

SOUTHERN BAPTIST SOUL SHAPING RETURN TO RELIGIOUS BONDAGE

By Rev. Ken Silva, Southern Baptist pastor-teacher, Jun 25, 2010



For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. ([Galatians 5:1](#))

Heading Back Into Law-based Quid Pro Quo Spirituality

For quite some time now [Apprising Ministries](#) has been covering the influx of corrupt [Contemplative Spirituality/Mysticism](#) into the [Southern Baptist Convention](#), which is allegedly the largest Protestant denomination in the

United States. I've told you that—under the guise of so-called [Spiritual Formation](#)—this romanticized version of neo-Gnostic Roman Catholic mysticism has been promulgated by [Living Spiritual Teacher](#) and [Quaker](#) mystic [Richard Foster](#), with his spiritual twin and Southern Baptist minister [Dallas Willard](#) along to give this asceticism-lite neo-Pietism a thin veneer of scholastic respectability.

However, through the influence of this Eastern-style spurious CSM, the problem is that the church visible has now ended up deep within the Wonderland of [Humpty Dumpty language](#) and the mental off-roading that is postmodernism; words have all but lost their fixed meanings and out goes logical thinking, which is always the fruit of mysticism. You may recall from [Leonard Sweet, Frank Viola, And The Third Way](#) I told you about a gentleman by the name of Carl McColman; I shared that he's "the author of several books including *The Aspiring Mystic* and *366 Celt*, and runs [Anamchara: The Website of Unknowing](#).

By the way, *anamchara* is a Celtic word meaning "soul friend" and refers to the "spiritual director" monks were assigned to oversee their practice of contemplative spirituality, and McColman's website itself "is devoted to Christian mysticism, interfaith spirituality, Celtic wisdom, emergent theology, and assorted other topics." As I've said before, although I disagree with most of his conclusions regarding so-called "Christian mysticism," McColman is undoubtedly an expert witness on the subject of mysticism itself; and he recently reviewed [The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See](#) by Roman Catholic mystic [Richard Rohr](#).

If you didn't know, Rohr is quite involved within the neo-liberal cult of the sinfully ecumenical [Emerging Church](#); and he's also a fellow [Red Letter Christian](#) along with his friends [Emerging Church](#) guru [Brian McLaren](#), [Diana Butler Bass](#), and [Tony Campolo](#). As it concerns the subject of meaningless postmodern language, in his review of Rohr's book of mystic musings, McColman tells us that:

Rohr has a clear sense of the paradox and play at the heart of mysticism,... Rohr does not promise his readers that *The Naked Now* will make them become mystics; instead, he promises to invite them to "see" as mystics do. He uses the metaphor of seeing and even of the "third eye" to unpack not only what is wrong with religion in general, but to present mysticism as a shift into all-embracing, nondual consciousness...

Rohr suggests that these principles epitomize what he is trying to say: “All saying must be balanced by unsaying, and knowing must be humbled by unknowing,” and “All light must be informed by darkness, and all success by suffering.” The key to these mystical axioms, of course, is unlearning the dualistic way of seeing and thinking by relaxing into the naked now: the “sacrament of the present moment.” ([Online source](#))

This is a hallmark of the irrational philosophy within Eastern religions; and this attack upon rational thought, even upon language itself, is at the very corrupt heart of postmodernism. No doubt you’ve heard this type of Eastern-style gibberish slithering into mainstream evanjellyfish circles for a while now: “All saying must be balanced by unsaying, and knowing must be humbled by unknowing”. Translation: Shut off your critical reasoning skills. Biblical Christians will recognize this better as: Yea, did God really say? For our purposes here, [Emerging Church](#) icon [Rob Bell](#)—himself a mystic disciple of Rohr—explains the heart of the matter.

A year ago in [Through Rob Bell “The Great Enlightened Ones” Tell Us Man Has Divine Greatness](#) I brought to your attention that Bell had finally come right out of his mystic closet in his sermon [I will say it again, and again, and again](#). Although he didn’t mean to, below Rob Bell is about reveal for you what we’re actually dealing with when it comes to these so-called “spiritual disciplines,” which are all the rage right now within pretending to be Protestant evangelicalism. Bell shared:

It’s interesting how many traditions (pause) When you read **the great enlightened ones**; meditation, centering prayer, reflection—in every tradition you can find **the mystics**—and what’s always at the heart of the spiritual lives, the everyday lives of **the great ones** was always a period of time.

