

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

It is the notion for a spiritual movement based on spiritual exercises (techniques of imagination, meditation, and confession) of Ignatius of Loyola, which Protestant, Richard Foster, adapted to the temptation of modern apostate Protestantism by mixing them with the elements of Orthodox mysticism. Spiritual exercises have been adapted to modern apostate Protestants when they received from Orthodox mystics a note of sentimentalism that indulges modern hedonism.

Although the president of the General Conference, Ted Wilson, spoke several times against the apostasy of the Spiritual formation that appears within the Church itself, we can identify this deception in certain sermons, spiritual literature, health club programs and, very often, in the lectures of unconverted Christian psychologists.

Here is a concise analysis of the seven fundamental errors of the Spiritual formation:

1) The neglected role of God's law results that a believer does not repent for the sins of selfishness, pride, carnality, etc, but proclaims them as proper needs only because they are natural and sincere, and repents only for the symptoms of those sins in bad acts and unpleasant feelings. He will repent for he **said** an ugly word to his friend, but he does not repent for **he is such**, because he does not see the problem in himself, but in the absence of self-control. The reform for the heart motives do not exist. A former drug addict does not consider that the very desire for inebriating is sin, but only the way of inebriating, so now he redirects his desire towards inebriating with the emotion of love, abuse of music, etc. Since God's law is **neglected** and therefore the perception of God is **distorted**, the believer from God does **not seek relief from desires, but their satisfaction**. A distorted conscience is formed, which, in approaching God, advocates the **sincerity of the heart** motives

instead of the **sincerity of the will**, against the motives of the heart. Instead of by faith (reliance) in God beginning to do what is right, a man is **waiting** for his sinful heart to earnestly desire God. As such expectation - to find in himself the right motives - is unrealistic, he either falls into discouragement, or attempts to proclaim the fanatical motives of his fallen nature with the notion of true love and sublimates them in religious zeal and everyday life.

2) Egocentrism instead of Christ-centrism has the following consequences: Instead of repentance from love, which would be the fruit of the correct knowledge of God, they excite their repentance by **awakening** the feeling of the shame of the insulted pride or the fear of the unclean conscience or the sadness of the selfish human sentiment. Ellen White wrote:

"Many precious souls, earnestly desiring to be Christians, are yet stumbling in darkness, waiting for their feelings to be powerfully exercised. They look for a special change to take place in their feelings. **They expect some irresistible force, over which they have no control, to overpower them.** They overlook the fact that the believer in Christ is to work out his salvation with fear and trembling." (Ms55-1910)

True love is not the result of induced **emotions**, nor is the emotion itself, but it is the result of the **reform of the motives of the heart** under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It represents the law of God written in the human heart:

"When self is submerged in Christ, true love springs forth spontaneously. It is **not an emotion or an impulse**, but a decision of a sanctified will. It consists not in feeling, but in the transformation of the whole heart, soul, and character, which is dead to self and alive unto God." (6BC 1100)

"Many **moved from feeling**, not from principle and faith ..." (1T 186)

"Do not exalt your feelings, and be swayed by them, whether they be good, bad, sad, or joyful." (ST Dec. 3, 1894)

3) Abuse of emotions for the sake of inebriating, and suffocating the consciousness of one's own spiritual vanity. Believers are led to seek salvation in a feeling of being loved. Love is presented as some kind of a feeling that satisfies the needs of the unrenewed human nature:

"But the Bible is interpreted in a manner that is pleasing to the unrenewed heart, while its solemn and vital truths are made of no effect. Love is dwelt upon as the chief attribute of God, but it is degraded to a weak sentimentalism, making little distinction between good and evil. ... Popular revivals are too often carried by appeals to the imagination, by exciting the emotions, by gratifying the love for what is new and startling. **A message which appeals to unimpassioned reason awakens no response.** In those churches which he can bring under his deceptive power, he will make it appear that God's special blessing is poured out; there will be manifest what is thought to be great religious interest. Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world." (GC 558, 464)

"Do not appeal to your own feelings. **Do not think that sentimentalism is religion.** Shake yourselves from every human prop, and lean heavily upon Christ." (EGW, HS 137.5)

"The love and sympathy which Jesus would have us give to others does not savor of **sentimentalism**, which is a snare to the soul; it is a love that is of heavenly extraction." (Sons and Daughters of God, 147)

"They are miserable unless there is something to excite. They have not within them the power to be happy; but they depend for happiness upon the company of other youth..." (PYM 431)

"You can be happy in Him if you had not another friend in the wide world." (Ellen G. White, Lt 2b, 1874. HC 259.)

