

Catholic Mysticism and the Emerging Church

By Richard Bennett

Mysticism is an attempt to gain ultimate knowledge of God by a direct experience that bypasses the mind. As practiced by those who claim to be Christian, mysticism not only bypasses the mind, but it circumvents Christ Jesus as mediator.

The Catholic Church incorporated elements of pagan religions throughout the centuries. For example, while I was a priest in Trinidad, West Indies, I found mysticism in Voodoo was practiced by some of my Catholic parishioners. Voodoo in Trinidad is called Shango, whereas it is called Santería in such places as Cuba and Brazil. Whatever name is used, it is basically the same pagan practice with a veneer of Catholicism that has been handed down by tradition. When I was parish priest in Gasparillo, South Trinidad, I found out that some of the members of the church were also part of the Shango group. I observed, from a short distance away, one meeting of such a group. It was being held in the backyard of one of our parishioners. As people arrived at the house, they dipped their hand into a large glass bowl of goat's blood. Some just dipped their hand in the blood; others dipped their hand and made a sign of the cross in the same way they did with the holy water when they came into the Catholic Church. They assembled in a circle in the backyard. Before the witch doctors began their incantations, about six men began to play on their bongo drums. The drums became louder and louder, and as the darkness came over the yard, lanterns and candles were lit, so I continued to see what was happening. The incantations became higher pitched, and then some of the people rose up and began to dance in frenzy. Some men and women fall on the ground and squirmed like they were snakes, shrieking and crying out. Some days afterwards I came to know about the disastrous affects of what had the happenings to some of those present.

I had serious misgivings about the infiltration of Shango into the life of our rural parishes. I brought the matter up with some of the professors of the Catholic seminary. When I explained the horrors within Shango, I was told that I was misinformed and that I did not understand the culture of Trinidad or the policy of the Church to use the culture on the lives of its people. At that time, while the Catholic Church incorporated elements of pagan religions in the lives of the people, it was not up front or officially performed.

Catholicism Married to Pagan Religions and Pantheism

For centuries, the Roman Catholic Church has assimilated into herself the mystery elements of pagan religions, however, in 1965, at the time of Vatican Council II, Papal Rome officially joined itself with pagan religion and their practice of seeking to know God by direct experience. Some of the exact words of approval of these practices are still in the Vatican Council II documents. For example, Papal Rome states,

“ . . . In Hinduism men explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myth and the accurately defined insights of philosophy. They seek release from the trials of the present life by ascetical practices, profound meditation and recourse to God in confidence and love. Buddhism in its various forms testifies to the essential inadequacy of this changing world. It proposes a way of life by which man can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or by the aid of divine help...The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. ”¹

¹ *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, No. 56, *Nostra Aetate*, “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” 28 Oct. 1965, Austin Flannery, Gen. Ed., Vol. I, Para. 2, p. 739.

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Thus, Papal Rome officially accepts in Hinduism, that with confidence and love, one may seek release from the trials of the present life by ascetical practices and profound meditation. Similarly, in Buddhism, one may attain a state of perfect liberation and supreme illumination, either through their own efforts or by the aid of divine help. Such an authorized approval of pagan practices has now become quite apparent in modern day Catholicism. Two months after the Vatican's monumental acceptance of pagan mysticism, another well-known papal document revealed the heart of Roman Catholic policy. The basis for the recognition of pagan practices was proclaimed to be a 'divine element' in mankind. This divine element in mankind makes it possible for the Catholic to have sense of brotherhood with other religions. The exact words of other Vatican Council II document are,

"It [Vatican Council II] longs to set forth the way it understands the presence and function of the [Roman Catholic] Church in the world of today. Therefore, the world which the Council has in mind is the whole human family seen in the context of everything which envelops it... This is the reason why this sacred Synod, in proclaiming the noble destiny of man and **affirming an element of the divine in him**, offers to co-operate unreservedly with mankind in fostering a sense of brotherhood to correspond to this destiny of theirs."²

Jesuit mystical priest, William Johnston, explains what had happened as the Papal Church recognized pagan religions as valid ways to reach God.

