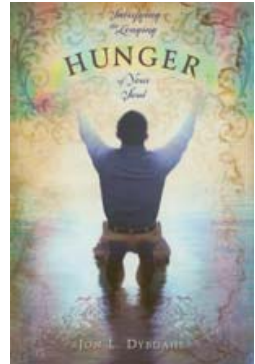


# How to Still the Hunger of the Soul: A Critique of the Book, *Hunger*

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Autumn House Publishing, a subsidiary of the Review and Herald, produced a book entitled *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul*, by Jon Dybdahl, that deals with an increasingly vital need for a people who continue to wander in a Laodicean state of surfeiting yet remain hungry. Dybdahl rightfully desires to lead the reader on a journey that will satisfy the longing of the soul. Furthermore he does present some biblically sound ideas certain to be helpful.

Yet, Dybdahl's suggestion that aspects of Eastern meditation offer a valuable aid in Christian worship raises some questions. We appreciate that he identifies the difference between Eastern meditation and true worship as a contrast in the nature of the God worshiped. But in what way do some new-age "postures and actions" benefit Christian worship? Note how he introduces this issue:



With the rising popularity in North America and Europe of Eastern and New Age religions, questions about meditation have increased. Something that many Christians may earlier have simply neglected they now fear as a subtle way to bring false teaching into the church.

My response is that meditation is like music. A powerful tool for either good or evil, it can be God's means for growth and inspiration or the devil's instrument of deception and destruction. Let us look then at the distinctions between Eastern/New Age meditation and true Christian meditation. The differences stem from contrasting concepts of God. . . .

At times we will notice occasional similarities between Eastern and Western meditation. Some postures or actions can benefit both types.<sup>1</sup>

This approach resonates with, and the expressions reflect, what sometimes is called "emerging spirituality." Key proponents openly call for a merger of Eastern and Western forms of meditation. These merging terms and patterns of activities include: prayer stations, Taize, the silence, sacred space, ancient prayer practices, spiritual direction, centering down, centering prayer, inner light, beyond words, spiritual disciplines, prayer labyrinths, prayer rooms, contemplative prayer, Jesus prayer, *lectio divina*, breath prayer. It is widely seen as the answer to the spiritual hunger of modern man. Some of these practices, rooted in ancient religions and left behind by Protestantism, are currently being embraced with enthusiasm by modern Protestants who have grown weary of the outward manifestations of the charismatic movement. Moreover, they seem to be equally attractive to conservatives who have had only a head knowledge of their religion. In this critique, we will consider whether several practices suggested in *Hunger* are God's answer to modern man's soul hunger.

Jesus promised to satisfy the hunger of our souls if we would go to Him and take His yoke—working with Him in His mission to save humanity in obedience to the Father. Do the practices suggested in *Hunger* harmonize with Christ's method of stilling our soul hunger?

## Breath Prayers—Do They Really Connect Us With God?

Another method of simple praying is the use of one's own breathing, a form often called the breath prayer. Since most religious traditions practice it, can we consider it Christian? Yes, if the content and context are Christian. The way I use the prayer for myself is to pray for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. I simply say as I inhale, "Spirit of the living God" and as I exhale, "Fall afresh on me!" I find the combination of the words with my breath very powerful, especially as I remember that "spirit" means "wind" or "breath." We can employ any scriptural words. In fact, we pray a shortened Jesus prayer. Simply inhale to "Lord, Jesus Christ" and exhale to "have mercy on me (a sinner)."<sup>2</sup>

Christian promoters of this practice contend that "breath prayer" originated with the Desert Fathers, a monastic group living in Egypt during the third and fourth centuries.<sup>3</sup> However, the same practice, with different words, has been current in other religions since ancient times.<sup>4</sup> Apparently the actual words used matter very little, if at all. In Christian practice, it is supposed to "silence the mind"<sup>5</sup> so that the soul may communicate with God

directly. It is thus related to glossolalia during which the soul is said to communicate directly with God in “the language of heaven” without the participation of the mind.

The Christian pattern for breath prayers is said to rest on the example of Jesus on the cross praying, “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46), and His breathing on them and saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” (John 20:22). Many introductions and instructions for breath prayer sound very spiritual and biblical, until we look a little deeper.

