

Research on Spiritual Development

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I. Current State of Spiritual Immaturity and Need for Virtue

Moreland (1997) identifies seven attributes of what psychologists call the "empty self," which has been growing in "epidemic proportions" in America (p. 88). "The empty self is constituted by a set of values, motives, and habits of thought, feeling, and behavior that perverts and eliminates the life of the mind and makes maturation in the way of Christ extremely difficult. There are several traits of the empty self that undermine intellectual growth and spiritual development" (p. 88). Seven traits are:

(1) **Individualism** that dwells on self-interest and fails to practice self-denial intended to enrich broader groups like family and church. "[T]he empty self-populating American culture is a self-contained individual who defines his or her own life goals, values, and interests as though he or she were a human atom, isolated from others with little need or responsibility to live for the concerns of the broader community. Self-contained individuals do their own thing and seek to create meaning by looking within their own selves" (p. 89).

(2) **Extended adolescence** where a person continually seeks to be made whole by consumer goods, entertainment, food, and preoccupation with physical appearance, sex and body image. "For the infantile personality type, pain, endurance, hard work, and delayed gratification are anathema. Pleasure is all that matters, and it had better be immediate. Boredom is the greatest evil, amusement the greatest good" (p. 89).

(3) **Narcissism** -- "Narcissism is an inordinate and exclusive sense of self-infatuation in which the individual is preoccupied with his or her own self-interest and personal fulfillment. Narcissists manipulate relationships with others, including God, to validate their own self-esteem and cannot sustain deep attachments or make personal commitments to something larger than their own ego" (p. 89). "The narcissist evaluates the local church, the right books to read, and the other religious practices worthy of his or her time on the basis of how they will further his or her own agenda.... Narcissists see education solely as a means to enhance their own careers. The humanities and general education that historically were part of a university curriculum to help people with the intellectual and moral *virtues* necessary for life directed at the common good, just don't fit into the narcissist's plans. As Christopher Lasch notes, '[Narcissistic] students object to the introduction of requirements in general education because the work demands too much of them and seldom leads to lucrative employment'" (p. 90).

(4) **Passivity** -- "The couch potato is the role model for the empty self, . . . we let other people do our living and thinking for us... From watching television to listening to sermons, our primary agenda is to be amused and entertained" (p. 90) Moreland identifies as the chief culprit for passivity the ubiquity and usage of television, with elementary school children watching an average of 25 hours per week of television, and high schoolers spending six times as many hours watching TV as they do homework. Studies show that widespread viewing television leads to "mental passivity, retards motivation and the ability to stick to something, negatively

affects reading skills (especially those needed for higher-level mental comprehension), weakens the ability to listen and stay focused, and encourages an overall passive withdrawal from life. . . . Passive people do not have lives of their own, so they must live vicariously through the lives of others, and celebrities become the codependent enablers of a passive lifestyle" (pp. 90-91).

(5) **Sensuality** -- the empty self makes decisions and even judges reality based on images such as television ads. People no longer make decisions through careful use of abstract reasoning and analyzing the pertinent issues. "In a sensate culture people believe only in the reality of the physical universe capable of being experienced with the five senses. A sensate culture is secular, this-worldly, and empirical. By contrast, an ideational culture embraces the sensory world but also accepts the notion that an extra-empirical, immaterial reality can be known as well -- a reality consisting in God, the soul, immaterial beings, values, purposes, and various abstract objects like numbers and propositions" (p. 91). A sensate culture eventually disintegrates because of the lack of intellectual resources, and this is what is happening today according to Moreland, with our society be marked by "shallow, small-souled people" (p. 91).

(6) **Lack of Interior Life** -- "In a fascinating study, Roy Baumeister traces the changing views of the self and of success from medieval to modern times. According to Baumeister, the self used to be defined in terms of internal traits of virtue and fidelity, and the successful person, the person of honor and reputation, was the person with deep character. In such a view, the cultivation of an interior life through intellectual reflection and spiritual formation was of critical importance. In the last few decades, however, the self has come to be defined in terms of external factors -- the ability to project a pleasurable, powerful personality and the possession of consumer goods -- and the quest for celebrity status, image, pleasure, and power has become the preoccupation of a self so defined. A careful development of an inner life is simply irrelevant in such a view of the good life" (p. 92).

(7) **Hurried and Busy Lives** -- activities and noise fill the life of an empty self. "Because the empty self has a deep emotional emptiness and hunger, and because it has devised inadequate strategies to fill that emptiness, a frenzied pace of life emerges to keep the pain and emptiness suppressed. One must jump from one activity to another and not be exposed to quiet for very long or the emptiness will become apparent. Such a lifestyle creates a deep sense of fatigue in which passivity takes over. And fatigued people either do not have the energy to read or, when they do, choose undemanding material" (p. 92).

The Formation of Virtue

105: "A mature person has a tightly integrated, well-ordered soul. A carefully developed mind is a crucial part of a well-ordered soul. A mind that is learning to function well is both part of and made possible by an overall life that is skillfully lived. . . . You must order your general lifestyle in such a way that a maturing intellect emerges as part of that lifestyle. If you want to develop a Christian mind, you must intend to order your overall form of life to make this possible."

Virtues and the Good Life

35: "[A] modern trend is a change in what we mean by the *good life*. From Old Testament times and ancient Greece until this century, the good life was widely understood to

mean a life of intellectual and moral virtue. The good life is the life of ideal human functioning according to the nature that God Himself gave to us. According to this view, prior to creation God had in mind an ideal blueprint of human nature from which He created each and every human being. Happiness . . . was understood as a life of virtue, and the successful person was one who knew how to live well according to what we are by nature due to the creative design of God. When the Declaration of Independence says we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them the right to pursue happiness, it is referring to virtue and character. So understood, happiness involves suffering, endurance, and patience because these are important means to becoming a good person who lives the good life.

“*Freedom* was traditionally understood as the power to do what one ought to do. For example, some people are not free to play the piano or to say no to lust because they have not undergone the training necessary to ingrain the relevant skillful habits. Moreover, since community is possible only if people accept as true a shared vision of the good life, it is easy to see why a sense of community and public virtue could be sustained given this understanding of the good life, happiness, and freedom.”

106: "A life so ordered to facilitate intellectual growth is characterized by a certain set of virtues that makes such growth possible. A virtue is a skill, a habit, an ingrained disposition to act, think, or feel in certain ways. Virtues are those good parts of one's character and make a person excellent at life in general. As with any skill (for example, learning to swing a golf club), a virtue becomes ingrained in my personality, and thus a part of my very nature, through repetition, practice, and training. If I want to develop the virtue of compassion, I must regularly practice acts of mercy, self-sacrifice, and kindness. Knowing what these virtues are will give you something specific at this which to aim in your efforts to cultivate your mind."

Moreland identifies five groups of virtues which are especially important in cultivating a Christian mind. These are: (1) Wisdom, which also includes truth seeking and honesty. The Christian mind commits to seek and find truth even if truth is not what one wants to hear. (2) Faith and hope. One cannot achieve intellectual growth when a person's soul is anxious, depressed or distracted. (3) Humility, and its associated traits of open-mindedness, self-criticism and non-defensiveness. (4) Faithfulness to God and dedication to His cause in the world.

II. Sanctification in General

Christian spiritual “formation” connotes an early point in a process, while “development” implies the continuation of a process. In theological terms, the process is known as “sanctification,” which occurs after conversion. To understand sanctification, we first must understand conversion, insights for which are provided by Petersen (1993).

Conversion is when we respond to God's love and submit to Him, and God responds to us by giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit to live within us. God's intent in coming to live in us is to empower us. But God will not do anything against our will. Because we have not shed completely our earthly sinful nature, there exists a civil war within us when the Holy Spirit arrives. Our carnal nature wants to continue doing self-centered acts pleasing to our senses, whereas the Holy Spirit graces us with a new nature, in which we experience new values, new attitudes, new desires, with a hunger to know God better and a longing to be around our new

brothers and sisters. Moreover, the Holy Spirit changes our relationship to sin, with it not being as attractive as it was before. Although we will continue to sin, we will hate it afterwards. The first step in conversion is repentance in which we recognize that we are heading in the opposite direction of God. This recognition is the work of the Holy Spirit and we respond to it by repenting. Repentance involves turning from sin and turning to God, and is in short an about-face. However, we do not stand at attention after making the about-face, but rather must continue moving toward God.

The kind of transformation that is needed so that people become a new creation in Christ has three elements: worldview, values, and behaviors. "Everyone has a *world view*. It is made up of the person's answers to the big questions of existence. How do I understand the universe, its origins? What about the natural world? How did it come about? Why did it come about? What about me? What am I? Why do I exist? What is my notion of God, or gods?

"A person's answers to these questions will determine how he or she approaches life. Even if a person writes in 'I don't know' to all the questions, the effect will be the same. Not knowing, agnosticism, is then the controlling philosophy. My worldview tells me who I am.

