The history of social movements has taught us that it is neither sheer numbers that win, nor the charisma of a particular leader, the logical soundness of an ideology, the unusual social and economic contexts, military force, nor anything else that is statistically commensurable. If anything, it is the spirit of the collective movement that determines the success or failure of its objectives.

The aforementioned factors absolutely influence the direction and speed of a movement. Moreover, however, it is the individual’s level of commitment, emotional assurance, and sense of duty amidst the larger whole that establishes this spirit and the transmission of the movement’s interests. Simply said, whoever is most “unashamed” wins.

Nevertheless, in this contemporary culture of relativism, emotional detachment, individualistic hedonism, and the deconstruction of any source, expression, or result of duty, this spirit of assurance is horrifically unaccepted. To have an absolute belief in anything or anyone is now reviled. To believe in purpose, meaning, and duty is considered to be infantile. To live with an ethical foundation based on any set of principles is labeled as fanatical and outdated. Everything has failed, nothing has meaning, and all is hopeless. All we can hope for is to live selfishly without offending anyone.

This has resulted in a generation of apathetic, lost, indifferent, and indecisive young people. Political correctness has evolved from mere guidelines to a domineering bully. Passion has degenerated into biological hormones, religion into rhetoric, and spirituality into a neuropathological condition. Any “ism” is seen as a form of social control. Believing in nothing with no emotional attachment or logical rigor is the ideal nirvana to be reached.

The greatest tragic effect on this generation is that simply, boredom has set—not temporary boredom, but boredom on the largest scale possible—with life itself. We used to fear the allure of evil. But now we fear a generation that could care less about good and evil, one that is bored with good and evil altogether.

Amidst this context, there exists an army of dedicated young people who knowingly and unknowingly are fighting against these currents of existential anomie. Injected with the spiritual currents from Scripture, these “young people within the Seventh-day Adventist church... yearn to demonstrate Nehemiah’s leadership, Daniel’s integrity, Mary’s humility, Paul’s passion for evangelism, and Christ’s love for God and humanity.”

This new movement—the GYC—convenes annually to seek and galvanize such young people, pointing them to a higher cause, if not the highest cause: the distinctive message and mission of the Adventist church towards the proclamation of the Three Angels’ Messages.

The 2009 conference’s theme is “Unashamed.” It is a pushback against the ideological and cultural currents of our day and to reclaim those parts of our identity that not only make us assuredly Christian,
but also assuredly created and happy human beings, satisfied with the antibored “more abundant life” that Christ promised to all. It is focused on the raw boldness so thirsted after in every sphere of society.

This issue takes the best articulations of this “Unashamed” reaction and formats them into one compilation. First, this perspective is seen not only from one generation but two current ones. From a more energetic generation, Sebastien Braxton diagnoses the issue where symptoms include the paucity of realness and suggests an etiology of shame. From a wiser generation, Raymond Holmes takes the perspective homiletically to parse a scriptural understanding and answer to the “right way of thinking.”

Samuel Pipim and Mark Howard identify the theological and ecclesiological lack of boldness and originality in the Adventist church. The former takes on the denial of our Adventist identity and mission in the realm of spirituality: prayer, spiritual exercises, meditation, and other movements that have claimed to be the answer to the aforementioned times. The latter takes on the denial of the Spirit of Prophecy and the lack of boldness to believe in one of the distinctive identifying marks of biblical Adventism.

Real-time scenarios of the “Unashamed” reaction have also been collated to prove its efficacy. The testimony of Deniza Hush is an actual conversion story of a Muslim who struggled in this culture with so many “isms,” and finally arrived at truth, regardless of sacrifice, price, or persecution. Nomthandazo Malambo explains the necessity of this unashamed faith not only to survive on secular universities such as Harvard, but also to promulgate the Gospel message on campus itself. Also Paul Howe writes of the missiological necessity of boldness in the Adventist world church, especially when doing evangelistic work in Ethiopia. The lessons learned in Ethiopia have immense global ramifications evangelistically.

Lastly, Dave Fiedler and Mark Finley draw two maps where the former delineates the historical stages of the Great Controversy from the beginning, highlighting what is actually at stake when we forsake our boldness and unashamedness. The latter points forward with five steps to the road to spiritual revival, a formula to repeat the Pentecost event and to move forward the Gospel against the tides of mediocrity, conditional ethics, meaninglessness, and boredom – foremost in our own hearts.

The timing of this conference and this issue could not have been more providential. They are designed to let all Adventists Affirm that they are “unashamed” to preach the everlasting gospel bequeathed to them. We must start now to plead for the Holy Spirit boldly. It is “not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Zech 4:6). Let us seek this untreated, unprocessed, organic courage, and audaciously dare to be unashamed in this church, this culture, in this world – for we have not confidence in ourselves, but in Him for His glory!

Endnotes
1 http://gycweb.org/about/missionStatement.html
Have you heard any of the following terms: Prayer labyrinth, taizé prayer, spiritual disciplines, spiritual formation, and spiritual directors? What about God-encounters, the silence, sacred spaces of meditation, contemplative prayer, centering prayer, breath prayer, and Jesus prayer?

Welcome to the new age of inter-spirituality, mystical or contemplative spirituality—and its many ways of encountering God.

Currently championed by advocates and sympathizers of the "signs and wonders,” "emergent church,” and "worship renewal” movements, these new spiritualities are being woven into the beliefs and practices of Christian churches, youth organizations, and educational institutions.

This brief summary –distilled from a six-part presentation I will be making at the GYC convention in Louisville, Kentucky (December 30, 2009-January 3, 2010)—is designed to inform and warn about the new “Trojan horses” that are being wheeled into our churches.1

The Old and New Trojan Horses

The term “Trojan horse” comes to us from the Greek story of the destruction of the fortified city of Troy. According to the account, after fighting the soldiers of ancient Troy for 10 years, the Greeks grew weary from battle. They felt that besieging the city and a frontal attack would not do the job. They needed a more subtle approach.

A wily Greek named Odysseus ordered a large hollow wooden horse to be built. Upon completion of the project some soldiers were locked inside the belly of the hollow horse. The remaining 100,000 Greek soldiers, pretending to retreat permanently, sailed out of sight in their 1,000 ships—leaving the now-famous wooden Trojan horse in front of the walled city.

However, one Greek, Sinon, was deliberately left behind by the Greeks—as a spy. After the soldiers appeared to sail away, the Trojans came to marvel at the huge creation. They found Sinon, who pretended to be angry with his fellow Greeks, stating that they had deserted him. He assured the Trojans that the wooden horse was safe and would bring luck to the Trojans.

Only two Trojans, Laocōön and Cassandra, spoke out against the horse. They warned the leaders of Troy about the horse, saying, “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts.” But the citizens ignored the warning. Instead, celebrating what they thought was their victory over the Greeks, the Trojans wheeled the wooden horse inside the walled city.

That night, after most of Troy was asleep or in a drunken stupor, Sinon the spy let the Greek warriors out from the horse, opened the city gates, and signaled the waiting ships to return. Soon a thousand Greeks streamed into the city, killed all the inhabitants of Troy, and razed the city to rubble.

Thus, through covert deception, the Greeks accomplished what they could not do by direct assault. It is
from this account that we get the “Trojan horse” phrase; an expression that has since come to refer to deception and treachery disguised as a blessing.

The story, even as a parable, applies appropriately to our times—“Beware of Greeks bearing gifts.” We need to beware of the many “Trojan horses” that are being wheeled into our churches. As documented in the book *Here We Stand: New Trends in the Church*, the Trojan horses are the biblically questionable teachings and practices that are making their way into our institutions and churches.²

In recent times, however, far more dangerous hollow horses are subtly rolling into the church in the guise of new spirituality. Today’s Trojan horses have been wheeled from practices in Eastern religions (such as Buddhism and Hinduism), the rehabilitated medieval contemplative spirituality of the Catholic church, the “inner divine light” of Quakerism, and the emerging spirituality recommended by influential emergent theologians and leaders of some mega-churches.

Thus, today, we hear phrases such as: interspirituality, postmodern spirituality, creative or rediscovered spirituality, mystical spirituality, contemplative spirituality, spiritual directors, spiritual formation, spiritual tourism, experiential spirituality, the silence, the sacred spaces of meditation, and many new forms of enriching one’s devotional life.