The problem with even the most favorable descriptions of the practice is this implication that benefit is gained from the repetition of a simple brief phrase or word. Also implied is that there is benefit to a particular structure in prayer. This harmonizes with Catholic theology, being similar to the rosary prayer, but not with Adventist theology, since we believe that “prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend.”<sup>6</sup>

Some promoters readily admit the similarity of Christian practices to Eastern meditation. Vocalist John Michael Talbot wrote:

One powerful tool for meditation is breath prayer. Many of us exclusively associate this method with Eastern Religions. But it is also a venerable ancient method used in Christian meditation. It has similarities to the Eastern methods on a physical and psychological level, but has its own distinct Christian flavor and tone from a theological and mystical perspective. . . .

In Hinduism and Buddhism uniting meditation with breath is fundamental. It is a way to give the body and mind something to do without distracting it into complications. It also slows the body, the emotions, and the thoughts, so as to better focus all of them on the meditation at hand. Focusing on the breath is often the beginning stage of meditation. . . .

With both Christian and non Christian expressions some bodily posture is recommended that will enable the practitioner to stay relatively still and quiet for an extended period of time, say twenty to thirty minutes.

How do we do it? I teach that we must first find a quiet place that will be relatively free from intrusion for the meditation time. Next we sit either in the traditional cross-legged position or in a straight back chair with feet flat on the ground . . .<sup>7</sup>

If we use practices similar to Eastern meditation, should we not expect similar results? Whether the words are Christian or Hindu, the focused repetition of a word or short phrase sometimes results in an altered state of consciousness, which is what some practitioners specifically seek and interpret as an encounter with God. Is this what Ellen White referenced when she wrote in *The Ministry of Healing*: “Let every breath be a prayer”?<sup>8</sup>

Those who promote breath prayer also specify that Paul asked us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). However, most Christians, including Adventists, understand Paul to counsel us to be in a constant attitude of prayer so that our minds naturally turn to God in gratitude and praise when we experience good things and turn to Him for support when we experience difficulties. Christian prayer is a way of actively engaging in the service of our Master. When we begin our day with prayer, laying all our plans at His feet,<sup>9</sup> we keep our requests in mind throughout the day, ready to respond to God’s providential leading.

Ellen White asks us to “cultivate the habit of talking with the Saviour when you are alone, when you are walking, and when you are busy with your daily labor. Let the heart be continually uplifted in silent petition for help, for light, for strength, for knowledge. Let every breath be a prayer.”<sup>10</sup>

God also asks us to come and *reason* with Him.<sup>11</sup> He wants us to *talk* to Him, as we would with a friend. By contrast, “breath prayer” suggests a different God—one who can be engaged by much repetition. It suggests that the participation of the mind is not necessary for “experiencing” God. Breath prayer thus falls in the category of magic rather than communication. It appears to be just another substitute for a genuine experience with God, not unlike the one encountered in the form of glossolalia.

It is troubling to consider that readers of *Hunger* might be led to accept this counterfeit type of prayer in place of genuine communion with God.

### ***Hunger Also Promotes a Spiritual Discipline Known As Lectio Divina***

Multitudes of potential methods for meditation exist, but I want to outline two major possibilities to give an example of what you can do. You can modify both of them to fit your particular need and preference.

The first is a variation of an ancient Christian method called *lectio divina*, or sacred/divine reading. One reason I use it is that either an individual or a group can employ it. Often I find people are more willing to try meditation personally if they have had a good experience in a group setting. In class I have often done this type as a means of introducing meditation and of helping people see the discipline's value."<sup>12</sup>

It is unfortunate that Dybdahl does not specifically define *lection divina* and how what he advocates differs from some of the sources he uses. Is *lectio divina* innocent, or should we be aware of potential dangers? Notice what one Christian advocate of the practice says:

*Lectio Divina* is Latin for divine reading, spiritual reading, or 'holy reading,' and represents a method of prayer and scriptural reading intended to promote communion with God and to provide special spiritual insights. The principles of *lectio divina* were expressed around the year 220 AD and practiced by Catholic monks, especially the monastic rules of Sts. Pachomius, Augustine, Basil, and Benedict.

The practice of *lectio divina* is currently very popular among Catholics and gnostics, and is gaining acceptance as an integral part of the devotional practices of the Emerging Church. Pope Benedict XVI said in a 2005 speech "I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of *lectio divina*: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart." *Lectio is also said to be adaptable for people of other faiths in reading their scripture—whether that be the Bhagavad Gita, the Torah, or the Koran. Non-Christians may simply make suitable modifications of the method to accommodate secular traditions* [author's emphasis]. Further, the four principles of *lectio divina* can also be adapted to the four Jungian psychological principles of sensing, thinking, intuiting, and feeling.

