

Mysticism's Trojan Horse

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In my last article, I introduced the subject of Spiritual Formation; its definition and basically what it entailed. [1] I'd like to expand that in this article.

Spiritual Formation is really another name for *mysticism*, normally entered into by the practitioner doing certain "disciplines" or exercises to gain more of God; in other words, it is at its root, a form of *works*, not to gain salvation, but to allegedly maintain and perfect it, something only God does within us (**Hebrews 12:2**). The bottom line is that Spiritual Formation at its root, caters to **SELF**. The process associated with Spiritual Formation is something that constantly reminds the practitioner to look inward to compare and determine growth and creates within actions that are based mainly on how a person feels. I believe this is why there has been a proliferation of movements like *racial reconciliation*, *social justice* or what we call "wokeness," some of which, on their face appear religious therefore things Christ would approve. Increasingly, what entails "wokeness" has infected the church, tending to destroy it from within, like a Trojan Horse.

Spiritual Formation wants us to use our emotions as barometers of spirituality or the *primary* means of determining not only *if* we are going down the right path and making the correct decisions, but how deep our relationship with God has become. Jesus never did that. Paul didn't do that. In fact, when people in the Bible *did* make decisions based on their feelings, it often got them into trouble. Here is just one example.

In **1 Kings 13**, we read of a young man whom God called to give a specific message. Part of the responsibilities laid on the young prophet was to do the following after he gave the Word of the Lord to Jeroboam (**v 9**):

1. don't eat bread
2. don't drink water
3. don't return home the same way he had come

The young prophet did all that God had commissioned him to do. Yet, he met an unscrupulous prophet that told the young prophet he should come home to eat with him. The young prophet protested but the older unscrupulous prophet overruled him by saying he too was a prophet and this is what God had told him. The young prophet went home and ate with the older prophet and then God spoke through the older prophet to tell the young prophet he would be killed that day for his disobedience.

I don't want to get into why did God use the unscrupulous prophet who was a liar, but the fact remains we must ask *why* the young prophet disobeyed God in the end when he started so well? It was because he heard the older prophets words and judged them by how he *felt* about them instead of consistently going back to God's own words on the subject. It cost him his life. Because the young prophet caved into his feelings, he paid a terrible consequence for it.

Spiritual Formation, like New Age teachings, relies heavily on how a person feels about something and what is "right" for one person might not be for another, based on feelings, which makes Spiritual Formation grounded in *mysticism*.

Consider quotes from some of the well-known people within the Spiritual Formation movement.

Today I personally believe that while Jesus came to open the door to God's house, all human beings can walk through that door, whether they know about Jesus or not. Today I see it as my call to help every person claim his or her own way to God." Henri Nouwen, *Sabbatical Journey*, pg. 51.

If a church is good at making disciples it will be good at making leaders because in the end, a good spiritual formation plan will lead to an accelerated spiritual multiplication. — Gary Rohmayer, *Next Steps For Leading a Missional Church*

Spiritual formation for the Christian basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself. - Dallas Willard

Spiritual Formation is a process, but it is also a journey through which we open our hearts to a deeper connection with God. We are not bystanders in our spiritual lives, we are active participants with God, who is ever inviting us into relationship with him. - Renovare

The quotes above may *sound* good to many, but are open to interpretation of the hearer. In fact, the more nuanced the quote, the more mysterious and therefore, *better* for many people because it sounds intellectual. It is rejected only when people are able to see the actual message within the quote. This is the huge key here. Spiritual Formation tends to focus on concepts and ideas that certainly seem to base themselves in Scripture and are outwardly *loving*. But Spiritual Formation dutifully avoids calling "sin" sin, any condemnation of sinful behavior or judgment that God Himself will pour out on those who reject Him and on this world.

When I went to seminary in the 1980's, one professor referred to sin as "brokenness." No, that's not it. Sin is the transgression or breaking of God's Law. While it *creates* brokenness that is not the main point. Sin breaks God's Law, period.

Spiritual Formation obfuscates the truth with questions and lies, actually redirecting people *away* from God to a reliance on Self. Consider Henri Nouwen's quote, who said in part, "...*all human beings can walk through that door, **whether they know about Jesus or not**...*(emphasis mine)." While *yes*, all human beings *can* walk through the door of salvation, in order to do so, they *must* receive the salvation that is available through Jesus and no one else.

