

**Silence and Solitude in Pentecostal Spirituality:
Exploring the Inner Life in Contemporary Context**

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22–26 July 2026

INTRODUCTION

Though Pentecostals do not self-identify within the mystical streams of Christianity, the origins of Pentecostalism at the turn of the twentieth century and subsequent renewal movements demonstrated “mystical” accounts of fresh encounters with the Spirit that are often likened to Luke’s description of the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) ¹ and subsequent movements of the Spirit ever since. Clark Pinnock once observed that “Pentecostals read the Bible not primarily as a book of concepts, but as a very dynamic activity of ongoing divine activity. They inhabit the story-world of the Bible and experience God according to the pattern narrated by the biblical text.”²

In 1971, Karl Rahner, considered to be the most influential Catholic theologian of the twentieth century, stated that “The devout of tomorrow will be a *mystic*, someone who has *experienced* something, or else he will not be at all.”³ For Rahner, that “something” is the grace of “God’s self-communication in a direct encounter”⁴ with humankind. Pentecostals are well acquainted with direct, divine encounters. Though revival “encounters” infuse much needed new life into the church, they do not automatically lead believers into maturing discipleship. Amidst the continuing longing for renewal, Cecil Robeck calls attention to what we are asking from God, explaining that “If we are looking only for a sense of euphoria, some feeling that we want

¹ All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the NRSV Version.

² Clark Pinnock, “Divine Rationality: A Pentecostal Contribution to the Doctrine of God”, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16 (2000): 9, as quoted in Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Re-Enchanting the Text: Discovering the Bible as Sacred, Dangerous and Mysterious* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023), 161 of 179.

³ Karl Rahner, “Christian Living Formerly and Today,” in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigation*, vol 7, trans. David Burke (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 15.

⁴ Karl Rahner, *The Mystical Way of Everyday Life*, trans. Annemarie S. Kidder (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), xvii. Rahner believed that the saints of the past who wrote insightfully about their experiences with God have much to teach moderns about the journey of the soul’s interior life, letting go of attachments, and learning contemplative faculties for discernment of God’s presence in daily living.

to reproduce, some new experience to erase the boredom of everyday life, we will ultimately be disappointed. We may even end up worse off than we were before we got our wish.”⁵

Pentecostals generally assumed that spiritual growth relates to one’s divine empowerment of Spirit baptism. Frank Macchia explains that “Spirit baptism among Pentecostals was thought to open the sanctified life to the supernatural power of the Spirit that empowers the life and witness of the church.”⁶ However, Macchia notes that eventually “Spirit baptism became power detached from purity. Early advocates of this detachment did not mean to leave union with Christ and purity behind. But when detachment was experienced in later generations, they were not always mindful of the need to keep these things together.”⁷ Emphasizing power without practicing holiness has its own consequences.⁸ A question remains if Pentecostals are open to integrate expressive worship and the exercise of spiritual gifts with inner life purity that embraces silence, solitude, and meditative communion with God. In doing so, the inner and outer life of the Spirit necessarily work together to enhance one’s activistic, missional purpose. Aizaiah Yong has recently coined the term “Contemplacostal” in hopes of bridging Pentecostalism with contemplative spiritual practices.⁹

⁵ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission & Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 325.

⁶ Frank D. Macchia, *Tongues of Fire: A Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2023), 301.

⁷ Frank D. Macchia, “Spirit Baptism and Spiritual Formation: A Pentecostal Proposal” in *The Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 2020, Vol. 13 (1) 49.

⁸ Dysfunction, conflict, and moral failure within Pentecostal congregations are not unlike what Paul confronted the charismatic believers in the Corinthian church.

⁹ Aizaiah G. Yong (with contributions from Amos and Alma Yong, *Trauma & Renewal: Toward Spiritual, Communal, and Holistic Transformation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2025).

Relative to this introduction is an interesting argument made by the Swiss theologian, Walter Hollenweger, that John Wesley “mediated Catholic elements to Pentecostalism and to the American Holiness Movement.”¹⁰

SPIRITUALITY AND INNER LIFE

“The language of affections” was a predominant theme in Wesley’s writings and subsequent eighteenth-century revivalist literature, about which Dale Coulter noted that the heart’s affections “continued to serve as the primary conduit of older traditions in the subterranean channels of nineteenth-century holiness movements.”¹¹ John Wesley (1703-1791) was deeply impacted by authors in classical Christian spirituality¹² whose writings underscored the importance of living a devoted life of self-denial and humility. Essential discipleship was more than one’s doctrinal consent; it was the transformation of one’s affections through which one’s “disordered attachments/desires” become “holy” desires. In Wesley’s terms, “*simplicity of intention*” and “*purity of affection*,” were the “inward religion” of the heart, which meant one’s commitment to wholly loving God and neighbour (Matt.22:36-40).¹³

On January 1, 1733, thirty-year-old Wesley preached a sermon, “The Circumcision of the Heart,” at St. Mary’s Church at The University of Oxford, where he described the “habitual disposition” of the soul. Wesley’s understanding of “Christian perfection” (or perfect love) was

¹⁰ Walter J. Hollenweger, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), 142.

¹¹ Dale M. Coulter, “Introduction” in Dale M. Coulter and Amos Yong, *The Spirit, the Affections, and the Christian Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016), (p. 8). (Function). Kindle Edition.

¹² See Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Public domain website: <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/kempis> ; William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, public domain website: https://www.ccel.org/ccel/law/serious_call.html); and Jeremy Taylor, *The Rules and Exercises of Holy Living and of Holy Dying* (Google books, Publica domain website: <https://wesleyscholar.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Whole-Works-of-J-Taylor-vol-3-1850.pdf>

¹³ John Wesley, *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Boston: The Christian Witness Co., 1880), 4. The writer’s advice in a Proverb was to “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (4:23).

the result of the Spirit's aligning of one's holy desires with God's will. As a result, loving God and one's neighbour can become more consistent and less conflicted. One's holy desires to live out God's will that are aligned within the divine grace Wesley called "governing affection."¹⁴ Regardless of (or perhaps because of) his optimistic view of holy desires within God's will, Wesley was quick to confess his struggles in the throes of ministry's demands. He prayed:

Deliver me, O God, from too intense an application to even necessary business. I know how this dissipates my thoughts from the one end of all my business and impairs that lively perception I would ever retain of your standing at my right hand. I know the narrowness of my heart, and that an eager attention to the earthly things leaves it no room for the things of heaven. Oh, teach me to go through all my employments with so truly disengaged a heart that I may still see you in all things, and see you therein as continually looking upon me, and searching my reigns; and that I may never impair that liberty of spirit which is necessary for the love of you.¹⁵

Importantly, holy desires, for Wesley, can be cultivated through spiritual practices, such as prayer, Scripture reading, celebrating the Eucharist (at least weekly), fasting, and engaging in works of mercy. Ultimately, however, Wesley believed that sanctification was activated by the Holy Spirit in cooperation with the believer.¹⁶

Contemporary authors have picked up the significance of a person's inner life when describing what it means to be spiritually formed.¹⁷ Dallas Willard argued that spiritual

¹⁴ Philosopher, James K.A. Smith, emphasized the importance of spiritual habits (what he called liturgies). Discipleship is more about "hungering and thirsting" than "knowing and believing" in aligning our loves and longings with what God desires. See *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016), 1-2.

¹⁵ Frank Whaling, ed., *John and Charles Wesley: Selected Prayers, Hymns, Journal Notes, Sermons, Letters and Treatises* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 80, as quoted in Roger Heuser and Norman Shawchuck, *Leading The Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving the People*, Revised Edition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 58.

¹⁶ Wesley's discipleship forged support and accountability in nurturing inner life purity. In class meeting, participants asked four questions of one another: (1) How it with your soul (not just behavior, but the inner life)? (2) Where have you experienced God this week (attentiveness to grace and disciplines that discern God's presence)? (3) Where have you struggled or fallen short (a space for honest confession)? And (4) How can we pray for you (intercession and support in burden-bearing)? See David Lowes Watson, *Accountable Discipleship: Handbook for Covenant Discipleship Groups in the Congregation* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1984).

¹⁷ James K.A. Smith contends that habitual patterns "... shape and constitute our identities by forming our most fundamental desires and our most basic attunement to the world." See James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 15.

formation, regardless of religious context or identity, “*is a process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite “form” or character.*”¹⁸ Who we are becoming at the *depths of our being* “refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being [the character] of Christ himself.”¹⁹ The mystical reality of “Christ being formed in you” (Gal. 4:19b) reinforces the argument made by Bernard McGinn—that Christian mystics throughout the centuries were convinced that one’s encounter with God “... takes place on the deepest and most fundamental layer of the self...” [so that] “God becomes present in our inner acts, not as an object to be grasped, but as the direct and transforming centre of life.”²⁰ The dual nature of this inward encounter with God, in the words of Dale Coulter, is “inward renewal [that] both heals and elevates the soul.”²¹ What are some ways to describe how inner renewal takes place in one’s heart and soul?

In a previous paper, “Pentecostals and the Mystical Threefold Path in Historic Christian Spirituality: Strengthening the Inner Being with Power Through the Spirit,” I explored the theological/metaphorical frameworks of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. Both wrote extensively in the sixteenth century about the soul’s *interior* journey on the Mystical Threefold Path—*purgation*, *illumination*, and *union*. This description of the soul’s journey continues to constitute a classical framework of Christian spirituality since the fourth century.²²

¹⁸ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On The Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 19. See James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016).

¹⁹ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 22. Paul, after reproving the Galatians, reminded them of the radical assumption of “Christ being formed [within] you” (Gal 4:19b).

²⁰ Bernard McGinn, Editor. *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism* (New York: Modern Library, an imprint of The Random House Publishing Group, 2006), xvi.

²¹ Coulter, “Introduction” in Coulter and Yong, *The Spirit, the Affections, and the Christian Tradition*, (p. 2). (Function). Kindle Edition.

²² James K.A. Smith recently discovered that contemplative practices within the Christian tradition have become a source that led him to deeper ways of knowing that brought substantive meaning to his faith and profession. See James K. A. Smith, *Make Your Home in This Luminous Dark: Mysticism, Art, and the Path of Unknowing* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2026), pp. xiii-xiv. (Function). Kindle Edition.

In this paper I argue that Pentecostals can benefit from the contemplative streams of spirituality that integrate theological and psychological insights with one's inner journey toward Christlikeness—specifically examining the contemporary metaphors of “shadow work” and “true self/false self.” Pertinent to this discussion, I will also describe three contemplative prayer practices: Lectio Divina, The Examen, and Centering Prayer, which serve as a means of grace toward deeper Christlikeness.

***“You desire truth in my inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart”***

The fifty-first Psalm is a penitential prayer of David in which he confessed profound sorrow over his moral failure. Expressing a request to be “purged” clean, David acknowledged that God “desires truth in the inward being; therefore, teach me wisdom in my secret heart” (51:5).²³ In Jewish tradition, the “heart” is not mere sentimentality. Thus, Jesus knew the significance in his claim that happiness is inherent in those who are “pure in heart” (Matt. 5:8). In contemporary terms, as Nouwen points out, the heart is the “source of all physical, emotional, intellectual, volitional, and moral energies.”²⁴ Thus, a question remains: Is psychological health important to the process of becoming spiritually formed in Christ? Is there a relationship between emotional and spiritual holiness? Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au view healthy spirituality as “always being on the way” toward growth, which requires that a person “is committed to being aware and reflective about how his or her actions, thoughts, and feelings affect the life of love to

²³ Toward the end of his prayers, David acknowledged, “O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. ... Such knowledge is too wonderful for me...” (Ps. 139:1-3, 6a).

²⁴ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), 60.

which Christians are called.”²⁵ Those who engage in self-reflection soon discover that there are many parts of the self that at times are in conflict with other parts. Psychiatrist David Benner explains:

Genuinely transformational knowing of self always involves encountering and embracing previously unwelcomed parts of the self. While we tend to think of ourselves as a single, unified self, what we call “I” is really a family of many part-selves. ... The problem lies in the fact that many of these part-selves are unknown to us. ... If I only embrace my strong, competent self, and never able to embrace my insecure, vulnerable, shame-based parts, I still live with their influences under the surface, but without any agency to consciously act accordingly.²⁶

How does one enhance *self-awareness* and *self-understanding* of those “part-selves” that are unknown to us?²⁷

Contemporary psychology, especially with its attention to the unconscious, has shed light on understanding spiritual development of the inner life. Without reducing spirituality to merely a psychological realm, there are psychological insights—when integrated with Christian spirituality—that help to explain the inner dynamics of one’s journey toward Christlikeness. In the discussion that follows, I will examine two contemporary metaphors in Christian spirituality—*Shadow Work* and *False Self/True Self*—that provide us with insight into David’s prayer for “*the truth in our inner being*.”

