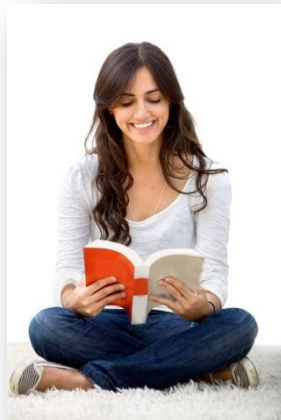


# **The One Project**

A Short Evaluation

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## **Introduction**

We are living in dangerous times. The end is near and the powers of darkness are over-active, knowing that their time is short. Their aim is to seduce the elect. We are called to be faithful watchmen on the wall of Zion and we are, as a God-given duty, expected to blow the trumpet, when, somehow, danger is approaching.

The Bible calls us to be alert and awake in this time of the end. Just before the coming of Christ, when the ten virgins are all asleep, wake up calls are urgently needed, in order to be saved in God's coming kingdom.

Love and brotherly unity of all men is the heralded watchword of the popular movements in our days. Although love and unity are very necessary in the Christian life, these important aspects should never belittle nor eclipse God's righteousness. A true movement of God will be characterized by restoring the principles of God's broken law among humanity. This is the only way that will bring true love, happiness, unity and salvation.

On the surface the popular movements of this day look mostly wonderful, attractive, beneficial and innocent, but when put to the test by God's standard, they may fail dramatically. Underneath may lurk unholy principles which exert unnoticed, baneful influences.

There should be in our midst no room given to doubtful movements and activities. Our intentions may be pure and sincere, but we must be careful not to identify with movements that are not thoroughly sound and in harmony with God's purpose.

### **A Better World based on Love**

The founder of The One Project is Stephen Ridley, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He is a Chartered Certified Accountant and has a Masters degree in technology management. He lives in the U.K. in London. Ridley wrote *The Book of Life* which plays a fundamental

role in The One Project movement. A pdf of the book can be freely downloaded via the One Project website: [www.the-one-project.net](http://www.the-one-project.net) (recommended reading) and the book can be ordered via Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/The-Book-Life-StephenRidley/dp/1452558361/>

Ridley also wrote *The Book of Intention*, which is fundamental to The One Project as well. It reveals a pantheistic idea for we read on page 3: “God is the good in all.” On the same page the question is raised: “Do I believe in God?” and his answer is: “No, I do not believe in God, but I *know* that God exists. I have both surrender and faith.” Both books, written by Ridley, as the founder of The One Project, are clearly New Age oriented.

On page 2 we read as follows: “The One Project... is about the Universe. It intends a better world for all Human Beings based on love. *The Book of Intention* expands upon *The Book of Life*, explaining the nature of reality, why we are here, and how to grow to a higher level of consciousness, towards a higher self, both as practical Human Beings and through the spirituality and connection that is innate within everyone. This work is both a channeled and experiential understanding of holistic philosophy, psychology, healing and prophecy, uniting the work of the avatars and their messages, a Book of knowledge. It is about learning, healing and teaching, intending to unite all Human Beings as One.”

The reference to the work of the *avatars* and their messages, reveals unmistakably the link with the New Age movement. The work of the avatars and their messages is clearly described by New Age priestess Alice Bailey on several pages of her books.

The One Project features the sharing of global values and the transformation of human consciousness for the Golden Age.

There are three aspects in this sentence that catch our attention:

- a. Sharing global values.
- b. Transformation of human consciousness.
- c. (preparation for) The Golden Age.

Does the gospel of Jesus Christ call us to share global values or are we as Christians to share the truths of the Bible? It is true that our human consciousness should be influenced and transformed according to God's will, but this expression is meant here as a *human change* of thinking as a preparation for the Golden Age. Does the Bible really say that a Golden Age for humanity on earth will soon be here? It is clear that these three aspects do not match biblical teaching. No, they clearly match New Age talk.

Alice Bailey, New Age priestess, contemplative, mystic and occultist, coined the term New Age and she revealed the often unnoticed operations behind the scenes. Note how she pictures the transformation of human consciousness or changed thinking:

“It is this growing spirit of humanitarianism which will lie behind all movements towards world socialization in the various nations. This movement is symptomatic of a change in the orientation of man's thinking, and therein lies its major value... it is at the same time foundational to the new world order which will emerge out of all these experiments which human thinking is at this time evolving. These are the things which will be in the consciousness of disciples commissioned by the Hierarchy to bring about the needed changes and the new orientation” (Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 584).

New schools of thought are to bring about the transformation of human consciousness with the new ideas:

“Together and as a group they can become sensitive to the incoming new ideas which it is intended should condition the new age that is upon us; together and as a group they can establish the ideals and develop the techniques and methods of the new schools of thought which will determine the new culture; together and as a group they can bring these ideas and ideal into the consciousness of

the masses, so that schools of thought and world religions can be blended into one, and the new civilization can emerge” (Ibid., pp. 29, 30).

This, however, is not God’s program for mankind and it is not in harmony with His plan of redemption. This world will not be saved by human effort of changed thinking but only by faith in our crucified and risen Saviour and He alone is able to change our thinking the right way through His Spirit.

### **A New World by Human Effort**

The One Project site informs us further:

“The vision of The One Project is to create and live in a world guided by *shared global values*, benefiting all and One.

This will create a new beginning for Humanity, manifested by thinking and acting through the shared values of *Collaboration, Constructiveness* and *Benevolence*. This in turn creates a virtuous circle in everything Human Beings do, leading to the *transformation of Human consciousness*.

Development of a new global economic model that maintains a sustainable environment will also ensure the survival of Human Beings on Earth, ultimately creating a world on that is fit for future generations.

*The other pages on The-One-Project.net web-site give recommended reading and inspirational resources for personal learning, the transformation of Human consciousness, and on collaborative, constructive and benevolent projects already taking place.*” ([www.the-one-project.net](http://www.the-one-project.net))

As we consider this information, it should be clear that The One Project is all about creating a new world by human effort – a new global economic model – which will ensure the survival of mankind on earth, thus ultimately creating a world fit for future generations. The vision is to create and live in a world guided by shared global values.

As Christians we should lovingly care for each other and for the

earth as good stewards, but is the creation of a better world by human effort the digest of biblical teaching? Is that the world we should be looking for as Christians? Is that the message we should proclaim? No, not man but God will ultimately create a new heaven and earth and human efforts are doomed to fail. The One Project harmonizes with the principles of the New World Order and with New Age thinking.

Note that the intended transformation of Human consciousness is not by the influence and work of the Holy Spirit but by thinking and acting through the shared values of Collaboration, Constructiveness and Benevolence. The One Project – Transformation, says: “The time is *now* for the Transformation of Human Consciousness, through *shared* global values.”

### **Recommended Reading**

Under the heading ‘Recommended Reading’ we only find five books including “The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment” by Eckhart Tolle.

We read about this book: “Surrender to the present moment, where problems do not exist. It is here we find our joy, are able to embrace our true selves and discover that we are already complete and perfect. If we are able to be fully present and take each step in the Now we will be opening ourselves to the transforming experience of THE POWER OF NOW. It's a book to be revisited again and again.”

In this book we are again squarely confronted with New Age thinking. Note, for instance, that we should discover that we are already complete and perfect. Thus man’s divinity is affirmed. This is in harmony with the New Age statement in *The Externalization of the Hierarchy*: “Step by step man has been led through prayer, the voice of desire, through worship, the recognition of deity, through affirmation of the fact of human identity of nature with the divine, to a belief in the divinity of man” (p. 400). How misleading and how unbiblical this is. Yet, The One Project has it as Recommended Reading. Can we ever identify ourselves with such a movement?