"Then came the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Overnight the Catholic Church which had been a Western institution exporting its wares to the East became a world community. Asian and African bishops and theologians assembled in Rome and, with their European and American confreres, acknowledged that the Spirit of God is at work in all peoples and in all religions. Since then, most theologians recognize non-Christian religions as 'valid ways'."³

Thus, it is that present day Catholicism stands hand-in-hand with Buddhism and Hinduism. Out of this marriage, the same William Johnston teaches disastrously deceitful ways to directly experience God. He writes, "Self-realization lies at the very heart of Buddhism ...In self-realization I become one with God just as the object is one with the mirror and just as Jesus is one with his Father."⁴ Likewise the famous mystical monk, Thomas Merton, taught a consciousness of identification about God that is supposed to come from mysticism. Merton stated,

"...now I realize what we all are. And if only everyone could realize this! ...I suddenly saw all the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really *are*. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed. ...I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other."⁵

The Catholic priest, William Shannon, is a devotee of Merton. He often cites his mentor, as he does with the following quote that endorses an idolatrous self-identification with God. Shannon writes,

² Vatican II Document No. 64, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 Dec. 1965 in Flannery, Vol. I, Sec. 2, 3 pp. 904-5. Bolding in any quotation is added in this presentation.

³ William Johnston, *The Mirror Mind* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990) p. 7. For a better understanding of the Hindu roots and methods of the New Age Movement, the general category under which both Merton and Johnston must be catalogued, see Christian writer Tal Brooke, *Riders of the Cosmic Circuit* (Batavia, IL: Lion Publ. Corp., 1986; ISBN 0 7459 1217 6). Although Brooke does not distinguish between Christian and Catholic, he shows the goals of the present manifestation of "enlightened masters" and traces their methods back to Babylon.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33, 39

⁵ Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Image edition Dec. 1989 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966) pp. 157-158. This book has official Roman Catholic approval.

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“A person of true faith travels, not without difficulty, towards the heart of mystery. Such a person, as Merton puts it, works ‘his way through the darkness of his own mystery until he discovers that his own mystery and the mystery of God merge into one reality, which is the only reality.’ *DQ* 180”⁶.

These quotations from Johnson, Merton, and Shannon are standard descriptions of the pantheistic myth of modern Catholicism that identifies Being or Nature with God with our own nature or essence. These blasphemous lies are merely further expansion of the basic teaching of Vatican Council II that stated that there is an element of the divine in mankind. Vatican Council II, and those priests that have built on its deceit, have attempted to change, “*the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man....*”⁷

Evangelical Endorsement of Pantheism

A leading Evangelical, Richard Foster, lauds pantheistic identification with God. Foster states, “Contemplative Prayer immerses us into the silence of God. How desperately we in the modern world need this wordless baptism! ...Progress in intimacy with God means progress toward silence.”⁸ Foster asks rhetorically, “What is the goal of Contemplative Prayer?” And he answers, “To this question the old writers answer with one voice: union with God.... Bonaventure, a follower of Saint Francis, says that our final goal is ‘union with God,’ which is a pure relationship where we see ‘nothing’.”⁹ “Our final goal is ‘union with God’” is just an Evangelical rehashing of Catholic concept of a divine element with man as the basis of mankind’s union with God. Foster has a whole website devoted to deceitful mysticism: Renovare.org. In 2005, he went so far as to publish what he calls the “Renovare Study Bible” to further the trail of pantheistic identification with God.

Thomas Keating, a Catholic priest, agrees with Foster as he writes, “Contemplative Prayer is the opening of mind and heart—our whole being—to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond thoughts, words and emotions.”¹⁰ Thus, Keating depersonalizes God, making Him a nameless “Ultimate Mystery.” This impersonal, “Ultimate Mystery” is a non-speaking, non-judging “god.” Is Keating in the twenty-first century any better off than the men on Mars Hill to whom Paul spoke regarding their “*altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD, whom therefore ye ignorantly worship*”?¹¹ There is morality and, of course, no gospel message derived from Keating’s “Ultimate Mystery.” Thus, Keating, Foster, Merton, and Shannon in their pantheistic identification of God, have attempted to destroy God’s self-sufficiency as Creator and the Lord God Almighty. They have endeavored to clone God into the image of humans. According to Romans 1:25, have they not “*changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever*”? In the place of the true worship of God, they have set about to establish pantheistic idolatry.

