

Cracks in Our Spiritual Foundation?

Lynn Lusby Pratt

Have you noticed any of the following in your church or your own spiritual life: Eastern mysticism, occult practice, a dismissal of the atonement, “the silence,” a downplaying of Scripture, a hate-the-church mentality? No? What about naïve acceptance of non-Christian belief systems, foul language in sermons, an emphasis on social justice at the expense of the Great Commission?

Examine the following quotes from an open-minded perspective. Perhaps the source is a Christian trying to tell us...what? Or perhaps the source is a non-Christian. In that case, what is the message? Mark each quote with your best guess to indicate a Christian (C) or non-Christian (N) source. The quotes are not out of context but are representative of the writers’ beliefs.

Then check the source list to see who each of the quotes belongs to. You may be surprised at the similarities between what Christian and non-Christian leaders say. Perhaps you found that some quotes could be taken very different ways, depending on who you thought was saying them. What we *assume* someone means may not *be* what he means. It’s increasingly vital to ask questions and compare spiritual teaching with Scripture.

Quotes

- ___ 1. “You and I may have strong opinions on...biblical inerrancy, but these should not be considered evangelical essentials.”
- ___ 2. “We do not know who wrote [Daniel].” The messianic prophecy in Isaiah 9:6, 7 refers to “human agents.” Isaiah did not really write the book of Isaiah; the book of Isaiah is “tradition” and “poetic imagination.”
- ___ 3. “I think the resurrection of Jesus really happened, but I have no idea if it involves anything happening to his corpse, and, therefore, I have no idea whether it involves an empty tomb.”
- ___ 4. “The Church’s fixation on the death of Jesus as the universal saving act must end, and the place of the cross must be reimagined in Christian faith. Why? Because of the cult of suffering and the vindictive God behind it.”
- ___ 5. “It was the purest inner knowing I had experienced, and it was shouting in me *no, no, no!* The ultimate authority of my life is not the Bible.... My ultimate authority is the divine voice in my own soul.”
“We also need Goddess consciousness to reveal earth’s holiness.... Earth becomes alive and sacred.”
- ___ 6. “The beginning of sharing my faith with people began by throwing out Christianity and embracing Christian spirituality, a nonpolitical mysterious system that can be experienced but not explained.”
- ___ 7. “We must be continually aware that the ‘old, old story’ may not be the ‘true, true story.’”
- ___ 8. “God’s story is changing.” | “Theology is inherently temporary.” | “The Trinity is not wrong but it may not be the only way to understand God.”
- ___ 9. “The first step in faith is to stop thinking about God at the time of prayer.”
- ___ 10. “Gently focus on one thing so that it becomes more difficult for stray thoughts to enter your mind. I like to start with a breathing meditation. To begin meditation, find a comfortable position. Sit in a comfortable chair, with your feet flat on the ground. Place your hands in your lap with the palms facing upward. Close your eyes and begin witnessing your breath. Observe the inflow and outflow of your breath without attempting to control it in any way.”
- ___ 11. “Breathe in forgiveness.”

- ___ 12. “Explore nowhere else except deep within yourself—you will come face-to-face with God.”
“Some people are upset with me because it sounds like I’m anti-Christian. I think they might be right.”
- ___ 13. “One of the fundamental things that the novitiate has to learn is to find his centre within himself.”
- ___ 14. “Prayer is ‘soul work’ because our souls are those sacred centers where all is one.”
“It is in the heart of God that we can come to the full realization of the unity of all that is.”
- ___ 15. “When the voice and vision on the inside become more profound and clear than the opinions on the outside, then you have mastered your life.”
- ___ 16. “At the center of our being is a point of nothingness...the pure glory of God in us.... It is in everybody.”
“I see no contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity. The future of Zen is in the West. I intend to become as good a Buddhist as I can.”
- ___ 17. “The meditation of advanced occultists is identical with the prayer of advanced mystics.”
- ___ 18. “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.”
- ___ 19. “A small army of yoga missionaries [has been trained to] set upon the Western world. They may not call themselves Hindu, but Hindus know where yoga came from and where it goes.”
- ___ 20. “We do not meditate to relax a little and experience some peace, we meditate to unfold our inner being.’ Repetition of the mantra (sacred syllables) is used as an aid in meditation and to still the mind. Through chanting the ancient practice of singing the Lord’s name one opens the heart and experiences the joy within.”
- ___ 21. “In your imagination allow your spiritual body, shining with light, to rise out of your physical body. Look back...and reassure your body that you will return momentarily. Imagine your spiritual self, alive and vibrant, rising up through the clouds and into the stratosphere.... Go deeper and deeper into outer space until there is nothing except the warm presence of the eternal Creator.... Listen carefully.... Note any instruction given.”
- ___ 22. “The nervous system in a state of quiescence, alert, awake but not active, is comparable to what Buddhists call the highest state of dhyana or deep meditation. The conscious recognition of the Clear Light induces an ecstatic condition of consciousness such as saints and mystics of the West have called illumination.”
- ___ 23. “[Mysticism] is metaphysics arrived at through mindbody experiences. Mysticism begins in experience; it ends in theology.”
“New Lights offer up themselves as the cosmions of a mind-of-Christ consciousness. As a cosmion incarnating the cells of a new body, New Lights will function as transitional vessels through which transforming energy can renew the divine image in the world, moving postmoderns from one state of embodiment to another.”
- ___ 24. “Experiments are being made now, unknown oft to the subjects themselves, to see how quickly a man may be pushed through experience...into a position where it will be safe to train him further.”