Another book of the five recommended books to read is: *Quantum Healing, Exploring the Frontiers of mind/Body Medicine*, by Dr. Deepak Chopra. The information that goes with this book is as follows:

This is an extraordinary new approach to healing by an extraordinary physician-writer - a book filled with the mystery, wonder, and hope of people who have experienced seemingly miraculous recoveries from cancer and other serious illnesses. Dr Deepak Chopra, a respected New England endocrinologist, began his search for answers when he saw patients in his own practice who completely recovered after being given only a few months to live. In the mid-1980s he returned to his native India to study Ayurveda, humanity's most ancient healing tradition.

Now he has brought together the current research of Western medicine, neuroscience, and physics with the insights of Ayurvedic theory to show that the human body is controlled by a 'network of intelligence' grounded in quantum reality. Not a superficial psychological state, this intelligence lies deep enough to change the basic patterns that design our physiology - with the potential to defeat cancer, heart disease, and even aging itself. In this inspiring and pioneering work, Dr Chopra offers us both a fascinating intellectual journey and a deeply moving chronicle of hope and healing. ([www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk))

Who is Dr. Deepak Chopra? He is an Indian medical doctor and writer. He has written about spirituality and topics in mind-body medicine. Chopra says that he has been influenced by the teachings of *Vedanta* and the *Bhagavid Gita* as well as by *Krishnamurti Jiddu* and by the field of *quantum physics*. He was initiated in the *Transcendental Meditation technique* and he endeavors to unite Western scientific knowledge with *Ayurveda* and *Yoga* and also with alternative health concepts from the *New Age* movement. He is the founder and director of the holistic Chopra Center for Wellbeing at the Omni La Costa Resort and Spa in Carlsbad, California. ([http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deepak\\_Chopra](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deepak_Chopra)) ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deepak\\_Chopra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deepak_Chopra))

Note that the insights of Ayurvedic theory are incorporated in Chopra's recommended book *Quantum Healing*. What are we to think of this? What is Ayurveda precisely? It is in short an Hinduistic, Indian health theory revealed by the divine cosmological Brahman spirit.



It should be clear then that Chopra's book, *Quantum Healing*, recommended by The one Project, has not much to do with God's principles of healing. No, the book has more to do with the spirit world of the powers of darkness. We can be sure that satanic agencies are at work among men with increasing activity.

Ellen White emphasized that wonderful healings will take place: "Wonderful scenes, with which Satan will be closely connected, will soon take place. God's Word declares that Satan will work miracles. He will make people sick, and then will suddenly remove from them his satanic power. They will then be regarded as healed. These works of apparent healing will bring Seventh-day Adventists to the test" (White, *Last Day Events*, p. 166, 167).

### **Working Together**

The One Project advocates a new global economic model. Shouldn't we expect that this One Project would primarily concern and address the business world? Has the business of this world and the global economy much to do with the church? Is it the assignment of the church to interfere with business and economy? We must admit that this is not the specific calling of the church. How then did it come to pass that some evangelical churches embraced The One Project idea?

The influential American pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback church testified that he had trained around 400,000 pastors in 162 countries and he continued: "But now, my staff and I are not just training church leaders but business and government leaders and help them too... A three-legged stool will have stability. So, I'm going from country to country teaching business its role, teaching church its role, and teaching government leaders their role – you've got to work together" (Jan Voerman, *The Hidden Agenda*, p. 116). But shouldn't there be a separation between church and state?

Note in this context the following New Age quotation: "...the education of the masses in cooperative statesmanship, in economic stabilization through right sharing, and in clean, political interplay is imperatively necessary. The long divorce between religion and

politics *must* be ended and this can now come about because of the high level of the human *mass* intelligence..." (Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 18).

Warren made a clear link with the economic world, the church and the state. He testified that he is teaching them all to work together and his pursued universal Purpose Driven PEACE plan, should usher in the much desired millennium – the Golden Age, or a new and better world. Thus there is, under the influence of New Age thinking, a clear bearing between Rick Warren’s teaching and the principles of The One Project. This could explain, to some extent, that The One Project has been embraced by several evangelical churches and has been adapted and clothed with a rather more biblically looking garment.

It is also remarkable that the modern evangelical church growth movements also advocate a similar transformation of consciousness called ‘a paradigm shift’ - a change of mind from the old to the new way of thinking, derived from Peter Drucker, a prominent expert in business management: “It is no accident that the church-growth leaders present this globalistic ‘paradigm shift’ of thinking, that is in harmony with Drucker’s methodology and with the New Age Movement, as a central spearhead on the way to the One World Church” (Voerman, *The Hidden Agenda*, p. 85). Thus there is a link between many evangelical churches, business, and the New Age.

### **Love and Brotherhood**

All the modern movements emphasize to a great extent the importance and values of love and brotherhood as a main issue. The One Project does the same and has the word love in bold and italic letters. We read: “The key to the transformation of Human Consciousness, the second coming, is the manifestation of shared values across the world, across all cultures, faiths and belief systems of the common good, the values of ***love***” ([www.the-one-project.net](http://www.the-one-project.net)).

Note also the emphasis on love and brotherhood by the New Age

movement: “The work of pouring out the principle of love (which is the Christ principle) and of lifting the masses in their consciousness to the pitch where they can understand and welcome that love-principle is the main work of the new age, and it will inaugurate the age of brotherhood and mould humanity into the likeness of the Christ” (Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 504). The Christ in this quotation is not the Christ of the Bible but the New Age Cosmic Christ whose coming will be esoteric. “‘...Cosmic Christ’ does not refer to Jesus, but to Satan himself, the great anti-Christ who will mimic Christ’s return” (Voerman, *The Hidden Agenda*, p. 174).

Consider the reason why the cosmic Christ has not yet come and the Golden Age has not yet been ushered in:

“The reason He has not come again is that the needed work has not been done by His followers in all countries. His coming is largely dependent, as we shall later see, upon the establishing of right human relations. This the church has hindered down the centuries, and has not helped because of its fanatical zeal to make ‘Christians’ of all peoples and not followers of the Christ. It has emphasized theological doctrine, and not love and loving understanding as Christ exemplified it. The Church has preached the fiery Saul of Tarsus and not the gentle Carpenter of Galilee. And so, He has waited” (Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 12).

Note that there are two things that delay the second coming of the cosmic Christ and the ushering in of the New Age:

1. The establishment of right human relations.
2. The lack of emphasis on love and loving understanding.

It is very interesting to note that these two things are the spear points of The One Project, clearly presented as the key to the second coming. Read again that important sentence carefully which clearly includes right human relations on the basis of shared values of love:

“The key to the transformation of Human Consciousness, the second coming, is the manifestation of shared values across the world, across all cultures, faiths and belief systems of the common good, the values of **love**.” ([www.the-one-project.net](http://www.the-one-project.net)).

Thus we see again that there is harmony with the New Age movement.

The need of love is much stressed by the New Age: “An Avator is at present usually a Representative of the second divine aspect, that of Love-Wisdom, the Love of God... Humanity needs love, understanding and right human relations as an expression of attained divinity” (Bailey, *The Reappearance of the Christ*, p. 11).

Consider also the New Age activity and influence on the churches: “The activity of the astral plane is being much intensified and the angels of devotion, in whom the aspect of divine love is pre-eminent, work with the astral bodies of all those who are ready to strengthen and redirect their spiritual aspiration and desire. They are the angels who guard the sanctuaries of all the churches, cathedrals, temples and mosques of the world. They are now increasing the momentum of their vibration for the raising of the consciousness of the attendant congregations” (Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 505). Ellen White wrote in harmony with this: “An innumerable host of evil angels are spreading over the whole land and crowding the churches” (White, *Early Writings*, p 274; Cf., Rev. 18:2).

### **The Adventist One Project**

Five Adventist church leaders in Denver, Alex Bryan, Japhet De Oliveira, Sam Leonor, Tim Gillespie and Terry Swenson, introduced The One Project, a similarly named movement into our church with, as we will see, rather similar characteristics. The central theme is *Jesus. All*. This, certainly is a good theme. To walk with Jesus – having a good relationship with Him – getting to know Him better – serving Him in a more efficient way; these are all, without doubt, good and much desirable aspects.