Dramatized Mysticism

The Pentecostal Word of Faith movement is simply a dramatized form of mysticism. In a sermon tape, Kenneth Copeland states, “You don’t have a god in you, you are one.”¹² In a 1987 crusade, Copeland is documented as saying; “I say this and repeat it so it don’t upset you too bad. [*sic*] When I read in the Bible

⁶ William Shannon, *Seeds of Peace: Contemplation and Non-Violence* (New York: Crossroad Publ. Co, 1996) p. 73

⁷ Romans 1:23

⁸ Foster, Richard J., *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992) p. 155

⁹ *Ibid.*, p 159

¹⁰ Thomas Keating, “The Method of Centering Prayer” <http://www.thecentering.org/centering> 10/22/02

¹¹ Acts 17:23

¹² Kenneth Copeland, “The Force of Love” (Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1987), audiotape # 02-0028

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where He (Jesus) says, I AM, I say, Yes, I am too!”¹³ Kenneth Hagin in Word of Faith states, “You are as much the incarnation of God as Jesus Christ was. Every man who has been born again is an incarnation and Christianity is a miracle. The believer is as much an incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth.”¹⁴ Casey Treat, known for the infamous quote, “When God looks into the mirror, He sees me! When I look into the mirror I see God!”,¹⁵ proclaims on his web page, “God dwells in you. God walks in you. When you walk, God walks. When you show up, God shows up. When you show up, a winner shows up. You won’t lose.”¹⁶

Paul Crouch, Benny Hinn, Charles Capps, Robert Tilton, Paul Yonggi Cho, Marilyn Hickey, Morris Cerullo, T.L. Osborn, and Jerry Savelle are just a few of the well-known names that promote stage-managed mysticism. As one might suspect, many of the gurus of dramatized mysticism promote fellowship with Catholicism. The Trinity Broadcasting Network, one of the largest radio and TV networks in the world today, through its founders, Paul and Jan Crouch, fosters fellowship with Roman Catholics amid mysticism presented in all the whirling garments of emotionalism.

Catholic Charismatics draw from many sources: the traditional mysticism of the sacraments, the Word of Faith movement, and both Catholic and Zen mystics. In biblical terms they are thrice dead in deceit, for what has been quoted here are pieces of insolence, blasphemy, and falsehood. The Copelands, the Crouches, Hinn, Hagin, and others like them would have you rejoice in the “light within” by claiming that you are a god within. The Lord God Almighty proclaims, “*I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.*”¹⁷ The Word of the Lord still stands, “*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*”¹⁸

The Emergent Church Movement Promotes Catholic Mysticism

The Emergent Church movement that affects many people across the world has embraced much of Catholic mysticism. Brian McLaren, a main leader of the movement, sets aside the Gospel and the authority of the Bible while clearing a path into mysticism. Tony Jones, a typical leader of the Emergent Church movement, accepts channels of Catholic mysticism. His mystical techniques are now taught to pastors and youth ministers and are penetrating much of what is called Evangelicalism.

Mystic Syncretism Popularized for Youth

Tony Jones is the U.S. National Coordinator of Emergent-US. He is a regular speaker at Youth Specialties National Youth Workers Conventions. Jones was also respected enough in his field to be one of the featured seminar presenters for the Zondervan National Pastors Conference in February 2006. The back cover of his 2003 book, *Soul Shaper: Exploring Spirituality And Contemplative Practices In Youth Ministry*, states that this book “is hands down the most comprehensive primer on the study and use of spiritual and contemplative practices for the benefit of your teenagers—and especially your own soul.”¹⁹ The book specifically targets youth ministers and pastors. Even Jones’s recommendation of Meister Eckhardt’s *Collected Works* as “a mystical treatise...with **an emphasis on God’s indwelling of humanity**”²⁰ is enough to forewarn a true Christian of the latent pantheism.