"A person's world view will determine his *values*. Values are those things that are of such importance to a person that they motivate his or her behavior. If, for example, I believe I am nothing*more than a biological accident, that I, together with the natural world, just happened, that belief will be reflected in the things I attach importance to. Self-fulfillment would certainly be close to the top of the list.

"*Behavior* reflects our world view plus our values. It acts out how we perceive ourselves and what we consider to be important. So if self-fulfillment is a driving value, my behavior will tend in that direction. I will spend a lot of my time and energy pursuing the things that make me feel good about myself.

"So world view, values, and behavior serve as a basic framework for understanding ourselves . . . Change must occur at the core, in our world view, in the things we believe. If things change there, values will follow in time, and behavior will not be far behind. Transformation comes from within, and works its way on out. Conversion lays the foundation for changes in our worldview.

"An understanding of the interplay between world view, values, and behavior helps us know how to minister to others. If we want to see true transformation occur, our efforts should be oriented toward affecting what a person believes and values. That helps us take wrong behavior in stride. We know that in time genuine changes in behavior will appear" (pp. 82-83). All too often we mistakenly focus on behavior, when the true focus should be on transformation of the heart.

Regent's own J. Rodman Williams (1990) provides the following insights on sanctification:

83: Sanctification is holiness of life and means "to make holy or be made holy." It refers, therefore, to both action as well as a state of being. Holiness means separation or being apart from things evil or impure, and therefore means purity and cleanness. Holiness further refers to moral perfection.

86: The source of sanctification is Jesus Christ, who sanctifies Christian believers by purifying and separating them from sin through his blood. This sanctification occurs at the beginning of a Christian's walk.

Once purified by Jesus' blood, however, a Christian does not remain pure because of his/her sinful nature. To aid in continuing the process of sanctification, God has provided Christians with "divine prescriptions -- the Ten Commandments and various ordinances -- by which this holiness is to be manifested. To be a holy people, therefore, is to walk according to God's command (p. 88)."

88 -- 89: "Believers, although sanctified, are by no means without sin in their lives. According to John, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8)." To use *89 Paul's language again, there is still "defilement of body and spirit"; there remain sinful elements from the former life. Although we had been cleansed. . . , cleansing and purification continue to be needed. . . . Cleansing and purification will never cease to be needed.... Holiness is a matter to "strive for" in every believer's life."

90: "[S]anctification is the goal of the Christian life. God would have His people constantly moving toward the goal of complete holiness.... The goal is clear -- entire sanctification; the goal to be fulfilled at the coming of Jesus Christ."

93: "The goal of growing in holiness should always be before the believer. Indeed, there is no justification for any view that suggests little concern for holy living. We are called by God to be a holy people and that means, as we have seen, progressive sanctification. There is serious error if we do not devote ourselves to growing continually in holiness. However, we err badly if we allow the goal to be claimed as an accomplished end.... If we make such a claim, there is terrible deception at work and the forsaking of truth... The person so self-deceived by claiming perfection is open to many dangers such as pride, hypocrisy, blindness, and even despair."

94: "The spirit of a person is the deepest dimension of human nature. As given by God, it is particularly the center of man's being. The spirit is that dimension of the self in which God immediately encounters man. However, as a result of sin man has become estranged in his spirit from God and shut away from His life-giving presence.... Hence, there is need for an ongoing purification of the spirit.... In the area of spirit surely much in the believer needs a continuing*95 cleansing. There may be pride or haughtiness of spirit that needs reduction to humility, bitterness of spirit that needs a sweetening by God's Spirit, a judgmental spirit that needs to be refined by love, a fretful spirit that needs to be renewed in calmness and peace. To these may be added especially an unforgiving spirit and he's the released from hardness and ingratitude."

95 -- 98: In addition to sanctification of the spirit, God also sanctifies the soul, which Williams separates into mind, feelings (emotions, desires and passions) and will. Regarding the

mind, Williams refers to Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." He notes that the mind "may be beset by evil thoughts, corrupt schemes, and worldly plans; the mind may slip away from spiritual concerns into things of the flesh; the mind may not seek a walk in humility after the pattern of Christ (96)." Regarding feelings, Williams notes that the Christian has already scored a victory in this realm through Christ's crucifixion. Our flesh, our carnal nature, has been essentially crucified or put to death with new life in the Spirit and by the Spirit. Although no longer central and dominating, the flesh, however, still remains and continually struggles with the Holy Spirit. Craving, lusting and boasting are constant temptations for believers, but believers must not indulge in such behavior. We must live a life of daily growth in holiness.

97: "There is much in the realm of the feelings and passions that needs to be sanctified. We have but to mention such things as anger, lust, envy, jealousy, and covetousness to recognize immediately how often these occur in the Christian walk. For example, anger and lust (and here let us go back to Jesus's own teaching) are passions that inwardly break God's law against murder and adultery. The issue deeper than murder is giving vent to anger and hatred; the issue deeper than adultery is allowing oneself to look lustfully at another person. It is such feelings and passions that need continual purging."

Likeness of God -- "The likeness of God is the likeness of Christ. Hence, the ultimate goal of sanctification is transformation into the likeness of God in Christ. Or, to put it another way, it means *conformity to Jesus Christ*.... Whereas this conformity begins with a new life in Christ, it is also to be ever-growing, with the goal that of likeness to Jesus Christ (100)."

Method of Sanctification -- "Sanctification is primarily the work of God: its source is in Him. Sanctification is basically God's doing; it is not a work man can perform in himself. It is not as if a person who has been called, regenerated, and justified (all unmistakably works of God) is thereafter called on to sanctify himself, so that whereas God justifies, man sanctifies. While man's role is an important one, sanctification is not basically his work.... For sinful man, it is God alone who sanctifies (101)."

Dying to Sins -- "It is a paradoxical fact about Christian existence that the believer is to understand himself as "dead to sin" -- in that sin no longer dominates him -- nonetheless sins do remain, and to those sins he is called upon to die.... Denial of the self refers here to the total self that is opposed to the way of Christ: this sinful self must be left behind. It follows that whatever there is of pride, anger, lust, or any other sin, it is to be denied, indeed, renounced. This is by no means a renunciation of the person and his selfhood, as if there were some virtue in self-persecution. Rather it is a renunciation of everything that continues in the self as sin, hence the sinful self. Dying to these sins, moreover, is not a matter of calm repose (as death may be viewed) but of vigorous action. It is as if to say, 'I *renounce* each and every sin that operates in my life; I *disown* them as not belonging to me as a follower of Jesus Christ (103 -- 04).'"

In addition to renouncing sins, Christians on the road of sanctification must also mortify sins (see Romans 8:13). Note that the Holy Spirit provides energy for this task, but it is the person who must perform the task of mortification. "For example, when such a sin as jealousy, or anger, or lust is manifest, and the believer feels in the grip of it, then he may declare

vehemently some such words as these: ‘*By the power of the Holy Spirit I put you (jealousy, anger, lust) to death!*’ Sin should not be permitted to have its way or be allowed to lurk in some hidden corner. If necessary, it should be dragged out screaming, and then slain in the power of the Spirit. Nothing less can suffice when a Christian is dealing with the viciousness of sin (104).” A Christian should confess sins, but not substitute confession for mortification of sins. This mortification is not for sins in general, but for particular sins which should be named. This mortification, whether it is done at a time when the sin is almost overwhelming, or if the sin is committed and the crying of anguish is from the Spirit, the total annihilation of the sin must be sought. This is not simply a verbal exercise; it must be done with the whole being.

In addition to giving death to sins, a Christian on the road to sanctification must also live for righteousness. "This means, basically, that the believer's life should be undergirded with an intense desire for righteousness.... the believer who will grow in holiness must be a person who both hungers and thirsts after righteousness and gives it the highest priority in his life (108)." This includes obeying God's word by immersion in the words of Scripture on a daily basis, and constantly supplementing the faithful reading of God's Word by action. Living for righteousness also includes looking to Christ by actively following him. For sanctification to continue, the believer must set his mind on things above and dwell his thoughts on them. This means not to allow anything base or degrading to occupy his mind, but rather focusing on the highest, the noblest, and the best.

112: "[S]anctification includes the forsaking of selfish concern (the sin of pride and self-centeredness) in a total outgoing attitude of compassionate selflessness and humble concern for others. Sanctification is far more than a life of purity of heart (as basic as that is); it is also a life of humility, love, and self-sacrifice."

To live for righteousness also means to walk by the Spirit. Walking by the Spirit means to put on such virtues as kindness, compassion, gentleness, humility, and patience, all of which are either identical with, or similar to, the fruit of the Spirit.

In similar vein, Rick Warren (2002) provides the following:

173: “God’s ultimate goal for your life on earth is not comfort, but character development. He wants you to grow spiritually and become like Christ. Becoming like Christ does not mean losing your personality or becoming a mindless clone. God created your uniqueness, so he certainly doesn’t want to destroy it. Christlikeness is all about transforming your character, not your personality.

“God wants you to develop the kind of character described in the beatitudes of Jesus, the fruit of the Spirit, Paul’s great chapter on love, and Peter’s list of the characteristics of an effective and productive life. Every time you forget that character is one of God’s purposes for your life, you will become frustrated by your circumstances.”