In the context of the formation of this One Project there are, however, a number of relevant questions we could ask. Is the promotion of Jesus Christ the undivided core of the One Project? Are there perhaps some other important aspects that played a role in the formation of this One Project? Are the five founders happy with the

existing church and the direction it follows? What is their personal vision about the church and its mission? Do they perhaps have their concerns and disappointments that made them come together to share their ideas and feelings? Has the Adventist version of the One Project something to do with the existing One Project movement outside our church? Are there similar aims and purposes? Does the Adventist version also promote a change of thinking or, in other words, a transformation of human consciousness? Does it reflect, somehow, also New Age thinking? Does it advocate global unity by sharing love rather than doctrine? These are certainly important questions to answer.

### **The Seattle Gathering**

On February 10 and 11, 2014, the Seattle One Project gathering, titled *Jesus. All*, and subtitled *Present Truth*, took place in Seattle Westin Hotel's fourth floor.

Janet Lundeen Neumann was invited to attend and took notes. She wrote a report. She noted that there was continued live rock music during these two days. Her impression was that the notion of *change* was overtly urged – no defined change, simply change.

She testifies: "I continued listening for an Adventist version of 'Present Truth,' but instead heard a revised truth – a nebulous truth that focused on 'conversation' and 'dialogue,' with consensus determining direction. I heard people disillusioned with the established church structure, some seeking to deconstruct traditional worship. I heard an urging that a 'narrative' truth be interpreted by 'current culture.' I heard an advocacy for a social gospel with no mention of evangelism. I heard an urgency that we dip into 'other streams' and 'streams that flow both ways' for truth. And I heard mockery of our church both in word and in tone from the platform and attendees. I heard an emergent truth."

<http://advindicate.com/articles/2014/3/4/one-project-present-or-emergent-truth>

The One Project co-founder, Japhet De Oliviera, in his welcome speech stated that we are not set in stone. We are not afraid to turn around 180 degrees. The more we know the less certain we are. This

speech made Janet to state: “He merely sowed the verbal seeds of uncertainty and indefinite change” (Ibid).

Speaker, Bill Knott, emphasized *conversation* and *dialogue* and near the end of his speech he stated: “Disagreement is important to our growth - Jesus expects disagreement in His church – His church is not built on unanimity.” But is this truly biblical as we think of Christ’s prayer (John 17) and the perfect unity of the early church? (Acts 2:46; 4:32).

Another co-founder, Alex Bryan, told in a dramatic way that in the barber shop he recently had a hair cut by a young woman who had become paranoid when she attended a Revelation Seminar by a SDA evangelist. Bryan urged that we, as a church, should not go around scaring people, frightening them with fearful views about the future. Instead of scaring people with horrible beasts, teaching Revelation, he suggested that the church should focus on Jesus.

But this is *not* Jesus. All. This is a *false* Jesus. All. If we somehow disregard the things Jesus taught, we present only a *partly* Jesus. We even reject Him if we belittle or neglect the prophecies revealed in the book of Revelation, for it is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Rev. 1:1) We can only speak of Jesus. All, if we give full credit to *all* His teachings, including the words of prophecy He has revealed in the book of Revelation.

However, this speaker seemed to dismiss the necessity of sharing the last day message, for that could make people paranoid. Janet remarks: “Present Truth as revealed by Ellen White states, ‘The book of Revelation must be opened to the people... The truth it contains must be proclaimed, that people may have an opportunity to prepare for the events which are soon to transpire’ Letter 87, 1896. (Ev. 195.4)” (Ibid).

A pastor from Loma Linda University church, Randy Roberts, focused on learning new things and learning from others. He quoted John 16:12 and stressed that today “there is more.” He explained that God moves us forward as we are able. There is new truth for us in our generation. Learn, move and change. At the end of his speech

the screen has these words: “*Recalibrate*: When we learn new things, how do we set aside old understandings, without damaging our ‘roots?’” (Video: Randy).

Thus, as a presented principle, we should be prepared to learn new things and set aside old understandings. What are these old understandings precisely? The things that we have always believed? Have we, as a church, perhaps believed in untrue things? It is not specified, but undoubtedly, learning new things and setting aside old understandings indicates a change of mind. And is this not, in other words, a transformation of human consciousness?

Yet another One Project co-founder, Sam Leonor, showed on the screen prophetic time tables of Daniel and Revelation, as used by our pioneers and the church and he hinted at this prophetic message rather with a mocking attitude, as something that is all passed and he stressed that he would “absolutely not” spent time on this for we are living in *the now*. He made the prophetic message of Revelation rather laughable. Thus this One Project co-founder also presented a *false, partial* Jesus All, for he would “absolutely not” spent time on the prophetic revelation of Jesus Christ.

He stressed the here and now and stated that in Heaven there is no sickness – and he emphasized that this should be here *now*. In Heaven there is no poverty – and that’s the way it should be here *now*. In Heaven there will be gender equality – and that’s we should work towards here *now*. (Video: Jesus is our Future: Sam Leonor - Seattle 2014).

It sounds in a way similar to Eckhart Tolle’s book *The power of now*. (see page 7). It would not be amazing if some would see in this emphasizing of the *here and now* an inclination towards *kingdom now* theology, which comes close to New Age thinking, with the Golden Age believed to be just around the corner.

Co-founder Tim Gillespie alluded to the church with the story of a cow that was fed and grown up in a box and he made clear that this is not real life. And so he stressed that we must go beyond our own denomination. To remain fresh we must be fed from other streams – streams must flow both ways – others should inform our present

truth – we must dialogue with others, you know why? because God is always doing something new and we wouldn't want to miss it - As a church we have always been engaged with one another – we have shut our boundaries tight - We should change – we should learn from others. (video: Tim, Resolve) However, does this speech not raise the question: Has God entrusted us with a special message to share with others or are others to share a special message with us?

The various One Project speakers can be listened to by video via this site: <http://vimeo.com/the1project/videos>. Or click in the right column on *Vimeo* of this site: <https://the1project.org>.

Listening to the various speakers, it must be said that besides the speeches that raise some question marks, there were also good messages.

## Education

It is interesting to note that Sam Leonor, co-founder of the One Project, is a doctoral candidate at George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon. (<http://www.zoominfo.com/p/Sam-Leonor/47180128>)

This University promotes the emerging church, contemplative prayer or spiritual formation. What are we to understand by this?

**Contemplative Spirituality:** A belief system that uses ancient mystical practices to induce altered states of consciousness (the silence) and is rooted in mysticism and the occult but often wrapped in Christian terminology. The premise of contemplative spirituality is pantheistic (God is all) and panentheistic (God is in all). Common terms used for this movement are "spiritual formation," "the silence," "the stillness," "ancient-wisdom," "spiritual disciplines," and many others.