Could these new ways of being “spiritual” actually be oldfashioned spiritualism disguised in new clothes? Are we honestly mistaken about today’s “God-encounters” and the other attempts to reach higher levels of spirituality? Could these be “the Omega” of deadly heresies? Several years ago, in the face of pantheistic teachings threatening our church, Ellen G. White warned:

> Today there are coming into educational institutions and into the churches everywhere spiritualistic teachings that undermine faith in God and in His word. . . . [B]ut however beautifully clothed, this theory is a most dangerous deception. . . . The result of accepting it is separation from God (Ministry of Healing, p. 428). This warning may be more relevant to our times than we may think.³

**The Trojan Horses From the East**

The foundation for the new spiritualities was laid in the 1960s and 70s by the pantheistic teachings of the New Age movement which is an adaptation of Buddhist and Hindu religious practices to the western world. This movement is syncretistic, in that it incorporates any number of spiritual and religious ideologies at one time.

The New Age movement is consistently monistic (the belief that all of reality is essentially one) and pantheistic (the belief that everything, including man himself, is divine). For, if all is one, and there are no distinctions, then all is God. Or, in the words of New Age leader Shirley Maclaine “I am God, because all energy is plugged in to the same source. . . . We are individualized reflections of the God source. God is us and we are God.” ⁴

In recent times, this New Age doctrine has been popularized by Unity minister Eric Butterworth, in his bestselling “inspirational classic” Discover the Power Within You: A Guide to the Unexplored Depths Within. He writes:

> “The great sin of mankind is not to know the divinity that lies unexpressed within every individual. . . . This basic principle – the Divinity of Man – is the dynamism of Christianity that can save the world and lead mankind to a new level of ‘peace on earth, good will toward men.’” ⁵

Oprah Winfrey spoke for many who have embraced the New Age spirituality, when she endorsed Butterworth’s book in the following words on the front cover of the paperback edition (1992)

> “This book changed my perspective on life and religion. Eric Butterworth teaches that God isn’t ‘up there.’ He exists inside each one of us, and it’s up to us to seek the divine within.”

According to this pantheistic view, since human beings are essentially God, spirituality or the process of salvation is essentially selfdiscovery or the quest for the oneness of life. It is seeking to be God. Not
godlike, but God. The new spiritualities do not seek to be Christlike, but to develop a mystical "Christ-consciousness."

It should be emphasized that when this new spirituality speaks about its hunger or search for God it is actually a quest to encounter a supernatural or divine influence (hence "God encounter"). It is also a quest for information about the afterlife, believed to be part of this universal "One" or "essence."

Advocates believe that they can have their "God encounter" in any of the traditional organized religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.). They also claim that they can be in touch with the supernatural through "ancient religious faiths" like paganism, witchcraft, the occult, and magic. Others believe that the search for "the sacred" can take place within the depths of their very being (i.e., within their gender or sexuality) or in the environment—hence the promotion of feminist, gay/lesbian, and ecological spiritualities.

Since it is a syncretistic movement (i.e., a combination of different systems of philosophical or religious belief or practice), doctrinal teachings are not as important as the "experience" of God. In other words, this mystical spirituality often carries connotations of a believer having a faith more personal, less dogmatic, more open to new ideas and influences, and more pluralistic than the doctrinal/dogmatic faiths of mature religions.

The technical term used is interspirituality—the view that all the world’s religions are identical at the mystical level and therefore should be solidarity among them. Thus, the new spirituality is ecumenical in nature. It tries to unite all religious faiths at the level of a "God encounter" experience. 6

Meditation: The Way to Encounter God

In the new spirituality, the most popular means to encounter God is through meditation—understood to mean the ridding of oneself of all thoughts in order to "still" the mind by putting it in the equivalent of pause or neutral. Meditation is the mystical practice designed to experience altered states of consciousness that allow a person to have an esoteric experience. This religious experience is, however, deceptively disguised in secular society where meditation is promoted as a neutral exercise for personal benefits of health, relaxation, and improved productivity.

Observe that true Christian meditation, in contrast to the new forms of meditation, is an active thought process, in which the believer seeks to fill his or her mind with truths about God. It is not the emptying of one’s mind. Rather, it is thinking or reflecting on God’s Word, praying and asking God to give us understanding by the Spirit, who has promised to lead us “into all truth” (John 16:13). The product of Christian meditation must always be in harmony with the teachings of God’s Word. It must also lead to an authentic Christian spirituality, lifestyle, and an adoration, praise, and service for Christ.

But in the new spirituality movement, meditation is just the opposite. It is the process by which the mind becomes thoughtless, empty and void. It is like turning a fast-moving stream into a still pond.

The silence refers to the meditation practice of the absence of normal thought. The physical spot where a person goes to engage in the mystical practice of meditation is called the sacred space. The "sacred space" can also refer to the actual silence or the state of being during the mystical experience.

The two most common methods used to induce this thoughtless state are breathing exercises, where attention is focused on the breath, and mantras, which are repeated words or phrases. 7 (In the new spirituality within Christian circles these "mantras" go by the label "contemplative prayers.")

The ultimate goal of the mystical meditation is to link oneself with God (or the divine part of man). It is to become one with the higher self. This "God encounter" experience is referred to by such names as: awakening, transformation, enlightenment, self-realization, cosmic consciousness, Christ consciousness, and super-consciousness.

The West Kisses the East

For justifiable reasons, in the 1980s the term New Age movement inspired a sense of dread among
many Bible-believing Christians. However, by the end of the 1990s the fear and suspicion had almost abated, and at the beginning of the 21st century the pantheistic teachings and practices of the New Age movement quietly began filtering into Western culture and churches. Today (a decade into the 21st century), these practices of Eastern spirituality are beginning to define the essence of Christianity!

If the foundation for the new spirituality movement was laid by the New Age movement, the impetus for morphing the New Age spirituality into today’s Christian churches was made possible by the meeting of a Zen Buddhist and some Roman Catholic monks. Since then Christian churches began adopting the mystical or “interspirituality” techniques of the New Age as valid ways of talking to or encountering God.

“Contemplative prayer” became the term of preference, even though it refers to the same practice of going beyond thought by the use of repeated words or phrases (almost like chanting—whether Eastern [as in mantras] or Western medieval [as in Gregorian chants]).

In 1992, Newsweek magazine did a cover story, informing readers about the rise of contemplative spirituality. In it Kenneth Woodward wrote an article titled “Talking to God” in which he observed a shift in Christian paradigm towards ancient mysticism. He described the rise of mystical prayer through the mediation of “spiritual directors”—a new term for what used to be “Gurus” in the Eastern religions and “spiritual guides” in medieval Catholic mysticism.

Silence, appropriate body posture and, above all, emptying the mind through repetition of prayer – have been the practices of mystics in all the great world religions. And they form the basis on which most modern spiritual directors guide.

Again, in September 2005, Newsweek carried another special report called “Spirituality in America.” The feature story, titled “In Search of the Spiritual,” is seventeen pages long, and explains how the Christian mystical movement was growing. It also traces the contemporary prayer movement in the 1960s, to two Catholic monks in Massachusetts (Thomas Keating and William Meninger). It began with the monks’ invitation to the great Zen Buddhist master Roshi Sasaki to teach them meditation, and their subsequent discovery in 1974 of a 14th-century Catholic guide to contemplative meditation: Drawing on that work ["The Cloud of Unknowing"], as well as the writings of the contemplatives Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila, the two monks began teaching a form of Christian meditation that grew into the worldwide phenomenon known as centering prayer. Twice a day for 20 minutes, practitioners find a quiet place to sit with their eyes closed and surrender their minds to God. In more than a dozen books and in speeches and retreats that have attracted tens of thousands, Keating has spread the word to a world of “hungry people, looking for a deeper relationship with God.”

Notice the link: Instruction of Catholic monks in the meditation of Zen Buddhism (by Roshi Sasaki), their re-discovery of medieval Roman Catholic mysticism, and now a new form of Christian spirituality (“centering prayer”) for a world of “hungry people, looking for a deeper relationship with God.”

In fact, Thomas Keating subsequently co-published a book, Finding Grace at the Center, with another Catholic monk, Basil Pennington (1931-2005), in which they stated:

We should not hesitate to take the fruit of the age-old wisdom of the East and “capture” it for Christ. Indeed, those of us who are in ministry should make the necessary effort to acquaint ourselves with as many of these Eastern techniques as possible.