174: “It is the Holy Spirit’s job to produce Christlike character in you. . . . This process of changing us to be more like Jesus is called *sanctification*, and it is the third purpose of your life on earth.

“You cannot reproduce the character of Jesus on your own strength. New Year’s resolutions, willpower, and best intentions are not enough. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to make the changes God wants to make in our lives. . . . Christlikeness is not produced by imitation, but by inhabitation. We allow Christ to live through us. . . . How does this happen in real life? Through the choices we make. We choose to do the right thing in situations and then trust God’s Spirit to give us his power, love, faith, and wisdom to do it. Since God’s Spirit lives inside of us, these things are always available for the asking.”

175 – 76: “While effort has nothing to do with your salvation, it has much to do with your spiritual growth. At least eight times in the New Testament we are told to “make every effort” in our growth toward becoming like Jesus. You don’t just sit around and wait for it to happen.

“Paul explains in Ephesians 4:22-24 our three responsibilities in becoming like Christ. First, we must choose to let go of old ways of acting. ‘Everything . . . connected with that whole way of life has to go. It’s rotten through and through. Get rid of it!’

“Second, we must change the way we think. ‘Let the Spirit change our way of thinking.’ The Bible says we are ‘transformed’ by the renewing of our minds. . . .

“Third, we must ‘put on’ the character of Christ by developing new, godly habits. Your character is essentially the sum of your habits; it is how you habitually act. The Bible says, ‘Put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.’*

“God uses his Word, people, and circumstances to mold us. All three are indispensable for character development. God’s Word provides the *truth* we need to grow, God’s people provide the *support* we need to grow, and circumstances provide the *environment* we need to practice Christlikeness. If you study and apply God’s Word, connect regularly with other believers, and learn to trust God in difficult circumstances, I guarantee you’ll become more like Jesus. . . .

“Spiritual maturity is not a solitary, individual pursuit! You cannot grow to Christlikeness in isolation. You must be around other people and interact with them. You need to be part of a church and community. Why? Because true spiritual maturity is all about learning to love like Jesus, and you can’t practice being like Jesus without being in relationship with other people. Remember, it’s all about love – loving God and loving others.

“Becoming like Christ is a long, slow process of growth. Spiritual maturity is neither instant nor automatic; it is a gradual, progressive development that will take the rest of your life.”

III. Definition of Spiritual Formation/Development

Mulholland (1993) notes that one of the major movements of the late 20th century was spiritual formation. Spirituality came in wide varieties -- Muslim, Zen, Hindu, Buddhist, and other Eastern meditation techniques. The reason for this emphasis on spirituality was the loss of meaning, purpose and value of life created by a largely materialistic and hedonistic consumer society. Before defining “spiritual formation/development,” it is useful to first define “spiritual” or “spirituality.”

Moberg (1991) provides a secular/governmental definition of “spiritual well-being,” and also shows the sharp contrast between a secular view and the Christian view of spirituality.

6: "The Spiritual Well-Being Section of the 1971 White House Conference on Aging... defined 'the spiritual' as that which pertains to people's inner resources, especially their 'ultimate concern, the basic value around which all other values are focused, the central philosophy of life – whether religious, anti-religious, or non-religious – which guides a person's conduct, the supernatural and nonmaterial dimensions of human nature.'

"In 1972 the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (NICA) was organized. One of its first projects was a survey of ministries with and for the aging in the religious sector, including a question on spiritual well-being. Resources reflected such a wide range of implicit definitions that a workshop was convened to seek consensus on its meaning. The result was the one-sentence definition that subsequently has been at the center of NICA's activities: 'Spiritual well-being is the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, community and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness.' This definition has been advanced to fit diverse theologies, traditions, ethics, and linguistic patterns, providing leverage to groups concerned for ministries with and for the aging."

10-11: "Lane... identifies four aspects of spiritual life: A Christian outlook which is 'a reflex, intellectual faith-vision of the world'; finding or seeking God in prayer and contemplation; finding God in activity that makes prayer a style of life in God's service, and 'an experiential awareness of the presence of God' which is a special grace or gift of sensing God's operative presence in the world and in oneself. 'It is this rooting in a personal experience of God that*empowers individuals and communities to become committed, creative forces for the transformation of society.' As an 'ambassador for Christ' like St. Paul (2 Corinthians 5:20-21), 'one of the best characteristics of a spirituality for our time is reconciliation, both individual and social.'

"Protestant spiritual traditions also emphasize the important role of community; genuine spiritual life contravenes selfish individualism and has an impact upon the world."

14: "There are at least two major paradigmatic orientations to spiritual wellness and maturity. One centers around explicit development of the self. It dominates perspectives of the human potential movement, New Age thought, many Eastern religions and new sects, and humanistic psychology. A well-known representative of this approach is Maslow's self-actualization theory with stages of development through which people move to satisfy their needs. Theoretical orientations like this easily become narcissistic, making their disciples 'selfish, self-centered elitists' who are 'exclusively concerned with their own needs.' (Yet Maslow later indicated that self-actualizing people are also 'great improvers and reformers of society,' integrating self-improvement and social zeal). Borelli's summary about spiritual orientations and fulfillment in aging reflects this self-centered philosophy: 'Ideally, the goal of life is to know oneself, to reach the immortality within, and to integrate oneself spiritually.... Jung identified the self as the image of God within everyone.... Re-centering on the self is a result of coming to know it through its images.'

"And the other paradigm is directly opposite. It views serving others and 'loss of self' as the means for attaining self-fulfillment and spiritual maturity. It is exemplified best by Jesus,

who said that he came to give fullness of life to all who accept it as a free gift of God's grace. The way to save one's life is to deny oneself, take up one's cross daily, and follow him, 'For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it' (Luke 9:24). He taught his followers to love others by deeds of kindness and service, not merely feelings and attitudes, as well as the love God and oneself."

Mulholland (1993) provides the following brief definition of "spiritual formation" and then discusses it. "Spiritual formation is a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others" (p. 12).

According to Scripture, human wholeness is equated with the image of God. We are, of course, created in God's image according to Genesis 1:26-27. The New Testament parallel is to become like Christ, who is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). This spiritual formation in the image of Christ is directly contrary to our self-actualization culture that creates God in our image.

Scripture also reveals that human wholeness involves nurturing one another toward wholeness, whether seeking justice in the world or pursuing shalom within the covenant community of God's people. There is no wholeness in the image of Christ without our relationship with others, both in the world and in the body of Christ.

"Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses, into something a little different from what it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish creature: either into a creature that is in harmony with God, and with other creatures, and with itself, or else into one that is in a state of war and hatred with God, and with its fellow-creatures, and with itself. To be the one kind of creature is heaven: that is, it is joy and peace and knowledge and power. To be the other means madness, horror, idiocy, rage, impotence, and eternal loneliness. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other" (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: McMillan, 1960), pp. 86-87).

"Spiritual formation is the great reversal: from being the subject who controls all of the things to being a person who is shaped by the presence, purpose and power of God in all things" (P. 27). This is contrary to our nature, since we have a deep need to control. "We tend to see such control as essential to the meaning, value and purpose of our being. How much of the compulsive workaholism of our activities serves to authenticate ourselves as persons (to ourselves and others) and to prove that we have value, meaning and purpose in the world! To put it simply, we live as though our doing determined our being" (p. 27).

Prior to doing, we must "be." That is, "our doing flows out of our being." Although spiritual disciplines are important, we must always remember that God, and not us, is a source of the transformation in which we become whole in the image of Christ.

"When we operate from the perspective that our doing determines our being, we expect immediate returns on our investment of time and resources -- observable results that prove that

we have performed well and are therefore persons of value and worth. If we fail to receive such instant feedback, we presume we have failed and begin to struggle with a perceived loss of self-image, value, purpose and even identity. Instant-gratification persons have great difficulty waiting patiently for God's timing; trusting God to bring the needed transformation in God's time, not theirs; persevering in obedience even when there is no indication that such obedience is making any difference in their lives. 'Being conformed' militates against our need for instant gratification" (p. 31).

Works is the *result* of a being that exists in relationship with Jesus as Lord. "So spiritual formation is not something that we do to ourselves or for ourselves, but something we allow God to do in us and for us as we yield ourselves to the work of God's transforming grace" (p. 32).

Stella Ma (1999, pp. 5-6) in her Ph.D. dissertation at the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University provided the following definition for "spiritual formation":

"[S]piritual formation" is . . . the transformational process in which a believer moves toward maturation. The anticipated result of spiritual formation is the development of godly character that is conformed to the image of Christ, which enables one to relate to God more intimately. The purpose of spiritual formation is to enable Christians to love and serve God, and others, more perfectly (Mulholland, 1993; Willard, 1990).