**Spiritual Formation:** A movement that has provided a platform and a channel through which contemplative prayer is entering the church. Find spiritual formation being used, and in nearly every case you will find contemplative spirituality. In fact, contemplative spirituality is the heartbeat of the spiritual formation movement.  
(<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/manning.htm>)

**The Emerging Church:** Another Road to Rome. The emerging church has many aspects. "The common denominator being promoted is the idea



that the time has come for Christianity to be reinvented for our generation. In order to do so, the church must provide the environment and the experiences to attract people. Christianity, the Emerging Church promoters say, must become relevant to our postmodern generation. No longer does reason or God's Word hold the answers to life's questions. Experience must become the key factor to encounter spiritual reality." (<http://www.understandthetimes.org/commentary/c46.shtml>)

"Georg Fox University is a hub of contemplative /emerging activity with a list of adjunct professors that includes Dan Kimball and Leonard Sweet. In 2005, George Fox hired Todd Hunter, Leonard Sweet and Brian McLaren to teach certain classes; and chapel speakers at the university have included Richard Foster and Brennan Manning. Recommended and required reading for classes at George Fox include a wide assortment of staunch contemplatives/mystics like Thomas Keating, Henry Nouwen, and Thomas Merton." (<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=3245>)

Richard Foster, one of the speakers at George Fox, was called the contemplative spark plug. "More than any other individual, Richard Foster has spread Roman Catholic and Pagan mysticism throughout Protestant and Baptist churches." ([http://www.wayoflife.org/index\\_files/evangelicals\\_turning\\_to\\_roman\\_catholic\\_spirituality.html](http://www.wayoflife.org/index_files/evangelicals_turning_to_roman_catholic_spirituality.html))

At George Fox University "The course SFAD 556 teaches Spirituality and the Writings of the Mystics – Included in the course is a small group practicum to assimilate contemplative practices into the student's devotional life." (<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/blog/?p=8746>).

However, is the contemplative prayer - or the spiritual formation movement - a good way to come closer to God?

Ray Yungen justly appeals: "I challenge the Christian community to look to the facts surrounding the contemplative prayer movement and see its connection to the New Age occultism and Eastern mysticism... After taking an honest look at the evidence, the conclusion is overwhelming that contemplative prayer is not a spiritually-sound practice for Christians" (*A Time of Departing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., p. 89, 130; Cf., Voerman, *The Hidden Agenda*, p 132).

“‘Contemplative Spirituality’ also known as the ‘Spiritual Formation Movement’ smoothly paves the way for the working of evil spirits within the church and in people’s lives. The spirits ‘will confess faith’ and ‘respect’ church-institutions ‘and their work will be accepted as a manifestation of divine power.’ (The Great Controversy, p. 588)” (Voerman, *The Hidden Agenda*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., p. 195, 196).

### **As Above - So Below**

Sam Leonor’s speech “Good Gifts” in the SDA “Forest Lake Church,” Apopka, Fl., at the GODencounters Conference 2005, is still on internet: (<http://vimeo.com/37413353>). At the end of his speech Leonor said: “get up straight and comfortable” - he referred to the “ancient practice of meditating on the word” and said “let these words wash through your soul.” He then read slowly, with long pauses, the paraphrased, mystical version of the Lord’s prayer as we have it in the Message Bible by Eugene Peterson, with the words “earth” and “heaven” replaced with the words **as above, so below**. The Message Bible is regarded to be the New Age Bible. “There is so much New Age thought permeating ‘The Mess,’ you couldn’t learn the Truth from it, no matter how hard you tried. One piercing example of New Age doctrine occurs right in the middle of the Lord’s Prayer.” (<http://www.francesandfriends.com/message-bible-continued/>  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yclzmPxB\\_9o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yclzmPxB_9o))

“This phrase [as above, so below] comes from the beginning of The Emerald Tablet and embraces the entire system of traditional and modern magic which was inscribed upon the tablet in cryptic wording by Hermes Trismegistus. The significance of this phrase is that it is believed to hold the key to all mysteries. All systems of magic are claimed to function by this formula... The purpose of all rituals in ceremonial magic is to unite the microcosm with the macrocosm to join God, or gods when invoked, with the human consciousness.” ([http://www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/a/below\\_above.html](http://www.themystica.com/mystica/articles/a/below_above.html)) (Voerman, *The Hidden Agenda*, p. 104).

Thus, under the promising title: GODencounters, false spiritual NEW-AGEencounters were presented.

## Education Molds One's Thinking

We are informed that The One Project's co-founder Tim Gillespie also studied at George Fox University, where contemplative spirituality is promoted. He earned his Doctor of Ministry in 2011. (<http://www.apu.edu/soulquest/chaplains/tgillespie/>)

Co-founder, Terry Swenson, earned his Doctor of Ministry as well at George Fox University, with an emphasis in the areas of Postmodernism, Globalisation, CrossCultural interaction and Leadership. (<https://www.linkedin.com/pub/terry-swenson/30/807/804>)

And co-founder Alex Bryan was also a student there at that same University. He earned "his doctoral degree in ministry from George Fox University in 2009. He serves as co-chair and presenter for the One Project, a movement celebrating the supremacy of Jesus Christ in the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

(<http://archives.adventistreview.org/article/6247/archives/issue-2013-1511/11-cn-alex-bryan-walla-walla-church-pastor-to-lead-kettering-college-of-medical-arts>)

If one has been a student at George Fox University which promotes New Age spirituality, would we then be surprised if we see him reflect and promote these ideas and practices? Wouldn't that be then a rather natural way of acting? Could we then blame the person for that? We could only blame him that he should have been wiser not to get involved in such an education.

Alex Bryan was proposed (July 2012), to be the new president of the SDA WWU (Walla Walla University). After all, the board did not appoint him, with 9 votes in favor and 16 against.

With this occasion a number of concerns, mainly touching his education, were ventilated:

"As a group of constituents, alumni, educators, pastors, church members, medical professionals, students and parents, we feel that Alex Bryan, at this point in time, is not a good candidate for the next WWU president as evidenced by the concerns expressed in this document. Out of multiple areas of concern, three follow as to why Alex Bryan, at this point in time, should not be appointed as WWU's next president: 1) his background, 2) his educational experience, and

### 3) his views and relationships with spiritual formation.”

(<http://cafesda.blogspot.nl/2012/07/concerns-over-alex-bryan-email-posted.html> - emphasis added)

It is always a delicate matter to ventilate concerns and it is understandable that some prefer to remain rather anonymous. With such occasions there are always two groups: one in favor and one group against, and sometimes the process can rather develop unpleasantly.

There are quite a few people in our church who do not find fault in the emerging church movement promoting contemplative spiritual formation and they dismiss the worries of those who discern the dangers of practicing this kind of spirituality, as unwarranted.

However, as we have a look at the concerns that were ventilated by many, it is not a surprise that such concerns came up since we know the educational background of the person. He acts in harmony with the things he has learned at George Fox university. Some points may clearly illustrate this. As we present these points, the purpose is not to harm people personally, for the concerns are not particularly against the person. No, the worries are rather linked up with his education. It is to illustrate that the educational program that was followed undoubtedly has its influence on the church as well as on The One Project movement and its consequences should be seriously considered.

1. Created a “Sunday service” church... (which) described itself in 2004, while Alex Bryan was the pastor: “We are an independent, interdenominational, evangelical church.
2. Professional degree in emergent church spiritual formation. Received his Doctor of Ministry degree from George Fox University, under the direction of the spiritualist and Emerging Church leader Leonard Sweet.
3. Invited his mentor, a self-admitted spiritualist and leader of the emerging church movement, Leonard Sweet, to Southern Adventist University, to speak for Vespers Jan '09 and attempted to indoctrinate the Southern University Theology faculty by bringing Sweet to speak with them specifically.