The actual practice of *lectio divina* begins with a time of relaxation, making oneself comfortable and clearing the mind of mundane thoughts and cares. Some *lectio* practitioners find it helpful to concentrate by beginning with deep, cleansing breaths and reciting a chosen phrase or word over and over to help free the mind.

Naturally the connection between Bible reading and prayer is one to be encouraged; they should always go together. However, the dangers inherent in this kind of practice, and its astonishing similarity to transcendental meditation and other dangerous rituals, should be carefully considered. It has the potential to become, and often does become a pursuit of mystical experience where the goal is to empty and free the mind and empower oneself. The Christian, on the other hand, uses the Scriptures to pursue the knowledge of God, wisdom, and holiness through the objective meaning of the text with the aim of transforming the mind according to truth. God said His people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6), not for lack of mystical, personal encounters with Him.<sup>13</sup>

According to a 2002, affirmative doctoral dissertation at Pacifica Graduate Institute, the practice of *lectio divina* has its roots in Greco-Roman antiquity.

"This theoretical study suggests that *lectio divina*, an ancient Christian form of contemplative prayer, attains to the depth psychological goal of illuminating unconscious material. From its origins in Greco-Roman antiquity, through its appropriation by Philo<sup>14</sup> in the 1st century BC, to its fullest development within the Benedictine monastic tradition in the 6th century, *lectio divina* has given rise to a contemplative attitude, a result of which can be profound psychological insight which often proceeds from the unconscious. The study provides a foundation for interdisciplinary dialogue by focusing on several important points of intersection between Jung's theory, practice, and desired therapeutic outcomes and those of *lectio divina*."<sup>15</sup>

Do we need to go to the broken cisterns of ancient Greece and Rome to find out how to get to know God through the Bible? These practices led to the practice of withdrawing from the world through monasticism. By contrast, Christ sends us into the world.

Ellen White encouraged a personal application method of reading and meditating on God's Word:

The study of the Bible demands our most diligent effort and persevering thought. As the miner digs for the golden treasure in the earth, so earnestly, persistently, must we seek for the treasure of God's word. In

daily study the verse-by-verse method is often most helpful. Let the student take one verse, and concentrate the mind on ascertaining the thought that God has put into that verse for him, and then dwell upon the thought until it becomes his own. One passage thus studied until its significance is clear is of more value than the perusal of many chapters with no definite purpose in view and no positive instruction gained.<sup>16</sup> (*Education*, p. 189)

### ***Hunger* promotes a type of prayer known as the “Jesus Prayer”**

A good example of a short prayer is the Jesus prayer. Popular in the Russian Orthodox tradition, it has spread widely in Christendom through the book *The Way of a Pilgrim*. The prayer is biblically based (see Luke 18:38) and says simply: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” You can shorten it even more in various ways, such as “Jesus, have mercy on me” or “Have mercy on me.” The Orthodox tradition repeats the prayer, either out loud or in the heart, many, many times until eventually it moves from the head to be the constant melody of the heart, influencing all areas of life.

Francis of Assisi reputedly prayed all night saying just “Jesus, my Jesus.”<sup>17</sup>

To advocate repeating of a simple phrase until it moves from the head to the heart is problematic because such repetition is widely recognized as a doorway to self-hypnosis. It is unfortunate that *Hunger* does not demonstrate how the techniques it presents are different from the techniques promoted by the recommended authors. If a technique is dangerous, it is not enough to be using a different name for God or even to have a different world view than other practitioners such as Buddhists or the Hindus.

For example, in *The Way of the Pilgrim* referenced in *Hunger*, we find these instructions:

The continuous interior Prayer of Jesus is a constant uninterrupted calling upon the divine Name of Jesus with the lips, in the spirit, in the heart; while forming a mental picture of His constant presence, and imploring His grace, during every occupation, at all times, in all places, even during sleep. The appeal is couched in these terms, Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me. One who accustoms himself to this appeal experiences as a result so deep a consolation and so great a need to offer the prayer always, that he can no longer live without it, and it will continue to voice itself within him of its own accord. Now do you understand what prayer without ceasing is! . . .