4) The Spiritual formation advocates the confession of sins to another person, but not to the one to whom the sin has been done, in order to correct the relationship with that person, but confessing of all sins of one's own life to a person of trust, **for the sake of psychic relief**. Of course, therefore, **the need for such confession is the proof of the unreconciliation of man with God**, which is the consequence of the absence of actual repentance for sins. A person who does not reject sins, naturally has the impression that God does not hear him, and therefore the advocates of the Spiritual formation seek consolation in another person or a group, explaining that "the other man makes the presence of God more real". Ellen White wrote:

"I hope that none will obtain the idea that they are earning the favor of God by confession of sins or that there is special virtue in confessing to human beings. ... Confess your secret sins alone before your God." (T5 647-649)

Listening to the others' confessions is a poison for one's own conscience, which does not console itself anymore with examples of others' victories over sin, but with examples of others' powerlessness and fall, convincing himself that a real victory over sin is not possible. His motto becomes: *"I'm not OK, you're not OK, that's OK!"*

5) A spiritual building built on the sand can not withstand storms of life. Instead of rejecting the distorted notion of the doctrine that directs them to build their spiritual building on the sand of their own self-righteousness instead of on the Wall of life, the advocates of the Spiritual formation shift responsibility for their own sins to other people, parents, disappointments, unsatisfied needs of existence, etc, as when Adam for his fall blamed Eve, and Eve -

snake. Of course, hard temptations and tribulations are not the cause of sin, but a **test** of whether the sin in our heart is still present:

"God sends trials to prove who will stand faithful under temptation. He brings all into trying positions to see if they will trust in a power out of and above themselves. **Everyone has undiscovered traits of character that must come to light through trial.**" (7T 211)

"God permits us to experience the ills of poverty, and places us in difficult positions, that the defects in our characters may be revealed and their asperities be smoothed away." (4T 496)

6) The representatives of the Spiritual formation do not see the source of depression in a thwarted **selfishness**, nor the source of anger in the insulted pride, but they excuse their sins with **unpleasant circumstances**. On this basis, they conclude that anger and depression of a wounded heart instead of conquering, are to be expressed. Ellen White warns:

"It is not wise to look to ourselves and study our emotions. If we do this, the enemy will present difficulties and temptations that weaken faith and destroy courage. Closely to study our emotions and give way to our feelings is to entertain doubt and entangle ourselves in perplexity. We are to look away from self to Jesus." (MH249)

"He may feel apparent relief for the time in expressing his feelings; but it only makes more acute the sense of how great his sufferings and trials have been, until the whole becomes magnified in his imagination..." (3T 97.1)

By dwelling upon the wounds from the whole past, and by giving vent to the unpleasant feelings which are the consequence of the wounding (insult) of one's own vain or selfish Ego, sin only **develops even more.**

7) Since such a person can not endure stressful situations because he has not died to his great Self, instead of going to the monastery, he is given psychological techniques of forming boundaries by which **he disables others from harming his unconquered Ego**. Ellen White warns:

"Bring nothing into your preaching to supplement Christ, the wisdom and power of God." (EGW, CET 247.1)

Boundaries are formed also from the fear of critical thinking, which could spoil false peace, and therefore the representatives of the Spiritual formation proclaim every discussion and reexamination as hate speech, and as criticism hurts their great Ego, they experience it personally. Ellen White reprimands such:

"They become conservative, and seek to **avoid discussion**. ... And there are many in the church who take it for granted that they understand what they believe, but, until controversy arises, **they do not know their own weakness**. ... Agitate, agitate, agitate!" (GW 298-299)

The so-called support groups provide false consolation:

"These will pity those who deserved reproof, because personal feelings have been hurt. All this unsanctified sympathy places the sympathizers where they are sharers in the guilt of the one reproved. In nine cases out of ten if the one reproved had been left under a sense of his wrongs, he might have been helped to see them and thereby have been reformed. But meddling, unsanctified sympathizers place altogether a wrong construction upon the motives of the reprover and the nature of the reproof given, and by sympathizing with the one reproved lead him to feel that he has been really abused; and his feelings rise up in rebellion against the one who has only done his duty. ...

We hear the plea: *"Oh, I am so sensitive, I cannot bear the least reflection!"* If these persons would state the case correctly, they would say: *"I am so self-willed, so self-sufficient, so proud-spirited, that I will not be dictated to; I will not be reproof. I claim the right of individual judgment; I have a right to believe and talk as I please."* ...

They are far from God; yet they take great satisfaction in their lives, when their conduct is abhorred of God. This class will ever be at war with the leadings of the Spirit of God, especially with reproof. **They do not wish to be disturbed.**" (Ellen G. White, 3T 359-361)

"And when men standing in the position of leaders and teachers work under the power of spiritualistic ideas and sophistries, shall we keep silent, for fear of injuring their influence, while souls are being beguiled?" (EGW, Manuscript 72, 1904)

For deeper information, see the following address:

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