The unbiblical part of what Nouwen said is that they can come "*whether they know about Jesus or not*," which is 100% incorrect. Ultimately, Nouwen's false statement is based entirely in New Age tenets. This has been part and parcel of the New Age since its inception and goes back to the mystery religion of

Babel (**Genesis 11**). Jesus said very clearly, "*I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me the Son,*" (**John 14:6**). The New Age argues that's not what Jesus *meant*. They say we need to dig much deeper to uncover the actual meaning. No, Jesus spoke plainly and people wanted Him dead because of His claims. They did not misunderstand Him.

If people will take the time to read books about the Pleadians, specifically "Seth Speaks," or books by Barbara Marciniak, they'll see clearly how demons masquerading as "ascended masters" have channeled their messages to humans for decades in modern times. Lies mixed with truths makes them lies.

The key significant difference between biblical Christianity and Spiritual Formation has to do with the Bible teaching *sanctification* and Spiritual Formation teaching *the journey*. Of sanctification, the apostle Peter notes, "*...Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, for His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. Through these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world on account of lust.*" (**2 Peter 1:2-4**).

Because the Holy Spirit lives within the Christian at the moment salvation is received, we already have everything we need for sanctification, which is the process by which we are transformed into the character of Jesus (**Hebrews 12:2**). It's all God. He gets the job done. We don't need to enter into a journey, a labyrinth or any other discipline to establish that. Our job is submission to His will at every turn, just as Jesus consistently did throughout His life (**Luke 22:42**). That is our responsibility and it is not something we do once and done. It is an ongoing way of life for the Christian. The more we know and understand His Word, the more we can submit to Him because of it and that is how we cooperate with God in sanctification. Call that the "journey" if you want but it is still a process overseen by God in the life of each Christian.

Like men such as Andrew Murray and A. W. Tozer, who were by and large, Christian mystics, today's world of Christendom has become inundated with Christian mystics (and even atheists), who stress the experiential relationship with God. Some of them tend to be so ethereal and nuanced that it is difficult to distill their words down to clarify what it is they're actually saying. Jesus wasn't like that, nor was John the Baptist, Paul and others. What they believed they expressed *clearly* so people could understand and none of it was based in feelings.

The more I study Spiritual Formation, the more I'm forced to conclude it is the root of many problems within Christendom today. We lionize people like Tim Keller (recently deceased), because of how intellectual, mysterious, loving and seemingly magnanimous their teachings are and for that, they are highly esteemed and sought after speakers and authors. In the end, they cater to people who have itching ears.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers...(2 Timothy 4:3 NKJV)

If I can distill this down to a quick summary of Spiritual Formation, I believe Spiritual Formation is a form of New Ageism loosely wrapped in biblical phrases and ideas. The essence of New Age teaching caters to SELF because it was created by Satan. This is why it has given rise to things like *racial reconciliation* and *social justice*, which on the surface appear Christian. New Age teaches that all are one and God is in all; ultimately meaning we are all gods. The term "namaste" in America has come to mean "the god in me bows to the god in you" and is clearly New Age. That is not the actual meaning of namaste, but has *come* to mean that in some circles.

Because God is in all as taught in the New Age, people should endeavor to treat others as though they are gods. Racial reconciliation and social justice (which I'll go into in a future article), turn the focus on alleged inequities that many to most white people living today have never had a hand in perpetrating. Social justice is loosely based on the miracles Jesus performed in feeding thousands and healing them. The difficulty is that He did that as a testament to who He was/is - God, very God. This does not mean we shouldn't help others as we can, but we'll get into that.

Proponents of Spiritual Formation reinvent or re-imagine God and God's Word. They twist the truth. Who else do we know who has done this since **Genesis 3**? I don't see Spiritual Formation in Scripture. I see where people *might* be confused into thinking it's in Scripture, but it's not there. In fact, there are many areas of Scripture that diametrically oppose it.

Be careful who you lionize and hold in high esteem.

[1] <https://studygrowknowblog.com/2023/05/22/just-avoid-it/>

[2] <https://www.4truthministry.org/spiritual-formation-contemplative/>