Whether it’s prayers, chanting, **meditation**, reflection, study—whatever you call it—what is it essentially; it’s **taking time to breathe**. Because when you’ve been breathing, (slight pause) in a proper sort of way, you’re far better equipped to handle what life throws your way. (5:41-6:23)

Did you catch that; the mystics, in whatever religion mind you, are to be considered “the great enlightened ones.” In other words, we’re being told that these mystics have “more” understanding of God through their meditation in altered states of consciousness than we mere second class

citizens do with only our Scriptures. So what we're seeing here is a new form of Gnosticism where the truly "initiated" and "enlightened" ones are the superior Christians who practice these spiritual disciplines. But you need to realize that this is actually a contradiction to God's Word:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

Notice carefully here God tells us that His Scripture makes sure we'll be *competent* and *equipped for every good work*; we don't need any ascetic practices of Pietism, nor do we need highly subjective experiences gleaned from meditation in altered states of consciousness. And now you know why these mystics eschew logical and rational thought; you see, it has a nasty habit of refuting their fickle flights of fancy. But we have some more bad news here on the SBC front, the following is a new book from [LifeWay Publishing](#) by [Dr. Jim L. Wilson](#) called [Soul Shaping: Disciplines That Conform You to the Image of Christ](#), which we're told "is the Baptist Doctrine Study for 2010." [1]

If you didn't know [LifeWay: Biblical Solutions for Life](#) just happens to be the publishing/teaching arm of the [Southern Baptist Convention](#) itself; so this isn't some isolated book, it's sanctioned as the [Baptist Doctrine Study](#) and "[it] is a resource for course credit in the subject area Baptist Doctrine in the Church Growth category of diploma plans" [2] of the [Christian Growth Study Plan](#). No doubt we immediately recognize the problem from the title alone: [Soul Shaping: Disciplines That Conform You to the Image of Christ](#); which now begs the question: What about everyone who, like me, doesn't practice this artificial ascetic Pietism; you mean to say that we're not able to be conformed to the image of Christ?

Or how about this; as I told you in [The Cult Of Guru Richard Foster](#), Foster is the one considered to have "discovered" these spiritual disciplines which had supposedly been lost. For example, concerning the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of Foster's [Celebration of Discipline](#), Eugene Peterson of [The Message](#) travesty gushes:

“Like a child exploring the attic of an old house on a rainy day, discovering a trunk full of treasure and then calling all his brothers and sisters to share the find, Richard J. Foster has ‘found’ the spiritual disciplines that the modern world stored away and forgot,...” [3]

So apparently everyone who lived before 1978 and Foster’s “discovery,” like say Jonathan Edwards and Charles Spurgeon, also weren’t able to be conformed to the image of Christ? That’s pretty hard to believe. Well, per a tip from an AM reader I went and got Dr. Wilson’s *Soul Shaping* book, the title of which reminds me of [Soul Shaper](#), an earlier book by self professed [Emerging Church](#) progressive theologian [Tony Jones](#) who’s also “theologian at residence” in the EC church of his universalist “pastor” [Doug Pagitt](#). I can tell you that it’s really Richard Foster without quoting Foster; I know, I’ve studied this stuff for five years now so I can easily recognize the language.

It’s little more than a propaganda piece for “spiritual disciplines” with Dr. Wilson drawing from [M. Robert Mullholland, Jr.](#); well, I have most of his books and Mullholland is as contemplative as they come. Dr. Wilson also favorably quotes from Foster’s disciple Dallas Willard, from contemplative teachers Barbara Brown Taylor, and Gary Thomas, and then even the late Roman Catholic universalist mystic [Henri Nouwen](#)! Rather curious that Dr. Wilson, ostensibly a Protestant, would turn to an apostate (at best) Roman Catholic priest for proper Christian spirituality. Nouwen’s main shtick was teaching a form of meditation in an altered state of consciousness known as [Contemplative/Centering Prayer](#) (CCP), the words are interchangeable.