- ___25. “Do you not see that God is trying experiments with human lives?...I...who am reaching out toward divine sons, I have not become satisfied yet.... I am in travail to set you a kindle with the Christ-thing which has no name. How fully can you surrender and not be afraid?”
- ___26. “Finally, there is the third Jesus, the cosmic Christ, the spiritual guide whose teaching embraces all humanity, not just the church built in his name. He speaks to the individual who wants to find God as a personal experience, to attain what some might call grace, or God-consciousness, or enlightenment.”
- ___27. “‘Drink, daughter, from my side,’ [Jesus] said, ‘and by that draught your soul shall become enraptured with such delight that your very body, which for my sake you have denied, shall be inundated with its overflowing goodness.’ Then she fastened her lips upon that sacred wound...”
- ___28. “Body and spirit are in the throes of a sweet, happy pain, alternating between a fearful fiery glow, a complete impotence and unconsciousness, and a spell of strangulation, intermitted sometimes by such an ecstatic flight that the body is literally lifted into space. This after half an hour is followed by a reactionary relaxation of a few hours in a swoon-like weakness, attended by a negation of all the faculties in the union with God. From this the subject awakens in tears; it is the climax of mystical experience, productive of the trance.”
- ___29. “There is nothing wrong...with eroticism in worship.”
- “Some of the most spiritual people I know claim to be without religion.”
- “I say [Jesus’] name over and over again, for as long as fifteen minutes, until I find my soul suspended in what the ancient Celtic Christians called a ‘thin place’—a state where the boundary between heaven and earth, divine and human, dissolves.”
- ___30. “It is often said that in today’s modern and postmodern world that the forces of darkness are upon us. But I think not; in the Dark and the Deep there are truths that can always heal. It is not the forces of darkness but of shallowness that everywhere threaten the true, and the good, and the beautiful, and that ironically announce themselves as deep and profound.”
- ___31. “In the emerging culture, darkness represents spirituality. We see this in Buddhist temples, as well as Catholic and Orthodox churches. Darkness communicates that something serious is happening.”
- ___32. “This mystical stream [contemplative prayer] is the Western bridge to Far Eastern spirituality.”
- ___33. “To be contemplative we must become converted to the consciousness that makes us one with the universe, in tune with the cosmic voice of God.”
- ___34. “If you have a particular faith or religion, that is good. But you can survive without it.”
- ___35. “Those who love me come from every system that exists. They were Buddhists or Mormons, Baptists or Muslims.... I have no desire to make them Christian, but I do want to join them in their transformation into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters.”
- ___36. “The day is dawning when all religions will be regarded as emanating from one great spiritual source; all will be seen as unitedly providing the one root out of which the universal world religion will inevitably emerge. Then there will be neither Christian nor heathen, neither Jew nor Gentile, but simply one great body of believers, gathered out of all the current religions.”

Source List

(No judgment is being made on the motives of those quoted. It's about the teaching.)

