

Dan Kimball's Emerging Church and Eastern Meditation

A Critique by Steve Muse
[Eastern Regional Watch](#)

As I read Dan Kimball's book, *The Emerging Church*, I realized the book opened up a Pandora's Box of concerns for what Kimball was communicating to this new generation of churches about *vintage Christianity*.

Reading the book, I became impressed with a very disturbing sense that Kimball is attempting to take today's youth back into an experience-based relationship with God much like the Catholic mystics have revealed to us through their writings. And now through [contemplative prayer](#) and contemplative spirituality we are to come into a deeper relationship with God. On the Internet, countless sites promote the Emerging Church experience with its myriad forms of worship and prayer—and on most of these sites Kimball's book is heartily promoted.

When I discovered Kimball's article on [labyrinth prayer](#) on his website, I was almost sickened. As a former occultist, I learned such practices many years ago and even now, I have talked with former occultists who are shocked to see a demonic practice revived within the churches in the body of Christ. A former occultist, Jane Whiting, has written an excellent [critique](#) about the article posted on [vintagefaith.com](#): *A-maze-ing Prayer*

More than thirty years ago, as an occultist, I was deeply involved in mysticism and the practice of contemplative prayer. I learned this meditation technique from studying Catholic mystics who said then, and even teach now, that one does not have to believe in Jesus Christ to enter into the contemplative experience but that all roads would take us to the same destination. I went even further by becoming a disciple of Transcendental Meditation, which was identical to the Catholic contemplative prayer techniques I had already learned. Those I walked with into this journey of mysticism experienced a much deeper spiritual realm leading many into relationships with seducing spirits rather than with God. These same techniques are encouraged by today's new mystics and especially New Age advocates—such advocates feel encouraged to see Christians moving into this type of prayer experience.

I had not given this sudden push to contemplative spirituality much thought until I started seeing centering prayer being taught in the local prayer center and in various retreats in churches throughout the area. When I heard about the Emerging Church as a new expression of the church, I looked for those I could talk to and ask questions; much to my surprise, I was told of many alternate forms of worship and contemplative prayer techniques that were being promoted as good and righteous in many youth groups and youth organizations such as [Youth Specialties](#).

If Kimball and other “emerging” leaders are endorsing the use of contemplative (centering prayers, mantra prayers, breath prayers, silence prayers) prayer techniques of any kind, they are leading believers into eastern meditative prayer experiences. This is really nothing more than a Christianized version of Hindu prayer techniques that were introduced through Roman Catholic priests, Thomas Keating and Basil Pennington, as a result of their own mystical prayer experiences.

[Thomas Keating](#) and Basil Pennington write in their book, *Finding Grace at the Center*:

We should not hesitate to take the fruit of the age old wisdom of the East and “capture” it for Christ. Indeed, those of us who are in ministry should make the necessary effort to acquaint ourselves with as many of these Eastern techniques as possible...

Many Christians who take their prayer life seriously have been greatly helped by Yoga, Zen, TM and similar practices, especially where they have been initiated by reliable teachers and have a solidly developed Christian faith to find inner form and meaning to the resulting experiences. (pp. 5-6)

What these two men have introduced into the Christian prayer arena is *centering prayer* or contemplative prayer, which has its roots in Eastern Religions and the Occult and cannot be made safe by Christianizing the terminology or the techniques. I could dedicate pages to this issue but others have written describing in detail the concerns with contemplative prayer. Ray Yungen's book, *A Time of Departing*, explains the impact that contemplative spirituality (New Age Occultism) is having upon the present day churches. [Henri Nouwen](#) speaks to the issue of contemplative prayer in his book, *In the Name of Jesus*, by saying:

Through the discipline of contemplative prayer, Christian leaders have to learn to listen again and again to the voice of love and to find there the wisdom and courage to address whatever issue presents itself to them.... For Christian leadership to be truly fruitful in the future, a movement from the moral to the mystical is required. (pp. 6, 31-32)

And yet it is this very mysticism that led Nouwen to pronounce the following in his book, *Sabbatical Journey*:

Today I personally believe that while Jesus came to open the door to God's house, all human beings can walk through that door, whether they know about Jesus or not. Today I see it as my call to help every person claim his or her own way to God. (p. 51)

Reading Dan's book is like offering someone a state of the art computer but with a catch. The computer you received works great but a worm virus has been installed with the vendor's knowledge. He has not told you that using your new computer could be disastrous to others as you send e-mails to all your friends and they in turn e-mail others around the world thus infecting them. Unless people are warned and the virus is identified and removed, it will cause harm to computers all over the world.

Dan Kimball and other *emergers* are treading on dangerous ground if they do not take a serious look at these issues. What has appeared as spiritual and mystical is really a trip into an experience with *angels of light* or rather, darkness itself and with the father of lies. II Corinthians 11:4 says:

For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.

II Corinthians 11:13-15 says concerning men such as Thomas Keating, Basil Pennington and Henri Nouwen:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.

By encouraging Eastern meditative techniques blended with Catholic forms of prayer and meditation, like the virus in the computer, the body of Christ is becoming infected with the philosophies of men and the doctrines of demons. It is for this reason that many are concerned with the direction Kimball and other emerging leaders are attempting to lead the church. These issues need to be addressed publicly because the body of Christ is at risk.

Steve Muse, Director
[Eastern Regional Watch](#)
smuse@erwm.com