¹³ www.watchman.org/rektop/unbiblcl.htm 11/11/02

¹⁴ www.watchman.org/rektop/unbiblcl.htm 11/11/02

¹⁵ Michael Horton, *The Agony of Deceit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990) p. 91

¹⁶ www.caseytreat.org/godsword/Being_In_Christ 11/11/02

¹⁷ Isaiah 42:8

¹⁸ Isaiah 8:20

¹⁹ Tony Jones, *Soul Shaper: Exploring Spirituality And Contemplative Practices In Youth Ministry* (Zondervan, 2003)

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 252

No Testimony of Salvation in Christ Jesus

In neither of his two books, *Soul Shaper: Exploring Spirituality and Contemplative Practices in Youth Ministry* (2003) and *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* (2005), does Jones present the Gospel. Like so many leaders in the Emergent Church, his personal testimony is not of being a convicted sinner without hope before the All Holy God and in that conviction coming to Christ as the only Savior. Rather, in Chapter 1, “The Quest for God,” Jones’s testimony shows that in 2005 he is still fumbling in the darkness of unbelief.

“[Some of us] have this nagging feeling that God is following us around, nudging us to live justly, and expecting us to talk to him every once in a while...Every time I leave God’s side, as it were, it’s not too long until I feel God tagging right along beside me, I can’t seem to shake him. Yet having this sense of God’s company doesn’t necessarily translate to a meaningful spiritual life. I know this because despite my awareness of God’s presence, I have spent most of my life trying to figure out what to do about it.”²¹ This sad testimony is of a man who is not “*in Christ*,” and yet he is one of the leading lights of the Emergent Church movement in making and disseminating materials for youth pastors and youth groups.

Of his growing up in a Protestant church, he says, “I’d say there was one word that summed up my religious life: obligation.”²² Predictably, he fell away from his pattern of obligatory prayer, Bible reading, and “quiet time,” but felt guilt ridden about it. His solution:

“Something occurred to me: People have been trying to follow God for thousands of years...Maybe somewhere along the line some of them had come up with **ways of connecting with God** that could help people like me...I could think of no better way to spend it [his three month sabbatical] than to travel and read about different ancient ways of prayer and devotion.”²³

His travels, in general, took him to round-the-clock prayer vigils and specifically to Dublin, Ireland, to Catholic priest Alan McGuickian and the staff at the Jesuit Communication Centre. He “voraciously read” Roman Catholic mystics and spoke with individuals who were Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox. Nowhere does he mention any in-depth study of the Bible nor of searching after the great truths of Scripture. In this way, his searching is reminiscent of Ignatius of Loyola,²⁴ and it is noteworthy that he recommends the disciplines of the founder of the Jesuits to youth pastors and youths to learn and practice. What is clear from his statements is that “obligation” remains major in his understanding of what it means to be a Christian—but what becomes equally clear is that he has no dependable knowledge of God from God. That is, he has no knowledge of God through the Bible as revelation by His Spirit. Because Jones does not hold to the Bible alone as giving truthful knowledge of God, God Himself remains **a truth undefined**. Thus, Jones is free to define a god of his own making and to fulfill his obligation to this god.

Thus by making Roman Catholic and Greek tradition his current standard, he is able to fulfill what he sees as his obligation in a supposedly time-honored and acceptable way through these old, mostly Roman Catholic mystical exercises. Yet clearly, before the All Holy God, he is still an alien and a stranger to saving grace in Christ Jesus.

Jones’s definition of “Christian” needs careful attention. In *The Sacred Way*, he states,

²¹ Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005) p. 15

²² *The Sacred Way*, p. 15

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 16

²⁴ Ignatius’s search began by reading stories of the Catholic saints, and attending to images, all of which fed his wild imagination with mystical fervor. None of these things brought salvation, Ignatius died unsaved.

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“For years I’d been told that to be a Christian meant I had to do three things: (1) read the Bible, (2) pray, and (3) go to church. But I had come to the realization that there must be something *more*. And indeed there is. There is a long tradition of searching among the followers of Jesus—it’s a quest, really, **for ways to connect with God**...The quest is to know Jesus better, to follow him more closely, to become—in some mysterious way—wrapped into his presence. And I thank God that some of these brilliant and spiritual persons wrote down what they learned.” (pp. 16-17)

What is missing, in Jones’s comments on knowing Jesus better and following Him more closely, is any conviction of sin and therefore any need for a Savior. Without the conviction of sin, one does not have life in Christ Jesus. The Lord declared that the Holy Spirit “*will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*”²⁵ Conviction is the Spirit’s work. He does it effectually, and none but He can open the mind and heart of a sinner to saving faith. Jones appears to be totally unaware of this, for he says nothing about the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, or about the Holy Spirit’s role of conviction. Jones is not a “follower of Jesus” in any biblical sense since his god is not the All Holy God of the Bible. His “Jesus,” therefore, is not the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible.