Many Christians who take their prayer life seriously have been greatly helped by Yoga, Zen, TM [Transcendental Meditation] and similar practices, especially where they have been initiated by reliable teachers and have a solidly developed Christian faith to find inner form and meaning to the resulting experiences.

Since the kiss between Eastern and Western mystical practices, there has been an increasing popularity of the use of rosaries, candles, incense, spiritual directors (persons who promote or train people in the spiritual disciplines, including “the silence”), prayer labyrinth, taizé prayer, “centering prayer,” and the lectio divina.
Another prominent person who has explained the indebtedness of the new spirituality to other religions is Thomas Merton (1915-1968), a twentieth-century Roman Catholic who had so immersed himself in Buddhism that he claimed he saw no contradiction between Christianity and Buddhism. He writes:

> Asia, Zen, Islam, etc. all these come together in my life. It would be madness for me to attempt to create a monastic life for myself by excluding all these. I would be less a monk.11

In one of his books, Merton sums up the essence of the new spirituality sweeping Christian churches:

> "It is a glorious destiny to be a member of the human race, . . . now I realize what we all are. . . . If only [people] could see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed. . . . I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other. . . . At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusions, a point of pure truth. . . . This little point . . . is the pure glory of God in us. It is in everybody.12"

As a result of these factors, and perhaps many others, practices of contemplative spirituality that used to be in both Eastern religions and medieval Roman Catholic monasteries and convents are now becoming the staple of many Christians, including Protestants.

**Mainstreaming the New Spirituality**

Contemplative spirituality reaches far beyond the walls of the Catholic Church. Mainline Protestant churches—Episcopalians, United Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, United Church of Christ, etc.—are all into it too. Through them, terms such as contemplative prayer, silence, sacred spaces, centering prayer, breath prayer, and other ideas of Eastern mystical spirituality are making their way into Protestant vocabulary. Let me mention a few notable individuals and institutions that have propagated this new spirituality:

1. **Matthew Fox**—a writer and Episcopalian priest, is often spoken of as being the proponent of New Age mysticism within Christianity. In *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, he wrote: "Divinity is found in all creatures. . . . The Cosmic Christ is the "I am" in every creature."13

2. **Morton Kelsey**—an Episcopal priest and a popular writer among certain Christian thinkers, wrote: "You can find most of the New Age practices in the depth of Christianity. . . . I believe that the Holy One lives in every soul."14 In his book *New Age Spirituality*, Morton Kelsey asked the question:

> How can the Christian community meet the religious needs of modern men and women pointed up by the New Age—needs that are not now being met by most Christian churches?

Each church needs to provide classes in forms of prayer. This is only possible if seminaries are training pastors in prayer, contemplation and meditation, and group process. . . . The church has nothing to fear from the New Age when it preaches, teaches, and heals.15

3. **Spiritual Directors International**—The need to start training pastors in contemplative, New Age spirituality has been answered by the *Spiritual Directors International* (SDI). They offer workshops and training seminars on how to experience this new spirituality. In one national conference in 2005 titled "Exile or Return? Accompanying the Journey into Contemplative Prayer", the following was presented:

> This workshop offers an opportunity to study and experience the director’s role in a person’s move into the beginning and early stages of contemplative prayer, silence, and openness to new sorts of praying.16

4. **Shalem Institute (for Spiritual Formation)**—located in Washington DC, is considered one of the leading centers for contemplative spirituality. Founded by Dr. Tilden Edwards (Episcopal minister) and Gerald May (a psychiatrist), this center’s mission is to spread the practice of the new spirituality prayer to Christianity as a whole. Some Adventists within our ranks have trained at this institute and are teaching the practice to their fellow believers.17

5. **Youth Specialties**—is a youth-oriented organization in North America. For years it has hosted an
annual event called the National Pastors Convention, to which many contemplative speakers are invited. They also make available onsite to the conference attendees labyrinth, late-night contemplative prayer sessions, and workshops on yoga, "Creating Sacred Spaces," "emerging worship," and "God Encounters: Spiritual Exercise That Transform Students." Tragically, some youth directors in the Seventh-day Adventist church have attended conferences by "Youth Specialties" and are modeling their youth ministry upon the practices they have learned in those places.

The Quaker Connection

While medieval contemplative spirituality managed to survive within small pockets of Roman Catholicism for centuries, it went largely unnoticed by Evangelicals. However, a few groups, such as the Quakers, the Pentecostal/Charismatic and Signs and Wonders movements, always kept some aspect of mystical spirituality within range of evangelical awareness.

But in 1978, when Richard J. Foster published Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth, classical contemplative spirituality suddenly became popular within Evangelical circles. Hailed by Christianity Today as one of the ten best books of the twentieth century, this work and others by Foster, introduced to the Protestant church the so-called "masters of the interior life" as he likes to call the medieval mystics.18

More than any other person, it is Richard Foster who has been at the forefront of the contemporary contemplative movement since the 1970s. Through his books, seminars, and lectures on "Spiritual Formation" and "Spiritual Discipline", he has provided a welcome bridge for Evangelicals into contemplative or mystical spirituality. He writes in his Celebration of Discipline [1978 edition]: "[W]e should all without shame enroll as apprentices in the school of contemplative prayer."19

Through his own personal influence, and through his recommendation of the books and works of ancient mystical authors, Richard Foster has helped to promote mystical spirituality among Protestants. The title of one article fittingly refers to Richard Foster as "Evangelicalism's Mystical Sparkplug." He himself stated:

When I first began writing in the field in the late 70s and early 80s the term "Spiritual Formation" was hardly known, except for highly specialized references in relation to the Catholic orders. Today it is a rare person who has not heard the term. Seminary courses in Spiritual Formation proliferate like baby rabbits. Huge numbers are seeking to become certified as Spiritual Directors to answer the cry of multiplied thousands for spiritual direction.20

What many readers are, however, unaware of is that Foster is a Quaker (the Religious Society of Friends) minister and scholar. He was trained at George Fox College (now University)—the leading Quaker university in the USA. One website calls him "perhaps the best known Quaker in the world today."

One unique Quaker doctrine is direct revelation via an "inner light." It refers to a divine presence and guidance in every man. There is an emphasis on being still and silent and passive in order to receive guidance from the inner light. Other terms for it are "light of God," "light of Christ," "inward light," "the light," "light within," "Christ within," and "spirit of Christ." In this respect, the teachings of Quakerism are substantially not different from the spirituality promoted in Eastern religions, and which are being imported to Christian churches.

Emerging Protestant Spirituality

It is not just in the Roman Catholic, mainline (liberal) Protestant churches, and the Quaker movement that we find the new (mystical) spirituality. We also find it spreading in Evangelical Protestant churches, including our own Seventh-day Adventist Church. In my opinion, the stage for mystical spirituality within Evangelical Protestantism was prepared by three major bridges.

1. Signs and Wonders Movement. The first bridge is the "signs and wonders" movement (sometimes called the "gospel of power" revival movement). By means of its inordinate emphasis on speaking in tongues, visions, dreams, prophecies, healings, prayer warriors, laughing in the spirit, prayer walks, and
other forms of prayer offensives, this movement of the 1980s created a fertile environment for people to embrace a mystical contemplative spirituality.\(^{21}\)

2. Mega-Churches. The second critical bridge has been constructed by some well-meaning Evangelical, mega-church leaders like Rick Warren (of the "Purpose-Driven" fame). Through their influence, these Evangelical thought leaders have introduced many Protestants to mystical meditation practices, such as "contemplative meditation" or "contemplative prayer." These practices are often disguised as new forms of prayer.

Among the "spiritual exercises" promoted by the new spirituality movement are three popular forms of prayer: "centering prayers," Jesus Prayer," and "breath prayers." For example in the book *Sacred Pathways*, a work describing some "practical spiritual exercises," and which has been endorsed by Rick Warren, the author teaches readers how to practice "centering prayers."

It is particularly difficult to describe this type of prayer in writing, as it is best taught in person. In general however, centering prayer works like this: Choose a word (Jesus or Father, for example) as a focus for contemplative prayer. Repeat the word silently in your mind for a set amount of time (say, twenty minutes) until your heart seems to be repeating the word by itself, just as naturally and involuntarily as breathing.\(^{22}\)

Observe that, but for the Christian words used (Jesus or Father), the practice of "centering prayer" is essentially similar to that in Eastern-style meditation or chanting. One special form of the centering prayer is the "Jesus Prayer." Here, the prayer *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner* is often abbreviated to *Jesus*.

