ourselves — or demons — talking to ourselves.

Modern mystics think nothing of using Bible verses taken out of context. One is: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

However, take notice that the whole Psalm is dealing with the judgment of God and directed outward, not inward. Not a word here is spoken about finding God's voice in our soul. The verse does not say be still and hear something, but rather be still and know. Knowing is cognitive. Our minds are still to be operating.

The word "still" in Hebrew is literally *harpou*, which means to cease. The verse in context means that we should not provoke God or question His dealing, especially in judgment. We need to stand back and let God work without questioning His sovereignty and rights over His creation. We are to really think about who God is in all His power. We are to shut our mouths, as it were, when it comes to God's right to act and punish evil.

We could paraphrase it: "Just keep your mouth shut and realize Whom you are dealing with." It could be said to be an Old Testament equivalent of Romans 3:19, "that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world guilty before God."

In fact, God is so in charge we don't even have to fear if mountains are moved and the seas are troubled (Psalm 46:1-2). Verse 8 says, "come behold the works of God," not center in to listen for that still, small voice. We can relax because God is in control. This is anything but self-focused — it is clearly God-focused.

Our *final point* is extracting ourselves from the mire of mysticism. The wedding is an unbiblical marriage and we should not attend it, hang out at the reception, or welcome its babies.

We may be asked the following by a mystic: "If Jesus is in us, that is, if He really indwells every believer, does it not make sense that we can talk to Him and He to us inside of us? Inside of us is really where we get turned on and tuned into God. Inside us is really where all the action is."

This seems to be Foster's approach. After quoting a number of Catholic mystics — not the Bible — he writes:

"One way to nurture simplicity is through the discipline of silence. Society is dominated by the inane notion that action is the only reality. Please, for God's sake and your own, don't just do something, stand there! Come in and enjoy his presence. Sink down into the light of Christ and become comfortable in that posture. Open the subterranean sanctuary of your soul and listen for *Kol Yahweh*, the voice of the Lord. To do so gives us focus, unity, purpose."<sup>42</sup>

So we are to be still and God's voice somehow will speak in us or to us from somewhere inside. We just have to sink down into Christ. This is terrible advice. One's Christian life does not consist of looking at what the world is doing and then going to the opposite extreme. If so, then it really means believers are still taking their cues from the world. As such, the world is still a mirror and springboard. This kind of ping-pong existence is never advised in the Bible. Doing the opposite of what everyone else is doing may still be wrong. Slowing down is fine and less stress in life is fine as well. However, Foster

is not advocating just having less stress in our lives.

Yes, Christ is in the believer (Colossians 1:27), but He is in us for regeneration and salvation, not communication. The Bible does not say that the indwelling Christ is there for communication, but it does say He is there for regeneration and, one day, glorification (John 1:12-13, 10:10). He is the quiet house guest, doing His work unseen.

In Galatians 1:16, Paul says, "God revealed His Son *in me*." Paul does not make even the slightest suggestion that the indwelling Christ is in Him for communication. This is not for a mystical *tete-a-tete* that Paul has in view. God's Son in him equaled salvation, according to verse 15. Christ's power in salvation would empower Paul to preach Jesus to others (v. 16). Paul is outer-directed.

In Galatians 2:20, Paul says that Christ living in him allows him to live out a Christ-like life. No hint of mystical messages from inside.

The Church has always understood that Jesus' indwelling was for regeneration. Daniel Whittle's chorus from his wonderful hymn, "Christ Liveth in Me," says, "Christ liveth in me, Christ liveth in me, O what a salvation this, that Christ liveth in me." Whittle knew exactly that Christ indwelt Him — and *why*.

It is very wrong to say that because we cannot find God's voice in the bustle of the world then, *Voila!* We will find Him speaking inside of us.

The lines of communication are abundantly clear in the Bible. God addresses us and directs us, and metaphorically we could say He *speaks to us* through the Bible. We speak to Him in prayer. We should not want more than God has given us.

When Jesus talked in John 10:16 about "hearing" His voice, He was saying "those that are real sheep will obey my voice" or "obey my orders." The Greek root used for hear is *akouo*, which is a term of intimacy and indicates they really get the whole message of who Jesus is as Savior and Shepherd, as well as its implications. Once again, we have no indication

that we are to hear an inner voice. Moreover, where are His orders found? In the Bible, of course. Note that Jesus did not say the origin of His voice is inside His sheep.

In Matthew 28:20, He said we are to "observe all things that I have commanded," that is, found in all of Scripture. He will address us there. We should love "hearing" from our Savior in His Word.

The contemplative-prayer movement is a subtle way to rob us of the Savior's words and a life of obedience. It is a form of false godliness, lacking clear biblical direction and power. One may ask, "Does God ever speak to you?" My answer is "Yes — all the time — in the Scriptures." It is wonderful to encounter God in dynamic ways immersed, for instance, in Psalm 119.