Here is a rosary. Take it, and to start with say the Prayer three thousand times a day. Whether you are standing or sitting, walking or lying down, continually repeat “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me”. Say it quietly and without hurry, but without fail exactly three thousand times a day without deliberately increasing or diminishing the number. God will help you . . .<sup>18</sup>

Essentially, the “Jesus Prayer” doesn't differ from the “breath prayer,” except for the specific words used. Each utilizes multitudinous repetitions of a set of words, implying that the repetition of these words has some spiritual efficacy. Again, this is more in line with Catholic teachings than with Protestant teachings. Furthermore, multiplied repetition of the name of Jesus will inevitably tend toward diminishing reverence for God. Ellen White brought to light the seriousness of using the name of God repetitiously when she wrote, “Even in prayer its frequent or needless repetition should be avoided. ‘Holy and reverend is His name.’ Psalm 111:9. Angels, as they speak it, veil their faces. With what reverence should we, who are fallen and sinful, take it upon your lips!”<sup>19</sup>

Its origins are also troubling, as documented in the *Zondervan Handbook to the History of Christianity*:

Hesychasm developed, in part, from the quest for *apatheia* or passionlessness . . . Monks sought to attain this state through mastery of the mind and body alike, conceived as a unity. *They used breathing techniques and repetitive prayers to achieve a state of self-hypnosis, whereby the mind would become completely cleared of thoughts and, it was believed, able to see God.* A prayer known as the ‘Jesus prayer’ (first described by John Climacus) was used, which in its basic form was simply ‘Jesus, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ *The form of words varied and sometimes was nothing more than the name ‘Jesus’ repeated over and over again. Chanted in time with the monk’s own breathing, the prayer would almost lose all meaning—but this was precisely the intent, since they sought a state of mind empty of thoughts, into which God might move.* Although its roots lay much earlier, hesychasm became especially popular and well known in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries” [author’s emphasis].<sup>20</sup>

The aforementioned state of self-hypnosis is an altered state of consciousness that practitioners interpret as being in the presence of God. Similar practices of repeating phrases or the name of a god are also practiced in various non-Christian religions.<sup>21</sup>

Although many may be unaware of it, there are distinct dangers associated with these various prayer practices commonly called contemplative prayer.

One of the authors recommended in *Hunger* cautions that a very different sort of spirit may be encountered in these practices. Richard Foster gave a warning in regard to contemplative prayer saying that this is for more mature believers; that “we are entering deeply into the spiritual realm” where we may encounter “spiritual beings” who are not on God’s side. He suggested a prayer of protection in which one surrounds himself with “the light of Christ,” saying “all dark and evil spirits must now leave,” and other words to keep evil ones at bay.<sup>22</sup>

In another book, Foster said, “So that we may not be led astray, however, we must understand that we are not engaging in some flippant work. We are not calling on some cosmic bellhop. This is a serious and even dangerous business.”<sup>23</sup>

*Hunger* also indicates the need to pray for protection before meditation “Begin with brief prayer for God’s presence, guidance, and protection from any evil influence. When we become quiet and open to God, we simply want to make sure that anything that happens is under Jesus’ leadership. The prayer itself helps to quiet people and create the setting for meaningful meditation.” (*Hunger*, p. 63)

If these various authors warn of the possibility of meeting evil spirits through contemplative practice, how can we recommend these things to those who really do “hunger” for a deeper connection with God?

### ***Hunger* Mentions the Concept of “Centering Down”**

*Help people begin to focus on the present situation in preparation to hear God’s Word. Sometimes called “centering down,” it seeks to minimize distraction and let people concentrate as much as they can on God’s Word. For example, suggest that they close their eyes. Also I ask people to relax their bodies consciously and to give any physical tension over to Jesus. Often shoulders and neck in particular need to release their tautness. Occasionally people should take a few deep slow breathes or become conscious of their breathing.*<sup>24</sup>

We need to examine what “centering down” means to those who use this term:

There are many more uses and considerations regarding centering prayer, but it is essentially the process of *centering down* to the Presence of the Lord with you. Centering prayer is taught in all the major faith groups, to a greater or lesser degree: Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist.

Sadly, it is not widely taught in our faith and many Christians who’ve not heard of it think it is “new age” or even “demonic!” These are terms easily thrown about to discredit time-honored techniques of which the hurler of epithets is merely ignorant.<sup>25</sup>

Centering prayer is a two-stage process.

The first stage is to settle into stillness and become aware of God’s presence. Quakers call this centering down. It involves coming into the present moment by quieting the mind, letting go of problems, and releasing distractions.