²⁵ Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon Au, *Urgings Of The Heart: A Spirituality of Integration* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 8.

²⁶ David Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery* (Dowers Gove, IL: IVP Books, 2004), 50.

²⁷ See Alison Cook and Kimberly Miller, *Boundaries for Your Soul: How to Turn Your Overwhelming Thoughts and Feelings into Your Greatest Allies* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2016); Richard Schwartz, *No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma & Restoring Wholeness with Internal Family Systems Model* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2021); and Aizaiah G. Yong (with contributions from Amos and Alma Yong, *Trauma & Renewal: Toward Spiritual, Communal, and Holistic Transformation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2025).

SHADOW WORK

After their disobedience, Adam and Eve heard the “sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze” near where they were hiding among the trees. God called out to them, and asked them, “*Where are you?*” Adam replied that they were afraid because of their nakedness, to which God asked, “Who told you that you were naked?” (Gen. 3:8-11a). Shadow work, as we shall see, is the process of uncovering what we have unconsciously attempted to hide, whether from God, from ourselves, or from others. We, too, who were created in God’s image, have fashioned our own brand of “disobedience.”

Consider the characteristics of spiritual energy that describe people of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (see Gal: 5:22-23). Within the same communities of the early church, Paul described “the works of the flesh” where issues of power and antagonism demonstrated serious dysfunction within communities caught up in strife, jealousy, sexual misconduct, anger, quarrels, and dissension (Gal. 5:19-21). The ancient church recognized these contrasting energies of the Spirit and the flesh. For example, the apostle James described the tongue as a “restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth comes blessing and cursing” (James 3: 8b-10a).²⁸ James explained to his readers that conflicts and disputes “come from cravings that are at war within you” (4:1b). Having consulted many Christian organizations that were engaged in conflict, I discovered that those who are caught up in strive, quarrels, and factions—who habitually blamed

²⁸ Paul expressed his own inner conflict of a divided self “of the flesh” in struggling to understand his own behaviours. He confesses, “I do not do what I want, but I do the very things I hate. ... I can will what is right, but I cannot do it Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me” (Rom. 7:14-15, 18). The wisdom of Jeremiah remains true that the “heart is devious above all else, it is perverse – who can understand it? I the Lord test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings” (Jer. 17:9-10).

and judged other's motives without taking any responsibility for their part—often justified themselves under a biblical, righteous cause that they believed to be “Spirit-led.” What are the underlying forces at work under the pretence of self-righteousness while participating in behaviours of “biting and devouring one another” (Gal. 5:15a)?²⁹

Jungian (Depth) psychology argues that unconscious motivations, memories, and past traumas, though hidden from one's self-awareness, do still influence human behaviours. Shadow work enables one to move beyond external behaviours to examine the deeper, unconscious motivations of the heart (Matt. 11:15, 17-20). Carl Jung viewed the human psyche made up of two parts. First, the *ego* that includes both *personal consciousness* (how we perceive ourselves) and the *persona* (the public mask) we wear in presenting ourselves in public. Second, the human psyche also includes the unconscious *shadows* that one may try to ignore or repress because shadows conflict with how we wish to see ourselves or want others to see us. Thus, the masks we wear are meant to cover up the shadows we repress.³⁰

One concludes, then, that personal consciousness, the public persona, and shadows are a recipe for self-understanding (or self-misunderstanding) that which contributes to hidden, unconscious motives and the quality of life and relationships—including our “life in the Spirit.” Thus, believers who are engaged in destructive conflict may put on the mask of a “righteous” persona while denying the hidden impulses (shadows) to win, hurt, or destroy others. Shadows can be strengths and virtues (as well as weaknesses) that we have yet to integrate into our self-awareness and self-understanding. The importance of shadow work is summed up in these two

²⁹ Paul cautions the Galatians to “take care that you are not consumed by one another” (5:15b).

³⁰ See Roshan a Shrestha, “Discover yourself: open up your “Johari window” with “Johari” Feedback,” in *Kathmandu University Medical Journal*, 2023; 83(3):333-6.

claims: First, the more we repress our shadows, the darker they become.³¹ Second, the more we become self-aware, the less power they have on our unconscious motives and behaviours. Jesus called out “shadow” hypocrisy in his rhetorical question to the religious establishment, “Why do you see the speck in your neighbour’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye” (Matt. 7:3)?

Parker Palmer applied depth psychology to religious organizations, confirming previous research in leadership theory³² that leaders have the “power to project either shadow or light into some part of the world and onto the lives of the people who dwell there. A leader shapes the ethos in which others must live, an ethos as light-filled as heaven or as shadowy as hell.”³³ Without self-awareness of the interplay between inner shadows and light, Parker argued that leaders with “good” intentions may do more harm than good.

In illustrating his argument, Palmer identified five shadows that are common to leaders and their communities that are projected on the organisational culture:³⁴ (1) *A shadow of deep insecurity about one’s identity and self-worth* is masked by portraying a strong, extraverted public role that can be boastful and arrogant; (2) *A shadow that life is a battleground with an obsession of “winning at all costs”* denies an inner fear of losing, appearing weak or incompetent; (3) *A shadow of “functional atheism”* justifies a workaholic lifestyle with the

³¹ It may be important to note that Jung also believed that we also are informed by cultural and collective shadows that are denied or repressed within larger cultural contexts.

³² See Manfred Kets de Vries, *The Leader on the Couch: A clinical approach to changing people and organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, 2006); and *Reflections on Character and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, 2009).

³³ Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 78.