Past Apostasy Comes Alive in the Present

In *Soul Shaper*, Tony Jones advocates sixteen “ancient-future” spiritual tools or disciplines such as “The Jesus Prayer, Lectio Divina, Silence and Solitude, Stations of the Cross, Centering Prayer, The Ignatian Examen, and the Labyrinth.” Assuming that the Roman Catholic-Evangelical split over the Gospel is a thing of the past, Jones begins defining his “postmodern” approach to youth ministry by combining aspects of what he sees as common spirituality in Evangelical, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox traditions along with Eastern religious practices gleaned from Buddhism and Hinduism. Tony Jones’s involvement with youth ministries and their leaders is particularly dangerous. This is because of his use of obscure heretical practices from Papal Rome, which he then passes off on the unsuspecting as if he has rediscovered a long hidden spiritual treasure for a “postmodern Christianity.” His major goal is to make his very Roman Catholic view of the “past come alive in the present”²⁶—something Bible believers should consider carefully, especially regarding his very young audience.

What is so hazardous is that most youth ministers are not familiar enough with the history of the Christian Church to recognize that Jones is selling them a bill of spiritually bankrupt goods. Moreover, pastors within the mainstream of the Evangelical church are also being taught these practices at such places as Zondervan National Pastors Conference. Regrettably, Tony Jones misleads pastors and youth leaders when he writes of “the saints of the Christian church who have over the past two millennia labored at practicing and perfecting these disciplines.”²⁷ He also states, “One of the things you may have to leave at the front cover is denominational bigotry. A lot of the practices herein will seem very ‘Catholic’ or very ‘Eastern Orthodox,’ and if you aren’t from one of those traditions, remember this: before 1054 we were all Catholic/Orthodox! That’s right—for the first half of Christian history, there was one church, and most of the practices in this book are from that time.”²⁸ Jones is not drawing from genuine Christian history before 1054. Clearly, he has taken his history from the apostate Roman Catholic Church. He conveniently forgets the Vaudois, the Waldenses, the Paulicians, the Albigenses, the Spanish believers, and many others who in the first eleven centuries never followed the mystic practices the papacy has consistently promoted since the Dark Ages.

²⁵ John 16:8

²⁶ *Soul Shaper*, back cover

²⁷ *The Sacred Way*, p. 21

²⁸ *Soul Shaper*, Introduction, p. 20

More Developed and Lethal Mystic Syncretism

The Gospel message is open, plain, and straightforward. Tony Jones's message, however, in his 2005 book *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* is even more artful and disguised than his *Soul Shaper* book. In *The Sacred Way*, Jones advocates the spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola and such mystical and Roman Catholic practices as the Labyrinth, Centering Prayer, the Stations of the Cross, and the Jesus Prayer. The dishonest substitution of Roman Catholic mystical methods for the straightforward proclamation of the Gospel of grace and fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the spiritual black hole into which Tony Jones is leading his readers.

The operating principle of Tony Jones's mystical philosophy is his endorsement of the humanistic message and technique of Ignatius of Loyola. Here Jones emphasizes the Jesuit founder's use of visualization and human choice in order to overcome evil and to be the person one wants to be.

Jones also teaches gross idolatry. He promotes images that are forbidden by the Lord, implying that God's holy presence is to be seen in the icon. He makes his position known by quoting another who holds the same position. In *The Sacred Way*, he quotes an Eastern Orthodox woman, who says,

“The sober **presence of the Lord in an icon** makes us uncomfortable because it makes us realize how far short we fall from the ineffable beauty and power of God.... The steady, unsettling **gaze of the Lord in an icon** is like the gaze of a surgeon as he looks at a patient's wounded, broken body. The surgeon understands the woundedness better than the patient does, and he knows exactly what it will take to heal it. Our Lord sees brokenness and failures in us that we can't, that we simply won't, that we could not bear to see. And he invites us to open ourselves to his healing, a healing that will progress very gently, very gradually, as we are able to bear it.” (pp. 98-99)