Find a quiet place and let family members know you do not want to be interrupted. Sit comfortably. Begin repeating a sacred phrase or word: for example, *peace, Lord, love, God is love*. This helps you quiet internal dialogue and become more God-centered. Repeat your sacred phrase effortlessly, in silence, until you reach a state of stillness. Do not concentrate or work at it, just gently repeat it.<sup>26</sup>

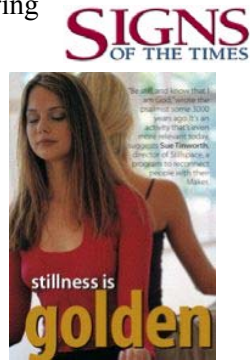
Since “centering down is the first stage of centering prayer’s two-stage process,” we need to ask what is centering prayer?<sup>27</sup> John D. Dreher characterizes “centering prayer” as thus:

Centering prayer is essentially a form of self-hypnosis. It makes use of a “mantra,” a word repeated over and over to focus the mind while striving by ones will to go deep within oneself. The effects are a hypnotic-like state: concentration upon one thing, disengagement from other stimuli, a high degree of openness to suggestion, a psychological and physiological condition that externally resembles sleep but in which consciousness is interiorized and the mind subject to suggestion. After reading a published

description of centering prayer, a psychology professor said, “Your question is, is this hypnosis? Sure it is.” He said the state can be verified physiologically by the drop in blood pressure, respiratory rate, lactic acid level in the blood, and the galvanic conductivity of the skin.<sup>28</sup>

In our own *Signs of the Times* magazine, an article encourages the practice of centering prayer:

Contemplation is essentially wordless, but its core cry is “I consent to Your presence and Your action within.” (See Psalm 139:1-4; Romans 8:26, 27.) Feel your hunger for connection with the Divine and express your adoration. God is waiting to connect with you (Revelation 3:20), but it may take some time for you to focus. If you are distracted by thoughts, let them float past you without following. One method, called “centering” prayer [author’s emphasis], encourages you to refocus on God by internally saying one of the names of God that you relate to. This can help you to be present to God again.<sup>29</sup>



Notice the difference between the type of contemplation recommended by Ellen White and that recommended by the author of “Stillness is Golden.”

It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.<sup>30</sup>

The *Signs* article recommends, “If you are distracted by thoughts, let them float past you without following.” In other words, the recommendation is to empty the mind and to avoid thinking. By contrast, Ellen White recommends a focus of the mind on the life of Christ—an active use of the imagination. These are two very different types of contemplation. The emptying of the mind is typical of Eastern meditation.

The silence that Ellen White encourages—a silence and solitude that is essential in order to hear the voice of God—is not the silence brought about by a mantra-style repetition of words:

All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God. In them is to be revealed a life that is not in harmony with the world, its customs, or its practices; and they need to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, “Be still, and know that I am God.” This is the effectual preparation for all labor for God. Amidst the hurrying throng, and the strain of life’s intense activities, he who is thus refreshed, will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. He will receive a new endowment of both physical and mental strength. His life will breathe out a fragrance, and will reveal a divine power that will reach men’s hearts.<sup>31</sup>

## In Summary

Although the author of *Hunger* wants to teach ways to still the hunger of the soul, some of the recommended methods directly counter the instructions of inspiration. Thus they can lead only to a counterfeit spiritual experience. The meditative practices of breath prayer, *lectio divina* and the Jesus Prayer are part of a mystical tradition that spans many forms of spirituality, all of which are incompatible with the Adventist understanding of the nature of God and how He makes Himself known to us.

These practices originated in Eastern pagan religions, were adopted by the Desert Fathers of the Catholic Church, and are now being offered to the Protestant community. While the goal of achieving higher spirituality is commendable, the method is flawed. Deeper spirituality is experienced through sanctifying obedience to the Word of God.

It seems futile to attempt to Christianize practices of pagan origin, such as breath prayer, *lectio divina*, and the Jesus Prayer, and attempt to use them in our worship of God. We cannot use practices based on intrinsically false

view of God to worship our Creator God who wishes to have an intimate relationship with us. We cannot expect God to work through this modality by requesting that He will, any more than we can pray over a Ouija board and expect that God will answer our questions. “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

We are forced to conclude that, instead of being a means to draw us close to Christ, Eastern-style meditative practices only make people *feel* spiritual. They do not help to draw them into true fellowship with Christ in His work in this world—a work that is outward-focused, rather than inward-focused. Thus, the spirituality produced by Eastern-style meditation and prayer is a seducing<sup>32</sup> counterfeit of the genuine. It is unfortunate that a recommendation of these is included in a book sold in our Adventist Book Centers.