³⁴ Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. Also, see the chapter on “The Interplay of Light and Shadow”, in Roger Heuser and Norman Shawchuck, *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving the People* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010); and Stacie Chappell, Elizabeth Cooper, and George Tripp, “Shadow work for leadership development”, in *Journal of Management Development*, Vol 38 No 5, 2019, 325-335.

assumption that ultimate responsibility rests on me —and that God’s purpose will not be accomplished without me; (4) A shadow of *fear—especially of the natural chaos of life—* represses a vulnerability of losing control or power; and (5) *Denial of failure and death* operates out of one’s own fear of death, failure, or negative evaluation.³⁵ In all these shadows, the leader’s self-identity personified in public roles has yet to be integrated with the underlying, hidden dynamics of strengths and weaknesses that have been repressed.

One’s increasing self-awareness and self-understanding potentially lead to more effective, authentic agency in Spirit-empowered living. For example, one’s external focus on the persona of ministry—however pure the motives—may still be out of touch with the internal essence of Christian faith. Jung explains:

The acceptance of oneself is the essence of the moral problem and the epitome of a whole outlook upon life. That I feed the hungry, that I forgive an insult, that I love my enemy in the name of Christ – all these are undoubtedly great virtues. What I do unto the least of my brethren, that I do unto Christ. But what if I should discover that the least among them all, the poorest of all the beggars, the most impudent of all offenders, the very enemy himself – that these are within me, and that I myself stand in the need of the alms of my own kindness – that I myself am the enemy who must be loved – what then?³⁶

In sum, shadow work is difficult but ultimately liberating.

TRUE SELF/FALSE SELF

Trappist Thomas Merton (1915-1968) developed the concept of True Self/False Self in light of one’s personal identity, and the most important question, “*Who am I ultimately before God?*” Merton believed that “The spiritual life consists in receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit

³⁵ Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 78-91.

³⁶ Carl G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1955), 271-271, quoted by Connie Zweig and Jeremiah Abrams, eds., *Meeting The Shadow: The Hidden Power of the Dark Side of Human Nature* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 1991), 274.

and His charity, because the Sacred Heart of Jesus has willed in His love, that we should live by His Spirit—the same Spirit which proceeds from the Word and from the Father, and Who is Jesus’ love for the Father.”³⁷

Merton’s question of personal identity before God is often eclipsed by other questions asked of us— “Who do I want to be?” “Who should I be?” and “Who do others expect me to be?” How one answers these questions is what Merton called the “empirical” self or ego. Merton agreed that developing a healthy ego is commonly understood as necessarily important for living a fruitful, self-satisfying life. However, one should not equate a healthy ego of fruitful living with one’s identity ultimately before God. Merton argued that each of us is “shadowed by an illusory person: a false self”³⁸ that believes one can live the “good life” on one’s own *self-referenced* terms. Christians who believe they are living within God’s will of kingdom reign (1 Thess. 5:23-24; Eph. 2:10) may still be living on their own “self-referenced” terms. The pretence of living a religious “good life” (religious false self) can be what Nouwen considered to be the “inner side of a secular life, the sour fruits of our worldly dependencies.”³⁹ The condition of living a divided life—what Merton called the illusory nature of the false self—can be seen as a metaphor for original sin. Merton writes,

All sin starts from the assumption that my false self, the self that exists only in my own egocentric desires, is the fundamental reality of life to which everything else in the universe is ordered. Thus I use up my life in the desire for pleasures and the thirst for experiences, for power, honor, knowledge and love, to clothe this false self and constructs its nothingness into something objectively real. ... And when they are gone there will be nothing left of me but my own nakedness and emptiness and hollowness, to tell me that I am my own mistake.⁴⁰

³⁷ Thomas Merton, *Thoughts In Solitude* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1958), 36.

³⁸ Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: A New Directions Book, 2007), 34.

³⁹ Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart*, 60.

⁴⁰ Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 35.

Living out one's identity within the layers of the false self has consequences.

Rowan Williams cites the early wisdom of John the Dwarf, a Coptic, Egyptian desert father born in 339 A.D. who wrote, "We have put aside the easy burden, which is self-accusation, and weighed ourselves down with the heavy one, self-justification."⁴¹ Most everyone with internal critical voices are well acquainted with the burden of self-accusation. But even worse, Williams points out that, when carrying the heavy burden of self-justification, "there will always be some new situation where we need to establish our position, dig the trench for the ego to defend."⁴² Paul wrote to the Colossians:

Set your mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly..." (Col 3:2-5a). ... you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience ... Above all, clothe yourselves in love which binds everything together in perfect love. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts (Col. 3:9b-10, 12b, 14-15a).

Dying with Christ is letting go of ego-centric attachments to all that we had hoped would provide us with some level of significance and happiness. But ego-centric living is never fully satisfying, nor does it wish to surrender to one's only *true* identity that is in Christ. Merton explains:

The secret of my identity is hidden in the love and mercy of God. ... I cannot hope to find myself anywhere except in him. Ultimately the only way that I can be myself is to become identified with Him in Whom is hidden the reason and fulfilment of my existence.⁴³ ... The Christian life is a return to the Father, the Source, the Ground of all existence, through the Son,

⁴¹ Rowan Williams, *Silence and Honey Cakes: The wisdom of the desert* (Oxford: Lion Books, 2003), 47.

⁴² Williams, *Silence and Honey Cakes*, 48.

⁴³ Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 35-36.

the Splendour and the Image of the Father, in the Holy Spirit, the Love of the Father and the Son. And this return is only possible by detachment and “death” in the exterior self, so that the inner self purified and renewed, can fulfil its function as image of the Divine Trinity.⁴⁴

When we refuse to abandon ourselves to God’s love, Williams writes that one day we will grieve to see the “face [that] God will show to us in the mirror [that] he holds up for us on the last day [and why we] continue to question our own preference for the heavy burden of self-justification, or self-creation, and weep for our reluctance to become persons ... transfigured by the personal communion opened up for us by Jesus.”⁴⁵

Briefly stated, True Self/False Self dynamics operate primarily in the unconscious shadows of one’s self-referenced identity. Essential for the soul’s journey are spiritual practices of silence and solitude that can lead to dialogical prayer, and that provide the opportunity for the Spirit to shine healing light on the soul’s pathway toward Christlikeness.

SILENCE AND SOLITUDE⁴⁶

Silence and solitude, though counter-cultural to most moderns, were so important for Jesus that he invited his disciples to “Come unto me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my

⁴⁴ Thomas Merton, *The Inner Experience* (New York: Harper One, 2003), 36 (Function). Kindle Edition.

⁴⁵ Williams, *Silence and Honey Cakes*, 60.