[This University, however, released a nine point statement, denouncing the emerging church movement and reaffirming Seventh Day Adventist Faith and Practice, 10-23-2014. <http://advindicate.com/articles/2013/11/22/southern-faculty-release-statement-on-the-emerging-church-movement?>]

4. Opening his pulpit (April 2012, both services) at Walla Walla University Church to emerging church leader Shane Claiborne, a proponent of the “Kingdom Now” theology embraced by the emerging church movement and a teacher of universalism, and founder of the New Monasticism movement. Claiborne’s staff admitted one of their objectives, while at WWU, was to recruit WWU students to join them in the work of their ministry.
5. Alex Bryan has called Ellen G. White a 19th century mystic. He has stated this from the pulpit and included references to this in his book, page 22, “In 1842, during this era of Advent hope, fifteen-year-old Ellen White had a mystical experience.”
6. Openly promoted Roman Catholic Mystics and Contemplative authors at the Adventist Forum on Spiritual Formation, October 2011. These authors included: Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, Brennan Manning, and Henri Nouwen...
7. During his sermons he often quotes from leading emergent church leaders, such as Leonard Sweet and Catholic contemplative authors such as Brennan Manning, and many more. Note that these authors are also listed as “My Favorites” on his brother’s blog, the current pastor of the Sunday church Alex helped to start. Also, these authors and their books are listed on Alex Bryan’s blog as “Must Reads.” [He quoted, for instance, the New Age minded Eugene Peterson in his sermon *Why I love the Body*, 3-8-2014; and N. T. Wright, who teaches a redefined, other gospel, in his sermon *A Whole New Politics*, 1-7-2012. See for information N. T. Wright: [http://www.sayyesor.no/emergent\\_wright.html](http://www.sayyesor.no/emergent_wright.html) [http://www.soundwitness.org/evangel/emerg\\_5\\_redefine.htm](http://www.soundwitness.org/evangel/emerg_5_redefine.htm)]
8. Belittling Adventist doctrines in favor of mystical experiences during his One project sermon February 2012, Seattle Wa. He suggested that our fixation on doctrine and identity as Seventh-day Adventists has kept us from becoming a great religion.
9. His failure to properly shepherd his misguided Roswell, Georgia flock is disappointing. Former Seventh-day Adventists today are worshiping in the [Sunday] church he started, now led by his brother...
10. Bryan continues to promote Spiritual Formation in his church. Views and Relationship with Spiritual Formation. Alex Bryan has indicated that Spiritual Formation shall be incorporated in all venues of the WWU church.
11. Ecumenical Focus. Some constituents were at the One Project gathering February, 2011. Bryan presented a bowl with puzzle pieces that he used to demonstrate that the SDA church, even as we are unique; we are only one of the pieces of the puzzle. [Note this comment: “WHAT?? So he's saying that we don't have a unique identity and purpose. That we aren't God's last day church. We're just one of many churches that God has spread his truths over. So there's no difference if I leave the SDA church and become a catholic then.” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6byCpoQKQm8&safe=active>)]

12. He speaks often of the need to be ecumenical. This emphasized joining with other denominations and leaving behind our Adventist distinctiveness and practice. For example, at the ONE project, Bryan stated that if a Seventh-day Adventist called themselves part of the “remnant church” then they are “arrogant and extremists.”
13. Doctrinal Concerns. Seventh-day Adventist beliefs are rarely presented from the pulpit. The Three Angels’ Messages, the Sanctuary message, the Remnant, the distinctive messages of Adventism are not being heard.
14. Alex Bryan displays his favorite Spiritual Formation books at the Adventist Forum meeting held at Walla Walla University, October 2011.
15. Bryan recommends reading Contemplative Pastor Eugene Peterson, Emerging Church leader Brian McLaren’s Generous Orthodoxy, and Universalist Rob Bell’s Velvet Elvis. (Ibid; [http://www.prophecyagain.com/SDA\\_schools\\_gates\\_of\\_Hell.pdf](http://www.prophecyagain.com/SDA_schools_gates_of_Hell.pdf). <http://www.scribd.com/doc/99744647/Concerns-Regarding-Alex-Bryan-as-the-New-President-of-Wwu> This last website shows a photo of Alex Bryan with his favorite Spiritual Formation books at the Adventist Forum meeting and also a screen shot from Alex Bryan’s blog page, showing his “Must Reads” page.)

Some may try to dismiss all these points as only “rumors” but on the other hand others, including seminary students, underline them.

We read: “Some of the ‘rumors’ were that he is into the spiritual formation thing and that he doesn’t believe in the inspiration of Ellen White. He tried to deny that but the evidence of all these years was so overwhelmingly against him that, ignoring those facts seem impossible. The committee did not have any other choice than say no, we need to get a good faithful historic seventh day Adventist... We need to get back to historic Adventism, we need leaders who love this church, who have a clear understanding of scripture and who believe in sister White and who reject ‘evangelical Adventism.’”

Another Seminary student wrote: “Bryan, is not a faithful sda, he is a liberal who is into spiritual formation and all those things that Elder Wilson spoke against.” (Comments 11, 21);

(<http://www.atoday.org/article/1278/news/2012/july-headlines/walla-walla-university-presidential-search-what-went-wrong>)

Another source informs us: “We are a group of Seventh-day Adventist church members in the Walla Walla Valley deeply

concerned with what is sweeping into our Walla Walla University and valley churches. We do not wish to remain a silent majority... In July Pastor Alex Bryan introduced the new Associate Pastor, Emily M. Flottmann, who will be leading out in 'Spiritual Formation'. In his sermon that day he used the words 'Spiritual Formation, mysticism, mystical,' etc. At one time during the July sermon, he referred to Ellen G. White as a mystic and suggested that we should be reading from outside sources. We are very concerned about the way these ideas will be presented to impressionable college students, as well as to younger children in their formative years. Parents send their children here in good faith and pay thousands of dollars so that they will be instructed in the truth. What will be their anguish when they discover these students have been indoctrinated in spiritual sophistries?... Pastor Bryan defended the use of Richard J. Foster's books knowing full well that Foster is a Quaker mystic, the head of Renovare, an organization whose goal is to introduce evangelicals to contemplative spirituality. Foster borrowed many of the principles in his book, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* from the Desert Fathers (mystics in Egypt of the third and fourth centuries) and from Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. Pastor Bryan produced a pile of books, including some by Brennan Manning, a former Catholic priest, which he recommended for the spiritual journey...We are venturing on VERY dangerous ground. The entire Adventist population should be aware of the basis of the Emerging Church,/Spiritual Formation/Contemplative Prayer movement that is sweeping the world and is being introduced into our universities and churches. We desperately need our people informed so that they are not among the 'shaken out.'

(<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/mikesbiblestudyclass/conversations/topics/18145>  
<http://clubadventist.com/forum/ubbthreads.php/topics/502816/1.html>)

## **Mysticism**

On May 24, 2014, the WWU community experienced a very remarkable church service. Alex Bryan, co-founder of the One Project, preached about prayer and he requested that all the lights should be turned off during his sermon. In complete darkness he

repeated many times: “Close your eyes when you pray.” He further explained: “because in the darkness you shall see even more clearly.” He stressed the value of darkness as a necessity to communicate with God, evidently inspired by a 14<sup>th</sup> Century mystical source *The Cloud of Unknowing*, edited by Emilie Griffin. In this apparently, rather nicely presented sermon, there was, however, a mixture of truth and error. Amidst Bible texts about clouds, darkness, and night, Bryan quoted from this Catholic source of discipline of contemplative prayer. He quoted the following passage:

“This darkness and cloud is always between you and God, no means what you do, and it prevents you from seeing him clearly by the light of your reason and from experiencing him in sweetness of love in your affection. So set yourself to rest in this darkness as long as you can, always crying out after him whom you love. For if you are to experience him or to see him at all, insofar as it is possible here, it must always be in this cloud and in this darkness” (p. 15). (See and listen to the video presentation of this sermon: “And adoring bend the knee, While we own the mystery,” May 24, 2014; Services, January – Current 2014, <http://www.wwuchurch.org/>)

“So set yourself to rest in this darkness as long as you can... if you are to experience him or to see him... it must always be in this cloud and in this darkness.” This was put into practice and the whole congregation sat in total darkness during the sermon on prayer. We are informed that all windows were shuttered and taped.

Was this just an happening by chance? Or is it the consequence of the kind of education which Bryan has chosen?

But is darkness not linked up with evil powers and associated with the Gentiles? Are Christians not children of light, called out of darkness? Do we not serve God Who is only light and in Whom is no darkness at all? Why then should we sit in darkness as we pray and worship Him?