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- <sup>1</sup> Jon Dybdahl, *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul* (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House Publishing, 2007), 61.
  - <sup>2</sup> *Hunger*, 52.
  - <sup>3</sup> William Gaultiere, Ph.D., “Spiritual disciplines for the Soul: Breath Prayers,” Christian Soul Care, 2006, <http://www.christiansoulcare.com/spiritualdiscipline/spiritualdisciplinebreathprayers.htm>. This article provides a good introduction to breath prayer by a Christian proponent.
  - <sup>4</sup> Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing* (Silverton, OR: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2006), 75. For instance, it is part of yoga: “I once related Foster's breath prayer method to a former New Age devotee who is now a Christian. She affirmed this connection when she remarked with astonishment, ‘That's what I did when I was into ashtanga yoga!’”
  - <sup>5</sup> Brian Flynn, *Running Against the Wind* (Silverton, OR: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2005), 199. “Breath prayer . . . is used or described as a technique to silence the mind or supposedly to ‘practice the presence.’ Richard Foster also advocates breath prayers as a method to achieve the same purpose. Remember it is repetition that brings one into an altered state of consciousness. Breath prayers are just another way of using meaningless repetition to gain an altered state. The practitioners believe they will feel closer to God through this method”
  - <sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, “The Power of Prayer,” *Signs of the Times* (January 29, 1902). “Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. In the secret place of prayer, where no eye but God's can see, no ear but His can hear, we may pour out our most hidden desires and longings to the Father of infinite pity; and in the hush and silence of the soul, that voice which never fails to answer the cry of human need, will speak to our hearts.”
  - <sup>7</sup> John Michael Talbot, “Breath Prayer,” Living Water, no date, <http://www.johnmichaeltalbot.com/Reflections/index.asp?id=145>.
  - <sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1905), 510.
  - <sup>9</sup> Ellen White, *Steps to Christ* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1892), 70. “Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work. Let your prayer be, ‘Take me, O Lord, as wholly Thine. I lay all my plans at Thy feet. Use me today in Thy service. Abide with me, and let all my work be wrought in Thee.’ This is a daily matter. Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ.”
  - <sup>10</sup> *Ministry of Healing*, 510.
  - <sup>11</sup> “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18)
  - <sup>12</sup> *Hunger*, 62.