⁴⁶ City Harvest Church (CHC) founding pastors, Kong Hee and Sun Ho—who had experienced their own extended times of silence and solitude—began an experiment on whether the mission-driven culture of Harvest City Church could also embrace the invitation by Jesus who said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest...” (Matt. 11:28-30). Roger and Gayle Heuser were invited to design and facilitate the first *Silent and Solitude* Retreat (three nights/two days) for CHC leaders in February 2023. As of June 2026, there have been a total of four retreat designs in three-day, four-day, and five-day formats with 20-50 retreats per retreat. CHC pastors and staff have attended a retreat each year for four years. Currently, cell group leaders and marketplace leaders are also participating in silence and solitude retreats. While a formal assessment is underway, current anecdotal testimonies express significant change in the lives of participants.

burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30). Though Jesus’s words are familiar to us, it does not mean that we will follow through with his invitation, for reasons each person must personally reflect upon.

A.B. Simpson⁴⁷ published an article, “The Power of Stillness” in the *Pentecostal Evangel* in 1958. Upon reading a small book *True Peace*, Simpson described a new way of framing his prayer life. He writes, “God was waiting in the depth of my being to talk with me if I would only get still enough to hear Him.”⁴⁸ Simpson continues,

So, I began to get still. But I had no sooner commenced than a perfect pandemonium of voices reached my ears, a thousand clamouring notes from without and within, until I could hear nothing but their noise and din. Some of them were my own questions, some of them my own cares, some of them my own prayers. Others were the suggestions of the tempter and the voices of the world’s turmoil. Never before did there seem so many things to be done, to be said, to be thought; and in every direction I was pulled and pushed and greeted with noisy acclamations and unspeakable unrest.

It seemed necessary for me to listen to some of them, but God said, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Then came the conflict of thoughts for the morrow, and its duties and cares; but God said, “Be still.”

As I slowly learned to obey, and shut my ears to every sound, I found that after a while when the other voices ceased, or I ceased to hear them, there was a still, small voice in the depth of my spirit.

As I listened it became to me the power of prayer, and the voice of wisdom, and the call of duty, and I did not need to think so hard, or pray so hard, or trust so hard; but that still, small voice of the Holy Spirit in my heart was God’s prayer in my secret soul, and God’s answer to all my questions.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Albert Benjamin Simpson was founder of the “Christian Missionary Alliance. His framework of the Fourfold Gospel (Full Gospel) was a major influence on the early theology and missiology of the Assemblies of God. See “This Week n AG History – Nov. 6, 1960”, from [AG News website](http://www.agnews.org). See the unabridged version of this article that was published in the first edition of the “Elim Evangel” a few years before the Azusa Street Revival. See website link: <http://hanswaldvogel.com/lib/Simpson%20-%20Power%20of%20Stillness.html#:~:text=The%20best%20thing%20about%20this%20stillness%20is,own%20works%20C%20even%20as%20God%20did%20from>

⁴⁸ Simpson, “The Power of Stillness,” 28.

⁴⁹ Simpson, “The Power of Stillness,” 28.

Simpson asks if any word in the Psalter is “more eloquent than the one word, Selah?”⁵⁰ Sounding more like St. Teresa of Avila, Simpson writes, “There is, in the deepest center of the believer’s soul a chamber of peace where God dwells, and where, if we will only enter in and hush every other sound, we can hear His “still voice.”⁵¹ Simpson concluded that

The best thing about this stillness is that it gives God a chance to work. “He that entered into His rest hath ceased from his own works, even as God did from His.” When we cease from our works, God works in us; when we cease from our thoughts, God’s thoughts come into us; when we get still from our restless activities, “God worketh in us both to will and to do his good pleasure,” and we have but to work it out.⁵²

Sociologists Margaret Poloma and Matthew Lee conducted an extensive empirical study on prayer practices of Pentecostals in North America. They discovered both *active* and *passive* dimensions of prayer practices used by Pentecostals, the latter being when “prayer moves from soliloquy to dialogue with the divine and beyond to mystical union.”⁵³

More recently, Xiaoli Yang⁵⁴ documented a case study of twenty-four “dangerously exhausted” Asian Pentecostal pastors who pastored in hostile environments where Christian faith is not practiced openly but amazingly is thriving. The pastors who were invited to their first silent retreat gave up their cell phones and entered into a time of contemplative practices: candle

⁵⁰ Simpson, “The Power of Stillness,” Unabridged version, first paragraph, second sentence.

⁵¹ Simpson, “The Power of Stillness,” Unabridged version, second paragraph, third sentence.

⁵² Simpson, “The Power of Stillness,” Unabridged version, seventh paragraph, first sentence.

⁵³ The “active” dimension (human activity is directed toward the divine through adoration, thanksgiving, supplication, confession) The “receptive” dimension (“prayer moves from soliloquy to dialogue with the divine and beyond to mystical union”). The researchers concluded that ... receptive prayer [expressed in prophetic prayer] and communion (mystical encounters) flow together for many and increase their sense of divine love. See Margaret Poloma and Matthew Lee, “From Prayer Activities to Receptive Prayer: Godly Love and the Knowledge That Surpasses Understanding,” in *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 2011, Vol. 39, No. 2, 152.

⁵⁴ Xiaoli Yang’s academic interest are World Christianity, intercultural theology, ethno-hermeneutics, mission studies and spirituality. She holds research and supervisory roles at several Australian universities and visiting appointments at Fuller Seminary and Princeton Theological Seminary. She is a pastor and spiritual director who has authored fifty articles that have appeared in such journals as the *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, *Missiology—An International Review*, *Mission Studies*, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, *Review of Religion and Chinese Society*, *ChinaSource*, as well as several book chapters published by Brill, T&T Clark, De Gruyter, Fortress Press, St Paul’s Publications

lighting, Lectio Divina, creative expressions of sculpture and poetry, paying attention to the five senses when reading scriptures, eating food, and bodily awareness while strolling outdoors in nature. In addition to group sessions, retreatants also had opportunity to process their experiences in private sessions with a spiritual director.⁵⁵ Yang concluded that utilizing the five senses were readily accessible to retreatants since “Pentecostal spirituality insists that the Spirit of God is dynamic, immanent and present in the world ... [and] God is revealed through the tangible and the audible in the Spirit.”⁵⁶ At the same time, spiritual retreat practices were different from Pentecostal spirituality that centred around the movement of the Spirit in a corporate setting: preaching, altar calls, raising of hands, practice of *glossolalia*, prophetic utterances, dancing in the Spirit, and so forth.