A significant feature is that the leaders of the emerging church stimulate darkened churches. Dan Kimball, who studied with Alex Bryan at George Fox University under Leonard Sweet, wrote *The Emerging Church*, and he explains: “But in our culture, which is



becoming more multi-sensory and less respectful of God, we have a responsibility to pay attention to the design of the space where we assemble regularly. 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” (Kimball, *The Emerging Church*, p. 136).

However, does darkness not represent *false* spirituality? Is it not symbolically used of ignorance, falsehood and wickedness? And is darkness not particularly associated with demonic activities and with occult practices?

The emerging church leaders are convinced that Christianity needs to be adjusted and revised in order to meet the spiritual needs of this new, modern age. They believe that a shift must take place toward a recovery of the ancient; a return to the mystics and learn from them. Just one of the features in this context is that churches are darkening their sanctuaries as an emerging spiritual style of mystical worship.

This is in full harmony with the teaching of the well-known priest and New Age leader, Matthew Fox, who promotes mysticism and contemplative prayer.

Fox wrote: “In addition to welcoming silence, a cosmological worship will welcome darkness as well, and in the process instruct people to embrace the dark and not fight it. Of course we cannot read in the dark and since so many worshipers in the West have learned to equate prayer with reading, the idea of turning out the lights may threaten many people. Yet prayer is mostly about responding with the heart, not with the written word. Worship that takes the heart as the starting point for prayer would be sure to attract many who have given up on worship precisely because it has banished mystery and darkness... It is time to place worship within the cosmological setting that the human species throughout the world is embracing. We should explore the rituals of the native peoples, whose ceremonies appreciated the power of darkness and night” (Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, p. 220, 221).

Alex Bryan quoted a prominent Catholic mystic source and he had all the lights turned out during his sermon on prayer. This was in agreement with New Age Mysticism and with the emerging church.

But what further information has been given about this *Cloud of Unknowing*, which Bryan quoted in his sermon?

In an introduction by Evelyn Underhill, a pacifist and mystic, it is clear that this source is for “lovers of mysticism.” She explains: “It represents the first expression in our own tongue of that great mystic tradition of the Christian Neoplatonists which gathered up, remade, and ‘salted with Christ’s salt’ all that was best in the spiritual wisdom of the ancient world.” There is no particular information about the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, but it seems clear that he was a cloistered monk, possibly a Carthusian, devoted to the contemplative life. This mystical source is treasured by Catholics.

(<http://www.catholicspiritualdirection.org/cloudunknowing.pdf>)

Carl McColman, Contemplative Writer and Speaker – Embrace Silence – Embody Love – writes: “Anonymously written around the year 1375, *The Cloud of Unknowing* — a lucid and deceptively simple manual on contemplative spirituality — offers a fascinating glimpse into the practical side of medieval mysticism... The Cloud’s author advocates contemplation: prayer steeped not in language or the imagination, but in cultivated inner silence... One remarkable feature of *The Cloud of Unknowing* is that it advocates the use of a single-syllable ‘prayer word’ to effectively discipline the mind and to keep it focused while the heart attempts to grow in its supramental task of loving God. This spiritual exercise involves repeating a short word like ‘God’ or ‘love’ repeatedly, in order to help surrender all extraneous thoughts and seek the place of inner silence, where one may ‘be still and know’ the God who is lavish love. This practice of using a prayer word has been adapted in our own day by the monks who developed the method of centering prayer, a form of meditation which again relies on the repeated single-syllable word as a tool of ‘centering’ or allowing the mind and body to come to a place of resting in the Divine presence... In the eyes of God, we are already mystics and

contemplatives. All we have to do, now, is to learn how to simply allow that to unfold. Even within the mysterious mists of the cloud of unknowing.” (<http://www.carlmccolman.com/mystics/cloud-of-unknowing/>)

*The Cloud of Unknowing* is advertised as “the glory of English mysticism, and one of the most practical and useful guides to finding union with God ever written” (<http://www.bol.com/nl/p/the-cloud-of-unknowing/1001004006443766/>) An experience “of union with God... is not a Christian concept, but rather, a Pantheistic principle” (Mac Dominick, *Outcome-Based Religion: Purpose, Apostasy, & The New Paradigm Church*, 2005, p. 301; Cf., Voerman, *The Hidden Agenda*, p. 146).

*The Cloud of Unknowing* is not an innocent source for Christians to read and certainly not to quote from in church this way during a sermon – it is without doubt a dangerous source.

Ray Yungen, author, speaker, and research analyst, referring to *The Cloud of Unknowing*, explains: “It is essentially a manual on contemplative prayer... The premise... is that in order to really know God, mysticism must be practiced – the mind has to be shut down or turned off so that the *cloud of unknowing* where the presence of God awaits can be experienced... even though the method is identical to occult and Eastern practices... By definition a mystic... is someone who uses rote methods in an attempt to tap into their inner divinity. Those who use these methods put themselves into a trance state outside of God’s sanction or protection and thus engage in an extremely dangerous approach” (Yungen, *A Time of Departing*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 33, 34).

Contemplative Spirituality is “a belief system that uses ancient mystical practices to induce altered states of consciousness (the silence) and is often wrapped in Christian terminology; the premise of contemplative spirituality is pantheistic (God is all) and panentheistic (God is in all)” (<http://www.lighthouse trailsresearch.com/cp.htm>).

Thus the spiritual practice advocated in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, to repeat a word over and over again (Cf., Matt. 6:7), to silence the mind in order to come in union with God, is an occult New Age practice of emptying the mind and realizing the divinity within.

Contemplative spirituality “plays a very important role in the New Age movement. As attractively wrapped in biblical terms, it subtly entices and wins Christians to occult concepts and practices” (Voerman, *The Hidden Agenda*, p. 128).

“Always the tools of contemplative prayer are used only to help guide us to an experience of union with God. In the temporal moment of contemplative prayer we are drawn even momentarily into the eternal realm that transcends our time” (*Presbyterian Church, Youth Ministry, Spirituality, Prayers*, April 20, 2004, p. 3). “‘Into the eternal realm that transcends our time’ is a new age expression. And the method advocated is designed to induce a form of self-hypnosis, which removes reason and will and prepares one to become the subject of ‘wicked spirits in high places’” (Voerman, *The Hidden Agenda*, p. 145).

Brian Flynn, a former New Age medium, explains: “It is unbridled and unprotected mental thought that provides a perfect avenue for a demonic spirit world to intercept and redirect our way of thinking” (Flynn, *Running Against the Wind*, Silverton, Oregon, 2005, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 93).

Thus we see that the mystical practices advocated in *The Cloud of Unknowing* are dangerous for Christians to experience. Therefore it is unwarranted to cite this source the assenting way as was done in church during the worship service. It is out of harmony with our Adventist message. Since Alex Bryan is co-founder of the One Project, it has some bearing on that movement in our church as well.

As we consider this, and knowing their education, we should realize that there is a link between the founders of the One Project with New Age contemplative spirituality and Catholic Mysticism, practiced in the emerging church which is promoted by Leonard Sweet. Four of the five One Project founders studied under him and received their doctoral degree.

We clearly notice belittling of Adventist doctrine and favouring mystical experiences. We observe a mingling of true and false; a mixture of biblical principles with unholy ideas and practices.

We are warned: “More harm can be done by one who has a mixture of truth and error, than many who teach the whole truth can undo and correct.” (White, *The Review and Herald*, May 29, 1888).

It is interesting to note that on a forum website about the One Project, some people clearly recognize the wrong influence of the emergent church. We read: “Among the few names I recognized were Jon Dybdahl (a professor at Walla Walla who is thoroughly wedded to spiritual formation). He is one of the facilitators... It appears to me that these meetings have a heavy emergent church influence.” (<http://revivalsermons.org/forums/index.php?topic=4013.0>)

“I read that even though they asked people to just read the four Gospels and ‘The Desire of Ages’ before they came, they handed out these books for each participant: N.T. Wright's ‘Simply Jesus’ (2011), ‘7 Keys for Finding Jesus in the Book of Revelation’ (2012) by Steve Case and Daniel Wysong, and Leonard Sweet's ‘I Am a Follower’ (2012). If I'm not mistaken, these are emergent authors.” (Ibid.)