Spiritual formation for the Christian believer involves a personal relationship with God, the Father, through a person's dynamic faith and commitment to Jesus Christ, and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit (Albin, 1988). The process of spiritual formation is founded on Christ's death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead, which paid the price for sin. Sin is defined as that which separates humanity from God and eternal life. Sin is manifested as rebellion against God, and the choice made to set something else, other than God, at the center of the individual's existence. Christ's sacrifice opens a door to life in eternity with God, through the work and power of the Holy Spirit in the believer.

This process brings integration and restorative growth in all areas of human development and relationships. For all human growth and relationships have been fragmented, distorted and corrupted by sin, and cannot be restored or fulfilled without God. This process is a multi-dimensional process in that it involves the cognitive, affective, volitional, and spiritual domains of human development. It includes growth in all levels of human experience: both physical and transcendent; namely relationships with God, self, others, and nature (Loder, 1989; Nouwen, 1975; Saucy, 1993; Willard, 1998; Whitney, 1991).

Other synonymous terms for spiritual formation found in literature include Christian spirituality, formative spirituality, religiosity, perfection, Christian character formation,

discipleship, sanctification, spiritual development, process of spiritual growth, and spiritual or Christian maturity (Astley & Crowder, 1996; Mullen, 1996; Okholm 1996; Samaan, 1990). . . .

Spiritual formation is a growth process that involves the development of the whole person. Spiritual formation requires one to engage intentionally (Mulholland, 1993). Just as our body grows and develops with food and exercise, spiritual growth occurs when the mind, the emotions, and the will are nurtured, exercised, and nourished. Spiritual formation is a process that occurs throughout the span of a lifetime. Since spiritual formation requires one to become more conformed to the image of Christ, it is a lifelong endeavor. Spiritual formation is a process that requires specific acts of the will manifested in behavioral practices (Willard, 1998).

IV. Discipleship¹

Closely related to spiritual formation/development is discipleship, which connotes spiritual formation/development in the context of a relationship between the disciple and his/her discipler. George Barna in his 2001 book entitled *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* provides the following insights.

“[D]iscipleship [is] becoming a complete and competent follower of Jesus Christ. It is about the intentional training of people who voluntarily submit to the lordship of Christ and who want to become imitators of him in every thought, word, and deed. On the basis of teaching, training, experiences, relationships, and accountability, a disciple becomes transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ” (pp. 17-18).

The marks of true disciples are “a changed future through . . . acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and of the Christian faith as their defining philosophy of life; . . . a changed lifestyle that is manifested through Christ-oriented values, goals, perspectives, activities, and relationships; . . . [and] a changed world view, attributable to a deeper comprehension of the true meaning and impact of Christianity. Truth becomes an entirely God-driven reality to a disciple. Pursuing the truths of God becomes the disciple’s lifelong quest” (pp. 27-28).

“Discipleship cannot occur in a vacuum; it is most effectively accomplished in cooperation with other followers of the Lord. . . . It occurs when there is an intentional and strategic thrust to facilitate spiritual maturity. Specifically, [there must be] a philosophy of ministry that emphasizes the significance of discipleship and promotes a process for facilitating such maturity. [There must be] relational opportunities for [participants], matching those who need to grow with

¹ One of Christ’s direct commands for His followers to become disciplers is found in the concluding verses of Matthew, known as the Great Commission. Willard (1991) notes that the first part of this Great Commission is found in Matthew 28:19-20: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Although the Christian church over the centuries has diligently fulfilled this portion of the Great Commission, it has neglected or misunderstood the second half, which states that the new Christians must “obey everything I have commanded you.” This second aspect of the Great Commission, the part that directly focuses on discipleship, is what Willard has deemed the “Great Omission.”

individuals and ministries that facilitate growth. Because serving people is such a crucial dimension of spiritual maturity, churches help people grow by giving them opportunities to meet the needs of others” (p. 31).

34-35: "Three out of every five adult Christians we surveyed told us that they want to have a deep commitment to the Christian faith, but they* are not involved in any intentional effort to grow spiritually. They view their challenge as one of spiritual maintenance rather than spiritual development. They contend that because they have embraced Jesus, learned the core lessons from Scripture, and implemented those lessons, all they need to do in the future is continue doing what they're already doing. The one out of five believers who are actively engaged in some type of personal spiritual development activity, besides attending church services, are involved in concerted efforts to learn new insights, live in a more obedient manner, and apply their newfound wisdom in unique and expanding ways." Of those pursuing spiritual development, 68% are involved in a small group designed to generate spiritual growth, 24% attend a Sunday school class that motivates them to grow, 15% are being spiritually mentored, and 11% attend a special class for becoming more spiritually mature. These people seeking spiritual development typically have allocated an average of four hours per week to these endeavors.

Barna's research indicates that most born-again adults have not set any goals for spiritual development, they have not developed standards against which to measure the growth, or they have failed to set procedures so they can be accountable for their lack of growth. Only 40% of believers said they had set personal spiritual goals for themselves, and only 20% identified their spiritual condition as the single most important thing they would like to accomplish in life. Being a good parent and having happy kids was the top response with 29%, with financial security being the third at 14%. Less than one of five adult Christians described spiritual success in terms broader than personal maturity.

54: "The chief barrier to effective discipleship is not that people do not have the ability to become spiritually mature, but they lack the passion, perspective, priorities, and perseverance to develop their spiritual lives. Most Christians know that spiritual growth is important, personally beneficial, and expected, but few attend churches that push them to grow or provide the resources necessary to facilitate that growth. Few believers have relationships that hold them accountable for spiritual development. In the end, it boils down to personal priorities. For most of us, regardless of our intellectual assent to the importance of Christian growth, our passions lie elsewhere -- and our schedule and energy follow those passions."

"Presently, less than half of all born-again adults (44%) are convinced that there is absolute moral truth. The majority of American Christians either believe or yield to the belief that all moral truth is relative to the individual and his or her circumstances. Most believers either hold a weak belief that absolute truth exists (5 percent), that all truth is relative (13 percent), or admit that they don't know what they think about moral absolutes (38 percent). The confusion of Christians regarding truth is verified by other research we have conducted in which we asked about truth in different ways. The outcome was a series of inconsistent views, largely because so few believers have truly grappled with the matter. This incredible confusion about truth is at least partially attributable to the fact that only half of all believers (55 percent) claimed that the primary influence on their thinking about moral truth is the Bible or the religious teaching they

receive. The other half indicate that family and friends, experiences and observations, emotions and intuition, and other sources provide the greatest influence on their truth perspectives" (p. 71).

Barna defines discipleship as "activity that guides individuals to become spiritually mature zealots for Christ who then reproduce equally passionate mature followers of Christ" (p. 88). Barna identifies nine barriers to discipleship: (1) a lack of a clear, measurable definition of "spiritual success;" (2) defining "discipleship" as "head knowledge rather than complete transformation" (P. 89); (3) failure to teach people in systematic ways through strategic learning and developmental processes customized for the student; (4) lack of accountability for what we say, think, do or believe; (5) promoting programs and not relationships with people; (6) the failure of small groups to provide comprehensive spiritual nurture; (7) the failure of church leaders to be zealous about the spiritual development of people; (8) focusing attention on adults and not children, who will provide the greatest return on an investment since once children receive age of 12, "the chances of changing how they think and behave are limited" (p. 96); and (9) diversion of the best leaders to ministries other than discipleship.

Barna addresses specific outcomes for discipleship which are: passion (Christ seeks "the hearts of those who are willing to surrender everything for the blessed privilege of suffering for Him, just as He suffered for us. He wants people who are dedicated to getting beyond the offer of mere salvation to those who are willing to do what it takes to complete a personal transformation" (p. 99); maturity in ministry fundamentals (defined as "worship, evangelism, discipleship, servanthood, stewardship, and Christian fellowship") (p. 99); a biblical worldview; and "standards and accountability that fosters spiritual growth" (p. 100).

Barna noted that the churches effective in discipleship that his team studied employed general measurements of health and well-being, which included: the number of volunteers; the ease or difficulty in recruiting people for ministry such as food shelters, Sunday school teachers, etc.; the number of people who turned in a personal growth plan; the number of visitors attending the church; the number of divorces in the congregation; the number of serious friendships developed among the church members; the number of people going overseas on short-term mission trips; and the increase in spiritual maturity noted by small group leaders.

In addition to these general measurements, there also are a variety of measurements for personal growth, which include: self-valuations on how well the person is meeting his/her predetermined spiritual goals; discussion among family and small group members regarding spiritual growth progress; standardized assessment tools developed by the church; regular sessions with more mature Christians to discuss experiences and spiritual growth development; the use of journals to sense progress or barriers; identifying ways that people have applied lessons from recent sermons; an active prayer life, seeking direct revelation from God as to what is, and what is not, working in terms of personal spiritual growth.

Again in studying the churches highly effective in disciple-making, Barna identified the common methods of effective discipleship as including small groups, sermons with practical applications, classes for new believers; programs emphasizing leadership training; one-to-one mentoring; memorizing Bible verses; Sunday school classes that progressively help people develop a more comprehensive worldview; ministry groups that provide community service;

online curricula; two and three-year classes on worldview foundation; daily Bible reading programs; book discussion groups; life plan development; spiritual gift assessment and activation; and a large-group discipleship training process in a typical classroom approach.