Documenting the retreatants’ experiences of silence during the retreat, Yang writes, “Many retreatants are modern day Asian ‘Elijahs’, who are on the edge of burnout and desperately need to rediscover the art of silence in order to hear the Lord’s words again. ... a stance of ‘waiting upon’, ‘being receptive of’ whatever the Spirit will do.”⁵⁷ Yang proposed that silence “can in fact either be extended, or utilized as an entry point to [the] cataphatic tradition, within Pentecostal spirituality.”⁵⁸ To illustrate her point, she reported that for some retreatants, silence opened themselves up to “the river of the Spirit to take over and release God’s glory in visions, pictures, words or songs ... Many retreatants both individually and corporately experienced deep intimacy with God in silent contemplation.”⁵⁹ Yang also reported that—through contemplative prayer in silence and solitude—the Spirit also was able to touch the

⁵⁵ Xiaoli Yang, “Contemplative Aspects of Pentecostal Spirituality: A Case Study of a Retreat Experience in Asia”, in *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 2019, Vol. 28, 123-142.

⁵⁶ Yang, “Contemplative Aspects of Pentecostal Spirituality,” 127.

⁵⁷ Yang, “Contemplative Aspects of Pentecostal Spirituality,” 132.

⁵⁸ Yang, “Contemplative Aspects of Pentecostal Spirituality,” 135.

⁵⁹ Yang, “Contemplative Aspects of Pentecostal Spirituality,” 134.

unconscious parts where the false self and layers of its illusions ultimately surfaced the need for healing, forgiveness, freedom, and restoration.⁶⁰ Yang hopes there are lessons from silence and solitude that Pentecostal churches in the Global North can learn from brothers and sisters who are experiencing “the living God in the fierce fire of faith testing [and also] forming a unique form of Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality.”⁶¹

Susanne Thyroff and Volker Kessler conducted a study on the significance of silence for leaders, particularly Pentecostal leaders, that focused on increasing their “capacity to cultivate inner clarity, relational empathy, and alignment with higher values.”⁶² Based on the framework of Baldur Kirchner, a theologian with a background in psychoanalysis, silence is understood in three primary dimensions: *first*, silence in conversations involves active listening, empathic understanding, and restraint (qualities of a good spiritual director); *second*, silence for self-reflection provides an opportunity to process inner conflicts and gain perspective on personal values, and responsiveness to others; and *third*, silence before God includes the practices of prayerful contemplation, which opens the heart to divine guidance.

Raised in a Pentecostal church, Thyroff was accustomed to passionate expressions of prayer and worship, praying in tongues and multiple languages. While attending a workshop on silence led by Kirchner, Thyroff experienced the healing of past emotional wounds. She writes, “I came to understand that silence is not merely an absence of words but a dynamic process of self-discovery, healing, and divine encounter. This practice has profoundly influenced my

⁶⁰ Yang, “Contemplative Aspects of Pentecostal Spirituality,” 141.

⁶¹ Yang, “Contemplative Aspects of Pentecostal Spirituality,” 124.

⁶² Susanne Thyroff and Volker Kessler, “Silence: A Neglected Virtue for Christian Leaders”, in Robert Kovács, Wessel Bently, Balázs Siba, eds., *Ethical Leadership in Complex Times* (Budapest: Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, 2025), 97-113.

approach to leadership, equipping me to navigate complexities with greater clarity, empathy, and resilience.”⁶³

The goal of silence is not to be silent. Rather, silence and solitude provide a “slowing down” “a letting go” and “being still” long enough for the Spirit to “search and know me... and discern my thoughts from far away” (Ps.139:1-2). Silence and solitude provide the time and space to be alone with God and “listening with God” to discover those parts of our old nature that have yet to be surrendered. From the spiritual disciplines of silence and solitude come the invitation of the Spirit to engage in authentic, dialogical prayer about the true condition of our soul.⁶⁴ Nouwen likened solitude to “the furnace of transformation.”⁶⁵ What needs transformation are remaining dispositions of our heart that have yet to be conformed to wholeness in the image of Christ. Clinging to self-justification, whether consciously or not, the journey of being transformed into Christlikeness takes place at points of unlikeness with Christ, where one “dies to self” in order to be raised into wholeness in the image of Christ.⁶⁶

Contemplative prayer practices provide a means by which persons deepen their self-understanding of interior dynamics in relationship with God. In this paper, I explore *Lectio Divina* from the Monastic tradition, *The Examen* developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola, and *Centering Prayer* developed by Cistercian monk, Thomas Keating. Pentecostals often discover for themselves that contemplative prayer can complement the familiar praise and worship, thanksgiving, glossolalia, intercession, and prayers of agreement for healing and deliverance.

⁶³ Thyroff and Kessler, “Silence: A Neglected Virtue for Christian Leaders,” 100.

⁶⁴ See M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., *Invitation to a journey: A Roadmap for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016); and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (London: CSM Press “Student Christian Movement”, 1972).

⁶⁵ Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart*, 13.

⁶⁶ Mulholland, Jr., *Invitation to a journey*, 158.

LECTIO DIVINA, THE EXAMEN, AND CENTERING PRAYER

*Lectio Divina*⁶⁷

Lectio Divina—which literally means “divine reading” or “divine word”—is an ancient practice of “praying the scriptures.” This spiritual practice was developed by third century Desert Fathers and Mothers in Egypt, Syria and Palestine, and formalized by St. Benedict in the sixth century. Guigo II in the twelfth century structured the reading into four levels of listening to the passage. The hope was a deepening friendship with Jesus.⁶⁸

Before the first reading, one begins with *Silencio*, which is the grace of turning all our desires and scattered thoughts over to God. Then, *Lectio* is the *first reading* of the text with listeners’ attentiveness. A short passage of Scripture is read slowly, once or twice. We notice any word, phrase or image that “stands out.” What has “caught our attention” from the text may bring consolation, or it may puzzle, intrigue, or raise questions.