“... the One Project appears to have a strong emergent influence. Jon Dybdahl is heavily into spiritual formation and has rejected information and efforts to counsel and warn him away from it. He was one of the facilitators of the Seattle event... Project One appears to be an attempt to marginalize or ignore doctrines of the church that some Adventists become ‘frustrated’ over. I wonder which ones that might be? The purpose statement that pr. de Oliveira made signals a certain attitude towards the church. ‘We’re trying to create a safe place to say that Jesus is the center of the church and always has been.’” (Ibid.)

### **Guest Speaker**

As a special guest speaker at the Seattle One Project, 2014, gathering, Leonard Sweet was invited. He is a well-known influential author who wrote many books. He teaches New Age ideas and mystic spirituality, pantheism and panentheism. He promotes ecumenism and the emerging church. In his book *Quantum Spirituality* he admires prominent New Age leaders such as Willis Harman, Matthew Fox and M. Scott Peck. He even calls them “extraordinary” and “great” New Light Leaders and characterizes them as his “personal role models and heroes of the true nature of the postmodern apologetic” (p. viii. Cf., Warren Smith, *A “Wonderful” Deception*, p. 106, 107).

In one of Sweet's other books, *Soul Tsunami*, he stresses the urgent need to accept the new concepts. "The same gospel message must be continually shaped to reach a new way of thinking that pervades our age. *Soul Tsunami* will shift your paradigm - Sink or Swim in New Millennium Culture" (Amazon). Sweet "explains that it is time for a 'Postmodern Reformation' and everybody must choose: 'Reinvent yourself for the 21<sup>st</sup> century **or die**' (Leonard Sweet, *Soul Tsunami*, Zondervan, 1999, p. 75. Emphasis added)" (Voerman, *The Hidden Agenda*, p. 161).

Why was Sweet invited? With the educational background of the One Project founders it was apparently no problem at all to have this New Age promoter of the emergent church as a special guest speaker at the 2014 Seattle One Project gathering. Although this guest speaker may have brought a good message, he still is a New Age minded man and as such he was invited. Does this fact have any meaning at all? Could it be indicative of the direction the One Project is intended to go?

The One Project has, without any doubt, a very heavy Leonard Sweet connection. All five founders are strongly influenced by Sweet. See for further details the following website:  
([http://www.sayyesor.no/emergent\\_the1project.html](http://www.sayyesor.no/emergent_the1project.html))

Is it not very significant that at the first Seattle gathering, in 2012, "the fee included a copy of *I am a Follower: The Way, Truth, and Life of Following Jesus*, by Leonard Sweet"? (Ibid.) With this background information in mind, do we then need to guess which direction the One Project movement eventually will go in our church?

### **Change Your Church**

As the 2014 Seattle gathering neared its end, a communion service was shared with bread and wine only and followed by some kind of anointing each other. Everyone anointed the hand of the one sitting to the right with a drop of oil, while a blessing was read from a card: "May you be blessed with Compassion for those around you, The courage to be who you are, Gentleness and a tender heart, openness, understanding, and respect, strength that shines from within, and the power to make Jesus. All."

Janet Lundeen Neumann was not happy with the wording of this blessing and she explains: “When I expressed a discomfort with the line that asks for ‘strength that shines from within,’ and changed it to ‘strength that comes from God,’ I was quickly admonished by a person sitting near me that ‘I know these people and they’re not into that kind of stuff.’ Even so, the ‘strength that shines from within’ belief is panentheistic.” (<http://advindicate.com/articles/2014/3/4/one-project-present-or-emergent-truth>).

As for the anointing ceremony, do we notice here perhaps a link with some practice in the emerging church? Anointing with oil is one of the characteristics of the emerging church which is meant to comply with the idea that post-moderns are looking for a more sensual experiential worship. The sacred signs of water, bread and wine, oil and laying on of hands are accentuated. Julie B. Sevig, editor and author, explains: “Post-moderns prefer to encounter Christ by using all their senses. That’s part of the appeal of classical liturgical or contemplative worship: the incense and candles, making the sign of the cross, the taste and smell of the bread and wine, touching icons and being anointed with oil” (Sevig, *The Lutheran*, “Ancient New,” Sept., 2001, as quoted by Oakland, *Faith Undone*, p. 58).

The title of the One Project - Jesus. All, is much promising, but did it meet the expectations? Of course, there were many who enjoyed the gathering, but there were also disappointed attendees. Janet remarks: “As the event drew to a close, a ‘charge’ was given to each of us. Not a charge to share Jesus, but a charge for ‘change.’ Each person was told to ‘go home and change your church’... There was no focus on a continuing walk with Jesus by emulating His life, changing our lives, modifying our lifestyles, or sharing the Present Truth in the context of the three angel’s messages. It was just ‘Jesus. All.’ That’s all! Without any biblical or concise definition” (<http://advindicate.com/articles/2014/3/4/one-project-present-or-emergent-truth>).

Pastor Chad Stuart concludes: “In summary I would say, it was not the gathering I expected, but this does not mean it was a bad gathering. The focal point I expected, learning more about Jesus and

drawing nearer to Jesus, was not the primary focus I experienced, and based on that alone I would probably not choose to attend again.” ([www.chadn Stuart.com](http://www.chadn Stuart.com/tag/samleonor) /tag/samleonor).

## The Emerging Church

As we come to the close of this short paper, it should be clear that The One Project has roots that reach down into New Age thinking and false, mystic spirituality, which is practiced in the Emerging Church Movement. This movement is strongly ecumenical and does not characterize the uniqueness of Christianity but pictures it as one voice among many. Dialogue and spiritual practices are the way to experience God, while the Bible is not regarded as the sole source for faith and practice. Ideas and spiritual practices are also adopted from multiple religious sources including Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism and Eastern mysticism. All this, certainly, should hold us back to get somehow involved in this popular, unbiblical movement.

It is important to consider in this context the excellent nine points Faculty Statement of the Southern Adventist University on the Emerging Church Movement; A Reaffirmation of Seventh Day Adventist Faith and Practice, October 23, 2013.

(<https://www.southern.edu/religion/Pages/facultystatementontheemergingchu.aspx>)

But still, you may argue that there are also many good things in The one Project. Of course, there are attractive things in almost all movements, but the point is that it should not be *partly* good, but good and truthful *on all points*. There are many different churches and they all have some good, biblical points, but God wants His church to be truthful on all points. He is not satisfied with less.

Do we really need to be counseled and influenced by people outside our church who promote the modern emerging church movement with mystical, spiritual formation practices? Should such people be our teachers in order to be better educated and equipped to fulfill our God-given mission? Has God left His church destitute of important aspects of spirituality and truth? Is it God’s purpose that



we should go and learn truths and practices from teachers outside our church who neglect His law and do not keep holy His sign of their sanctification? Should we invite them as our special guest speakers to educate us? Is that the way Christ leads His church now in this time of the end? Is that the way which should enable us to be prepared and to be ready for His soon coming?

We are assured that we are not destitute of truth. "God has given all these truths to His children who are being prepared for the day of God... If God has any new light to communicate, He will let His chosen and beloved understand it, without their going to have their minds enlightened by hearing those who are in darkness and error" (White, *Early Writings*, p. 124).

It does not matter how great, brilliant, important, and popular teachers may be; if they are not in full harmony with God's law, they should not be our counselors. "There is to be no compromise with those who make void the law of God. It is not safe to rely upon them as counselors. Our testimony is not to be less decided now than formerly; our real position is not to be cloaked in order to please the world's great men. They may desire us to unite with them and accept their plans, and may make propositions in regard to our course of action which may give the enemy an advantage over us" (White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin, Our Present Dangers*, April 13, 1891 par. 17).