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- <sup>13</sup> “What is Lectio Divina?” Got Questions?org, no date, <http://www.gotquestions.org/lectio-divina.html>. For more information on *lectio divina*, go to: [http://www.inplainsite.org/html/lectio\\_divina.html](http://www.inplainsite.org/html/lectio_divina.html) or <http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/lectio/lectio.htm>.
- <sup>14</sup> It is of interest that Philo, the Jew, set up a system of thought that was adopted by some of the early Church Fathers and prepared the way for the changes that caused Jesus to say to the church at Ephesus, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” (Revelation 2:4) This system of thought was later adopted by the school at Alexandria whose allegorization method of interpreting the Bible set the foundation for the heresies of the Roman Catholic Church. Kees Waaijman, John Vriend, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods* (Peeters
- <sup>15</sup> D. Baker, “*Lectio divina: Toward a Psychology of Contemplation*,” (doctoral dissertation, Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2002), 1 [http://www.online.pacifica.edu/pgl/stories/storyReader\\$719](http://www.online.pacifica.edu/pgl/stories/storyReader$719).
- <sup>16</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), 189.
- <sup>17</sup> *Hunger*, 52.
- <sup>18</sup> Anonymous (translated by R. M. French), *The Way of a Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1991), 7-8, 13, [http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/Prayer\\_without\\_Ceasing.html](http://landru.i-link-2.net/shnyves/Prayer_without_Ceasing.html).
- <sup>19</sup> *Education*, 243.
- <sup>20</sup> Jonathan Hill, *Zondervan Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Oxford, England: Lion Hudson, 2006) 137-138. See this excerpt online at [http://www.zondervan.com/media/samples/pdf/0310262704\\_samptxt.pdf](http://www.zondervan.com/media/samples/pdf/0310262704_samptxt.pdf).
- <sup>21</sup> Luis S. R. Vas, “The Path of Japa,” May 2004, [http://www.lifepositive.com/Spirit/Rituals/The\\_Path\\_of\\_Japa52004.asp](http://www.lifepositive.com/Spirit/Rituals/The_Path_of_Japa52004.asp). “Repetition of any mantra or name of the Lord is known as Japa. From Buddhists to Muslims, Christians to Sufis, this path is hailed as one of the most meritorious forms of prayer in many spiritual traditions. . . Japa (muttering is one of its meanings in Sanskrit) practice is perhaps the highest common spiritual factor among all religious traditions. It is a discipline involving the (silent, or sub-vocally muttered, or chanted aloud) invocation of a word or phrase, usually pertaining to the divine, sometimes termed a mantra. It is practiced among Hindus—across the board from the Vedantists to the followers of Sri Ramdas at Anand Ashram in Kerala—Buddhists, Sufis and Christians alike. Moreover, despite its apparent simplicity, it is regarded as one of the most meritorious forms of prayer in all these traditions. . . . Japa spirituality is not unknown among Christians either. But it is most prevalent among Orthodox Christians, less so among Catholics and Protestants. A famous Orthodox Christian prayer is known as the Jesus Prayer or the Prayer of the Heart, and goes: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Have Mercy On Me.’”
- Basil Pennington, *Centering Prayer* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), 32-33, [http://www.kyrie.com/cp/a\\_gift\\_from\\_the\\_desert.htm](http://www.kyrie.com/cp/a_gift_from_the_desert.htm). “The desert tradition out of which this teaching on prayer of John Cassian, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and Centering Prayer evolved is the same as that from which the Jesus Prayer issued. However, while Abba Isaac gave St. John a word from the Psalms: ‘O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me,’ the Eastern current derived its source from two passages of the New Testament - that of the blind Bartimeus and that of the publican - to form the well-known prayer: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ In time, especially under the long domination of the Moslems, the Eastern Christian tradition was enriched or modified by other influences from the East. Thus today the expression ‘The Jesus Prayer’ is a blanket covering a variety of methods. The most highly developed, psychosomatic expression of the Jesus Prayer, presented by Nesophorus of Jerusalem and St. Gregory of Sinai (who actually learned it in Crete and brought it to the Holy Mountain) in the fourteenth century, and by St. Gregory Palamas in the century following, reproduce even to details the dhikr method of the Sufis of the thirteenth century. The Name used by the Sufis, of course, was Allah, while that used by the Orthodox Christians was the Name of Jesus. This dhikr method in its turn reproduces down to details the nembutsu method of meditation used by Buddhists in the twelfth century. We do not necessarily have to postulate a dependency. It may be that spiritual masters coming out of related cultures evolved similar methods.”
- <sup>22</sup> Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1992), 156-157.
- <sup>23</sup> Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1978), 16.
- <sup>24</sup> *Hunger*, 23.

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- <sup>25</sup> John W. Price, "Centering Prayer," updated September 15, 2002, <http://www.frjohnwprice.org/Centering.html>.
- <sup>26</sup> Christine N. Karcher, "Spiritual Relationship Help & Building Self Esteem," Relationships of Grace, 2003, [http://www.relationshipsofgrace.com/spiritual\\_relationship\\_help\\_article\\_centering\\_prayer.htm](http://www.relationshipsofgrace.com/spiritual_relationship_help_article_centering_prayer.htm).
- <sup>27</sup> Thomas Keating describes the origins of Centering Prayer on the following websites: <http://www.centeringprayer.com/intimacy/intimacy01a.htm> and <http://www.centeringprayer.com/wklyart.htm>.
- <sup>28</sup> John D. Dreher, "The Danger of Centering Prayer," *This Rock*, Vol. 8, No. 11 (November 1997), <http://www.saint-mike.org/occult/CenteringPrayer.asp>.
- <sup>29</sup> "Stillness Is Golden," *Signs of the Times*—Australia/New Zealand, Vol. 119 (November 2004), <http://www.signsofthetimes.org.au/archives/2004/november/article5.shtm>.
- <sup>30</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1898), 83.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ministry of Healing*, 58.
- <sup>32</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1904), 293. "The experience of the past will be repeated. In the future, Satan's superstitions will assume new forms. Errors will be presented in a pleasing and flattering manner. False theories, clothed with garments of light, will be presented to God's people. Thus Satan will try to deceive, if possible, the very elect. Most seducing influences will be exerted; minds will be hypnotized."