Meditatio is the *second reading* of the passage. As we sit in silence with a word, phrase, or image from the first reading, we repeat it—letting it to sink deeply into our hearts. Like Martin Luther, we may ponder how it calls us to confession, gratitude, or a new way of living. *Oratio* is the *third reading* of the text. As we respond to the text, we may wish to speak it out loud again, or write a poem or prayer in a journal, express any images of art, music, or dance—speaking the word aloud and being honest with God about our feelings.

⁶⁷ See Upper Room website: <https://www.upperroom.org/resources/lectio-divina-praying-the-scriptures>

⁶⁸ Mulholland writes, The Scripture is a living, active, creative presence in our lives, probing the human personality and helping us to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The word for “joint” connects things in proper relationships; the word for “marrow” is the essence of something. Thus, the Word of God encounters us, going to the center of who we are to bring about recreation and wholeness. Like a surgeon who skillfully removes that which is unhealthy from our bodies, the Word penetrates our inner being to heal our human brokenness and to restore our intimacy with Christ.” See M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1985, 2000), 41.

Contemplatio is the *fourth reading*. We rest silently in the presence of God (whether or not we feel the Divine Presence). “Being still” beyond words, phrases or images, we begin to enjoy the freedom that comes in contemplation. Some have added *Incarnatio*, which includes how we wish to “incarnate” the text in our own actions and relationships. As James admonishes, we are “doers of the word, and not merely hearers” (James 1:22a).

The Examen⁶⁹

The *Examen of Consciousness* was developed by Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1531) who encouraged those in his community “to find God in all things.” This meant paying attention to the Spirit’s leading in all events of daily living. During The Examen prayed in the morning and evening (and throughout the day), we focus our attention on God’s presence, and we commit ourselves “to see Thee more clearly, love Thee more dearly, and follow Thee more nearly, day by day.”

The following are prompts for the five phases of The Examen:

1. *Grace for openness to be with God.*

We contemplate what the Spirit may have in store for us with a reminder that we are created in God’s image as beloved, gifted and unique in our personality and life story. As we quiet ourselves, we ask for the grace to be open to whatever the Spirit has for us during this time of prayer.

2. *Prayer of gratitude.*

⁶⁹ Brief paraphrases of The Examen that were distributed by Robert G. Doherty, SJ in a spiritual life retreat, October 1983. Also, see George A. Aschenbrenner, SJ, “Consciousness Examen,” in *Review for Religious* 31 (1972): 14-21. Also, see Ignatian Spirituality.com: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/>

We express gratitude for today's gifts, inviting specific, concrete moments to our awareness. We give thanks for favours received and those we extended to others. We recall the gifts we have offered through our unique personality and ministry that brought joy and blessing to others. We remember our resiliency in difficult times, the ability to hope in times of weakness, our sense of humour, intelligence, health, and life of faith with others. We remind ourselves that God gives all of these to draw us into the fullness of life.

3. *Personal examination (discernment) of consolations and desolations.*

We ask the Holy Spirit to enable us to look at our actions, attitudes, and motives with honesty and patience in the presence of God's love (Jn. 16:13). The Spirit inspires us to see with growing freedom the development of our life story—hoping to learn and grow as we deepen the self-awareness of our “true self” in relationship with God.

Consolations. We recall the events of the day, remaining open to the internal movements of the heart that we experienced in our actions and conversations. For example, where did you experience love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5: 22-23)? When did you bear witness to any virtues of the Beatitudes? Were you aware of any hopes and desires, or hesitations?

Desolations. Many situations may show that your heart was divided, wavering between helping and disregarding, listening and ignoring, speaking and “shutting down,” neglecting and giving. This is not a time to dwell on shortcomings. Rather, we look tenderly with the Lord at how we have responded to God's gifts. We notice where we have acted proactively chosen a particular course of action and when we were emotionally reactive—being swept along without freedom of personal agency. What

reactions helped or hindered? Where did Christ enter our decisions and where might we have paused to receive his influence.

“Examine yourselves,” the Apostle Paul urges, “to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you” (2 Cor 13:5a)? Now, as we pray, Christ's spirit will help us know his concerns for us. As we become more aware of our actions and motivations, we will grow more familiar the promptings of the Spirit abiding within us. We invite God to speak, challenge, encourage, and teach us about loving God and your neighbour as yourself. In this way, we come to know that Christ is with us—and within us.

4. *Acknowledgement/Confession.*

We speak with Jesus about our day, sharing our thoughts on actions, attitudes, feelings, and interactions. We seek forgiveness, ask for direction, share a concern, or express gratitude. Having reviewed the day with compassion, we give thanks for God's divine grace and presence that allowed us to better see God's life in us and all around us.

5. *Resolve.*

Finally, we resolve with Jesus to move forward in the power of the Spirit in those relationships, roles, and actions that ask for our attention. Perhaps we finish with the Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, twenty-third Psalm, or another favourite passage. We eventually will establish our own rhythm and freedom to dwell on one part of The Examen at times more than others. We also might add music, a cross, candles, or images as we pray.

Centering Prayer

The unknown British writer of the *Cloud of Unknowing* writes,

This is what you are to do: lift your heart up to the Lord, with a gentle stirring of love desiring him for his own sake and not for his gifts. Center all your attention and desire on him and let this be the sole concern of your mind and heart. Do all in your power to forget everything else, keeping your thoughts and desires free from involvement with any of God's creatures or their affairs whether in general or in particular. Perhaps this will seem like an irresponsible attitude, but I tell you, let them all be; pay no attention to them. What I am describing here is the contemplative work of the spirit. It is this which gives God the greatest delight.⁷⁰

In the 1970s, Trappists Thomas Keating, William Meninger, and Basil Pennington—endeavouring to make Contemplative spirituality accessible to moderns—brought together the Christian contemplative tradition with insights from contemporary psychology into the practice of Centering Prayer. In Keating's writings, Centering Prayer (CP) is a means of deepening one's friendship with Christ. Drawing from Jungian psychology and Merton's True Self/False Self, Keating argued that CP could also be experienced as a "divine therapy."⁷¹

In praying through the four moments of CP, one begins to see how silence strengthens the capacity to listen more deeply to the Spirit. As we become more aware of being known and loved at the deepest level of our being, we may also be confronted with the "shadow side" of our personality and "layers" of the false self.⁷² Surrendering to the Spirit's purifying light of love enables one to "die" to the false self (Rom. 6:6-8). Quite remarkably, in the chaos and confusion of war David heard the word of the Lord, "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10)! For Keating, CP—simply stated—is consenting (surrendering) to "be still" in God's presence and, at

⁷⁰ Johnston, William, trans., *The Cloud of Unknowing: And the Book of Privy Counseling* (New York: Image, 1979), revised. 53.