Some would teach that if we knew nothing of the Bible and the words of Christ, it would not be all that bad. According to Foster, we would not necessarily need that since God's primary and deepest way of "speaking" to us is somehow inside us. If God truly speaks words from inside of us, why even bother going to the Book? Yet the Bible teaches that faith can only come by the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

We must remember and affirm that Jesus is primarily in the believer for regeneration and salvation, not communication. Our communication to God is through prayer. God's established mode of communication with us is His inspired Book, illumined by the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:1-14 is very instructive. The figure is turned around and we are said to be in Christ (v. 1) with regard to position and safekeeping. His being in us regards His giving us life and dynamic for change along with giving us His fulfillment of the Law (v. 4). With Jesus and His Spirit in us, we now really belong and it is an eternal belonging (v. 9). Christ regenerates us and gives us life, and ultimately glorification (vv. 10-11). Such a wonderful message — so much more exciting and fulfilling than the mystic's dream — should make us want to serve Him.

Some might protest, saying, "What about, 'For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones' (Ephesians 5:30)? Does this not mean there is a mystical intertwining and some kind of mystical merging going on? It sounds almost like we become Christ in some sense."

That kind of reasoning shows a lack of understanding of both context and Jewish metaphor. The context of Ephesians 5 is marriage. To push the metaphor into the mystical realm would require the husband to become the wife and vice versa, or for the two to blend into an asexual being.

The contextual meaning is that Paul is speaking of our covenantal union with Christ and so, marriage is to be a sacred covenantal union. As the bride and groom function in individual roles of submission and nurturing, it illustrates the covenantal union of Christ and believers. They are to be one in mind and purpose while maintaining their individual roles and personalities.

It is no accident that Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 for his illustration. Adam said Eve was "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." This was a way to describe covenantal union and Adam knew that he did not become Eve and she did not become him. Ephesians 5 is evidence against mysticism, not for it. Friends can say of our children, "I can see their mom and dad in them," and we know what they mean. Or we say, "They are our flesh and blood" and others understand. Our union with Christ gives us position and covenantal union, not literal absorption into Christ or Christ into us.

One very strange spin-off to all of this could be called post-mortem mysticism, in which some suggest that merging into Christ and one another would happen at the resurrection. Here would be the loss of all identity as the bride becomes Christ. These kinds of quirks need not even be addressed. Scripture verifies personal identity after death and into eternity.

All we have to do is connect the historical dots and we will know where we are and how we arrived. The teaching of Scripture is a far cry from the mystics' message that leaves

us in a fog of feeling, listening for voices when we should be looking for verses. The Bible way gives us more — not less — than the mystic's way, which is truly empty. It is spiritually harmful to think that one has latched into God when one is merely talking to one's self or, far worse, to demons.

### Endnotes:

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3. See further, *Catholic Almanac*. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1983, pg. 135.
4. Joyce Milton, *The Road To Malpsychia*. San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002, pg. 141.
5. David F. Wells, *Revolution in Rome*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1972, pp. 10, 96.
6. Brett M. Decker, "The Vatican II Sham." (Decker's article is a review of *The Great Facade*, a book by Christopher A. Ferrara and Thomas E. Woods, Jr.) Reprinted in *Christian News*, Jan. 12, 2004, pg. 11.
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8. See further, Benjamin B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles*. Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972, pp. 1-100.
9. See further, Henry C. Sheldon, *Pantheistic Dilemmas*. New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1920, pp. 244-246.
10. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The Mindless Mysticism of Madame Guyon," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1997, pp. 4, 12-15.
11. *Counterfeit Miracles*, op. cit., pg. 87.
12. Ignatius Loyola quoted by Warfield, *ibid.*, pg. 85.
13. Warren Wiersbe, *Real Worship*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 2000, pg. 26.
14. See further, "The Mindless Mysticism of Madame Guyon," op. cit.
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16. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-37.
17. See further, M. Kurt Goedelman, "A Journey into Mysticland," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 2003, pp. 5-10; and G. Richard Fisher with M. Kurt Goedelman, "Experiencing Mysticism — Critiquing the Teachings of Henry Blackaby," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 2003, pp. 4-16.

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19. Willard Weinrich in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, Editors, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991, pg. 269.
20. J.D. Douglas, Editor, *Twentieth-Century Dictionary of Christian Biography*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1995, pg. 311.
21. John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, 1994, pp. 78, 80, italics in original.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 195, italics in original.
23. See further, Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997, pp. 9-13.
24. William Johnston quoted by Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing*. Silverton, Ore.: Lighthouse Trails Publishing Company, 2002, pg. 33, ellipsis in original.
25. Thomas Keating quoted by Yungen, *ibid.*, pg. 42.
26. Michael J. Gelb quoted by Yungen, *ibid.*, pg. 53, italics by Yungen.
27. *Ibid.*, pg. 43.
28. See further, G. Richard Fisher, "The Road Not Traveled," *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1994, pp. 1, 14-15.
29. H. Wayne House and Richard Abanes, *The Road Less Traveled and the Bible*, Camp Hill, Pa.: Horizon Books, 1995, pp. 232-233.
30. *Twentieth-Century Dictionary of Christian Biography*, op. cit., pg. 252.
31. Richard J. Foster, *Freedom of Simplicity*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1981, pp. 56, 138.
32. Conference brochure for the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association.
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36. Dave Hunt, *Occult Invasion*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1998, pg. 204.
37. *Ibid.*, pg. 475.
38. Richard Foster quoted by Hunt, *ibid.*, pg. 482, italics in original.
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40. Brenda Scott and Samantha Smith, *Trojan Horse*. Lafayette, La.: Huntington House Publishers, 1993, pg. 109, italics in original.
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