Rick Warren’s endorsement of "contemplative prayer" is also seen in his positive evaluation of the book *The Soul at Rest: A Journey Into Contemplative Prayer*.\(^{23}\) The author of the book gives the following instruction on how to prepare for prayer time:

\begin{quote}
Take deep breaths, concentrating on relaxing your body. Establish a slow, rhythmic pattern. Breathe in God’s peace, and breathe out your stresses, distractions, and fears. Breathe in God’s love, forgiveness, and compassion, and breathe out your sins, failures, and frustrations. Make every effort to "stop the flow of talking going on with you—to slow it down until it comes to a halt."\(^{24}\)
\end{quote}

One wonders where in the Bible we are asked to partake of God’s love by physically breathing it in or to rid ourselves of sin by breathing it out?

3. Emergent Church & the Call for Worship Renewal. The third major bridge linking the various mystical spiritualities to the Evangelical Protestant world is a theological movement called “the Emergent or Emerging Church”—a movement whose way was paved by a philosophical worldview called postmodernism.\(^{25}\)

Space would not allow me to document how the emergent church movement is re-shaping the landscape of biblical spirituality.\(^{26}\) I can only refer readers to a special "Emerging Church" issue (Summer 2008) of this magazine for further reading on the subject.

Of particular interest to our discussion is the Emergent Church’s call for "worship renewal" through "sensory spirituality." By "worship renewal" or "worship awakening," they mean a worship experience in which the participants will actually "encounter" God through all their physical senses. Words like these are used to describe this: "multisensory spirituality," "experiential spirituality," "congregational spirituality" or "sensual spirituality."

A leading Emergent leader, Leonard Sweet, sums it up: "Postmoderns want a God they can feel, taste, touch, hear and smell—a full sensory immersion in the divine."\(^{27}\) Elsewhere in his book *Postmodern Pilgrims*, Sweet refers to this "full sensory spirituality" as "EPIC culture: Experiential, Participatory, Image-Driven, Connected."\(^{28}\)

For some, this EPIC culture may include such things as darkening sanctuaries and setting up prayer
stations with candles (taizé prayer), use of incense, and icons. For others, the worship includes touch, chanting, *lectio divina* [a form of contemplative prayer], drumming and dancing and other forms of bodily expressions (“body prayer” or “body worship”). One article further backs up the idea that postmoderns are looking for sensual, experiential worship:

> Post-moderns prefer to encounter Christ by using all their senses. That’s part of the appeal of classical liturgical or contemplative worship: the incense and candles, making the sign of the cross, the taste and smell of the bread and wine, touching icons and being anointed with oil. ²⁹

Perceptive readers will recognize that these new forms of worship making their way into Protestant churches are actually a return of Protestants to Roman Catholic worship. When the Emergent Church says “ancient future” (or “ancient new,” “back to the future”), they are saying we need to look back to Catholicism and the early century monks and mystics for worship or liturgical renewal.

Surprisingly, many Evangelical Protestants are heeding the call to go back to Rome to rediscover spirituality. This fact is captured in an insightful article in *Christianity Today* (February 2008) titled “The Future Lies in the Past.” The caption reads: “Lost Secrets of the Ancient Church: How evangelicals started looking back to move forward.” This eye-opening article not only explains that the “ancient future” church is now a reality but also recognizes that before there can be a full ecumenism among the various religions (inter-spirituality), all ancient mystical religions must be brought in. ³⁰

By the way, it is here—in the area of worship renewal and “full sensory spirituality”—that the “worship style” controversy in the Seventh-day Adventist Church comes in. Given the fact that these worship renewal movements are leading to mystical spirituality, is it any wonder that we have been warned against such practices?

For example, E. G. White warned that “just before the close of probation,” “every uncouth thing will be demonstrated. There will be shouting, with drums, music, and dancing. . . . And this is called the moving of the Holy Spirit.” She urged: “No encouragement should be given to this kind of worship” (*Selected Messages*, 2:36-37).

Unfortunately, our church is already being assaulted by the forces hidden inside the Trojan horses of contemplative spirituality.

**Trojan Horses in Our Church**

Over a century ago, Ellen G. White wrote about an end-time revival of spiritualism. Insightfully, she mentioned how Protestants will play a critical role in the union of the various forms of mystical spirituality:

> “The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism [*and its forms of mystical spirituality*]; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power [*Contemplative Spirituality*]; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience. . . .

> “While it [*spiritualism*] formerly denounced Christ and the Bible [*modernism*], it now professes to accept both [*postmodernism*]. But the Bible is interpreted in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect. . . . Christ is as verily denied as before; but Satan has so blinded the eyes of the people that the deception is not discerned” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 558).

Regrettably, instead of warning the world of this danger, some within our Seventh-day Adventist ranks are actually wheeling the Trojan horses of spiritualism into our church. In the guise of promoting spirituality, they are knowingly or unknowingly promoting practices akin to ancient paganism, and Eastern and Western medieval mysticism.

It is no secret that some of our scholars, chaplains, and leaders have been trained in the schools of contemplative spirituality. Neither is it a secret that some of those promoting mystical spirituality
continue to be invited to our national conferences to speak to our ministers. Still, others have been invited to give lectures and chapel services in our denominational institutions to the unsuspecting fertile minds of our young students. And some of our youth leaders are promoting such practices, having borrowed them from Youth Specialties conferences.31

Books and articles are also being published from our own denominational publishing houses that also promote some practices of contemplative spirituality. For example an article in our Signs of the Times magazine encourages the practice of centering prayer.32 Another thought leader published a book Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul (Autumn House, 2008), which leans heavily on "breath prayers," lectio divina as a form of meditation, "centering down" as a means of avoiding distraction, and "spiritual guides" as "fellow pilgrims . . . help us on our way." The book also frequently appeals to leaders in the emerging movement, such as Tony Campolo, Dallas Willard, Henri Nouwen, David Benner, Richard Foster, Morton Kelsey, Brother Lawrence, Thomas Keating, and M. Scott Peck.33

More recently, the book God Encounters: Pursuing A 24-7 Experience of Jesus (Pacific Press, 2009) was published, supposedly to enable young adults to explore the spiritual disciplines that will enable them to satisfy their hunger for God. The contributors to the volume share their "journeys"—"where we have found GOD and where we’ve been found by GOD." A few excerpts from one of the entries in the book will show the extent to which the new spirituality is making its way into the church:

"GEC [GodEncounters] seek to stretch young adults to experience GOD in ways that might at first feel uncomfortable, but will hopefully bring blessing and deeper intimacy with Jesus...

"Prayer room coordinator [Name Given] believes that introducing people to corporate contemplative practices such as lectio divina and centering prayer, and also to experimental prayer rooms like the ones set up to allow visitors to pray through the different stations of the Cross and the Old Testament sanctuary, helps to stretch them out of their comfort zones. . . .

"The climax of the prayer experience at GEC was the Boiler Room, a prayer room that stayed open for twenty-four hours straight, through all the watches of the night. The individuals who faithfully kept up the continuous prayer did so privately and in groups; quietly and loudly; mournfully and joyfully; written, spoken, sung, or drawn. . . .

"When I had finished pouring out my heart, I felt free to turn up the celebratory music and dance before GOD, and my time closed with my fiancé and I taking Communion together. I was surprised that I easily spent two hours there.

"Others shared Boiler Room stories with me of finding healing and freedom from destructive thoughts of the past; of attending an anointing workshop and then almost immediately having the chance to anoint someone in the prayer room."34

I want to believe that those who are promoting these practices of contemplative spirituality mean well. But I ask again the questions I raised at the beginning of this article: Are we honestly mistaken about today’s "God-encounters" and the other attempts to reach higher levels of spirituality? Could these new ways of being "spiritual" be actually old-fashioned spiritualism disguised in new clothes? Could we be witnessing "the Omega" of deadly heresies?

Already there are coming in among our people spiritualistic teachings that will undermine the faith of those who give heed to them. The theory that God is an essence pervading all nature is one of Satan’s most subtle devices. It misrepresents God and is a dishonor to His greatness and majesty (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 291).

Our Church today finds itself in exactly the position of the ancient Israelites and the early church—having to hold on to its faith in the midst of hostile pagan neighbors. We face the same threats and temptations to follow the practices, values and beliefs of our neighbors.

Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, . . . [D]o not inquire after their gods, saying, “How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.” You shall not
worship the LORD your God in that way. . . . Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it. (Deuteronomy 12:30-32.)

In the days of our early Seventh-day Adventist pioneers, they had to confront Kellogg’s pantheistic teachings and the mystical spirituality that follows its train. Today, as the new spirituality Trojan horses are wheeled into our churches, we may all do well to heed the warnings we have been given:

"In the book Living Temple [promoting Kellogg’s pantheistic theories] there is presented the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given. . . . Dangers that we do not now discern will break upon us, and I greatly desire that they shall not be deceived" (1 Selected Messages, p. 200).

"Be not deceived; many will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. We have before us the alpha of this danger. The omega will be of a most startling nature" (1 Selected Messages, p.197).

"This delusion [spiritualism/new spirituality] will spread, and we shall have to contend with it face to face; and unless we are prepared for it, we shall be ensnared and overcome. . . . I saw the rapidity with which this delusion was spreading. . . . It seemed that the whole world was on board, that there could not be one left" (Early Writings, p. 88).

The warnings of Laocöön and Cassandra to the leaders and citizens of Troy are applicable to our own times: "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts." In our case, we may plead: "Beware of the new spirituality movements. They are Trojan horses."

Endnotes

1. The Generation of Youth for Christ (GYC) is a grassroots young people's movement in the North American Division. The topics I will be presenting at the 2009 GYC are: (1) True Revival: What It Is and What It’s Not; (2) True Spirituality: The Walk of Holiness; (3) Understanding Post Modernism & The Emergent Church; (4) Contemplative Spirituality & Its Many Ways of Encountering God; (5) New Spiritual Warfare: Prayer Warriors, Prayer Walks, & Prayer Offensives; (6) Ancient Future: Which Way to Revival & Spirituality? The entire series will be made available on the GYC website (www.gycweb.org) and also on my personal website (www.drpipim.org).

2. "Trojan horses" include: the promotion of evolution as an acceptable doctrine of Creation, the acceptance of homosexuality, unbiblical divorce and remarriage as a valid form of morality, the embrace of new forms of worship, "gospel gimmicks," and entertainment as acceptable forms of worship renewal, church growth, and youth ministry, and a calculated campaign for new models of leadership in the church, in the name of "inclusiveness, balance, gender sensitivity, or diversity" in spiritual leadership at every level of church administration. For more on these, see Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, Here We Stand: New Trends in the Church (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventists Affirm, 2005). See also my "Leadership in the Church: Are We Honestly Mistaken?" Adventists Affirm (Spring 2006), pp. 6-24 (available also on the author's website: http://drpipim.org/leadership-contemporaryissues-97/55-leadership-in-the-church.html).

3. Non-Seventh-day Adventist authors are far ahead in documenting and warning against the dangers. See, for example, Roger Oakland, Faith Undone (Silverton, Oregon: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2007, 2008); Ray Yungen, A Time of Departing (Silverton, Oregon: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2002, 2006). I’m indebted to these works for the leads they provide into what is going on.


6. Another common expression used is ancient wisdom—the view that the supposed laws of the Universe, when mastered, enable one to see one’s own divinity—another word for occultism or metaphysics.

7. The word mantra is a Sanskrit word. It comes from two words—man (to think) and tra (to be liberated from). Thus, the word mantra means to escape from thought. By repeating the mantra, either aloud or silently, the word or phrase begins to lose any meaning it once had.
10. M. Basil Pennington, Thomas Keating, Thomas El Clarke, Finding Grace at the Center (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publ., 1978), pp. 5-6. According to the 2005 Newsweek article referred to earlier, in 1991 alone Keating taught 31,000 people how to "listen to God." It is centering prayer. In fact he wrote a popular book on "centering prayer" titled Open Mind, Open Heart.
16. Spiritual Directors International, Conference Workshops: "Exile or Return? Accompanying the Journey into Contemplative Prayer" (http://www.sdiworld.org/conference_workshops.html). The Spiritual Directors International also offer courses and classes on this new spirituality. One curriculum of its courses and classes includes: Spiritual Practice in Various Faith Traditions; Building a Bridge to Buddhism; Ignatian Exercises and Ecology/Cosmology: Spiritual Exercises; the Enneagram and Kabbalah; the Sacred Labyrinth: A New Spiritual Paradigm; Earth Prayer: Celebrating the Interconnection of All Living Beings; Trans-Faith Spirituality.
17. For example, Still Waters, "a place for silence, solitude, and spiritual companionship," is an influential retreat center near Berrien Springs, Michigan. Among the services it offers are worship and Taizé, spiritual companionship, etc. Its website indicates that some of the "Spiritual Directors" at Still Waters received their training at the Shalem Institute. See, http://comebestill.org/formation/direction/companions/, accessed December 13, 2009.
21. In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the stage was set with the celebration church movement, then celebration-style contemporary worship movement, and in recent times through the emergent scholars.
25. Postmodernism believes that (a) there are no moral absolutes (i.e., there is no right or wrong or "morality is relative") and (b) there are no absolutes (there is no absolute truth or "truth is relative"). The first claim deals with ethics or morality. The second concerns truth or
26. The emergent or emerging church is some Christians’ attempt to speak to the postmodern world. Despite its noble goals, this movement tends to hold Christian faith captive to the postmodern spirit. Thus, the emerging/emergent church movement begins by relativizing truth (doctrines/teachings). But before long, it will also relativize morality (ethics). And when ethics is cut loose from biblical holiness, the result is a mystical, New Age, ecumenical religion.


31. The documentation of spiritualism’s Trojan horses disguised as spirituality will await a forthcoming book. A summary will be given at the presentations at this year’s (2009) GYC meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. Mention will be made of the National Conferences on Innovation, organized annually by the Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Over the years, the speakers have included such individuals as: Doug Pagitt, Rabbi Marci Prager, Leonard Sweet, Kevin Kaiser, Leanne Kaiser Carlson, Samir Selmanovic, and others. The "National Conferences on Innovation" lists the following as supporters: the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Center for Creative Ministry, Versacare, Kettering Medical Center, Leadership & Educational Administration Department, Andrews University.


My wife and I lived in England for a number of years and often spent Sunday afternoons in London visiting the historic sites. London is one of the most fascinating cities in the world with its magnificent Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Big Ben Clock Tower, and the world-renowned London Bridge.

The story is told of a poverty-stricken beggar who sat at the end of the London Bridge many years ago, scraping away wretchedly on an old violin. The poor old man was futilely attempting to solicit a few pennies from passersby, but no one seemed to care about the old man’s music—if you could call it music. The beggar’s sad countenance only revealed the sadness of his heart.

A well-dressed stranger passed, but suddenly halted and returned to listen to the old man, whose weary eyes searched the stranger’s face for a trace of charity. Instead of the penny the old man hoped for, the stranger asked for his violin and said he would help him out with a tune. The stiff, numb fingers gently passed over the old instrument. The skilled hands carefully tuned the instrument and began to play a magnificent melody. Soon people stopped to listen. The crowd was small at first, and then grew larger. The music was irresistible. The dense crowd now thronged the end of the London Bridge and stopped traffic. One silver coin after another was dropped into the old man’s open violin case. Louder and louder, higher and higher, the music came from the old violin until it burst forth in rapturous melody. Word quickly passed through the crowd, “It is the hand of the master. It’s Paganini playing on the old beggar’s violin!”

I want to respond as that old violin in the hands of the Master so my life will be one of heavenly music. When the Holy Spirit takes control of our lives, He does amazing things. As an instrument in the Master’s hands, the Spirit will do more through our lives than we can possibly imagine.

The Bible predicts that there will be a mighty spiritual revival in the last days. The Holy Spirit will be poured out in Pentecostal power, and the gospel will be proclaimed rapidly all over the world. God will work rapidly to finish His work.

God has given us these two powerful promises:

Matthew 24:14: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations and then the end will come.”

Romans 9:28: “For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.”

The devil understands these prophecies, so before the second coming of Jesus he will work with all of his power. He will introduce his greatest deceptions. Through a counterfeit religious revival of signs, wonders, and miracles, the devil will mislead millions. But unusual power from beneath will call for
mighty power from above. Satan works, but God will work much more powerfully.

The last book of the Bible describes God’s final revelation of glory in these words:

Revelation 18:1: “After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.”

