

## Adventist Encounter Curriculum's Response to Spiritual Formation

### **A brief summary of Spiritual Formation and the Emerging Church**

A new reformation is supposedly sweeping through the Christian church, with the purpose of bringing enlightenment through spiritual insights gleaned from ancient mystics. Those involved in this reformation say we must move from preaching and teaching of God's Word, to a multi-sensory mystical worship experience that feels good. The general belief in the emerging church is that God dwells in every person (whether they've accepted Him or not) and that all paths lead to God. Many Christian leaders today claim that 'the euphoria and bliss that meditation creates is thought to be the voice and presence of God.'<sup>i</sup> Participants are not drawn into the light of God's Word but rather toward the authority and practices that were originally invented by Ignatius Loyola (founder of the Jesuits); and which Catholic mystics, and eastern religions aspire to. Spiritual formation teaches that the best way to approach God, and grow spiritually, is through another person.<sup>ii</sup>

### **Experience versus Doctrine**

'The spiritual formation movement teaches that if people practice certain spiritual disciplines, they can become *like* Jesus and model their lives after Him. Being born again and having the indwelling of Christ is not a prerequisite. This is 'a belief system that uses ancient mystical meditation practices to induce altered states of consciousness (the silence).'<sup>iii</sup> This is just one of the spiritual disciplines, among others, that are being touted as the avenue that will take Christianity to a new and higher level of spirituality, drawing participants closer to God.<sup>iv</sup> The foundation of this faith is not on Christ or the Bible, but rather on one's feeling. This would explain why so many teachers of contemplative and spiritual formation begin dropping the emphasis on biblical truth and distort the doctrines of the faith.<sup>v</sup>

### **Adventist Encounter Curriculum**

The *Adventist Encounter Curriculum* completely rejects spiritual formation practices and philosophies. It uses the Bible as its foundation and the only source of truth. It asserts that we are reconciled to God through Christ's death and resurrection; that we belong to Him by accepting His free gift of atonement. This has nothing to do with our works, rituals or mystical experiences. Through the gift of grace, the converted believer is transformed.

The *Adventist Encounter Curriculum* uses the latest pedagogical methodology in the teaching units, encouraging students to be 'thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men's thoughts' (EGW, Education, 17). The learning activities encourage a solid Biblical knowledge and a relationship with Jesus Christ. It does not incorporate the emerging church philosophies or practices outlined above. The curriculum utilizes the Bible as its textbook; Adventist resources as much as possible; it promotes and uses the Spirit of Prophecy in all teaching units; it explores the 28 Fundamental beliefs within its teaching units; and strongly promotes the sharing of the Seventh-day Adventist end-time message with the world.

"Faith comes through hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ." – Romans 10:17

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#### **Further reading on this topic:**

- 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18; Hebrews 4:12; Romans 10:17; Matthew 6:7; Isaiah 55:8-9; Deuteronomy 18:9-14;
- <http://amazingdiscoveries.org/AD-Magazine-Archive-Summer-2011-Spiritual-Formation>
- Oakland, Roger. *Faith Undone*. Lighthouse Trails Publishing; Eureka, Montana. 2007
- Yungen, Ray. *A Time of Departing*. Lighthouse Trails Publishing; Eureka, Montana. 2006
- Peth, Howard. *The Dangers of Contemplative Prayer*. Pacific Press Publishing; 2012.
- Howard, Rich. *The Omega Rebellion*. Remnant Publications; Michigan. 2010
- Walton, Lewis. R. *Omega*. Review and Herald Publishing Association; Washington DC. 1981

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<sup>i</sup> Oakland, Roger. *Faith Undone*. Lighthouse Trails Publishing; Eureka, Montana. 2007. 119

<sup>ii</sup> <http://amazingdiscoveries.org/AD-Magazine-Archive-Summer-2011-Spiritual-Formation>

<sup>iii</sup> Oakland, R. p. 81

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*, 117

<sup>v</sup> *Ibid.*, 112