### Authors Recommended in *Hunger*

It is of some concern that the author of *Hunger* recommends some books whose authors promote not only mystical aspects of the spiritual life but also some who specifically encourage the study of non-Christian (pagan) applications:

**Thomas R. Kelly:** "Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continually return. . . . It is a Light Within that illumines the face of God and casts new shadows and new glories upon the human face. . . . Here is the Slumbering Christ, stirring to be awakened, to become the soul we clothe in earthly form and action. And He is within us all. . . . The Inner Light, the Inward Christ, is no mere doctrine, belonging peculiarly to a small religious fellowship, to be accepted or rejected as a mere belief. It is the living Center of Reference for all Christian groups - yes, and of non-Christian groups as well who seriously mean to dwell in the secret place of the Most High." —*A Testament of Devotion* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 3.

**Henri J. M. Nouwen:** "The quiet repetition of a single word can help us to descend with the mind into the heart ... This way of simple prayer ... opens us to God's active presence." —*The Way of the Heart* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1991), 81.

**Richard J. Foster:** "[W]e must be willing to go down into the recreating silences, into the inner world of contemplation. In their writings, all of the masters of meditation strive to awaken us to the fact that the universe is much larger than we know, that there are vast unexplored inner regions that are just as real as the physical world we know so well." —*Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York, NY: HarperCollins®, 1980), 13.

"Thomas Merton has perhaps done more than any other twentieth-century figure to make the life of prayer widely known and understood . . . his interest in contemplation led him to investigate prayer forms in Eastern religion ... [he is] a gifted teacher" —Renovare, Richard J. Foster, Emilie Griffin, *Spiritual Classics* (New York, NY: HarperCollins®, 2000), 17.

**Thomas Merton:** "If only they [people] could all see themselves as they really are . . . I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other . . . At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusions, a point of pure truth . . . This little point ... is the pure glory of God in us. It is in everybody." —*Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1989), 157, 158.

**Morton Kelsey:** "You can find most of the New Age practices in the depth of Christianity [Christian church tradition]." —"In the Spirit of Early Christians," *Common Boundary* magazine, Jan./Feb. 1992. P. 19.

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**Tilden Edwards:** “This mystical stream [contemplative prayer] is the Western bridge to Far Eastern spirituality.” — *Spiritual Friend: Reclaiming the Gift of Spiritual Direction* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980), 18, 19.

**Thomas Keating:** A Trappist monk who began teaching a form of Christian meditation that grew into the worldwide phenomenon known as centering prayer. Twice a day for 20 minutes, practitioners find a quiet place to sit with their eyes closed and surrender their minds to “God.” “My acquaintance with eastern methods of meditation has convinced me that . . . there are ways of calming the mind in the spiritual disciplines of both the east and the west . . . Many serious seekers of truth study the eastern religions.” — *Open Mind Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel* (Warwick, NY: Amity House, 1986), 37.

“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 . . .” —M. Basil Pennington, Thomas F. Clarke, *Finding Grace at the Center: The Beginning of Centering Prayer* (Still River, MA: St. Bede Publications, 1978), 5, 6.

“If you are aware of no thoughts, you will be aware of something and that is a thought. If at that point you can lose the awareness that you are aware of no thoughts, you will move into pure consciousness. . . . A fifth kind of thought arises from the fact that through the regular practice of contemplative prayer the dynamism of interior purification is set in motion. This dynamism is a kind of divine psychotherapy, organically designed for each of us, to empty out our unconscious . . .” — *Foundations for Centering Prayer and the Christian Contemplative Life* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002), 64, 82.

**M. Scott Peck:** “Since the unconscious is God all along, we may further define the goal of spiritual growth to be the attainment of Godhood by the conscious self. It is for the individual to become totally, wholly, God.” — *The Road Less Traveled* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 283.

“Zen Buddhism should be taught in every 5th grade class in America.” — *Further along the Road Less Traveled* (Simon & Schuster Audioworks, 1992).

“Christianity's greatest sin is to think that other religions are not saved—*Further along the Road Less Traveled* (Simon & Schuster Audioworks, 1992).

“If the New Age can reform society rather than just adversely challenge it then it can be extremely holy and desperately needed.” — *Further along the Road Less Traveled* (Simon & Schuster Audioworks, 1992).