In this last, great revival the Holy Spirit will be poured out in full power. The gospel will spread rapidly around the world, and multitudes will respond to the preaching of God’s word. Thousands will share the words of life with their neighbors, and find responsive hearts waiting to receive the truth.

The Bible refers to this mighty revival as the outpouring of the latter rain. The terms early and latter rain were part of the agriculture cycle of Israel. The early rain watered the seed that had been planted and helped it germinate. The latter rain fell at the end of the agricultural cycle to ripen the grain and bring it to harvest. Without the latter rain there would be no final harvest. Water is one of the Bible’s symbols of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days to empower God’s people to complete the task of preaching the gospel to the entire world before Jesus comes.

The apostle James puts it this way in James 5:7, 8: “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”

The Old Testament prophet Joel adds in Joel 2:23: “Be glad then, ye children of Zion and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former and the latter rain.”

Historically, the former or early rain fell at Pentecost. Three thousand converts were baptized in a single place in one day. God’s word says that number is moderate in comparison to what is coming in the future. If I saw three thousand people baptized in one day in one place in North America I don’t think I would call that a moderate outpouring of the Spirit! But the point here is that the early rain is moderate in comparison to what is coming in the latter rain.

We can expect the Holy Spirit to do some absolutely incredible things at the end of time.

We know the outpouring of God’s Spirit in the latter rain to finish the gospel work on earth will be far more powerful than anything God’s church has ever seen before. Pentecost will be repeated on a much grander, larger scale.

Ellen White adds this thought in Great Controversy, p. 611: “The work will be similar to that of the Day of Pentecost. As the ‘former rain’ was given, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the gospel to cause the upspringing of the precious seed, so the ‘latter rain’ will be given at its close for the ripening of the harvest. The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close.”

On page 612 she continues: “Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers.”

What a thrill to be living at a time when God desires to pour out all of heaven’s power in the closing work. What a privilege to be a channel for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Friends, if we see the false manifestations of Satan in counterfeit revivals all around us, shouldn’t we long for the genuine manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain? Shouldn’t we be seeking God to send us that true manifestation? It is one thing to recognize the counterfeit, but it is another to receive the genuine gift of the Spirit.

It is possible to become so focused on the counterfeit we fail to recognize what God longs to do through
His people today. It is possible to become so fearful of the false that we miss seeking for the showers of the latter rain in our own lives. My heart longs for the genuine outpouring of the Holy Spirit in my own life and in the life of the church. It is only as God’s Spirit is poured out that the gospel message will go to the ends of the earth. Zechariah the prophet reminds us in Zechariah 4:6: “'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts.”

But some very important questions remain:

- How can I personally receive the abundance of the Spirit that God has promised at the end of time?
- What are heaven’s prerequisites for receiving this latter rain power of the Spirit?
- Why hasn’t God poured out His Spirit in all of its fullness yet?
- What is heaven waiting for?

There is nothing more important for us personally, or for the church as a whole, than receiving everything Jesus has for us.

LeRoy Froom reported that the bankers of Scotland are said to have forty million pounds in unclaimed deposit. Depending on the fluctuating exchange rates, this could be a whopping seventy to eighty million dollars unclaimed! It seems difficult to believe, but the riches of all heaven await our demand and reception. We need not wait for others to claim them. Oh, the tragedy of our poverty! Are the unlimited resources of the Holy Spirit often unclaimed by us?

Let’s study some of God’s prerequisites for receiving the fullness of the Spirit. If we want to receive latter rain power, here is what God’s word says in Zechariah 10:1: “Ask the Lord for rain in the time of the latter rain.”

God’s messenger to His last-day church adds, in the Review and Herald, August 25, 1896: “We should pray as earnestly for the descent of the Holy Spirit as the disciples prayed on the day of Pentecost.”

Luke also records the earnestness of the disciples’ prayers at Pentecost in Acts 1:14: “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”

The disciples sensed they were powerless without the Spirit. They realized the task was just too daunting without the mighty outpouring of the Spirit. Without the Spirit’s presence in their lives, in the fullness of power, they could not defeat the forces of hell.

The first prerequisite for receiving the Holy Spirit is earnest prayer.

The latter rain power will come only in answer to the prayers of God’s people. We are counseled in Testimonies, Vol. 8, p. 23:

“"My brethren and sisters, plead for the Holy Spirit, God stands back of every promise He has made. With your Bibles in your hands, say: 'I have done as Thou hast said, I present Thy promise, 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'"

Are you seeking God daily for the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Are you praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in your own life? God always keeps His word. He has said, “Ask, and ye shall receive.”

The second prerequisite for receiving the fullness of the Spirit is an undivided heart.

Jesus’ life is the model of a life filled with the Spirit. Luke 3:21 describes the scene at His baptism. “And while He prayed the heaven opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him ...”

There is a fascinating comment by the Father at Jesus’ baptism that opens new vistas of understanding regarding the reception of the Spirit. At the baptism, the Father spoke from heaven, declaring in Luke 3:22, “You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”
In Luke 4:18 the Savior replies, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.”

The Holy Spirit is poured out from heaven on those with whom the Father is well pleased. Jesus affirmed His heart’s undivided loyalty in John 8:29: “And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” Jesus was totally committed to pleasing His Father. Nothing else in life mattered as much as doing the Father’s will. The Father honored His Son’s commitment by sending His Spirit without measure.

Ask God to give you an undivided heart. Ask Him to teach you to live a life of absolute dependence upon Him. When God has a group of people with the main desire to please Him, seeking for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, He will then pour out His Spirit in abundance. Jesus longs for us to come to Him with humble hearts, putting aside our own desires and interests, saying as in Matthew 26:39, “... not as I will, but as You will.”

Day by day Jesus allows different spiritual tests to come to us. Each test is an opportunity to discover what is in our heart. He reveals things we never knew about ourselves, and His great desire is that these tests will drive us to our knees, saying, “Lord, I never knew that was inside of me. I never knew that was part of my nature. Please deliver me from the bondage of that specific habit or attitude. I willingly confess it and surrender it to you.”

God invites us to connect with the source of all power, that through His word and through opening our hearts to Him in prayer our minds will be in harmony with His mind, our wills in harmony with His will, and our hearts will be one with His. And if our power line to heaven is connected, we will be recipients of a full measure of His power.

Did you read about the woman a number of years ago who bought a new refrigerator, and soon everything she put in it spoiled? The milk soured, the lettuce wilted, the fruit and vegetables rotted, and the ice cream melted. She couldn’t figure out what was wrong. Everything seemed to be in working order. Then, to her absolute surprise, she discovered the plug had come out of the socket. The refrigerator was not plugged in. It was not connected to the source of power. Spiritual power comes when you are connected to the source of unlimited power.

Testimonies, Vol. 8, p. 19 reads: “There is no limit to the usefulness of the one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart and lives a life wholly consecrated to God.”

God has limitless plans for your life. There are no limits to what the Spirit can do in and through your life if you have an undivided heart and are wholly consecrated to God.

The third prerequisite for the reception of the Spirit is saturating our minds with the word of God.

The same Spirit that inspired the Bible inspires us as we read it. The same Holy Spirit who filled the lives of Bible writers as they wrote the sacred words of scripture fills our lives as we read their words. Facing the powerful temptations of the enemy while in the wilderness, Jesus emphatically declared in Matthew 4:4:

“... Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from of the mouth of God.”

The Master added in John 6:63: “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.”

The Holy Spirit flows through God’s word to fill up our lives. To be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the word of God. Spirit-filled lives are:

- Guided by the word of God
- Instructed by the word of God
- Empowered by the word of God
- Sanctified by the word of God
- Transformed by the word of God

When we accept the teachings of God’s word, we give the Holy Spirit permission to fill our lives with His
presence and power.

A **fourth prerequisite** for receiving the Holy Spirit in the fullness of His power is to put away all dissension between you and anyone else.

When the disciples were battling for the highest place, the Holy Spirit’s power was limited. When they were arguing among themselves, harboring ill feelings toward one another, the Holy Spirit’s power was limited. It is only by removing the roadblocks of dissension that the Spirit can be poured out upon our lives. At Pentecost the disciples “were all with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1). The New Testament Greek word for one accord means “together.” The disciples were not only physically together, but for the first time they were truly together in a harmonious unity. They still had their different personalities, but they were united in their commitment to one another. They were one in their desire to bring the gospel to the world.