And just what was the fruit of Henri Nouwen’s mystical practices; as I previously pointed out in [Henri Nouwen Says...](#), Nouwen would finally write:

Today I personally believe that 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 way to God. [4]

Universalism is where Nouwen’s mysticism led him; so why would an SBC author, and the SBC’s LifeWay arm, wish to encourage us to learn spirituality from Henri Nouwen? As you can see in [Is Dallas Willard A Christian?](#), SBC minister Dallas Willard’s own mysticism has already led

him close to Nouwen's universal neighborhood as he teaches the following foolishness:

is open and in touch with everyone in the world, and for all who seek them with all of their heart—and that is defined in terms of coming to love Him, and not just have the right beliefs about Him—but coming to love Him, and loving their neighbor as themselves... **It is possible for someone who does not know Jesus to be saved.** ([Online source](#), emphasis mine)

Being that Willard is a minster in the [Southern Baptist Convention](#), as I am as well, I can tell you that the above is not biblical doctrine, let alone being in accord with the SBC's revered [The Baptist Faith & Message](#). It is, however, right in line with the uber-inclusive and sinfully ecumenical [Emerging Church](#) aka [Emergent Church](#)—that morphed into [Emergence Christianity](#); and what do all of these people have in common? That would be the practice of spiritual disciplines, one of which is CCP. I also wonder why Dr. Wilson would be turning to “Rev.” Barbara Brown Taylor who's a contemplative aligned with [Progressive Christianity](#) and also:

an Episcopal priest, teacher, and author...she holds the Harry R. Butman Chair in Religion and Philosophy at Piedmont College in Georgia and is adjunct professor of Christian spirituality at Columbia Theological Seminary...[and] lectures on preaching at Yale, Princeton, and Duke Universities and is a regular columnist for *The Christian Century*. ([Online source](#))

As far as Gary Thomas goes, you may recall from [Mark Driscoll And Neo-Reformed New Calvinist Contemplative Spirituality](#) I told you that the neo-Reformed New Calvinist Mark Driscoll has recommended people read Thomas' book *Sacred Pathways* (SP). I happen to have SP and chapter 9 is a veritable ode of praise for contemplatives; Thomas romanticizes these mystics as he tell us about the “Acts of Contemplatives,” which he calls “many forms of prayer and activities that contemplatives can make use of in addition to general contemplative prayer.” Thomas then goes on to talk about their “Meditative Prayer.”

This would be the transcendental meditation-lite aka CCP that I already mentioned above, and which you'll also see mystics refer to as “the silence” and/or “wordless prayer” [5]; but, the truth is, it's nowhere taught in Scripture. And at the website of Gary Thomas under [Free Resources](#) we

find “Classic Christian Authors” like Roman Catholic Carmelite monk Nicholas Herman, better known as [Brother Lawrence](#) where we’re told:

Brother Lawrence was born Nicholas Herman around 1611, in Lorraine, France... He...dedicate[d] himself to the religious life and spent a short time living as a hermit, but gave this up in favor of the communal living of the Carmelite monastic order...

Interestingly enough, Lawrence’s book didn’t receive much acclaim when it was first published, due in large part to his association with Fenelon and the way Madame Guyon used Lawrence’s writings to bolster her own brand of Quietism. Since both Fenelon and Guyon were chastised by the pope, Lawrence’s work suffered in the comparison.

([Online source](#))

Let’s note a couple of things here: 1) During the Protestant Reformation, which had just happened and was ongoing during Herman’s life, the Roman Catholic Church actually condemned the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and 2) despite the fact that Herman was supposedly “practicing the presence of God” he would remain faithful to this apostate organization; and we’re supposed to see this sorry man as a “classic Christian author”? The fact is, his own practice of these so-called spiritual disciplines would lead Herman to reject the godly teachings of the Protestant Reformation in favor of other Roman Catholic mystic heretics like Fenelon and Madame Guyon.

You mean you really can’t see why the wise person would flee these disciplines to deception; I mean seriously, the very practices of this CSM originate with second century hermits who, in defiance of our Lord’s mandate [6] left the Christian community for the solitude of the Egyptian desert, and they in turn adapted them from practitioners of pagan religions they would encounter in interspiritual discussions. Then these practices would flower through the centuries within the various monastic traditions of apostate [Roman Catholicism](#) until the Roman Catholic Church would so anger God that He raised up the Protestant Reformers.

It’s absolutely asinine that the SBC is now encouraging Southern Baptists back into bondage.

Endnotes:

- [1] <http://tinyurl.com/2cfbra7>, accessed 6/24/10.
- [2] Jim L. Wilson, [Soul Shaping: Disciplines That Conform You to the Image of Christ](#) [Nashville: LifeWay Publishing, 2009], inner back cover.
- [3] Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* [San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers], front cover.
- [4] Henri Nouwen, *Sabbatical Journey* [New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company], 51, emphasis mine.
- [5] Gary Thomas, *Sacred Pathways* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000], 182-189.
- [6] See—[Luke 19:10](#); [John 20:21](#), One cannot very well do these things if they are isolated in a cave in the middle of a desert.