"Most of the highly effective disciple-making churches integrate mentoring or coaching into their process. The ways in which this happens vary tremendously. Some churches raise up future leaders and teachers by having them serve as apprentices to church staff. Other congregations have more traditional one-to-one matches, with one individual serving as the discipler and the other as the disciple. Some churches modify their approach and use an 'accountability partner' model: Both people are on equal footing, meeting regularly to talk, pray, and encourage each other spiritually. Several congregations use a trickle-down model: A staff member mentors a half-dozen laypeople, each of those people mentor from two to six other congregants, and each of those people does the same" (p. 123).

"Few churches use the Internet for anything more than an information dumping ground; we did not discover any innovative or productive uses of the Net for discipleship. A handful of churches try to shake up the predictability of the process by using a tape, book, or other outside resource as a focal point for interaction among people" (p. 124).

Keeping people motivated is always an issue, and small groups can keep people motivated by unstated peer pressure. Encouragement by one's spiritual family is a great incentive for continued spiritual growth. Another tool in this regard is establishing personal growth goals for the year. The good aspect of this approach is that no one is imposing goals on the person, the person sets his/her own goals. Most churches studied by Barna's group have disciples sign a commitment form with their objectives, and then provide quarterly or semiannual assessments of the progress being made by the disciple.

Ken Boa in his book *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* adds the following excellent material regarding discipleship:

371: "We teach what we believe, but we reproduce what we are. Although God in his grace may often use us in spite of ourselves, we normally cannot impart what we do not possess. Discipleship does not happen by accident; it is a process that is animated by an ongoing intention of the heart. No one suddenly stumbles into spirituality, and if we do not decide to apprentice ourselves to Jesus' authority, we will not become his disciples. Similarly, if we do not consciously intend to reproduce the life of Christ in others, we will miss our calling to make disciples. . . .

"Personal revival flows from fresh commitments to radical obedience and expresses itself in the focused presence of the life of Christ in us and through us. Like farmers (2 Timothy 2:6), we reap what we sow; spiritual nurture cannot be separated from our own spiritual formation, since we reproduce after our own kind.

"Discipleship is not an event but an ongoing process that requires conscious dependence on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-14). "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those

taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words" (1 Corinthians 2:12-13). Apart from the work of the Spirit, we are powerless to accomplish anything of lasting good. God is the one who causes spiritual growth, not us (1 Corinthians 3:6). Discipleship is sanctification - the growing experiential knowledge of the person of Christ."

Boa provides a history of spirituality in the ancient, medieval, and modern churches. Included in this history are the early church fathers, desert and monastic spirituality (including Benedict (c.480-547), the founder of the Benedictine order, who developed a system of monastic life which combined prayer and physical labor. Benedict prescribed for daily life the *lectio divina*, or sacred reading). Yet another church father cited by Boa is Augustine. The persons focusing upon spirituality in the medieval ages included Bernard of Clairvoix (1090-1153) St. Francis (c. 1182-1226), Catherine of Siena (c. 1347-1380) and Julian of Norwich (c. 1342-C. 1416). Each of the Reformers was highlighted by Boa, as was Ignatius of Loyola (c. 1491-1556) and Teresa of Avila (1515-1582). The Puritans integrated Reformed theology and spiritual experience, with one well-known Puritan John Bunyan writing from prison his masterpiece *Pilgrim's Progress*. Others identified included evangelicals John Newton as well as the two Great Awakenings with George Whitfield, Charles G. Finney, the Wesley brothers, and the Pentecostals. More recent spiritual figures include C.S. Lewis, A. W. Tozer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Henri Nouwen and Dallas Willard.

Finally, Bennett (2001) adds the following regarding discipleship and provides a definition adopted by a church group. "The discipleship growth process involves a marvelous mix of human discipline and God's grace.... Transformation and maturity results not only from the discipline of the individual, but also from the work of God's Spirit. In terms of our own personal discipline, Richard Foster (*Celebration of discipline*; New York: HarperCollins, 1978) categorizes the spiritual disciplines as "inward (meditation, prayer, fasting, study), outward (simplicity, solitude, submission, service), and corporate (confession, worship, guidance, celebration)" (p. 13).

"At the Eastbourne Consultation on Discipleship in the fall of 1999, leaders from more than fifty-four countries representing nearly ninety organizations, denominations, and churches presented the following statement regarding the definition of discipleship:

"While there are valid differences of perspective on what constitutes discipleship, we define Christian discipleship as a process that takes place within accountable relationships over a period of time for the purpose of bringing believers to spiritual maturity in Christ. Biblical examples suggest that discipleship is both relational and intentional, both position and process.... We will pursue the process of discipleship, just as purposefully as the proclamation of the Gospel. Evangelism and discipleship must be seen as integral" (p. 23), citing the Joint Statement on Discipleship, Eastbourne Consultation, September 24, 1999, Eastbourne, England).

V. Stages of Spiritual Development

Several authors described stages through which one develops spiritually in the process of sanctification. Boa (2001) provided the following historical perspective:

The ancient spiritual leader Pseudo-Dionysius developed the Ladder of Perfection which involved three stages of spiritual growth. "The first stage is the Purgative Way, and this involves a process of purifying the soul through renunciation, contrition, and confessions of blatant sins and willful disobedience. This process becomes more subtle as sins of omission and unconscious sins are gradually brought to the surface and renounced before God. Purgation involves brokenness, gradual death to the tyrannous dominion of the ego, and sometimes wrenching transfers of trust from self-reliance to reliance on Christ alone for the soul's well-being. The Purgative Way is a painful but needful process of finding Christ's life by losing one's own life (increasing mortification) and thus moving from anxiety to trust.

"The second stage is the Illuminative Way, which refers to a growing realization of the presence of God within as one is increasingly consecrated to God. In this stage, prayer is less an activity or an appendage and more a vital reality that flows out of one's being. Life takes on an aura of the mystery of God as one moves towards what Nicholas of Cusa called 'learned ignorance,' an increased awareness of how little we know. The Illuminative Way is often characterized by growing love and others-centeredness as one expresses love for God through the acts of love and service to others.

"The third stage is the Unitive Way, also described as contemplation and abandonment to grace.... The first phase of contemplation, or simply union with God, begins with the prayer of quietness in which one is yielded to God through purified desire and simplified will. This may be followed by what John of the Cross called the dark night of the senses, a time of dryness and painful stripping away of the intellectual and emotional assurances of God's presence and care. The second phase in contemplation, or full union with God, involves detachment from self and a certitude of the indwelling presence of God. This phase may be accompanied by an occasional experience of spiritual ecstasy that Teresa called wonder or rapture. John of the Cross described a second night, which he called the dark night of the spirit, that God may use to purge the last vestiges of self-will. The highest level of the spiritual mountain described by the mystics is transforming union, or spiritual marriage. This union of all desire and complete harmony with God involves a transmutation of personal identity in Christ and the realization of oneness described by in John 17:20-23."

Boa on page 510 states that Bill Fagan describes six stages of spiritual growth that have some comparison to the Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive Ways. The six stages are:

- *spiritual birth* -- acknowledging personal sinfulness and justification through Christ (John 3; Romans 1-3).
- *service* -- in gratitude, the believer uses natural talents provided by God to serve Him.
- *frustrated inadequacy* -- the painful discovery that we cannot live spiritual life of our own power (Romans 7)
- *identity with Christ* -- we realize in a personal way Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and we are aware that Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8)
- *renewing of the mind* -- we empty and fill our mind (Romans 12) as the Holy Spirit replaces the lies we have believed with the truth of our identity in Christ
- *union with Christ* -- we experience progressively Christ in our life which is only realized completely and perfectly in heaven.

Groeschel & Perrotta (2000) describe the Christian life as a journey (Jesus refers to himself as “the way” in John 14:6 and challenges his disciples to “follow me” in Matthew 4:19) with eight stages: Conversion (turning toward God), Purification, Mature Faith, Hope and Trust in Darkness, The Illuminative Way, Part I: The Love of Neighbor; The Illuminative Way, Part II: The Love of God; The Dark Night; and The Unitive Way.

13: “Christian writers from the earliest centuries, following . . . have used the word “spirit” or “spiritual” to describe the growth and struggles of the inner man.... Religion can be described as the outer, or sociological, aspect of belief.”

24-25:”Beginning in the fourth century, St. Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa, in the East, and St. Augustine, in the West, began to see the journey of Christians following* a threefold way: purgation, or deep conversion; illumination, or a heartfelt awareness of the divine intimacy, with God and neighbor; and finally the experience of union with God, which some writers, such as St. Bonaventure, have called the vestibule of heaven.”

26: Authentically spiritual conversion is “experiential (affecting how [the new Christians] perceive things), theological (affecting what they believe), moral (affecting what they do), and even emotional (affecting what they feel).”