Ellen White gives us this practical counsel in *Testimonies*, Vol. 8, p. 21: “Let Christians put away all dissension and give themselves to God for saving the lost. Let them ask in faith for the promised blessing, and it will come. The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was ‘the former rain,’ and glorious was the result. But the latter rain will be more abundant.”

Is there anything in your life that stands between you and someone else? Could it be that this wall is also a barrier to God giving you the fullness of His power? Do you need to forgive someone for hurting you so no barriers will stand between you and them?

Corrie Ten Boom survived one of Hitler’s death camps. Her sister Betsy was not as fortunate, and she died in the brutality and disease of the camp. After the war was over, Corrie traveled throughout her beloved Holland and Germany, sharing a message of reconciliation and peace. One evening, after a presentation in a church in Germany, she saw him. The image of this short, stocky, steel-faced German Gestapo prison guard was etched in her mind forever. His inhumane treatment of her sister Betsy led to Betsy’s death. But now this man stood before Corrie with his hand stretched out, asking, “Will you forgive me?” It took all of the grace possible to take this man’s hand in hers, look him in the eye, and say, “Yes, I forgive you!” Corrie recognized this vital truth. The Holy Spirit cannot fill an unforgiving heart. The Holy Spirit and bitterness do not go together.

The **fifth prerequisite** for receiving the latter rain is active labor for others.

Remember, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit gave the disciples power to witness. God sends His power so that we can proclaim His message and bless others. Many people are looking to the future for some great outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but that outpouring can begin in our lives today! True, it will increase in the future, but note this insightful statement in *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 511: “The dispensation in which we are now living is to be, to those that ask, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Ask for His blessing. It is time we were more intense in our devotion.” Then, on the very next page, Ellen White states, “It is the time of the latter rain, when the Lord will give largely of His Spirit. Be fervent in prayer, and watch in the Spirit.”

Now is the time to seek God for a spiritual revival. If this revival is to begin, it must begin in the heart of each of us. Now is the time to share Jesus’ love and grace with others. The more we share His love with others, the more the Holy Spirit fills us up with God’s grace to share more.

Why would God pour out His Holy Spirit on us to witness to others if we have no interest in witnessing? Why would God empower us to share our faith if we are not interested in sharing it?

The Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus. When we are interested in what the Holy Spirit is interested in, His power will be poured out on us in all of its fullness. It is now time, with consecrated hearts, to seek for the mighty power of God. Hosea the prophet cried out in Hosea 10:12: “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy, break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you” (emphasis supplied).

**The Welsh Revival**
The world still feels the influence of the great revival that flamed across the tiny country of Wales in the beginning of this century. However, few remember how this mighty spiritual revival began. It was at a simple church gathering in a little town in Wales where a tiny girl arose. She was so nervous she could stammer just one short sentence: "Oh, I do love Jesus." Then she sat down. The Lord used that short but earnest testimony to light a fire in other hearts. The Holy Spirit came down. Young and old people confessed their sins and testified to a new life in Christ. The revival spread through the church, across the town, and throughout Wales. Newspapermen traveled from London to report firsthand about this mighty revival. On their arrival in Wales, one of them asked a policeman where the revival was. Drawing himself up to his full height, the policeman laid a hand on his heart and said, "In this uniform."

When revival comes, it must begin inside of us.
From Shame to Shine

A conversion story of a Muslim youth as she struggled with atheism, mysticism, and New Age occultism

Deniza Hush

I was born the second of six children in a liberal Muslim family based in Zagreb, Croatia, in the former Yugoslavia. I remember watching my parents toil to complete their studies, as well as struggle to provide for their ever-increasing brood.

Although traditionally Croats are Catholics, during the socialistic era in Croatia every religion was ridiculed. Nonetheless my father educated us on the general demands of our traditional faith, Islam. By the time we were in elementary school, he assured that we were well versed about the dietary requirements for Muslims. He emphasised the superiority of Islam on all religious and lifestyle matters. It was likely during these early school years that we were warned that abandonment of Islam, whether through marriage with non-Muslims or by embracing other faiths, would result in excommunication. Whoever dared to leave Islam would bring a great shame on the family and would ultimately be rejected by them.

As a teenager I developed an intense interest in philosophy, fine arts, and poetry. These topics, off limits and considered deviant, escaped my Father’s notice since my personal studies were unsupervised. The more I read, the more my interest in them grew; the more my interest in them grew, the more I read. It was an exciting cycle for a growing teenager trying to make sense of the world. Looking back, it was my version of rebellion against the tight fist of my father’s rule, religion, and his despotic headship in our home. My life motto became: “Doing anything I desire, shamelessly and fearlessly.” Little did I know at fourteen, this supposedly bold statement was the very description of the character of Satan. Still, I embraced atheism, since after all, as philosopher Nietzsche said, “God [was] dead.” It made more sense to live an absurd life void of meaning than to be enslaved to a stupefying nonsense religion. I became acquainted with the alternative rock music scene and spent many hours listening to music that glorified disturbed thoughts and emotions.

When I approached university age, I was given an ultimatum. I had to choose between fine arts and my rocketing sports career in martial arts. I chose art. My father gave in and agreed to let me study art. At the time I was a national undefeated karate champion in the heavy category for women, and was preparing for European and world championships. It was in my karate club that I met a lifelong friend who was an art student, and who encouraged me not only to become a painter but a Christian.

A friend of mine, Zdravko, challenged my atheistic views on a daily basis, defeating all my arguments against theism. I was offered free drawing classes in his art studio under the mentorship of Pavlovic, a middle-aged artist who previously lived as a Catholic monk in a monastery. While enjoying their company and developing my art skills, I noticed my friends’ obsession with teachings about the life of Jesus. This puzzled me since I had thought that only unintelligent people could value religious tall tales. But here they were, fully capable and intelligent people who immersed themselves greatly in the love of Jesus, and who were evidently motivated by sharing their beliefs about God. I had to know more after
all; this talk had awakened a deeper longing to read the Bible, if not for the sake of conversion then at least for intellectual advancement.

One day a Catholic theology student visited our studio. I had been struggling to paint some still nature while I heard this person quote the first chapter from the Gospel of John. As he recited these verses his face beamed with a joy that was strange to me. I longed, to my amazement, to have such a faith. I surprised myself! I had to get a Bible. I bought the New Testament Bible, as it was within my budget, but it proved more of a lullaby, as it often put me to sleep mid-page, than the exciting reading I had hoped. Still I persisted, reading snippets of various chapters, and finally arriving at Christ's crucifixion. The words of the Roman centurion, "This man is truly the son of God," echoed in my mind. And as I remembered what I read about Jesus from Nazareth, I agreed with this statement. Faith embedded itself in my mind. The God
man concept amazed me, while the dying Savior and redeeming Messiah concept humbled me. Against all my family's religious background and prejudice, atheist school education and personal preference, in the secrecy of my heart I accepted the fact that Jesus is God Himself. However, it took me a couple of years to become a Christian and receive the power of the Holy Spirit to live a godly life. Just as God penetrated my life with the miracle of faith, the devil rose up to destroy each of my friends. My older artist friend eventually backslid into alcoholism, and certain events took place to embitter our friendship. But God was not finished with me yet.

At the university I met Harry, a colleague who was a practicing Christian and a regular visitor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. At first I strongly disliked him, as he was very uncomfortably friendly, humble, and polite in contrast to my arrogant and provocative disposition. Harry had a strange habit of starting conversations related to the Bible, Christianity, and important life questions. At the time I was, despite my earlier convictions, becoming deeply involved in various New Age practices.

I had started meditating using a picture of some healing guru. During these meditative sessions I would experience something like electrical currents flowing through my limbs, and would see colored rays of light coming out of the photo of my healer. Once, as I stared at this picture at some friends' apartment, I fell into a strange trance. I lost contact with reality and lost my sight, hearing, and spatial awareness. I then saw my body in the form of some radiant light encircled by moving energy rings. I started to panic, realizing that there was no way out. In complete horror, I screamed in my entrapped mind. I was possessed by spiritual powers that took hold of me and would not allow me to function. Suddenly a thought penetrated my mind: *Only prayer to God can get you out of this!* This thought did not come from me; all I thought was only fear and desperation, but I held to it as a drowning person to a float. I prayed every prayer I have ever heard, from Muslim to Catholic. As I eventually remembered the Lord's Prayer (that I had learned as a child from a friend who recommended it as the most effective prayer against being spanked) my condition began to improve. Instead of fear I felt strength and determination to get out of the trance. Every word of this prayer lead me one step closer to sanity. Soon I was able to see and hear. If I had not been prompted by what I now perceive to be the Spirit of God to pray that day, I could have ended up in a mental institution. Although this experience scared me, it did not put me off further experimentation with other forms of New Age spiritualism. My hunger for deeper spirituality, as well as greed to experience something that would fuel my artistic creativity, led me to a meditative session for enlightenment.