⁷¹ Thomas Keating, *Open Mind Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel*. New York: Continuum, 1986, 1992; and Thomas Keating, *Intimacy With God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003)). Also see John Coe and Kyle C. Strobel, eds., *Embracing Contemplation: Reclaiming A Christian Spiritual Practice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

⁷² Thomas Keating, *Intimacy With God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (New York: 1994, 2003) Crossroad Publishing Company), 51.

the same time, trusting God's action in us.⁷³ Keating describes four "moments" of CP that illustrate the psychological dynamics within the spiritual life.

The *First Moment* is one's "consent" to "be still" in the presence of God—trusting that the Holy Spirit is "active" within us (whether or not we feel God's presence). We may start with a word or phrase that expresses our consent to be in silent prayer, like "Surrender" "Abba" "Jesus" "Shalom" "Rest" or other words from Scriptures. These words are not the object of our attention; instead, they serve as a reminder of our consent to "be still" in the moment with God. Whenever our attention is disturbed or distracted by thoughts that "flood" our minds, Keating provides a "4R" framework— "*Resist no thought,*" "*Retain no thought,*" "*React to no thought,*" and "*Return ever-so-gently to the word or phrase*" —that speaks of our intention to be with God.

After time, scattered thoughts may pass into the *Second Moment* of "Rest," which is what Jesus promised his disciples. Moreover, they had the opportunity *to learn* directly from him who is *gentle and humble in heart and take on his easy yoke and light burden and find rest for the soul* (Matt. 11:28-30). In the Lord's presence, Keating argues that we experience the fruit of the Spirit that eventually becomes embedded in our character. He writes, "Spiritual awareness is designed by God to become our normal awareness. ... [and our] "true security."⁷⁴

However, in silence—when feeling secure in God's presence—our defences become lowered. This provides opportunity to experience the deepening of divinely transforming love in those areas that need healing, forgiveness, and wholeness. Keating's calls the *Third Moment* of Centering Prayer, "Unloading the Unconsciousness." When the shadows of repressed memories,

⁷³ Keating, *Intimacy With God*, 94.

⁷⁴ Thomas Keating, *The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation* - The Harold M. Wit Lectures at Harvard University (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 29.

past trauma, attachments, and aversions surface, we gently let them go during CP. The spiritual practice of “unloading” is what Keating calls a “therapy for the tyranny of the false self” through which we learn to relinquish subconscious perceptions and give them over to God. It is as though the Spirit “loosens up the emotional weeds of a lifetime.” As our defences continue to relax in the intimacy of divine rest, we discover that earlier coping mechanisms no longer work for us. Keating explains, “The gospel invites us to recognize that the false self is a disease that can be healed and to accept Christ as the divine physician or, in the context of this paradigm, the Divine Therapist.”⁷⁵ Thus, the continuing rest and delicate love that we experience in prayer continues to provide inner healing in places previously unknown or repressed.

During the *Fourth Moment* of “Evacuating,” we become aware of any residuals of the false self, and we learn new ways to give our lives more completely over to the mercies of God. The cycle continues as we return to our consent to be “still” in the presence of the abiding Spirit who companions us in the purifying process. Keating argues that each time we re-enter new cycles of these four moments, we experience greater freedom and inner transformation in the Spirit.

CONCLUSION

Pentecostalism’s contemporary story of encountering the Spirit’s outpouring as on the Day of Pentecost joins Christians throughout the centuries who believed that experiencing God is possible within the deepest levels of human existence. Jesus never intended for his followers to separate their empowered witness in the world from intimate communion with him.⁷⁶ I have

⁷⁵ Keating, *Intimacy With God*, 74-75.

⁷⁶ Separating power from purity may become a sobering reality for those who claimed they had prophesied in his name, cast out demons, and did many deeds of power in his name—and yet Jesus said to them that he never knew them (Matt. 7:23).

argued in this paper that Pentecostals can benefit from the spiritual disciplines of silence and solitude that embrace the contemplative/activistic polarity. The metaphors of “shadow work” and “true self/false self” enable one to more fully understand the inner characteristics, impulses, and emotions that are often denied and conflict with the desire to experience intimate communion with God. The contemplative practices of Lectio Divina, The Examen, and Centering Prayer -- added to current practices among Pentecostals -- are the means of grace for inner conflicts to be exposed, forgiven, and continually transformed by God’s infinite love.

The journey toward Christlikeness is not a straight path, mostly because the “religious false self” is often mistaken as one’s “true self.” Mulholland used a familiar metaphor taken from the “Revelation to John” when describing the church in Laodicea. Illustrating the contemporary “false self,”⁷⁷ John records the angel saying, “For you say, ‘I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.’ You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. ... Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come to you and eat with you, and you with me” (Rev. 3: 17, 20).

The chorus “Into My Heart” by Harry Dixon Clarke (1889-1957) was sung most Sunday mornings in Children’s Church at First Assembly of God in La Crosse, Wisconsin where my mother led me as a four-year-old to accept Jesus into my heart. Little did I know at the time that I would be returning to the same chorus at times in my life. Listening for the gentle knocking at my heart’s door, I open it the invitation to sit at the “cruciform table” with the Crucified One who continually loves me into self-awareness of my own shadows and hidden layers of the false self. Within this divine fellowship, any pretence of *self-condemnation* of old wounds and *self-*

⁷⁷ See M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., *Invitation to a journey: A Roadmap for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2016)., Jr., *The Deeper Journey: The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books), 2006.

justification of prideful ego accomplishments evaporates into the “cloud of forgetting.”⁷⁸ Paul, who assumed he had not yet reached the goal, wrote “but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14), fulfilling the ultimate spiritual journey—intimate union with God.

⁷⁸ The unknown English mystic described the “cloud of forgetting” as abandoning all thoughts, memories, and attachments that stand in the way of contemplating on anything less than God. See Johnston, William, trans., *The Cloud of Unknowing: And the Book of Privy Counseling* (New York: Image, 1979), revised.

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