Thus Jones uses this “castle-in-the-air” to soften his audience to the use of icons. He then builds his case for idolatry citing Catholic legends and modern Catholics as his authority because although he does not say so, he has found it necessary to bring in his own mediator, the form of which is an icon. He states,

“The Catholic belief [is] that Christians can pray *through* saints, especially the Blessed Virgin Mary, and their prayers will be delivered to the throne of God...The bottom line is that we use icons to pray, but we pray *through* them, not *to* them....Since we believe that those who have died in faith are currently living in eternity with God, praying through an icon of a saint is simply asking one of these friends to pray for me.”

This is exactly the issue in Exodus 32 when Aaron made a golden calf for the worship of Holy God. They surmised that they were not worshipping the calf; rather, they were using it to worship Holy God. Their worship was supposedly going through the image to God. Exodus 20:4-5 specifically forbids the making of these images, a reminder that is much needed today. Because Jones claims that we are in the postmodern age, which *de facto* means post-Gospel, and has rationalized by legend and Catholic tradition that icons are acceptable, he counsels,

“In order to incorporate praying with icons into your personal devotional life, the first item of business is to get an icon.... Shadows are never seen in an icon, and no source of light illuminates the subject's face. The icon itself is a source of light...an icon is not meant to be a depiction of a normal human being but of Jesus or Mary or a saint in their resurrected state.”²⁹

²⁹ *The Sacred Way*, p. 103

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Thus Tony Jones, turning his back on conviction of sin through the preaching of the Word of God, endorses forbidden images as being **good** for a person's spiritual life; but the Lord God says those who use such images hate Him, and He will visit their iniquity upon them to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:4-6).

In the Epilogue to his two books, in the sections called "Developing a Rule of Life," Jones urges his readers to use certain religious exercises, He writes,

"Following some experience with the ancient practices outlined in this book, you may decide to incorporate some of them into your personal Rule of Life. An example of a rule could look something like this: Pray through two centuries of the Jesus Prayer in the morning and evening every day. Keep the Sabbath from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday every week. Walk a labyrinth once a month. Take a two-day silent retreat once a year. Fast and walk the Stations of the Cross every Friday during Lent. Take a 28-day Ignatian retreat every decade...."³⁰

His final advice he declares is mandatory,

"We have lots of options in our ministries, but developing a disciplined spiritual life isn't one of them. That is, it isn't optional. It's mandatory...Slow down. Listen to God. Be silent. Meditate. Make the Stations. Stare at the icon. And there, do you feel it? The divine light of the Risen Christ flickering within you, slowly building to a roaring fire...."³¹

To all this, the Lord thunders through His Word, "*Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?*"³² One would have to say that the Mad Hatter's tea party in *Alice in Wonderland* has more to offer. The notions that Jones advances are merely the inventions of men and are certainly not by divine revelation of the Bible. They are but proud conceits from the Roman Catholic tradition "*intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.*"³³ These traditional Catholic practices that Jones so warmly promotes may have an appearance of spirituality but they have been found throughout history, and even again in our own day, simply to deceive by leading into pride and sin. In effect, Jones disclaims Christ as the only Mediator between God and man. One of the greatest denigrations of Christ Jesus is to attempt to interject some other mediator between God and His creation; and Jones has done this unashamedly. Yet, as Jones has already shown in his own case, when men let go of the knowledge of Christ Jesus as the only Mediator, they become entrapped within the traditions of men and the bankruptcy of worldly spirituality. Jones makes mystical exercises seem so worthy that by endorsing Catholic mysticism, idolatry and fleshly devotions, he can easily bewitch those who read or try to implement his teaching. The relic-artifacts of Catholicism, presented by Jones as appropriate to the postmodern period, are absolutely opposed to biblical truth. The Lord God's command is that believers are to be "*casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*"³⁴ Tony Jones is just an example of many Emergent Church leaders at present time affecting the USA, Canada, Ireland, France, and other parts of Europe.