"Who am I?" was the question that the participants of the enlightenment sessions meditated on. For three days we used so-called conversational meditation in which, for five minutes at a time, a person communicates everything that comes into their mind. After three days our minds became numb and empty, and we fell into an ecstatic state in which we all received the same answer to the meditative theme "Who am I?" The answer? "I AM THAT I AM."

Little did I know at the time that this descriptive name is the very name of God. It took me several months to find out this truth as I was reading through Genesis. My friends who took part in the enlightenment meditation turned more intensively toward drugs, alcohol, and immorality, just after they found out that they themselves were supposedly gods! Once I realized the seriousness of the deception, I became distraught and regretful.

I was getting close to the point of surrender. I became disillusioned with myself, art, relationships, the rock-and-roll lifestyle, family, and philosophy. I could not find purpose in any of these. It became my obsession to find the absolute truth. During this turbulent period, my colleague Harry invited me to meet
a Muslim-born lady who converted to Christianity through a series of dreams. Harry was regularly attending an Adventist church and keeping the Sabbath holy, and this intrigued me. I had been invited many times to attend various programs and seminars in the Adventist church, but I never went. I felt very embarrassed for disappointing my friend so many times by defaulting my promises to attend these meetings. This time my friend took no chances, opting to pick me up and take me to the meeting place. After a short introduction, the converted Christian lady told us her life story. Coming from a Muslim background, I completely understood the struggles she went through as a young woman. She had to run away from home to a different country to escape an arranged marriage. She experienced poverty and rejection, starvation, and ill health, until she decided to take her life. At this point she cried to God to help her, and He immediately gave it. In the series of dreams, God was leading her to Himself. She dreamed that she needed to read the Bible, had to be baptised, and that Jesus was the Way, Life and Truth. She dreamed that she had to find a Christian church that kept Saturday holy. After giving us such a shocking testimony, she continued explaining some fundamental Bible doctrines, like salvation in Jesus Christ, the state of the dead, and the Second Advent. She emphasized that salvation is only through Jesus Christ, and that the Bible was the only true revelation of God. These statements crushed me, as I was thinking of all the people who didn’t understand these teachings. Although I didn’t like many things that this woman was saying, I felt overpowered. A constant impression that everything she said was pure truth made me humble and convinced.

I wasn’t aware at the time that most Muslims who convert to Christianity have either a miraculous experience of healing and visions of the Lord Jesus Christ, or a revelation of Christ in dreams. Before we left she said that she would pray that at least one of us would be saved. This touched me, as no one had ever prayed for me. After leaving the house I felt extremely sick. I was having difficulty breathing and felt severe pain all over my body. I asked my fiancé for his illustrated Bible to put under my pillow, and I begged God not to take my life that night, as I was scared that I would die. I was so affected by the testimony of this woman that in the following days I focused on only one thing. I prayed again and again a simple prayer: “God, if you exist and you are real, give me an experience like that lady had so that I will know that you are leading me in the path of truth. Amen.” As a result of this simple prayer, the most merciful God gave me a few dreams in which He clearly directed me and testified of His great saving love for me.

The first dream, in answer to my prayer for God to show me His truth, was about two things. First, I was shown a great shiny city out of which came a little stand with the Scriptures on it. Every page was written with golden letters that looked alive with flowing light. I was instructed to read it to find salvation, but as I objected I received another short vision. This one related to my condition as a sinner. In a most terrifying way God showed me that my condition was like a black hole in the universe; my godless soul was dead! I woke up screaming in horror. I was alive, but in reality there was no true life in me.

My second dream was connected with my family. In this dream a stranger came to visit me and was standing at the door, waiting to be let in. The key for the door was lost, and my mother made every effort to convince me that it didn’t matter. After a long wait, the man quietly turned away and left. I knew that it was crucial for me to meet him. He could somehow see everything about me, and I felt very troubled. As I ran to the window to try to catch a glimpse of his figure, a penetrating thought raced through my mind. In what condition will he find you when he visits next time? As I was waking up from this disturbing dream, a flashing thought rushed through my brain. You have to get baptised.

I returned early from my holiday, and in great anticipation visited a local Adventist church. To my utmost surprise the service was entitled “Jesus Is Knocking at the Door of Your Heart!” The songs, the sermon, and the appeal were shockingly related to my dream, and for the first time, after only three weeks attending an Adventist church, I requested baptism. As the local pastor soon discovered, I knew very little about Bible doctrines, but one thing I knew clearly was that Jesus died for my sins. I knew that I had to follow His instructions and get baptised as well as keep His law. In his wisdom, my pastor delayed my baptism. He wanted to give me a deeper and broader understanding of the Bible, since he knew from experience that I would go through many trials and persecution because of my newfound faith.

Many of my colleagues and friends attended my baptism, along with my sisters. My sisters were amused, thinking that this was just another phase in my spiritual wanderings. My parents didn’t know
about it, but noticed some major changes in my attitude and lifestyle. However, my Father noticed with
time that I was reading the Bible and avoiding working on Saturdays. He was getting increasingly upset
and was warning me against my Christian inclinations. This finally escalated one early Sabbath morning
in 1993 when he asked me to go to the shop to buy bread.

I was found with my Bible, hymn book, and Sabbath School lesson on my desk while getting ready to
leave for church. He tore my hymnal and insisted that I declare whether I believed that the Bible is the
ultimate revelation of God. Shaking, I admitted my faith in the Bible. In my mind, I was reminded that
if I denied Jesus my Heavenly Father would deny me. My dad was mad and lost for words for a second.
His disbelief and shock led him to challenge me further. Shouting, he asked me if I believed that Jesus
is God.

In that moment I knew that my answer might cost me my life. While trembling and crying, I made a
decision not to fight my dad or defend myself. If I perish, I perish, was my thought. I had nothing to
hide; Jesus was too great to be ashamed of, and it was His job to protect His children. I told my dad
what I believed. With a stream of curses and verbal abuse, my father stepped back to gain further
strength. Next I saw his fist flying toward my face, but it never reached me. It was stopped in the air by
an unseen hand. In his confusion, he tried again to punch me, but the same thing happened. I
remembered the verse in Psalm 34:7 promising protection by God’s angels for those who fear God. There
were angels of God encamping around me, and my father was not allowed to harm me. Terribly angry,
your dad started spitting on me, as he couldn’t reach me. While he was returning to his bedroom, I heard
him say that I no longer had a part within the family and would have to leave.

As a result of God’s great patience toward my parents, I was able to return home almost every time they
kicked me out. I kept praying for them and claiming God’s promises. After that crucial Sabbath morning,
I managed to stay another year and a half with my family. Eventually, my parents gave me a final
ultimatum to choose either the Christian faith or the Muslim faith. As a result of my choice, my parents
chose to expel me from the family permanently unless I changed. There have been many years of
painful separation from my parents and younger brothers, but despite all the hardship it has been an
honor to suffer persecution for Christ. In His great mercy, God provided many family members for me in
our Christian faith.

In 1997, while studying theology at the Croatian Seventh-day Adventist seminary, I met a ministerial
student who was visiting from England. Alan was preaching an evangelistic campaign in one of the local
churches. After only knowing me for one week, he took me to one side and suggested that we would be
a good missionary team together. My first thought was that this guy was either crazy and desperate, or
very spiritual and serious indeed. Our relationship wasn’t based on infatuation, but friendship and
conviction that God was bringing us together for a higher purpose. To cut a long story short, we married
six months after that episode. From the start we covenanted to have an open home, where all who are
seeking shelter and encouragement are welcome. We have been happily married for twelve years, and
God has blessed us with three children. Although my parents still do not want to have any contact with
me or their grandchildren, we continue to pray, trusting God’s saving grace. In their eyes I have brought
shame to our family. But in the eyes of Jesus I am His witness and His shiny beacon. It is never time to
give in and dishonor God. Some sacrifices might look impossible to bear, but we should remember that
it is not our calling to calculate the costs. All we have to worry about is keeping our eyes fixed on the
shining face of our loving Savior.