49: “Almost every well-articulated religious tradition leads its followers to a period of moral conversion or purification at the beginning of the spiritual journey. This purification is often symbolized in ritual and liturgical rites by cleansing ceremonies, for example, washings and even baptisms. It is the inner struggle for virtue and the rejection of sinful ways that is the real purification. Often in societies corrupted by wealth and indulgence, like ancient Rome, or in our own consumerist culture, people attempt a religious experience without practicing virtue. They focus narrowly on a few good qualities and leave out a total moral conversion. These good qualities, like selective concern for social justice or this or that good cause, are often displayed with a certain self-righteousness. Meanwhile, the whole range of virtues, natural and supernatural, is ignored. This is Gnosticism at its worst. . . . No religious faith is more deeply opposed to spirituality without morality than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments’ (John 14:15) is a very helpful challenge for the disciples of Christ to keep in mind in these days of worldly religiosity.”

53 – 54: “In every world religion that teaches a spiritual path, the great step after an initial conversion is purgation – the purifying of the heart and life of the individual from serious moral faults, sins, self-centered attitudes and, as far as possible, the voluntary indulgence of sinful inclinations. Christ summed up this requirement very succinctly and with Jewish directness, saying, ‘If you love me you will keep my commandments’ (John 14:15). This process can and should be seen in a positive way as growth in the life of moral virtues or moral inclinations. Virtues are good traits consistently observable in a person’s * behavior.”

The second phase of the interior journey is called the Illuminative Way. It is called this "because the mind and heart of the individual are opening to the light of the divine presence, [and] in some ways [it] is the most beautiful part of the spiritual journey.... Obviously, the unitive way that follows represents the highest human perfection, because it is the most complete

surrender to the sanctifying or hallowing grace of Christ. But that way has not only its high mountains but its terrifying valleys, incredible darkneses as well as transforming light. The illuminative way also has its trials, demands, and struggles, but nothing like the ultimate death of self described by the saints as they reach the higher levels in the journey to the summit of the mountain of God" (p. 95).

"A spontaneous and free-flowing love of neighbor, followed by a greater love of God, are the two most important characteristics in the illuminative way. These two emphases, one following on the other, are significant enough that we may identify these as two distinct phases of the illuminative way" (p. 96).

"Generosity, zeal, ease at prayer, and recollection are all signs of a person growing in this way. The pull of the all-encompassing love of God is ever more strongly felt. God is experienced as a consuming fire. Others who would do better to remain silent will counsel the person in the illuminative way to observe moderation, common sense, balance. In a word, they will try to impose the mediocrity that they themselves have become comfortable with. The lives of the saints such as St. Teresa of Avila suggest that they suffer much at the hands of advisors who are themselves stuck somewhere in the purgative way, usually struggling with an incomplete and timid attempt to trust God and to accept His will.

"The illuminative soul is much more free than it had been. Human relations and understanding the needs of others are bathed in the divine light. Prayer and contemplative meditation become easier."

Finally, Mulholland (1993) identifies four stages of the classical Christian journey: Awakening, purgation, illumination and union. He states that "awakening" occurs when we encounter and respond to God by recognizing our sinfulness. "Purgation" is the process during which God removes from our life areas in which we are unlike Christ. "Illumination" is the process whereby we begin manifesting the image of Christ in the world. "Union" is the advanced state when we experience a wholeness in union with God. More specifically, awakening involves "encounter with God, encounter with self, comfort and threat"; purgation involves "renunciation of blatant sins, renunciation of willful disobedience, unconscious sins and omissions, deep-seeded structures of being and behavior, and coming to trust"; illumination allows "total consecration to God in love, God experienced within, integration of being, unceasing prayer, and increasing social concern"; and union is abandonment to grace, prayer of quietness, dark night of the senses, full union/ecstatic union and dark night of the spirit" (p. 81).

Purgation is "the process of bringing our behavior, our attitudes, our desires into increasing harmony with our growing perception of what the Christlike life is all about. Here is where the classical spiritual disciplines and the personal spiritual disciplines we will consider in the next chapters come primarily into play, although the disciplines also engender constant awakenings, deepen the stage of illumination and shape the experience of union with God. Purgation is the process of becoming integrated into the new order of being in Christ. Purgation has its own stages. First of all, there is a renunciation of all blatant inconsistencies with wholeness in Christ – what the fathers and mothers of the Christian spiritual tradition call 'gross sins.' We begin to bring our life under the values of God's kingdom, abandoning behaviors that

are contrary to God's will as revealed in*Christ and Scripture – for example, Paul's list in Galatians: 'fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing'(Galatians 5:19-21). This stage of purgation deals with the aspects of our old life that are clearly and unmistakably inconsistent with God's will for our wholeness. Often we are aware of these aspects of our life even before awakening comes to call us to purgation. Many of these behaviors are even suspect in the eyes of the world.

“Then purgation moves to other deliberate sins of our life – what Wesley called 'willful transgressions of the known will of God.' In this stage, purgation leads us to deal with behaviors that may be 'normal' and 'acceptable' in our culture for which the Scripture and the Spirit of God tell us are not part of God's will for our wholeness. For instance, Scripture's norms for sexual behavior are much more stringent than those of our culture” (pp. 82-83).

“Next, purgation probes the unconscious sins and omissions of our life.* . . . Finally, purgation deals with the deep-seeded attitudes and inner orientations of our being out of which our behavior patterns flow. Here purgation deals essentially with our 'trust structures,' especially those deep inner postures of our being that do not rely on God but on ourselves for our well-being. Catholic theologian and psychologist Benedict Groeschel characterizes this dimension of purgation as coming to mature faith and entering into the relationship of radical trust in God. He describes mature faith as a decline of anxiety and an increase of peace” (p. 84-85). Paul writes about this mature faith in Philippians 4 when he says to worry about nothing and pray about everything.

Illumination is characterized by “a profound transformation of our relationship with God. Illumination is the experience of total consecration to God in love. Rather than my being in charge of my relationship with God, God is given absolute control of the relationship” (p. 94). God becomes a living reality in our own being and infuses all things with His presence and purpose.

God infuses us with virtues, empowering us for holy living in the world. Paul describes this empowerment as the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Illumination is also characterized by increasing social concern, which is borne out of a deep sense of God's love. Good works are the hallmark of the illuminative stage. We are no longer self-centered or self-concerned, our motivation becomes a heart burning with love for God. There remain dangers in this stage, including pride and self-righteousness.

The final stage of the Christian journey is called union, which is also known by such terms as ecstasy and contemplation. In this stage, we find ourselves caught up in adoration, praise, rapturous joy, and peace, all of which are a gift of God's grace. This stage also has components, one of which is the "prayer of quietness," which involves yielding to God's presence and purpose with purity of intention. Another component is the "dark night of the senses" in which the Christian no longer seeks to know or feel God, since such sensual requirements restrict God to the narrow limits of our mind and senses. Yet another component is the "dark night of the spirit," which is the final stage of losing our "self." This is a profoundly painful stage which was illustrated by Jesus' cry from cross: "My God, my God, why have you

forsaken me?" From this darkness and despair we fall "into the fiery abyss of Love" (p. 100). Once we have relinquished all elements of self-control, we enter into a transforming union with God which is the ultimate conformity to the image of Christ.

VI. Spiritual Disciplines and Their Importance in the Process

Mulholland (1993) identifies the classical spiritual disciplines of the Christian tradition as being prayer, spiritual reading and liturgy. These disciplines provide a structure within which we can exercise personal disciplines.

Prayer is relational and not functional. It is not a shopping list which tries to keep God at arm's length and maintain control of the relationship. Prayer seeks to draw us into God's involvement in the brokenness of the world. This prayer is not individual but corporate. Mulholland suggests we become immersed in the sacrificial prayers of the saints who preceded us. This avoids the very narrow and individualized private prayers that we generally offer.

Mulholland identifies the second classical spiritual discipline as spiritual reading, which he describes as the exact opposite of informational reading. Rather than taking an analytical approach to the reading, we take a contemplative approach open to mystery. There are six steps in spiritual reading: preparing for it (shifting from control to receptivity), reading/receiving, meditating, responding to God from the heart, yielding/waiting upon God, and living out the text.

The last classical spiritual discipline identified by Mulholland is "liturgy," which "consists of the corporate and individual patterns of devotion, worship, fellowship and obedience that enable us increasingly to manifest in the world God's kingdom of love, forgiveness, reconciliation, cleansing, healing and holiness" (p. 117). The components of liturgy are worship (either corporate or individual), daily office (consistent daily behaviors that renew us in our discipleship; examples are personal quiet times with God, prayers before meals, moments of prayer throughout the day; prayer, Bible study, Christian fellowship), study ("disciplined growth in our knowledge and experience of God, ourselves, others in the world around us" (p. 118)), fasting (separating ourselves from something so that we can offer ourselves more completely to God), and retreat (setting aside a time, either together with others or by ourselves, to remove ourselves from the normal flow of life and give God our full and undivided attention). "A genuine spiritual discipline is a discipline of loving obedience offered to God with no strings attached. We put no conditions on it. We put no time limits on it. We have no expectation of how we want God to change us through it. We simply offer the discipline* to God, and keep on offering it for as long as God wants us to keep on" (pp. 131-32).