Objective salvation in the Lord of glory

As Mediator, Christ Jesus is the only means of union between God and man, "*that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which*

³⁰ *Sole Shaper*, p. 233

³¹ *The Sacred Way*, pp. 198-199; *Soul Shaper*, p. 233-234

³² Job 38:2

³³ Colossians 2:18

³⁴ II Corinthians 10:5

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are on earth; even in him.”³⁵ Christ Jesus is exalted to “*the right hand of the Majesty on high*”³⁶ as the One Savior. He and His Gospel are objective and real. This Gospel is not an idle tale, nor a piece of incomprehensible mysticism; rather, it is the proclamation of the awesome historical work of redemption accomplished by God Himself. The Father appointed Christ Jesus as the guarantor of real salvation. Christ Jesus was glorified in finishing the Father’s mightiest work. In Christ’s own words, “*I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*”³⁷ He had fulfilled all the Father’s will and so gloriously honored the Father. As Savior, He is exalted high above “*all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.*”³⁸ He alone—not some mystic charm of Rome or Buddha—has been given all authority in heaven and in earth. He has been given power over all flesh that He should, in His own words, “*give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*”³⁹ He alone has been given a name, which is above every name, “*that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”⁴⁰ It is God’s commandment that we trust on Christ, “*This is his command, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*”⁴¹

True faith involves a repudiation of the self-deceit of experiential mystical means of reaching God, “*for there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*”⁴² The Lord Jesus stands ready to receive every sinner who will throw away his rebellion and pride and trust in Him alone for salvation. Preaching the real historical Christ and His Gospel is the answer to the mindless adumbrations of Rome and the ecumenical mystics. Thus alone can the true Church, God’s People go “*forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.*”⁴³ The Gospel is a mighty deliverance from the groveling religious subjectivism of Rome and her pagan mistresses. To know God is life itself to a Christian. In the words of the Lord Himself, “*this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*”⁴⁴ Knowledge of God, and faith in Him, are the means whereby all spiritual supports and comforts are conveyed to the true believers. “*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.*”⁴⁵

Conclusion and Application

We now understand how serious is the infiltration of Catholic mysticism, now official in the Papal Church, and the upholding of the same mysticism by the Emergent Church movement. The machinations of Catholic mysticism and that of the Emergent Church have shown apostasy as they have rejected the Christ of history, and have received ‘the christ of Satan’, which ‘christ’ is ‘enlightenment,’ ‘Ultimate Mystery,’ and ‘self realization,’ and as they sport and play with Satan’s rites for fulfillment in such as ‘Centering Prayer,’ ‘The Ignatian Examen,’ and ‘The Labyrinth.’

³⁵ Ephesians 1:10

³⁶ Hebrews 1:3

³⁷ John 17:4

³⁸ Ephesians 1:21

³⁹ John 17:2

⁴⁰ Philippians 2:10-11

⁴¹ I John 3:23

⁴² I Timothy 2:5

⁴³ Song of Solomon 6:10

⁴⁴ John 17:3

⁴⁵ II Peter 1:3

Catholic Mysticism and the Emerging Church

There is no valid excuse for true believers to be deceived by “false apostles,” who transform themselves into the “apostles of Christ,” *“for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”*⁴⁶ There are many false prophets gone out into the world, but if we diligently study these things, which God has recorded for our safeguard against the subtle deceptions of Satan, we need not mislead nor be misled. The forces of evil in the influence and power of the Papal Church, and at the present day the Emerging Church, is powerful, but not all-powerful. It has been fought and overcome by One greater and mightier. Satan has been vanquished. Christ Jesus the Lord has conquered. His Word to us is still powerful and effective, *“be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*⁴⁷ The Lord has conquered for us the world and its powers. We take courage, though the subtleties and deceit of mysticism beats fiercely upon us, they only drive us closer to Christ. *“But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* What a glorious closing for the Lord’s final discourse to His Apostles, what a wonderful Word to us at this hour. There must be no surrender, no compromise, and no fellowship with the world of mysticism. Here is the Lord’s war-cry, *“him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”*⁴⁸ As we stand strong in Him, it will not be long before the conflict will cease! For *“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”*⁴⁹

Richard Bennett of “Berean Beacon” Webpage: <http://www.bereanbeacon.org>

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⁴⁶ II Corinthians 11:13-14

⁴⁷ John 16:33

⁴⁸ Revelation 3:21

⁴⁹ 1 John 5:4