1. Quaker theologian and writer Richard Foster, *Streams of Living Water*, p 229
2. Renovaré Bible study notes, editors Dallas Willard, Richard Foster, Walt Brueggemann, and Eugene Peterson, pp 982, 983, 997, 1068, 1245. The notes also consider Genesis 1–11 a myth and state that Moses didn't write Genesis.
3. Bible scholar Marcus Borg, 3/28/97 transcript "Considering Jesus," pbs.org. Borg's Jesus Seminar cohort John Dominic Crossan more openly states what they believe: that Jesus' body was probably "eaten by dogs."
4. Alan Jones, Dean of Grace Cathedral Episcopal Church, *Reimagining Christianity*, p 168
5. longtime Baptist writer Sue Monk Kidd, *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*, p 76; p 162
6. Christian writer Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz*, p 115
7. prominent emerging church voice Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, p 294
8. emerging church pastor Doug Pagitt, workshop "A New Theology for a New World" 2005
9. Catholic priest and speaker Brennan Manning, *The Signature of Jesus*, p 212
10. spirituality expert Deepak Chopra, "Mantra Meditation," beliefnet.com
11. pastor and speaker Rob Bell, sermon on YouTube
12. emerging church pastor Erwin McManus, *Soul Cravings*, conclusion; *The Barbarian Way*
13. New Age pioneer Alice Bailey channeling the entity Djwhal Khul, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p 312
14. Catholic priest and writer Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*, Jan 15 and Nov 16 readings
15. author Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret*, universallawstoday.com
16. Catholic monk and influential writer Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, p 142; in *Thomas Merton/Monk: A Monastic Tribute*, Patrick Hart, p 88
17. mystic Richard Kirby, *The Mission of Mysticism*, p 7
18. architects of centering prayer Basil Pennington and Thomas Keating, *Finding Grace at the Center*, p5
19. hinduismtoday.com
20. Hindu Swami Muktananda quote and explanation at blackrosespiritualcenter.org
21. Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, p 27
22. 1960s counterculture icon Timothy Leary, *Your Brain is God*, p 66
23. ordained Methodist minister and scholar Leonard Sweet, *Quantum Spirituality*, p 76; p 48
24. Alice Bailey channeling the entity Djwhal Khul, *Letters on Occult Meditation*, p 298
25. "God" speaking to mystic Frank Laubach. Quoted favorably by Presbyterian pastor John Ortberg in *The Life You've Always Wanted*, p 207
26. Deepak Chopra, *The Third Jesus*

27. “Jesus” speaking to medieval nun Catherine of Siena in a vision, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* by Caroline Bynum. After this event, Catherine ate only the Eucharist and the infected oozings of sick people. She died of starvation.
28. description of medieval nun Teresa of Avila’s fourth stage of the “ascent of the soul,” *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, p 413. Also at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Teresa_of_Avila. Teresa levitated, tortured herself, and had supernatural erotic experiences.
29. pastor and sociologist Tony Campolo, *Adventures in Missing the Point*, p 216; “Mystical Encounters for Christians,” beliefnet.com; Ibid
30. philosopher Ken Wilber, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*. Fans include McLaren, Sweet, and Bell. See Wilber’s life grid: www.kenwilber.com/personal/ILP/MyILP.html
31. leading emergent voice Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, p 126
32. Shalem Institute founder Tilden Edwards, *Spiritual Friend*, p 18
33. Benedictine nun and lecturer Joan Chittister, *Illuminated Life*, spiritualityandpractice.com
34. the Dalai Lama, thinkexist.com
35. the Jesus character in *The Shack*, William P. Young, p 182
36. Alice Bailey channeling the entity Djwhal Khul, *Problems of Humanity*, chapter V

Terms

This is a broad topic. But you can take a crash course in just one hour! After looking up definitions for any of these terms that are unfamiliar, Google search any name from the source list with any term here. See what relationships pop up. Look for direct quotations. Don’t assume; dig to find what the person *means*.

- Ancient Christian practice
- Ascended master
- Buddhism
- Christ consciousness
- Contemplative prayer (see also: breath prayer, centering prayer, Jesus prayer, mantra meditation, Zen, transcendental meditation, soaking)*
- Cosmic Christ
- Eastern religion
- Gnosticism
- Goddess worship
- Hinduism
- Initiation
- Interspirituality (interfaith)
- Kundalini (“serpent power”)
- Labyrinth
- Maitreya
- Mandala
- Mysticism
- New Age
- Occult
- Pantheism and panentheism
- Presence
- Reiki
- (the) Silence
- Spiritual direction (www.sdiworld.org)
- Spiritual formation
- Tantric or tantrism (black magic/sex magic)
- *The Cloud of Unknowing*
- Union with the divine
- Universalist
- Visualization (“creative imagination”)
- Yoga

*Note: These practices begin with words, then ultimately go beyond to not only the absence of *audible* words, but *completely* wordless. No thought. No content.

Back to Basics

Scripture warns us that the enemy is always trying to sneak in and destroy. Read Paul's heart-rending parting words to the Christians in Ephesus: **“Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears” (Acts 20:28-31).**

The Old Testament prophets were dealing with the same basic issues almost from the beginning: **“Your people...are full of superstitions from the East” (Isaiah 2:6).**

“Be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, ‘How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.’ You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates” (Deuteronomy 12:30, 31).

And when Jesus' disciples asked him for signs of his second coming, his first words in response were: **“Watch out that no one deceives you” (Matthew 24:4).**

We've been warned. Mysticism, occult practice, the undermining of Scripture...there is always something questionable creeping into the church. These days are no exception. But many Christians—even theologically sound church leaders who try to stay on top of things—are unaware. Dangerous teachings are being passed along, teachings that sound good on the surface but whose trajectory is off target.

Just a bit of attention to the information in this document can equip you with understanding and discernment to help seal any cracks in your spiritual foundation. And you're invited to spread the word—in love.

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