"[T]he greatest single danger in the spiritual disciplines is the temptation to turn them into works righteousness. Since the disciplines are activities we perform, from the* very first performance there is a possibility that we will begin to think our performance will make the difference in our growth toward wholeness in Christ for others" (pp. 135-36). This danger can be addressed by developing a deep inner posture which is expressed in the classical Christian spiritual tradition of silence, solitude and prayer. "Silence is fasting from speaking or listening to anyone other than God; solitude is fasting from fellowship with others to be alone with God; prayer is a means of dialogue with God" (p. 136).

Mulholland states that spiritual disciplines should be exercised corporately, since "the community of faith is the living reality within which the classical spiritual disciplines nurture us and provide the support structure for our personal disciplines. When we don't feel like worshiping, the community should carry us along in its worship. When we can't seem to pray, community prayer should enfold us. When the Scripture seems closed for us, the community should keep on reading, affirming and incarnating it around us.

In the second place, when God begins to work with us at the deep levels of our incompleteness and brokenness, our bondage and sin, we need the body of Christ to support, encourage, challenge and nurture us toward wholeness. We may be able to work through some of our bondage and brokenness alone with God. But when God begins to deal with some of the deep distortions of our being, we need others. In such times we confess our sins to one another, bear one another's burdens and become for one another means of grace to maintain the discipline through which God can bring us to wholeness. Such transformation is hard for us. The idea of corporate spirituality moves powerfully against the grain of our deeply encultured individualized, privatized understanding of spirituality" (p. 146).

Corporate spirituality also prevents heterodoxy and heresy. "Corporate spirituality is essential, because privatization always fashions a spirituality that in some way allows us to maintain control of God" (p. 149). Biblical examples of those who tried to maintain control of God include Nicodemus in John 3, Paul before the Road to Damascus experience (as related in Philippians 3:5-6), and Jesus' description of those who claimed on judgment day that they exercised works and used his name, but Jesus claimed not to know them (Matthew 7:22-23).

Mulholland states that a final element in spirituality is social holiness, which is bound to personal holiness. That is, "there is no personal holiness without social holiness, so also there is no social holiness without personal holiness" (p. 159). Mulholland states that those Christians who moved exclusively toward personal holiness achieve personal piety, but this is very compartmentalized, with a person's spiritual life being in one compartment and a life in another. This is particularly true in current society, with Christianity being widely seen as a religion of "personal pronouns, a purely individual faith;" but this phenomenon is of recent origin with traditional social doctrine largely being forgotten and replaced by individualistic theology (p. 159).

Similarly, "[w]hen persons move exclusively toward social holiness, the result can become a very manipulative, destructive kind of works righteousness. . . . *The Old Testament prophets continually remind God's people that the worship of God is incompatible with social, economic or political injustice. Worship of God is to result in a focal concern for the welfare of one's neighbors and community. Attempting to worship God while closing one's eyes to dehumanizing injustices in the social, political and economic grounds -- or, worse, while engaging in practices that contribute to injustice -- is regularly denounced as totally unacceptable. Iniquity joined with solemn assembly is an abomination to God" (pp. 159- 160).

Boa (2001) emphasizes the critical importance of discipline, self-control and the work of the Holy Spirit. He writes:

76: "The life of Christ can be reproduced in us only by the power of the Holy Spirit. As an inner work of God, it is achieved not by human effort but by divine enabling. Apart from Christ and the power of his Spirit, we can accomplish nothing in the sight of God (John 15:4-5; Acts 1:8). Therefore it is crucial that we develop a conscious sense of dependence upon the Spirit's power in all that we do (see Ephesians 1:19; 3:16; 5:18). . . .

"Dependence is critical, but there is no growth in the Christian life apart from discipline and self-control ("discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness" [1 Timothy 4:7]). Spirituality is not instantaneous or haphazard; it is developed and refined. The Epistles are full of commands to believe, obey, walk, present, fight, reckon, hold fast, pursue, draw near, and love. The spiritual life is progressively cultivated in the disciplines of the faith; you and I will not wake up one morning to find ourselves suddenly spiritual. This is why Paul uses the metaphors of an athlete, a soldier, and the farmer to illustrate the discipline of the Christian life (see 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 2:3-6). We grow in godliness as we hear and obediently respond to the Word. Spiritual maturity is characterized by the ability to recognize and apply the principles of Scripture to daily experience (Hebrews 5:11-14). The Bible comes alive when its precepts are put into practice, but this does not happen apart from human choice. We must choose to have our minds and emotions guided and strengthened by the Holy Spirit."

78: "In the New Testament, a quick survey of the Gospels through the lens of discipline reveals that the Lord Jesus engaged all the classic disciplines, such as solitude, silence, simplicity, study, prayer, sacrificial service, and fasting. Jesus understood that these practices were not optional for those who have a passion for the Father's pleasure and honor. Our Lord did not engage in these disciplines as ends in themselves but as means to know and obey his Father. They moved him in the direction of the foremost commandment (Deuteronomy 6:5; Mark 12:30): 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'"

"Yet we have bought the illusion that we can be like Christ without imitating his spirituality. If we wish to be like our Master, we must imitate his practice; if we believe he knew how to live, we must seek the grace to live like him. To ask the question What would Jesus do? without practicing the habits we know he practiced is to attempt to run a marathon without prior training. What is evident to us on the physical plane is often obscure to us on the spiritual level. It is absurd to think that we could excel at any sport such as golf or tennis without investing the needed time, training, and practice. But when it comes to living the Christian life, we suppose that we are doing well if we attend church and open a Bible once or twice a week. If believers expended the same time and energy in cultivating their spiritual lives as they are willing to invest in becoming reasonably skillful at any sport or hobby, the world would look with wonder at the power of the body of Christ.

"We desire to know Christ more deeply, but we shun the lifestyle that would make it happen. By relegating the spiritual to certain times and activities, we are ill prepared to face the temptations and challenges of daily living in a Christlike way. It is easy to deceive ourselves into thinking that without the active and painful formation of godly character, we will have the capacity to make the right choices whenever we need to. But if we have not been exercising and training and practicing behind the scenes, we will not have the skill (wisdom) to perform well

when it counts...*Will power alone will not be enough, unless our wills have been trained and strengthened through ongoing practice. When it comes to running a race, meaning well and trying hard will do us little good if we are out of shape through lack of training" (pp. 78-79).

"The disciplines of the faith are never ends in themselves but means to the end of knowing, loving, and trusting God. As we implement them in a consistent way, we cultivate holy habits. As these habits grow, they guide our behavior and character in such a way that it becomes more natural for us to live out our new identities in Christ. Our daily choices shape our habits, and our habits shape our character. Our character in turn guides the decisions we make in times of stress, temptation, and adversity. In this way, the godly actions of maturing believers are outward displays of increasing inner beauty" (p. 79).

"There is no standardized list of spiritual disciplines, but some are more prominent in literature than are others. Richard J. Foster develops a threefold typology of inward disciplines (meditation, prayer, fasting, and study), outward disciplines (simplicity, solitude, submission, and service), and corporate disciplines (confession, worship, guidance, and celebration). Dallas Willard divides disciplines into two classes: disciplines of abstinence (solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, secrecy, and sacrifice) and disciplines of engagement (study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, confession, and submission). Other writers characterize other activities, including journaling, dialogue, witness, stewardship, and listening, as disciplines" (p. 82). Boa lists the following as disciplines: solitude and silence, prayer (an ongoing dialogue with God), journaling, study and meditation, fasting and chastity, secrecy (anonymity), confession, fellowship, submission and guidance, simplicity, stewardship, and sacrifice, worship and celebration, service, and witness.

"Listen to this old proverb: Sow a thought, reap an act; Sow an act, reap a habit; Sow a habit, reap a character; Sow a character, reap a destiny" (p. 91).

VII. The Distinctiveness of Evangelical, Charismatic Christians

You will recall that the second phase of the CCCU project is to "identify member campuses representing several different theological traditions with mature programs of spiritual formation that appear to be achieving positive results." Since Regent is not affiliated with any denomination, our "theological tradition" is not immediately evident. Let me advance that because Regent is so diffuse across the Christian spectrum, we are an "evangelical" institution with a special emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Regarding "evangelicalism," McGrath (1995) writes as follows:

57-58: "[E]vangelicalism is as much a devotional ethos as it is a theological system. There is a creative intermingling here of the Reformed emphasis on right doctrine with the Pietist concern for a "living faith" -- that is, a personally appropriated and assimilated faith, expressed in such terms as 'a personal relationship with Christ.' Evangelicalism is basically Christian orthodoxy, as set out in the ecumenical creeds, with a particular emphasis on the need for the

personal assimilation and appropriation of faith and a marked reluctance to allow any matters of lesser importance to get in the way of the proclamation and application of the gospel.