Dedicated workers who are well trained and sufficiently educated can be, without doubt, a great blessing in God's work. However, there may be sometimes a popular trend to go for a degree to seminaries or universities outside of our church without fully realizing the involved consequences of such a move. Even if it is a well-known reputable Christian institution, there will be still differences of thinking and opinion with our Adventist faith which, certainly, will be of influence. It is never good to choose for a position which may endanger and challenge our religious persuasion.

Note this important counsel: "We need men well trained, well educated, to work in the interests of the churches. They should present the fact that we cannot trust our youth to go to seminaries

and colleges established by other denominations, that we must gather them into schools where their religious training shall not be neglected... If we do not have schools for our youth, they will attend other seminaries and colleges, and will be exposed to infidel sentiments...” (White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 45).

The One Project’s strong emphasis to disregard the peculiar features of our faith; to forget our distinctive prophetic message; to change our thinking; and to go beyond our own denomination to be fed from other streams, is not in harmony with God’s inspired counsel. We are admonished: “Do not now make mistakes. Never, never seek to remove one landmark that the Lord has given His people. The truth stands firmly established on the eternal Rock – a foundation that storm and tempest can never move... Do not lower the banner of truth or allow it to drop from your hands in order to unite with the solemn message for these last days anything that will tend to hide the peculiar features of our faith” (White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 162).

The emerging church brushes biblical doctrine and prophecy aside. Philip Yancey, author and editor for *Christianity Today*, whose beliefs fit with emerging spirituality, wrote: “Perhaps our day calls for a new kind of ecumenical movement: not of doctrine, nor even of religious unity, but one that builds on what Jews, Christians, and Muslims hold in common” (Yancey, *Christianity Today*, Nov., 1, 2004; as quoted by Roger Oakland, *Faith Undone*, p. 213).

The influential pastor Rick Warren, a great supporter of the emerging church movement, showed a very low regard for Bible prophecy; he “was actually laying ground work for the emerging church’s new reformation, a reformation that rejects thinking about the return of Christ and works more at convincing the multitudes that Christ is already in them as a global christ-consciousness” (Oakland, *Faith Undone*, p. 154).

Warren dismissed the sure word of prophecy clearly. He wrote: “When the disciples wanted to talk about prophecy, Jesus quickly switched the conversation... He wanted them to concentrate on their mission in the world. He said in essence, ‘The details of my return are

none of your business. What is your business is the mission I've given you. Focus on that!... focus on fulfilling your mission, not figuring out prophecy" (Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, p. 285).

Warren actively discourages the study of the prophetic word because he considers this a snare of Satan to keep us from our mission. We are warned however: "Satan is not asleep; he is wide-awake to make of no effect the sure word of prophecy. With skill and deceptive power he is working to counterwork the expressed will of God, made plain in His word" (White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 92).

"Every day adds its sorrowful evidence that faith in the sure word of prophecy is decreasing, and that in its stead superstition and satanic witchery are captivating the minds of many" (White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 210; Cf., Voerman, *The Hidden Agenda*, p. 59-63).

Sources from outside our church may be very interesting to read and when the author is well-known as a good, dedicated Christian who faithfully lives up to the light he has received, it may be even a blessing to read his works.

However, it makes a great difference if the author is influenced by New Age ideas and by mystical, ancient spiritual practices. In such cases it would be strongly advisable to shun such unholy sources, regardless how popular and brilliant the author and his works may appear to be. We should never allow such people in any way to be our guides, teachers, educators and counselors.

If we are called as God's people; if we are led by Him as "the special object of His care and of His love" (White, MR 168, 169), should we then go to other denominations and be fed from their streams and be educated, guided and counseled by their sources, and even so while unholy links are obvious?

Would we not then, like Israel of old, "commit two evils," (a) forsake God, "the fountain of living waters" and (b) hew ourselves "out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water?" (Jer. 2:13).

And are we not then, just as Israel of old, confronted with that significant question: "And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?" (vs. 18).

Consider God's impressive statement: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that *it is* an evil *thing* and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear *is* not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts" (vs. 19).

Is it advisable to drink and be fed from streams and sources from other denominations which are in conflict with the Creator of heaven and earth? Can we be sure then that they have the right spirit or are they perhaps guided by another spirit? Note this very significant statement: "God has a controversy with the churches of today... They have divorced themselves from God by refusing to receive His sign. They have not the spirit of God's true commandment-keeping people" (White, SDA BC vol. 7, p. 979).

Thus it is clear that there is a remarkable difference between God's people, who keep His commandments, and other churches. And so, we are not just another piece of the puzzle like any other piece, as one of the One Project founders would have us to believe. (See page 21, point 11). No, there is certainly a significant difference. God has *no* controversy with us as with other churches about His sign, for we have *received* it and we are characterized by a *different* spirit.

But how is it possible that some other churches appear to be very spiritual, active, and successful, as if God is particularly blessing them, while our church is struggling with several issues and seems to be spiritually rather tame? Is this not a good argument to go to them to learn the secret of their prosperity and success?

Consider, however, this clear explanation: "Satan deceives some with Spiritualism. He also comes as an angel of light and spreads his influence over the land by means of false reformations. The churches are elated, and consider that God is working marvelously for them, when it is the work of another spirit" (White, *Early Writings*, p. 261).

If the roots of the spiritual practices are not directly based upon the Bible but go back to ancient mysticism, then we can be sure that the reformation is not from God, but the work of other spirits. God has, however, honest children who will be called out from these

churches and who will gladly receive the truth. “Satan knows this; and before the loud cry of the third angel is given, he raises an excitement in these religious bodies, that those who have rejected the truth may think that God is with them. He hopes to deceive the honest and lead them to think that God is still working for the churches. But the light will shine, and all who are honest will leave the fallen churches, and take their stand with the remnant” (Ibid).

We need to go back to the Bible only and study the simplicity of Christ’s example. We should study and follow the faith of the great cloud of witnesses, which is presented to us in the Bible, and we should learn from their experiences.

Listen to this excellent video about the deception of the modern emerging movement: *Spiritual Formation: Prominent Seventh-day Adventists Speak...* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKeQ0i3fxw4&safe=active>).

### **False Reformation**

Note Ellen White’s words of warning against a false reformation of change that will enter the church:

“The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error. A new organization would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless.

Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure. Who has authority to begin such a movement? We have our Bibles. We have our experience, attested to by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit. We have a truth that admits of no compromise. Shall we not repudiate everything that is not in harmony with this truth? I hesitated and delayed about the sending out of that which the Spirit of the Lord impelled me to write. I did not want to be compelled to present the misleading influence of these sophistries. But in the providence of God, the errors that have been coming in *must be met*" (White, Selected Messages, Bk. 1, p. 204, 205).

Note also the words that introduce the book *Meet it*, (Remnant Publications), written by Rick Howard: "On the surface it looks promising, but when delving under the superficial outer layers, the powers of darkness are found lurking. At an October 2011 meeting of The One Project group, eleven authors were noted as being 'the most helpful.' Yet, they all promote and support the emerging church, spiritual formation interests. They all endorse and advance mysticism and spiritism, and all of them are leaders and teachers of these principles that are designed to win souls to Romanism."

Satan delights to deceive man with truths, wrapped up with lies; he rejoices to mislead man with good, attractive, pleasing things, that are mingled with falsehood and unholy principles.

It was Moses who stood in the gate of the camp and confronted the people with that important, searching question: "Who is on the Lord's side?" What is *your* answer to this decisive question?

May God bless us all as we decide to stay alert and remain true and faithful to His cause.

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(All the websites mentioned in this paper were accessed during the month May, 2014.)