

Assemblies of God: Committed to Spiritual Formation, Contemplative and Emerging

According to the Assemblies of God USA mission statement, they are committed "to personal spiritual growth and discipleship," saying "Spiritual formation brings glory to our Creator and Savior and validates our witness to the world. We will use every effective means to spiritually develop believers in our churches and to prepare continuing generations for service." Is this "Spiritual formation" an avenue through which contemplative spirituality and the New Age will enter Assemblies of God, and when the statement says "we will use every effective means," does that mean every means, including mystical prayer practices, rituals and disciplines?

If Assemblies of God Theological Seminary is any indication, then AOG is heading straight towards contemplative spirituality and the emerging church. Earl Creps, director of the Doctor of Ministry program and associate professor at AOGTS, is a heavy proponent of both contemplative and emerging. In his [course syllabi over the last five years](#), Creps has classes with titles such as "Leading the Emerging Church" and "Models of Ministry in the Emerging Church." Syllabus reading materials include those from [Henri Nouwen](#), [Brian McLaren](#), [Ken Blanchard](#), [Dan Kimball](#), [Erwin McManus](#), Sally Morgenthaler, [Leonard Sweet](#). A visit to Creps' "Spiritual Adventures" blog gives a hearty helping of emergent discussion. In [one blog](#), Creps tries to show how there might be a union between Pentecostalism and the emerging church, saying the relationship is "gaining some traction." While Creps ends that discussion with "I am painfully orthodox doctrinally," resources he offers throughout his blogs and websites would paint another picture. Under [Apologetics Resources](#), Creps recommends Leonard Sweet's book, *Quantum Spirituality*. Listen to Sweet, as he describes the New Light in his book: "I have followed those 'New Light leaders' ... [S]ome of those who led [me] into new light are: ... [Matthew Fox](#), Richard Mouw, Rowan Williams." Others that Leonard Sweet thanks include: Morton Kelsey, M. Scott Peck, Walter Bruggemann, Ken Wilber, Thomas Berry and many other New Age sympathizers. And then:

The first of these five untheorized observations is that New Light embodiment means to be "in connection" and 'in-formation' with other Christians. Deeper feeling and higher relating go together. The church is fundamentally one being, one person, a comm-union whose cells are connected to one another within the information network called the **Christ consciousness**." —[Quantum Spirituality](#), P. 122

He goes on:

Energy-fire experiences take us into ourselves only that we might reach outside of ourselves. Metanoia is a de-centering experience of connected-ness and community. It is not an exercise in reciting what Jesus has done for me lately.

Energy-fire ecstasy, more a buzz than a binge, takes us out of ourselves, literally. That is the meaning of the word 'ecstatic.'[Quantum Spirituality](#), P. 93
This ecstasy Sweet speaks refers to the New Age ecstasy that occurs in an altered state of consciousness. ([See more research on Sweet](#).) Sweet has written an endorsement for Creps new book, *Off-Road Disciplines*. With Creps influence at AOGTS and his admiration for Leonard Sweet, it looks like Sweet will play a role in the future of many Assemblies of God students.

AOG magazine, Enrichment Journal, freely promotes contemplative authors such as [Richard Foster and Dallas Willard](#), and AOG Southwestern University [lists Spiritual Formation](#) as one of it's core values. Courses such as [SCRIPTURE AND ETHICS](#) used reading material by Richard Foster as does the [ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY](#), which also uses a book by contemplative-promoting [Gregory Boyd](#).

To add to the promotion of contemplative and emerging through AOG seminaries is the [4th Annual National Church Planting Leadership Summit](#), which takes place in November. The conference motto says: " Our goal is to see the Assemblies of God become a church planting/church multiplication movement." One of the featured speakers at the conference is Mark Batterson. A [recommended reading list](#) on his website includes some of the most prominent New Agers and New Age sympathizers out there: [Laurie Beth Jones](#), Eckhart Tolle, Paulo Coelho, James Redfield (*The Celestine Prophecy*), Jack Canfield (*Chicken Soup* author), Anthony Robbins, and Leonard Sweet as well as numerous contemplatives and emergents: Brian McLaren, Henri Nouwen, Dallas Willard, Brother Lawrence and many others. Tolle, Coelho and Redfield are like world-class Alice Bailey level New Agers. If Mark Batterson brings what he has learned from these authors with him to the conference, then AOG's efforts to grow and multiply may head in a very dangerous direction.

With all of the influence that contemplative/emerging is having on AOG denomination, it is not surprising to find out that Purpose Driven has also found its way into the movement (it too is a big proponent of both contemplative and emerging). A search on the AOG USA website produces over [600 entries](#) for "Purpose Driven."

[\[Spiritual Formation\]](#) This article or excerpt is from *Lighthouse Trails* on September 12, 2006 @ 11:44 pm.