"The devotional use of Scripture is less of central importance to the evangelicals. It must be appreciated that this approach involves reading Scripture in a certain manner -- not only as the basis of the theological system or for intellectual stimulation but also for the spiritual nourishment* of the reader. The 'knowledge' of God that evangelicals seek is at least as experiential as it is cognitive, with its concern for a 'deeply based consciousness' of the Lord.

"Again, evangelicalism is not committed to any one specific theology of conversion (Reformed and Wesleyan perspectives are of particular importance in this context), but rather to a recognition of the need for personal conversion."

58 -- 59: "Debate within evangelicalism over its foundational beliefs and their consequences for Christian thought and life is healthy, in that it leads to a greater appreciation of the issues involved. Yet such a debate is short-circuited whenever someone declares that those who, while* arguing on biblical principles, reach different conclusions forfeit their right to be called evangelical. Evangelicalism embraces such diverse positions as Reformed and Wesleyan doctrines of grace, 'mixed body' and 'society of saints' doctrines of the church, and Lutheran and Zwinglian views of the real presence of Christ. Debate over these is helpful and legitimate; they are all, however, biblically based and have a long history within the evangelical tradition. None can be dismissed as "nonevangelical" without doing serious violence to biblical exposition and interpretation." Evangelicalism, according to McGrath, is grounded on the following six central beliefs: the supreme authority of Scripture as the Word of God, the Majesty of Jesus Christ (Christ is the focal point of Scripture and is uniquely "true God and true man"), the lordship of the Holy Spirit who brings spiritual regeneration and "works to conform us to Christ," the need for personal conversion, the priority of evangelism, and the importance of Christian community. Evangelicalism is transdenominational, can be a trend within mainstream denominations, and represents itself as an ecumenical movement. The diversity between evangelicals can be accounted for by the differing emphases they put on each of the six elements described above, how they interpret each of the elements, and elements that they may choose to add.

Boa (2001) demonstrates well the importance of the Holy Spirit, something upon which Regent focuses:

291: "'The Holy Spirit has long been the Cinderella of the Trinity. The other two sisters may have gone to the theological ball; the Holy Spirit got left behind every time.' Until recently, this observation by Alister E. McGrath in *Christian Theology: An Introduction* characterized the experience of most people in the church. The majority of believers have been content to acknowledge the existence of the Holy Spirit, but on the level of personal encounter, the relationship has been largely limited to the Father and the Son. But the winds of change have been blowing, and an unparalleled movement in the twentieth century has created a new awareness of the person and ministry the Holy Spirit. The past few decades have seen an explosion of worldwide church growth, and the fastest-growing churches are those that have centered on the fullness of the Spirit. At the same time a number of mainline denominations have

experienced significant membership loss, the Pentecostal and charismatic renewal movements have reached tens and now hundreds of millions of people around the world.

292: "Spirit-filled spirituality, although underemphasized by mainstream Christianity until the twentieth century, has been an essential part of spiritual formation since the days of the early church in the book of Acts. But it has been plagued by people's tendency to move toward the polar opposites of rejection or obsession. The extreme of rejection is marked by fear of experiential excess or loss of control and by theological rigidity. The extreme of obsession is stamped by emotionalism, sensationalism, and vulnerability to manipulation and false teaching. A more balanced perspective combines openness to the surprising work of the Spirit with discernment that tests experience in light of the Scriptures and the fruit that it produces. . . .

"The ministry of the Holy Spirit is multifaceted, but three essential aspects are bearing witness to Jesus Christ, applying Christ's redemptive work in human hearts, and working personally and progressively to form Christlikeness in the lives of believers. He empowers us to live a new quality of life, he purifies and purges us as we submit to his authority and control, and equips us with spiritual gifts and opportunities to build up others in the faith. But as J. I. Packer observes in *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, there are limitations to seeing the doctrine of the Spirit as essentially about power, purity, or performance. Although all of these are vital components of the Spirit's work, it is best to see the Spirit as an active, personal presence in our lives. The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus Christ by mediating Christ's presence to us. The Spirit assures us of the Father's love and care, brings us into personal fellowship with Jesus, and transforms our characters so that we become more like him."

294-95: "The Christian life is the life of Christ in us; without a moment-by-moment reliance on the Holy Spirit, this level of living is impossible. Sanctification is both a state and a process; when we come to Jesus, we are set apart to God by the Spirit's application of the work of Christ in our lives. We are called to realize this state of sanctification (God's inworking [Philippians 2:13]) in a progressive way by obedient conformity to the character of the indwelling Christ (our outworking [Philippians 2:12]). This is accomplished as we keep in step with the Spirit; "if we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). To be sanctified is to be possessed by God's Spirit, to respond to his transforming purposes in obedient faith, to bear the fruit of the Spirit by abiding in Christ (Galatians 5:22-23), and to pursue the process of maturation in holiness in our relationships with God, his people, and the people of the world.

"Spiritual maturity is directly proportional to Christ-centeredness. To be more preoccupied with the subjective benefits of the faith than with the person and pleasure of Christ is a mark of immaturity. The Spirit bears witness to and glorifies Jesus Christ; spiritual experiences, whether personal or corporate, should center on Christ and not ourselves. The tendency of some people and movements to glorify the gifts of the Giver more than the Giver of the gifts is incompatible with the biblical portrait of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

"However, many believers attempt to live the Christian life in their own power instead of the power of the Spirit. As A. W. Tozer remarked in *Paths to Power*, "the average professed Christian lives a life so worldly and careless that it is difficult to distinguish him from the

unconverted man." But even among diligent students of the Word there is a temptation to depend more on human initiative and effort than on the power* of the indwelling Spirit of God. It is easy and comforting to reduce God to a set of biblical propositions and theological inferences rather than a living person who cannot be boxed in, controlled, or manipulated by our agendas. There are common forms of Bible deism that assume (ironically, without biblical warrant) that God no longer communicates to his people or personally guides them apart from the words of Scripture. When we make assumptions that are closed to the surprising work of the Holy Spirit, they have a way of determining and limiting our experience of the power of God. . . .

"The church is not primarily a socioeconomic institution but a spiritual organism and must depend on personal and collective visitations of the Holy Spirit for its continued vitality. In *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, Jim Cymbala argues that unless congregations persistently call upon the Lord, their store of spiritual power will dissipate with time. Without the Spirit's unction, the divine Presence will not be evident in our worship and service.

"We need both the fire of the Spirit and the light of the Word, but many believers and churches have made this an either-or rather than a both-and by tending to be either Spirit-centered or Word-centered. Power without sound teaching is vulnerable to shallowness and lack of discernment; doctrine without power is vulnerable to dryness and spiritual torpor. But when power and truth, deed and word, experience and explanation, manifestation and maturity, are combined in our personal and corporate lives, the Spirit is welcome and Christ is glorified.

"A balanced Spirit-filled spirituality seeks to unite the mind and the heart instead of setting them in opposition. When we love God with our minds and with our hearts, faith and feeling unite and reinforce each other (see 1 Peter 1:8-9). The coldness and brutality of truth without love and the sentimentality and sloppiness of love without truth both fall short of Paul's vision in Ephesians 4:15: 'But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.' An adequate theology of grace encompasses cultivation of the mind and formation of the heart; it affirms not only the intellect and the will but also the dimension of intuitive and experiential apprehension. The body of Christ consists of believers who encounter the Holy Spirit in differing ways due to their unique temperaments and experiences. All of us profit when we welcome the balance that this diversity offers."

299: "The manifestations of the Spirit are manifold, but the New Testament distinguishes two primary ways in which believers can be filled with the Spirit. The inward work of the Spirit produces Christlike character and spiritual maturity [Stephen and Barnabas are examples of those controlled by the Spirit]. . . . The outward work of the Spirit concerns divine empowerment for ministry and service [examples are Elizabeth, Peter, and Saul]. . . . A healthy Spirit-filled spirituality requires both kinds of filling . . . " Those persons with a strong inward work of the Spirit but weak outward work of the Spirit will be strong in knowledge and/or character, but shallow in power and deed. Those who quench the outward work of the Spirit will not have effective transformational ministries. On the other hand, those strong in outward work of the Spirit will be strong in power and deed, but shallow in knowledge and/or character. "And when experience surpasses character, the Spirit is grieved and power is eventually lost. Power without character becomes more of a curse than a blessing and leads to the error of confusing spiritual manifestations with spiritual maturity."

300: "Character and gifting are both important; we need the fruit of the Spirit (the inward work) as well as the power of the Spirit (the outward work). Purity and power work best together and reinforce each other. It is also important that we relate Spirit-filled spirituality to the ordinary affairs and challenges of life and not limit the work of the Spirit to extraordinary phenomena.

"A full-orbed spirituality involves grounding in biblical truth and sound doctrine (knowing), growing character and personal experience with God (being), and developing gifts and skills in the service of others (doing)...

"When a person or a group neglects any one of these three areas, distortions are inevitable. Because of our backgrounds and temperaments, some of us will naturally be attracted to knowing, some to being, and others to doing. It is wise to discern our personal tendencies and to seek balance in our thinking, affections, and choices through exposure to people in the body of Christ who will stretch and exhort us."

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